

Billionaire's Regret: Finding Her

Chapter 371

Chapter 371

It was a twist of fate—just as Caitlin squatted down, Carmen, unable to stop herself, was sent tumbling forward and fell straight **into** the đĩ

vat.

“Ahhhh...” Carmen screamed, her body crashing into the vat with a loud splash, sending a wave of dark green water into the air.

Everyone around her instinctively took a step back.

The vat wasn't very deep, but after falling headfirst, Carmen found herself surrounded by the foul-smelling, murky water.

Carmen thrashed around in the filthy water, but the more she struggled, the worse it became.

Watching the struggling woman, Caitlin's eyes narrowed coldly. She had seen everything, even the small trick Carmen tried behind her. As soon as Carmen tried to push her into the vat, Caitlin had quickly crouched down, causing Carmen to miss her target and fall in herself

"Help!" Carmen's desperate cry echoed through the air.

Seeing what had happened, Caitlin feigned surprise. "Oh no, Carmen, how did you fall in?"

Timothy looked on in surprise, not knowing how to respond. "Randall, don't just stand there—go help her!"

"I'm on it!" Randall quickly started to take off his shoes, ready to jump into the vat, but Caitlin had already grabbed a bamboo pole. "No need to go in. I've got a bamboo pole!"

She poked the pole into the water, the tip hitting Carmen's stomach. Carmen screamed in pain, "Ahhh..."

"Sorry, Carmen, I wasn't paying attention. Grab the pole and pull yourself up!" Caitlin said, letting go of the pole as Carmen clung to it,

pulling herself up to safety.

Once Carmen was out of the vat, she looked completely unrecognizable. Her pristine white clothes were now covered in green algae and

muck, making her look like a creature from a swamp.

“Ugh... ugh...” Carmen gagged, coughing and retching, the awful smell of the water overwhelming her senses.

Timothy furrowed his brow, looking at her with a hint of irritation. “What happened? How did you fall in?”

Carmen, feeling humiliated, wanted to cry but couldn’t explain herself properly. Caitlin stepped in, offering an explanation.

“Timothy, the stones by the dye vats are slippery. I almost slipped myself earlier. Carmen must have lost her footing. You should be careful as

well.”

Carmen wanted to vomit blood at Caitlin’s words. She knew Caitlin had done this deliberately—if Caitlin hadn’t suddenly crouched down, she wouldn’t have fallen!

She had created this mess herself!

“Go wash up!” Timothy said, shooting a disapproving look at her, clearly displeased with the situation,

“Come on, let’s go to the water faucet and rinse you off.” Randall stepped in, helping Carmen away. **As** they left, **Carmen** shot Caitlin **a glare**, the tension between them growing deeper

Caitlin simply gave a cold smile as she watched Carmen struggle. Her eyes held an unspoken warning—if you try **to make a move against me** again, be prepared to suffer the consequences.

“Timothy, let’s move on and look at the other places!” Caitlin suggested, her voice still calm.

Timothy nodded, and they continued their tour of the Fragrance & Dye Studio.

As they walked, Timothy glanced at the surroundings and asked, “Caitlin, what do you think? Do you think there’s **any hope** of redung vers Fragrance & Dye Studio?”

Caitlin didn’t mince words. “As long as Yun’s Fragrance & Dye Studio is in your hands, it will likely remain in its current state for the **rest of**

your life.”

Timothy’s eyes narrowed. “What do you mean by that?”

“Timothy, it’s been five or six decades. What have you been doing all these years? The Fragrance & Diye Studio has fallen into **disrepair under** your watch. Don’t you think you should take some responsibility?”

“If you really wanted to do something about it, you could have fixed it by now. The truth is, you’ve never been serious about it.

Timothy’s face stiffened slightly at her words, and he sighed. “Isn’t it because we lost the Yun’s Aromatic Codex that we haven’t been able to

restore it?”

“Is it really just because of the Yun’s Aromatic Codex?” Caitlin’s voice held a note of suspicion.

Timothy’s face darkened. “Of course, it is!”

Caitlin’s lips curled into a cold smile. “Timothy, let’s make a deal.”

“A deal?” Timothy raised an eyebrow, clearly intrigued but wary. He couldn’t guess what Caitlin was up to.

“You give me the Fragrance & Dye Studio, and I’ll be the one to revive it and take it to greater heights.”

Timothy furrowed his brow even deeper. “Yun’s Fragrance & Dye Studio has a history of hundreds of years. It’s a symbol of our legacy, the essence of The Yuncey Family. How could I just hand it over? If I could, do you know how many people would want it? I’ve fought tooth and nail to protect it all these years.”

Caitlin smiled. “Timothy, it’s not that you want to protect it—it’s that you don’t own it. You don’t even have the right to transfer it because the land deed isn’t in your hands, right?”

Timothy froze, his eyes widening in shock. “Did Eleanor give **it** to you?”

“Timothy, the fact that you’re asking proves it’s true. The land deed for Yun’s Fragrance & Dye Studio isn’t in your hands, and you don’t have ownership of it! As Eleanor’s heir, it only makes sense that I inherit it.”

“You-” Timothy’s face twisted with realization, and he knew he had been outmaneuvered.

“You tricked me?” Timothy finally realized Caitlin’s plan. She had gotten him to admit that he didn’t own the deed and used that as leverage to pressure him into transferring the studio.

This girl was devious.

“Don’t worry, Timothy. As an heir, I have a responsibility to bear. Rest assured, I’ll help fulfill your **unac**

ished wishes.”

“You... you...” Timothy stammered, staring at Caitlin’s smiling face, but there was an icy **coldness to it, and it made him feel uncomfortable.**

Just then, several cars arrived at the entrance of Yun’s Fragrance & Dye Studio. A group of people in **work uniforms** got **out and walked**

toward them.

1714 Thu, 7 Aug

“Timothy, congratulations, congratulations! It’s wonderful to see The Yuncey Family finally recognize the heir to Yun’s Fragrance & Dye

Studio!”

The head of the cultural management bureau, the head of the land management bureau, and the head of the notary office, along with several other important figures, had arrived to congratulate Timothy.

Timothy was caught off guard. He hadn't invited them—how had they known to come?

Looking at Caitlin's subtle smile, he realized it was all part of her plan. It was a trap set for him from the beginning

“This is too much trouble,” Timothy said, forcing a smile and greeting them.

295

“It's our pleasure. The Yuncey Family has always been the leader in Departure City, and you are a respected elder. We heard you're planning to return Yun's Fragrance & Dye Studio to Eleanor's granddaughter. We just had to be here to witness it?”

“Yes, Yun, you are truly a role model of legacy preservation. Your dedication is something we should all learn from and carry forward.”

After exchanging pleasantries, the leaders turned to Caitlin. “So, this must be Eleanor's granddaughter, Caitlin? We saw the news. You're young, but you've already proven your capability by bringing the truth to light. We're impressed.”

Caitlin smiled graciously. “Thank you for the recognition. Since the relevant parties are all here, let's begin the official ceremony for the transfer. Please, follow me inside!”

Billionaire's Regret: Finding Her

Everything had already been arranged by Caitlin, and Sebastian had made the necessary connections in advance. **Caitlin invited** the peksan leaders into the Fragrance & Dye Studio, while Timothy wore a forced smile, inwardly seething with frustration,

He was trapped—Caitlin had maneuvered him into a corner. Now, if he refused to transfer the ownership, he would look selfish and good he

reputation. Though Timothy was extremely unwilling, the situation had progressed beyond his control; he had no choice but to go along with

1. it.

Inside the largest hall of Fragrance & Dye Studio, several of the leaders discussed the matter of transferring the ownership of the **studio**. They spoke with unanimity about the legacy of Yun's Fragrance & Dye Studio and its historical importance.

“Yun's Fragrance & Dye Studio is a treasure of Departure City, V Country. If it can be revitalized, it will be a great benefit to us all

“With the return of the rightful heir, revitalizing Yun's Fragrance & Dye Studio is no longer just a dream.

“It would be a huge gain for Departure City. We'll work together to ensure that this endeavor succeeds.”

Faced with the leaders' attitudes, Timothy forced a smile, trying to delay, "Well, actually, this matter isn't something to rush into."

But he didn't understand the current situation. The leaders were already moving forward with the process, speaking over each other as **they** discussed the next steps. Caitlin took charge of the situation, "Thank you all for your attention. As the rightful heir to Fragrance & Dye Studio, I will do my utmost to revive the fragrance and dye industry. Now, let's go over the paperwork and see what needs to be done."

"If we can have the original land deed of Fragrance & Dye Studio, that would be ideal. But if **not**, as long as Timothy is willing to sign the transfer agreement and sever the ties between The Yuncey Family and Fragrance & Dye Studio, we can proceed."

Timothy's face turned dark as he listened to their conversation. He considered feigning a heart attack to disrupt the transfer ceremony. His hand moved to his chest, but before he could act, Caitlin spoke, "I have the deed that Eleanor left behind. Please take a look."

Seeing Caitlin take out the land deed, Timothy almost choked on his own rage. The deed that The Yuncey Family had lost was indeed taken by Eleanor!

Caitlin presented the deed, carefully wrapped in plastic, to the leaders. She had discovered it inside the cover of the upper part of the Yun's Aromatic Codex, which was left by her grandmother. This made her suspect that the rumored royal tomb and treasure might not even exist.

The real treasure everyone coveted was likely this deed, the ownership of Fragrance & Dye Studio.

The leaders gathered around to examine the deed. After some inspection, they confirmed that it was authentic, marked with the seal of The Yuncey Family's legacy.

“Good, with the deed in hand, this process will be much easier.”

The leaders pushed the transfer agreement in front of Caitlin.

“Now, all that's needed is for Caitlin to sign it!”

This meant that Caitlin could directly obtain the ownership, bypassing Timothy entirely. It was as if Timothy **had spent** all these years protecting Fragrance & Dye Studio on behalf of Eleanor.

“Thank *you*, everyone. In that case, I'll sign the transfer agreement now.”

Caitlin signed her name on the agreement. To avoid any further complications, she made a request **in front of everyone**, “**I'd like your agency**

to also issue a document officially severing the ties between Fragrance & Dye Studio and The Yuncey Family. I **plan to develop Fragrance & Dye Studio** into an independent business, free from any interference. It would be best if **it** is fully separated **from The Yuncey Family**”

“Of course!” The leaders quickly agreed, and after some discussion, they drafted another document. **One** of them turned to Timothy said, “Timothy, we’ll need your signature here as well to finalize the separation.”

The document in front of Timothy left him with no room to maneuver. He was

prepared to sign.

now cornered, and with no other choice, he begrudgingly

Just as Timothy was about to sign, Carmen rushed in, shouting, “Don’t sign!”

Everyone turned to see Carmen storming in, now changed into fresh clothes, with Randall following behind her.

“Everyone, don’t be fooled by Caitlin! She wants Yun’s Fragrance & Dye Studio. Her ambition is clear. She’s after the wealth of The Yuncey Family!”

Carmen was desperate to expose Caitlin’s supposed scheme, but Caitlin wasn’t intimidated.

“Carmen! You can eat your food in any way you like, but don’t say anything out of line. Am I really after The Yuncey Family’s wealth? Let me ask you this: going back to my grandmother and her generation, who was in charge of The Yuncey Family?”

Carmen shot Caitlin a glare, but Caitlin's icy gaze only intensified.

"It was my grandmother's mother, Alexandra. My grandmother's father was The Yuncey Family's son-in-law. The family's fortune was **passed** down to the daughter, so why *did* Timothy inherit it later? Who disrupted The Yuncey Family's system of inheritance?"

Caitlin's question was sharp, challenging and forcing everyone to rethink the family's legacy.

"I don't care about what happened in the past! What I know is that Yun's Fragrance & Dye Studio is an inseparable part of The Yuncey **Family**. You've caused nothing but trouble since you returned, and now you want to take it independent? What are you really after?" Carmen said, her voice trembling with frustration.

She was young and didn't know the full story. She believed that her family was the true heir to The Yuncey Family's legacy, and the **studio** should rightfully belong to them.

Timothy, wary of delving too deep into the past, quickly cut Carmen off, "Enough, Carmen!"

"Grandfather..." Carmen wanted to argue, but Timothy's sharp tone made her bite back her words. He was too old to let his granddaughter continue this rant.

"Enough! Caitlin is the rightful heir to Eleanor. She's entitled to inherit Fragrance & Dye Studio. I trust that she will be able to revive it." Timothy signed the document, and the officials from various departments signed as well. It was all legitimate and official.

With the paperwork finalized, Caitlin turned to the leaders and politely said, “Thank you for your assistance. I look forward to working with all of you to bring Fragrance & Dye Studio back to its former glory.”

“Of course, Caitlin! We all wish Yun’s Fragrance & Dye Studio great success!” one of the leaders responded.

With the business done, the leaders left, but Caitlin called the head of the Cultural Bureau back, “I have one more favor **to** ask.”

Timothy’s brow furrowed. What more could this girl be up to?

Billionsaire's Regret: Finding Her

Chapter 373

“Oh? What’s the matter, Caitlin? Please, go ahead.”

“After I take over Yun’s Fragrance & Dye Studio, the first thing I want to do is apply for the World Intangible Cultural Heritage listing. While the Fragrance & Dye Studio is already a historic and cultural building in Departure City, that’s not enough, I want Fragrance Garments from **The** Yuncey Family to be recognized worldwide and added to the UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage list!”

Caitlin's boldness and vision resonated with the leaders present, and they all nodded in agreement. Even Randall, who hadn't spoken much, felt the ambition Caitlin exuded.

He had grown up in The Yuncey Family, and for years, he hadn't heard his grandfather express any real plans for managing Yun's Fragrance & Dye Studio. The Yuncey Family had always been living off its past. But Caitlin was the first person to truly attempt to preserve what was left and rebuild.

He couldn't help but admire her.

"Caitlin, in the past, the techniques for creating Fragrance Garments were lost, so we couldn't apply for the heritage status. But if you can rediscover the true techniques of Fragrance Garments, we will be able to have a world organization certify it, making the application possible."

The responsible official said this earnestly.

"Good, I will do my best! Thank you all so much! Please, allow me to see you out!"

Caitlin nodded and personally escorted the leaders out, while Sebastian and James helped them into the cars.

As they turned around, they heard Carmen's loud voice, "Grandfather, grandfather... are you alright, grandfather?"

“Master!” The butler Forrest also cried out in panic.

Timothy, pushed to the edge, had finally been so enraged that he nearly fainted. Carmen helped him calm down and then told Forrest, “Quickly take my grandfather back to rest!”

“Understood, young lady!”

Forrest, along with a few of the male servants, helped Timothy leave Yun’s Fragrance & Dye Studio.

“What happened to Timothy?” Caitlin asked, noticing the group leaving with the old man.

Carmen sneered, “Caitlin, you really know how to put on a show! You’ve pushed my grandfather to this point, and now you’re acting all

innocent?”

“Did you really think I made Timothy sick? How could that be? Wasn’t Timothy perfectly fine just now?”

Caitlin’s gaze was cold as she locked eyes with Carmen. The tension between them was palpable.

“Perfectly fine? Do you not see he’s forcing a smile?” Carmen snapped. “He kindly brought you to see Yun’s Fragrance & Dye Studio, and **what** did you do? You secretly conspired with several department heads to forcibly take the ownership of Yun’s Fragrance & Dye Studio from my grandfather. What do you call that?”

“Robbery! Despicable! Shameful... Ah!”

Before Carmen could finish her tirade, Caitlin slapped her hard across the face.

Slap!

Carmen instinctively cupped her stinging cheek, her eyes wide in disbelief. Caitlin had actually slapped her! How dare the stap **her** facet

“Caitlin, how dare you hit me? On what grounds?”

Carmen was furious, ready to tear into Caitlin, but she never even got the chance to lay a hand on her. Even if Caitlin hadn’t lifted a finger, Sebastian wouldn’t have stood by idly.

Sebastian quickly blocked Carmen’s hand, standing protectively in front of Caitlin.

Carmen, shoved aside by Sebastian, slammed into the doorframe. She was on the verge of exploding. “What, now you think you’re invincible just because you have backup?”

She turned to Randall, who had been standing behind her, and urgently called out, “Randall! Hurry up! Come help me! This woman dares to bully me, your big sister!”

“Big sister! Just leave it, alright? Caitlin hasn’t done anything wrong.”

Randall, ever the diplomat, intervened, not wanting to take sides. He felt that Carmen was being overly aggressive, and Caitlin’s taking over Yun’s Fragrance & Dye Studio was well within her rights.

“What? You’re helping her and not me?” Carmen couldn’t contain her frustration. Anger burned in her eyes as she glared at Caitlin. “Caitlin, you’re something else. I’ve seen through you now. You pretend to be all innocent, but you’re really a scheming, malicious woman!”

“Ha, don’t mistake me for you. If it weren’t for your first attempt at scheming against me, do **you** think I would have fought back? Take that little stunt earlier when you tried to push me into the dye tank. If I hadn’t caught the reflection of you moving, and squatted down to dodge, I would’ve fallen in for sure!”

Caitlin’s voice was cold and sharp as she countered. “As for schemes, who’s the real mastermind? You started it, and now you try to blame me! You think I’m scared of your tricks? Just wait.”

Caitlin left with Sebastian and James, her words ringing with confidence.

Sebastian cast a dark glance at Carmen. No one was allowed to harm his wife—not even with their petty schemes.

Carmen was so furious she could hardly breathe. As Caitlin walked away confidently, she turned to Randall, venting her frustration, “Did you see that? That’s the woman we’re dealing with! She’s a heartless demon who’s come to collect her debts! Stay away from her in the future, and don’t help her!”

“Alright, calm down. You’ll get wrinkles if you keep frowning so much. Let me take you home. You still have your meeting with Odessa tomorrow, don’t you? Let’s get ready for it.”

Randall, though skeptical about Caitlin’s involvement with Odessa, didn’t want to argue further. Tomorrow would reveal the truth.

The car drove down the road, leaving Yun’s Fragrance & Dye Studio behind, the scenic beauty of the green mountains and clear waters now a

distant memory..

Caitlin relaxed as she reviewed the documents they had signed today. She could finally breathe a sigh of relief. No matter what, Yun’s

reclaimed. Fragrance & Dye Studio was now back in her hands, the first piece of her grandmother’s legacy she

As she put the important papers away, Caitlin asked, “How’s Yordan doing?”

“We confirmed through a phone call that his rescue was timely. He’s not in life-threatening danger, but he hasn’t woken up yet,” Sebastian replied.

“Make sure extra people are guarding Yordan”

Based on past experiences, Caitlin feared Yordan might meet the same fate as the others—ending up dead like the remasters so it was essential to protect him,

“I’ve arranged for it. Once Yordan wakes up, we’ll be notified”

Sebastian had already thought ahead. His main goal was to help Caitlin, alleviating her concerns so that her plans could proceed smoothly.

“Good.”

Caitlin nodded. Just then, she noticed the road sign pointing toward Saint Everlight Cathedral.

Suddenly, an idea struck her, and she turned to James, who was driving, “Harrison, we’re heading toward Saint Everlight Cathedral. Let’s go

there.”

“Got it!”

James quickly adjusted the route, steering toward Saint Everlight Cathedral.

“What’s the plan at Saint Everlight Cathedral?” Sebastian asked, surprised by Caitlin’s sudden change of course.

Caitlin’s plans were always a mystery to him. Sometimes, he wished he could be a fly on the wall inside her mind, to understand exactly what she was thinking. Wouldn’t it be nice to know just how often she thought about him?

Billionaire's Regret: Finding Her

Chapter 374

Saint Everlight Cathedral is located on top of a mountain, and there is a walking path leading up to it. They parked their car at the foot of the mountain and started their hike.

The elevation of the mountain isn't too high, but the path is steep and winding. Caitlin slipped on some spare sneakers from **the** ca lightening the load, and walked up the mountain with the two men. Along the way, they chatted and admired the surrounding scenery. After everything they'd been through, from hardship to danger, it felt liberating and refreshing to walk through the open wilderness. It was a rare moment of ease.

James was like a mischievous big boy, cracking jokes that had everyone laughing heartily.

When they reached a halfway resting point at a pavilion, Sebastian left for a moment and came back with a beautiful bouquet of wildfishers in his hands. He returned to Caitlin's side and handed her the bouquet. "Caitlin, this is for you."

"Thank you." Caitlin accepted the flowers, gently inhaling their scent, and a soft smile graced her fair face.

If there's one thing that draws Caitlin to Sebastian, it's his ever-present romantic nature. Romance doesn't always require grand gestures sometimes, a small surprise can create the most touching moments. That was what moved her heart.

It was probably Sebastian's love for her—always there, always consistent. Caitlin felt deeply that love and indifference are worlds apart. Someone who truly loves you can make even the harshest conditions seem bearable, just to see you smile

The best love is a two-way journey, not one person humbling themselves endlessly. Love that's unbalanced cannot last.

After a brief rest, they continued their hike up the mountain. Half an hour later, they finally reached the top, where the majestic Saint Everlight Cathedral stood. The church was surrounded by towering pine trees, and the space outside was home to a large wishing tree,

enclosed by an iron fence.

The tree was covered in wish plaques, each engraved with names of men and women.

“Caitlin, let’s make a wish too!” Sebastian pulled Caitlin toward the church, eager to join in.

The two of them made a donation inside the church and received their own wish plaque. Sebastian wrote their names on it, adding “I will love you forever.”

Though the words were a bit cheesy, they were full of love.

“Done. Caitlin, if you have something to say to me, you can write it on the back.”

Sebastian handed her the plaque, and Caitlin took the pen. On the back, she wrote: “May the person I love be safe and sound every year.”

Sebastian frowned as he read it, “Why are you writing so many people’s names on it?”

He was possessive, so he crossed out the word “person” on the plaque, smiling in satisfaction. “There, that’s better.”

Caitlin couldn’t help but laugh at his childish behavior but didn’t stop him.

“I’ll throw it up there!”

It was said that the higher the plaque was hung, the more likely the wish would be granted. Sebastia, with **all his** might, threw **the** plaque toward the tree’s top. However, his strength was too much, and the plaque flew straight **over** the **tree’s** head.

Fortunately, James was standing on the other side and caught it. “Hey, come on, even the heavens **aren’t helping you now. You’re done for!**”

17 14 **Thu 7 Aug**

7

Sebastian scowled and took the plaque back. “I’ll try again. If it doesn’t work, I’ll climb up myself?”

This time, he controlled the force and tossed the plaque. It landed perfectly on a branch, swaying gently in the breeze, talkhang the and sparkling.

“Success!”

Sebastian held Caitlin’s hand, gazing into her eyes with deep affection. A look of joy and love filled his face.

As they shared a tender moment, James called out, “Caitlin, come over here!”

Caitlin and Sebastian walked hand-in-hand toward him. Not far away, there was a stone tablet.

“Look, isn’t this my grandmother’s name?”

Caitlin followed James’ pointing finger and indeed saw her grandmother Eleanor’s name on the tablet, alongside her great grandmother

Alexandra’s.

The inscription detailed events from decades ago, when The Yuncey Family had donated to rebuild Saint Everlight Cathedral after it had suffered a fire. Alexandra, as the head of The Yuncey Family at the time, had contributed to the reconstruction. Later, after Eleanor took over The Yuncey Family leadership, she had also helped to restore the statue of the Virgin Mary in the cathedral.

To commemorate these contributions, the cathedral had dedicated a stone tablet to The Yuncey Family, preserving their legacy for future generations.

“It seems The Yuncey Family has a deep connection to Saint Everlight Cathedral. Maybe we should ask the Archbishop. We might learn something useful.”

Caitlin made up her mind. She told Sebastian and James to wait outside while she went into the cathedral to inquire about the church’s

structure.

A priest, dressed in black, informed her that the oldest member of the church was Archbishop Nathaniel.

“Could you take me to see him?”

“Lady, may I ask why you wish to see our Archbishop?”

“Please tell Archbishop Nathaniel that I am Eleanor’s granddaughter and would like to consult him on something.”

When the priest heard the mention of Eleanor, he seemed surprised. “Of course, please wait here a moment.”

The priest left and returned shortly, offering a respectful bow. “Lady, please follow me to the inner courtyard.”

Caitlin followed the priest into a quiet room, where an elderly man with white eyebrows and beard was seated next to a bookshelf.

Before Caitlin could speak, the Archbishop, Nathaniel, asked, “You are Eleanor’s granddaughter, aren’t you? I’ve been waiting for you for a long time.”

Caitlin’s heart skipped a beat. It had only been a few minutes since the priest’s announcement, so how could he have been waiting for her already? Did this mean that Archbishop Nathaniel had known she would come to Saint Everlight Cathedral?

1714 Thu 7 Aug 1

Billionaire's Regret: Finding Her

Chapter 375

“Nathaniel!”

Caitlin bowed reverently. As she straightened up, she saw Nathaniel gesture for her to come and sit at the table

Once seated, Caitlin asked curiously, “Nathaniel, how did you know I’d come looking for you?”

“Your grandmother probably told you about Saint Everlight Cathedral when you were a child, didn’t she?”

“She did! I thought she was just telling stories back then. But today, when I saw the road sign for Saint Everlight Cathedral, I suddenly remembered. So it really exists.”

Nathaniel nodded. “If you wanted to know about your grandmother’s past, you’d start digging around/Seeing her name here at Saint Everlight Cathedral would make you curious to know more. And if you’re smart, you’d come to me.”

It was as if Nathaniel could see through everything, predicting Caitlin’s arrival with uncanny precision.

Nothing escaped him. Caitlin bowed her head respectfully. “Yes. My grandmother passed away a long time ago and left behind many mysteries. I came to Departure City to find the truth.

“But I’ve lost a lot of leads. Do you know anything about the Yuncey family from back then? Could you tell me something?”

Nathaniel's expression was calm and serene. He raised a hand to calm her. "Don't be anxious. Let me tell you a story."

Caitlin nodded and listened intently.

Nathaniel began slowly, "There was once a blacksmith, whose family had forged swords for generations. His craftsmanship won the king's favor, and he became wealthy and prosperous.

"His skills were passed from father to son, never to daughters or outsiders. But he only had a daughter. To keep the craft alive, he adopted a son, intending to teach him everything. But the adopted son had a dark heart.

"Unexpectedly, the son-in-law who married into the family was honest and clever. The blacksmith broke tradition and decided to teach him

instead.

"This sparked the adopted son's jealousy. He murdered the blacksmith, then killed the son-in-law too. He seized the blacksmith's property and didn't even spare the daughter.

"But the blacksmith's daughter was already pregnant with her husband's child. To protect her child, she endured humiliation and stayed with her father's killer.

“Months later, she gave birth to a daughter. She passed the craft to her child as she grew. In the end, the blacksmith’s daughter died full of sorrow. Before she passed, she told her daughter everything and warned her to beware of wolves in sheep’s clothing...”

Nathaniel stopped there.

“What happened next, Bishop?”

Caitlin turned to look at him. He was sitting cross-legged, eyes closed, head slightly bowed, as if he had fallen asleep.

“Nathaniel!”

Caitlin got up and walked over. After checking him carefully, she realized he wasn’t breathing.

17:14 **THU 7 AUG 1)**

Panic surged in her chest. She shouted toward the door, “Someone! Help!”

The priest from earlier rushed in. “Miss, what happened?”

“Nathaniel... he...”

Caitlin stepped aside. The priest checked his pulse and breathing. His expression changed. “The bishop has passed”

“I’m so sorry... I didn’t expect Nathaniel to pass away so suddenly...”

Caitlin looked at Nathaniel’s peaceful face, her heart in turmoil. It felt like he had waited for her for so long, only to die right after telling that story. How could it be so sudden?

“Don’t blame yourself. The bishop was very old. Passing peacefully is natural”

The priest consoled her, then rushed out to call the others.

News of the bishop’s passing quickly spread through the cathedral. Everyone gathered in the side hall. Some began preparing the funeral rites in an orderly manner.

Following tradition, they held a Holy Communion for Nathaniel. The believers prayed for his soul, asking for God’s forgiveness and that he may rest eternally in peace.

The ceremony was solemn. Hymns were sung, candles lit, scriptures read, and the Eucharist was held.

Caitlin, Sebastian, and James stayed at Saint Everlight Cathedral for the ceremony and witnessed Nathaniel's funeral.

By the time they came down from the mountain, it was almost evening.

The setting sun lit the sky in magnificent colors, yet there was a sense of sorrow in the air.

Nathaniel had passed, and Caitlin remained silent, her mood heavy.

"Come on, don't dwell on it. Nathaniel passed peacefully from old age. It had nothing to do with you," Sebastian comforted her.

"I just can't help but think... if I hadn't gone to him, maybe he wouldn't have died."

She remembered what Nathaniel said about waiting for her. The thought gnawed at her.

Sebastian wrapped her in his arms, gently patting her back. "Don't think like that, Caitlín. Nathaniel may be gone, but his spirit lives on."

Caitlin nodded. Sebastian asked, "Did he say anything to you before he passed?"

“He did, He told me a story, but I don’t think he finished it.”

Caitlin repeated the blacksmith story to Sebastian and James.

After listening, Sebastian fell silent for a moment and then said, “Was he using that story as a metaphor for the Yuncey family’s past?” James, who was driving, suddenly said, “Could the blacksmith be a metaphor for whoever founded the Fragrance & Dye Studio?”

“Then who was the blacksmith? Was he some ancestor of the Yuncey family...”

Before Sebastian could finish, Caitlin suddenly exclaimed, “I get it! The bishop was using that story to tell me about **the** Yuncey family’s past.

“That blacksmith might have been my grandmother’s grandfather. Since it’s several generations back, telling **me** directly would’ve been

17:14 **Thu 7 AUG**

confusing. But through the story, I understood.

“Look at this!” Caitlin pulled up the Yuncey family tree on her phone. “Clayton had one son and one daughter: Miles and Alexandra. Alexandra married Lloyd Emerson, and they had a daughter named Eleanor. Miles had a son named Timothy. That makes Timothy and a grandmother Eleanor cousins.

“If that’s the case, here’s the first question: Clayton had a son. Why did he pass the Fragrance & Dye Studio to his daughter Alexandra

Sebastian answered, “Because the rule was that Yun’s Fragrance & Dye Studio passed to daughters, and only to sons when there **were no** daughters.”

Caitlin shook her head. “I think that’s just a rumor. It doesn’t make sense for inheritance traditions. Here’s the second question: **Alexandra** and Lloyd’s daughter Eleanor—why did she have the surname Yuncey instead of Emerson?”

“Could it be that the Yuncey family’s tradition of passing the craft to daughters required daughters to keep the Yuncey name?” Sebastian guessed.

“But the bishop said the original rule was to pass to sons, not daughters or outsiders. The Fragrance & Dye Studio should’ve followed that Only when there were no sons would it go to a daughter.

“And if the daughter kept her mother’s surname, that could mean Lloyd—my great-grandfather—was a live-in son-in-law! Just like in the

story.

“Which leads to this conclusion: Clayton probably didn’t have a son at all!”

Caitlin’s mind was clearer than ever. “Third question: if Clayton was the blacksmith, Alexandra was his daughter, and Lloyd was the son-in-law—then who was the adopted son?”

AD

Comment

Billionaire's Regret: Finding Her

Chapter 376

“I got it!”

“Me too!”

Sebastian and James spoke almost in unison. “It’s Miles!”

“Exactly.”

Caitlin’s voice was firm. “If everyone in that story matches someone in real life, then Miles is the blacksmith’s adopted son.

“In other words, Miles was Clayton’s adopted son—not his biological child. No blood relation at all.

“Someone tampered with the Yuncey family records. Twisted the truth.”

That explained why they couldn’t uncover the real history.

The realization sent a chill down Caitlin’s spine.

The more she thought about it, the more horrifying it felt.

If that was the truth, then Timothy’s father, Miles, was the one who killed his adoptive father Clayton and his brother-in-law Lloyd.

And Timothy’s whole family—this so-called Yuncey lineage—were nothing but imposters. A bunch of parasites wearing the Yuncey name, feeding off a legacy that didn’t belong to them.

“finally understand now. No wonder my grandmother risked everything to escape Departure City sixty years ago.

“No wonder she was covered in wounds when my grandfather rescued her. She must’ve been hunted by those people.”

The more Caitlin pieced it together, the more upset she became. Her anger burned.

“That’s why, when I was searching for my mother, Una warned me before she died: don’t go to Departure City...”

James was just as furious. He slammed on the brakes and pulled over, turned around with red eyes. “So what now? Should I kill them?”

“Don’t do anything stupid, Harrison! We’ll get justice for what happened to my grandmother’s family—but not recklessly.

“We’re the only true blood left from the Yuncey line. We have to protect ourselves first, then figure out how to take them down.”

Caitlin stopped him in time.

“She’s right. There are plenty of ways to take revenge. We’ll plan carefully.”

Sebastian was all in. Whatever it took, he would help Caitlin carry out her vengeance.

After their discussion, they had dinner and returned to the Yuncey estate as if nothing had changed.

Sebastian and James went to prepare, while Caitlin went to see Timothy.

The staff said Timothy had fallen ill after being brought back earlier and hadn’t gotten up since.

When Caitlin arrived at the main wing where Timothy stayed, she found Forrest standing at the door.

Chapter 376

“Forrest, how’s Timothy doing?”

“He’s feeling a bit better, Caitlin.”

“I want to check on him.”

Caitlin entered the room and saw Beatrice Rachel chatting with the eldest daughter-in-law, Greta.

Neither woman gave b

a warm welcome.

Greta sneered. “Well, well, look who’s back. What’s your next plan to take over the Yuncey family?”

Rachel shot her a cold look and scoffed. “Caitlin, the Yuncey family treated you like one of their own. How could you stab Timothy **in the**

back? That stunt you pulled today? You might as well have robbed us outright.”

“Great-aunt, that’s a little dramatic, don’t you think? How is it robbery? I’m just following the family legacy and naturally inheriting the Fragrance & Dye Studio. I have the deed my grandmother left behind. I have every right to it.”

Caitlin stepped inside, unafraid. “Even Timothy isn’t objecting and supports me inheriting the Fragrance & Dye Studio. So what are you two

complaining about? What does it have to do with either of you?”

She didn't hold back, leaving Rachel fuming and speechless.

“Mother, don't get worked up! That's what she wants!”

Greta quickly supported Rachel and tried to calm her down.

Caitlin had no intention of letting them off easy. “Oh, by the way, I heard there's a ninth uncle in the Yuncey family. Where is he? I've been

back for a while and haven't seen him.”

“There's no ninth uncle in the Yuncey family.” Greta rolled her eyes.

“No? But I heard people say that when Timothy was young,

to his son.

he was

especially fond of a woman named Taylor. And apparently, she gave birth

“He never brought them back to the Yuncey estate? Or was Rachel too strict to let him?”

“If you ask me, no matter how strict the household is, you can’t just leave your own child out in the cold.”

She was deliberately rubbing salt in the wound.

The so-called proper wife, beaten by the mistress—it had to sting for life.

“Shut your mouth...”

Rachel hated anyone bringing up Taylor. But Caitlin had done it right to her face, nearly sending her into cardiac arrest.

“Caitlin, stop talking nonsense!”

Greta was furious. Caitlin couldn’t have hit a more sensitive spot.

Caitlin looked innocent. “What? It’s not like it’s some big secret. Why can’t we talk about it?”

Seeing how shaken Rachel was, Greta gently helped her up. “Mother, don’t get angry. Let me take you **out** for some air.”

As they were leaving, Greta shot a warning glance. “Caitlin, that’s enough. You better watch what you say.”

Chapter 376

Aug

“**Got it.** I’m just here to check on Timothy. I’ll leave after that.”

Caitlin went straight to the inner room and saw the old man lying in bed.

Timothy wasn’t asleep. He had heard everything from the outer room.

That girl somehow knew about his past with Taylor.

Knowing Caitlin had come in, he pretended to be asleep—but it didn't fool her.

“Timothy, I thought you were sleeping.”

“Sigh...”

Timothy realized pretending wouldn't work and opened his eyes with a sigh. “Caitlin, you're back. Have you eaten?”

“I have. Timothy, I know what I did today caught you off guard and made you sick. I'm sorry. Should I call a doctor for you?”

Caitlin's tone was full of care.

“No need. I'm fine...”

“That's good. I was really worried you might've gotten too upset.”

She gently tucked in his blanket. “By the way, Timothy, I was having dinner outside today and heard people talking about a woman named Taylor you knew in your younger days. They said you wanted to make her your fourth wife. Why didn't you bring her home?”

“Oh, don’t bring that up…”

If Rachel hadn’t held so much power over him, Timothy would’ve married Taylor for sure—especially since she gave birth to his son.

“It’s okay to talk about it, Timothy. I heard she had a hard life. Beautiful, but short-lived. Died young.

“But they also said she gave you a son—Hayden, right? That would make him my ninth uncle. People out there call him ‘The Fixer. Why **didn’t** you bring him home?”

“It’s in the past. Don’t mention it, Caitlin. If Rachel hears, there’ll be trouble.”

Timothy didn’t want to revisit those memories. Mostly, he feared Rachel.

“Timothy, you’re the head of the family. Are you really afraid of Rachel?”

“How about I help you bring him back? Don’t you want your son, who’s been out there all these years, to come home?”

“What could you do?”

Tim

Billionaire's Regret: Finding Her

Chapter 377

“Three days from now is your eighty-eighth birthday. Invite him here under the pretense of a birthday celebration **When the** tare comes him reunite with you. I promise, Rachel won’t be able to say a word.”

After Caitlin finished, Timothy looked thoughtful, as if weighing whether her plan could really work.

Seeing his hesitation, Caitlin added, “Timothy, if you’re worried Rachel might make a scene, we can play it by ear. If he reacts too strongly.

the reunion doesn’t have to happen right away. Just say he’s a guest here to celebrate your birthday. How about that?”

With a backup plan in place, Timothy finally agreed. “Alright. We’ll go with your idea. I’ll have someone send him an invitation

“Great. Then rest up, Timothy. I’ll go make the arrangements.”

After wrapping up their discussion, Caitlin left the main residence and returned to her own room.

When she reached her door, she flipped on the switch by the wall.

Click.

The room lit up instantly.

But the next second, Caitlin was jolted by what she saw.

“Ah! Zahra!”

Zahra was lying on the floor, a knife stabbed into her chest. Blood had pooled beneath her, staining the floor in dark, horrifying patterns.

Caitlin’s scalp tingled at the sight. She immediately pulled out her phone to call Sebastian and the others.

But before the call could connect, voices and footsteps came from outside. A group of people rushed in, shouting.

“Still haven’t found Zahra? How can a grown woman just vanish? Go check every room!”

It was Carmen’s voice!

Caitlin instantly realized something was wrong. She stepped out of the room just as Carmen arrived with her group.

Carmen saw her and asked, “Caitlin, have you seen Zahra?”

“Why are *you* looking for Zahra?”

Caitlin stared at her. Now calm, she saw through the situation clearly.

Zahra had been murdered—and her body was placed in Caitlin’s room. Carmen had come in at just the right moment, searching for her. If the body was discovered here, it would be easy to frame Caitlin for murder.

What a cheap, pathetic trap.

“She was supposed to help me check on the preparations for Grandpa’s birthday. Then she just disappeared. Where the hell did she **go**?”

Carmen turned to her people. “Search every room. We need to find Zahra–now!”

The servants moved like a search squad, barging into each room. Caitlin’s door was wide open. One **of them walked in and let** out a shriek.

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“Aaaah!”

Philip, the servant, came running out, pale as a sheet. “Something’s wrong! Something’s very wrong! In Caitin’s room–und one

“What did you find? Speak!”

“Zahra’s dead! Someone killed her!”

“What?! Zahra’s been killed?!”

Carmen gasped, then rushed into Caitlin's room with her people. When they saw the scene inside, they were all visibly shaken

Carmen staggered back out and pointed at Caitlin in horror. "Caitlin, you... you killed her?!"

Caitlin replied coldly, "Carmen, which of your eyes saw me do it?"

"You're denying it? Then why is Zahra's body in your room?" Carmen demanded.

"I don't know. I just got back."

"Oh please. You expect us to believe that?"

Carmen didn't even hesitate to point her as the murderer. "You! Go alert everyone—call the police!"

The servants bolted to deliver the message, while Carmen and two others stayed behind, watching Caitlin.

"You're a murder suspect now, Caitlin. Don't even think about running before the cops arrive."

"I'm not going anywhere. I want to stay and find out who really killed Zahra."

Caitlin met Carmen's gaze head-on. She hadn't killed anyone. She had nothing to hide. Let them try to frame her—she wasn't afraid.

News of Zahra's death spread quickly. Beatrice Rachel arrived at the scene, bringing many members of the Yuncey family with her.

Men and women alike gathered around the side house. Rachel approached Carmen and asked, "Carmen, what happened? Is it true? is Zahra really...?"

"Yes. Zahra's been murdered," Carmen said gravely, supporting Rachel.

Greta looked stunned. "How could this happen? She was fine at dinner just now!"

Douglas and Randall were just as shocked. "Where's the body?"

"In that room. We just found it."

Carmen pointed to Caitlin's room. Douglas looked alarmed. "Isn't that Caitlin's room? How..."

Everyone turned to look at Caitlin in disbelief. Rachel frowned and walked over, leaning on her cane.

Seeing that they were all eager to get a look inside, Caitlin warned, “Until the real killer is found, I suggest **none** of you **go** in there. You’ll just contaminate the scene and leave footprints—and good luck proving your innocence if you do.”

Her word’s stopped them in their tracks. Rachel and the rest stayed at the doorway, only peeking inside.

Everyone could see the body. Faces turned pale with shock.

“It really is Zahra... how did she end up dead in here?”

Greta covered her mouth with a handkerchief, looking distressed.

Rachel turned to Caitlin, her expression stern. “Caitlin, what’s going on? Why is Zahra’s body in your room? Did you kill her?”

“Rachel, I didn’t kill Zahra.”

“If you didn’t, then how did she end up here?” Rachel was clearly skeptical.

Douglas tried to be more diplomatic. “Caitlin, is there a misunderstanding here?”

Caitlin shook her head and defended herself. “Rachel, earlier I went to see Timothy. You saw me there yourself. After our conversation, i came straight back—and found Zahra like this. It’s impossible I could’ve done it in that short a time.”

“You say it wasn’t you, but Zahra is in your room. How do you explain that?” Greta challenged.

“I can’t explain it. But the police will. They’ll find the real killer.”

Caitlin’s voice was cold and steady. Her eyes swept toward Carmen, who raised her chin arrogantly.

Sebastian and James had already been alerted by Caitlin. James immediately began checking the Yuncey family’s surveillance system. Sebastian rushed to Caitlin’s side.

He arrived just as the crowd had formed. Caitlin glanced at him and nodded, signaling that she was okay.

After taking in the scene, anger flared in Sebastian’s chest. Who would pull such a childish stunt to frame Caitlin?

The crowd kept murmuring and speculating until the police finally arrived, led by Detective Shaw, along with the forensics team.

Shaw stepped forward and announced, “We’re with Departure City PD. My name is Shaw. We received a report of a murder. What’s the situation?”

Greta rushed to respond. “Officers, you’re just in time! The victim is our longtime housekeeper, Zahra. Please, find out who the killer is. Don’t let them get away with it!”

AD

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Billionaire's Regret: Finding Her

Chapter 378

Shaw spotted Caitlin in the crowd and gave her a small nod as a greeting. Then he ordered everyone to move down into the courtyard. Th crime scene needed to be secured for a detailed investigation.

Everyone filed downstairs and gathered in the yard, buzzing with speculation.

Greta kept harping on about punishing the killer, her words laced with insinuation—clearly pointing the finger at Caitlin.

Cynthia snorted. “Big sis-in-law, how are you so sure Caitlin’s the murderer before the police even finish investigating? Maybe someone else

did it and framed her.”

For all her trauma and instability, Cynthia’s thoughts were anything but muddled.

She was the only one who didn’t believe Caitlin was the killer. Just like she had never believed that the fire that killed her husband and son was an accident. Deep down, she’d always suspected the first branch of the family.

“Isn’t it obvious? Everyone saw where the body was. What more do you need?” Greta snapped.

Cynthia scoffed. “If what you see is always the truth, then on the night my husband and son died in that fire, I saw a shadow moving inside. But why didn’t anyone believe me back then?”

“That was different. The fire was an accident. Zahra was murdered. How is that the same?”

“How is it **not** the same? My husband and son were murdered too! Who’s going to give me justice?!”

The more she spoke, the more agitated she became—until she suddenly grabbed Greta by the collar.

“What are you doing? Let go of me, you lunatic!” Greta shrieked.

“My husband and son were murdered! Give them back to me!”

Cynthia always lost control when it came to the fire that took her family.

“Cynthia, calm down!”

Douglas and Randall rushed over to break them apart.

Rachel watched the chaos unfold and barked sharply, “Enough! Get her out of here! Do you want to make this even worse?”

Caitlin stood quietly nearby, watching Cynthia’s fury directed at Greta. She took it all in.

She had always thought Cynthia's husband and son had died in an accidental fire. But now... could there have been more to it?

Why was Cynthia so hateful toward Greta and Quill? Could they have been involved in that so-called accident?

Caitlin leaned toward Sebastian and whispered something in his ear. He nodded, agreeing that there might be more to uncover about that

old fire.

Once Cynthia had been escorted away, the courtyard finally quieted down.

Upstairs, Shaw and his team completed their initial investigation—collecting fingerprints, footprints, and conducted a preliminary check and had the body transported for further examination.

Coming downstairs, Shaw was immediately approached by Greta.

r clues. The medical examiner

17:15 The 7 Aug

Chapter 378

“So? **Did you** find anything?” **she** asked anxiously,

“There are still some questions we need to clarify,” Shaw replied, pulling out a notepad. “Who was the first person to discover **the** boo

“She was!” Several people pointed straight at Caitlin.

Shaw turned to her. “Caitlin, we’ll need you to come with us to assist with the investigation. Besides you, who else entered the **room?**”

Carmen stepped forward. “Me, and two servants—Philip and Omari. They went in first. I followed after.”

“What exactly happened?” Shaw asked.

“After dinner, Zahra went missing. I needed to speak with her, but I couldn’t find her anywhere and she wasn’t answering **her** phone. **Sol** gathered some people to search the house. When we got here, I ran into my cousin Caitlin.

“I asked if she had seen Zahra, but she didn’t tell me anything. Then Philip and Omari went into her room and found Zahra’s body. That’s

when we called the police.”

Shaw jotted everything down. “So the victim was found in Caitlin’s room?”

“That’s right.”

Shaw closed his notebook. “Alright, we’ve got a good grasp of the situation now. It’s confirmed to be a homicide. As for the method and the killer, we’ll continue the investigation and keep you informed. Please preserve the crime scene—no outsiders should enter for now.”

“Understood.”

Then Shaw turned to Caitlin. “Caitlin, please come with us.”

“Alright.”

Caitlin cooperated fully and followed Shaw and his team out. Sebastian went with her.

Watching Caitlin being taken away by the police, many in the Yuncey family were clearly delighted. Carmen exchanged a satisfied look with her mother. It felt like a thorn had finally been pulled from their side.

So satisfying.

With the evidence so clear—how could Caitlin get out of this one?

At the Departure City Police Department, Caitlin was taken in for questioning.

“Caitlin, did you have any conflicts with the victim?” Shaw asked.

“No. There were no issues between us.”

“Can you walk us through your movements that evening, before and after the incident?”

“In the afternoon, I visited Saint Everlight Cathedral. I had dinner later at a hotel—you can check their surveillance **footage**.

“After dinner, I returned to the Yuncey estate. The gate guards can confirm this.

“I first went to the main house to see my great-aunt and Greta, then visited Timothy and chatted with **him for a bit** when **we** finished, **it was**

around 8:45.

“It takes less than ten minutes to get from there to my room. When I opened the door and turned **on the light**, I **found Zahra’s body**.”

Chapter 378

“I was so shocked, **my** first instinct was to call someone. I stepped back to avoid disturbing the scene **and** that’s **when fran** into terme was bringing servants **to** look for Zahra.

“After that, they called the police. And now here we are.”

Shaw listened closely and nodded. “Got it. We’ll verify everything you said tomorrow. For now, you’re free to go. If you **discover** anything els contact me immediately.”

“Thank you, Shaw.”

Shaw was fair. He didn’t detain Caitlin just because she was the primary suspect.

Caitlin expressed her thanks and walked out of the station.

Sebastian was waiting outside. When he saw her, he hurried over. "How did it go?"

"I've told them everything. Let's go."

"Yeah."

Caitlin got into the passenger seat. Instead of taking her back to the Yuncey estate, Sebastian had already booked a hotel room for the night

She stayed at the hotel and contacted Shaw the next morning after confirming the autopsy results. Then she returned to the Yuncey

residence.

Carmen and Greta were surprised to see her back. They had assumed she'd been detained.

"Oh, Caitlin's back. So how was the holding cell last night?" Carmen asked with a smug smile.

"Wow, Carmen. Didn't know you cared so much."

Caitlin's voice was cold. "But I do have a question. Zahra died in my room, and *you* just happened to be the one who found **the** body—with servants in tow. Don't you think all these coincidences are worth explaining?"

AD

Billionaire's Regret: Finding Her

Chapter 379

"I already explained last night," Carmen said. "I was looking for Zahra to double-check the list for Grandpa's Birthday. I couldn't **find** her, p! brought people over to the side wing."

"Have you asked who saw Zahra last?" Caitlin asked coldly.

"How would I know?"

"Since you don't, then gather everyone in the Yuncey household. We need to find out. The longer this drags on, the more it'll affect Timothy's birthday celebration."

Though she was the prime suspect, Caitlin carried herself with authority and the confidence of someone in charge.

Carmen didn't want to take orders from her.

Caitlin didn't expect her to. She went straight to Rachel. "Rachel, you're the matriarch of the Yuncey family. Please give the order—have everyone gather in the main hall. I have a way to find the killer."

Rachel gave her a sharp glance but said nothing. Randall stepped in, "Grandma, if Caitlin says she has a method, let's give it a try. Getting to

the bottom of this quickly is in everyone's best interest."

"Fine. Forrest, go tell everyone to assemble in the main hall."

"Yes, ma'am." Forrest quickly went to deliver the order.

In no time, the entire Yuncey household—old and new servants, housekeepers, staff—were assembled. The entrance of the main hall was packed. Everyone was still buzzing about Zahra's death.

Rachel, leaning on her cane, stepped out with other family members and addressed the crowd. “Last night, something terrible happened in the Yuncey household. Zahra, a loyal and kind woman, was murdered in the east wing.

“We’ve gathered you here to find out who saw Zahra last—where and when. If you have any information, now is the time to speak.”

As Rachel’s gaze swept over the crowd, the murmuring quieted. One maid raised her hand. “Miss Beatrice, I was in the kitchen with Zahra around six o’clock last night, before dinner was served.”

Then others began chiming in—some had seen her in the morning, others in the afternoon or early evening. Most sightings were around meal prep time, and all in places like the kitchen or dining areas. No one had any clue how Zahra ended up in the east wing.

Caitlin walked slowly past the crowd, speaking as she moved. “The killer acted after dark, taking advantage of the chaos during dinner to avoid being noticed.

“The police and medical examiner confirmed that the time of death was roughly two to three hours before the body was found. I returned to my room close to nine. That timeline rules me out.

“What this proves is that someone set the crime scene in advance—waiting for me to walk into the trap. What they didn’t count on was the forensic team being able to determine time of death.”

As she analyzed the case, Caitlin closely observed everyone’s expressions and subtle movements.

“There’s another detail. Zahra wasn’t killed in the east wing. She was suffocated somewhere else, then drag

like she was murdered there.”

Gasps rippled through the crowd. People began whispering in shock.

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21715 Thu 7 Aug cho

Chapter 379

Carmen sneered, “Caitlin, you’re not a cop. Stop playing detective. Got any proof?”

Caitlin turned to her. “Good question. I said it’s a theory. But we can confirm it by checking the surveillance footage **from** the Yuncey estat

Carmen raised her chin, smug. “Well, what a shame. We thought of that yesterday, but the surveillance was down. And the east wins doesn’t even have cameras. So how can you prove you didn’t do it? Planning to pin this on someone else now?”

“If the surveillance is conveniently broken, then I won’t argue. Instead, let’s use a simpler method to identify the killer.”

“What method?”

Caitlin clapped her hands twice. James and Sebastian came forward, one carrying a stool and the other a washbasin,

Everyone craned their necks, curious. Douglas asked, “Caitlin, what’s this for?”

“As you can see, we have a washbasin here. Forrest, would you fetch some clean water and pour it in?”

Forrest did as instructed and poured fresh water into the basin.

Then Caitlin took a small red pouch from her pocket and emptied a powder into the water. “This is cinnabar powder. As most of you know, cinnabar wards off evil and is very difficult to dissolve in water. Right now, it’s settled at the bottom of the basin.

“Now, here’s how this works: if the real killer looks into the water, the victim’s face will appear. For anyone innocent, nothing will happen.”

She began pointing. “Let’s start with the first person in the front row.”

The servant she pointed to approached with curiosity and looked into the water.

“Nothing.”

“You’re not the killer. You may step back. Next.”*

One by one, the servants came forward to be “tested.” Each left the basin relieved. Even Omari, who had entered the room the night before, passed the test.

At last, only one person remained—Philip.

Standing at the back of the crowd, Philip was visibly nervous. A bead of sweat trickled down his forehead as he tried to appear calm. He stepped forward, but hesitated to look into the basin.

Carmen, watching him closely, grew increasingly tense. She didn’t believe for a second that a basin of water could reveal a killer. It had to be a bluff.

And she was right. This was psychological warfare. Caitlin wasn't using magic—she was betting on guilt and fear breaking the killer.

“You're Philip, right? It's your turn,” Caitlin said, eyes locked on him.

Philip's face was slick with sweat now, though he didn't seem to notice. Under Caitlin's pressure, he stepped forward—but refused to look. Instead, he backed away, panicked.

“Someone grab him! Make him look at the water!”

Caitlin shouted. James sprang into action, grabbing Philip and forcing him toward the basin.

Philip's eyes widened in terror as he was held over the water. The red powder seemed to shift mysteriously in the reflection—forming the outline of a face.

Zahra's face. Blood red.

“Ahhhhh!”

Philip screamed, completely losing it. He shoved back, knocked over the bedin, and tried to fes.

But James pinned him down in a flash, forcing him to his knees and twisting his arms

Caitlin walked up to him, towering over him. “Philip. You’re the killer. You madered Zahra did yo

AD

Comment

Billionaire's Regret: Finding Her

Chapter 380

Philip kept his head down, silent.

Everyone in the Yuncey family wore stunned expressions. They looked at one another, unable to process what had just happened.

Rachel slammed her cane on the ground and demanded angrily, “Philip! You’ve worked for the Yuncey family for years. How could you murder Zahra? Why did you do it?”

Greta scolded furiously, “Philip, have you lost your mind? Why Zahra? Did she ever wrong you?”

Philip kept his head lowered, looking tormented.

Carmen seized the moment. “Philip, if you killed her, then confess already!”

Philip lifted his head and glanced at Carmen, then looked away again. He seemed to struggle internally, but finally spoke.

“I’m sorry... I let the Yuncey family down... It was me... I killed Zahra...”

He burst into tears as he confessed. Just then, Sebastian arrived with Shaw and his team.

“The police are here!” someone called out, and the crowd parted to let them through.

Caitlin pointed directly at Philip. “Shaw, he just confessed. Philip killed Zahra.”

“We heard him,” Shaw said calmly. He gestured to his team.

Two officers stepped forward and cuffed Philip. Shaw followed procedure, announcing, "Philip, you are under arrest for murder. You'll be taken back to the station for formal investigation. Take him away."

As Philip was led away, Shaw turned to the crowd. "The suspect has been taken into custody. We'll interrogate him thoroughly, and we'll keep the Yuncey family updated with the results."

He then looked at Caitlin. "Thank you, Caitlin. Your method helped us solve the case much faster. We appreciate it."

"No need to thank me."

With the case resolved, Caitlin told everyone to return to their duties.

Then she turned to Rachel. "Great-aunt, Zahra died unjustly. I hope the Yuncey family will give her a proper burial and take care of her

family."

"Of course. Forrest, take care of the arrangements."

"Yes, ma'am."

“You may all go,” Rachel added, and the crowd dispersed.

As Carmen left, she gave Caitlin a sidelong glance.

Caitlin stared right back.

Think this is over just because Philip confessed?

Not even close.

1715 **THU 7 Aug** | D

Your time is coming.

With everything resolved, Douglas and Randall were even more impressed with Caitlin. As they left, Randall praised **her**, “**Caitlin**, that was brilliant. You really know how to catch a killer.”

“It was nothing. I just wanted justice—for Zahra and for myself.”

In truth, the entire plan had been carefully crafted by Caitlin, Sebastian, and James.

From the moment the autopsy confirmed Zahra had been suffocated elsewhere and moved, to James pulling surveillance data and identifying Philip as a suspect, everything had been orchestrated.

Sebastian came up with the idea for the cinnabar water trick.

They had actually used red iron powder, not cinnabar. The water basin was rigged with a magnetic device underneath. When Philip approached, the magnetic field triggered the iron particles to form a face—Zahra's face.

The goal was simple: panic the guilty into revealing themselves.

And it worked. A guilty conscience always leaves clues.

To avoid disrupting Timothy's upcoming birthday celebration, the Yuncey family quickly suppressed news of Zahra's murder.

They paid her family a large compensation, and her relatives didn't cause trouble.

With the matter closed, preparations for Timothy's grand birthday resumed in full swing.

That same afternoon, Carmen, Douglas, and Randall went to the Yuncey Group's headquarters.

They were there to hold Odessa accountable for leaking fragrance formulas and to demand compensation as per contract.

The meeting was scheduled for 3 p.m. Carmen watched the clock tick past the time. It was now ten minutes late, and still, no one from Odessa's team had arrived.

Frustrated, she slammed a file on the table. "Looks like Odessa tricked us. That woman's a fraud!"

She turned to Randall and snapped, "Randall, seriously? How could you introduce someone like that to the Yuncey family?"

Randall defended himself. "Odessa is incredibly talented. I even wanted to sign her on as the chief perfumer for our fragrance division.

"As for the failed Fragrance Garments launch—that was your idea from the start. Blaming Odessa was wrong."

He had recommended Odessa with the goal of elevating the family's fragrance business. He never expected Carmen to use her as part of a fake fragrance stunt.

“Randall, how dare you-”

“You two, enough!” Douglas cut in before things escalated. He turned to Carmen. “Odessa broke contract **first**. **Why not** use this chance to renegotiate terms? If we can lock her into an exclusive deal, she’ll only work for the Yuncey family. Isn’t that better?”

Before Carmen could respond, an assistant walked in. “Mr. Yun, Odessa’s team has arrived.”

“Good. Bring them straight to the main conference room.”

1715

Aug

Douglas adjusted his tie. Randall looked toward the door, eager to confirm if his guess about Odessa’s identity was correct.

Soon, the doors opened. A team of professionals and lawyers filed in, forming two lines at either side of the room.

Then a woman in a sweeping red gown walked in gracefully.

She was like a flame—commanding every eye in the room. Her wavy hair fell to one side, sunglasses perched above bold red lips. Her presence was cool, seductive, and untouchable.

Douglas was so stunned, he forgot to react.

Randall recognized her instantly and stood up, visibly excited.

Carmen stared at the woman, sensing something familiar—but refusing to believe it.

“She... she’s...”

An assistant pulled out a chair. The woman sat down with poise and removed her sunglasses.

Her face was regal and striking.

Douglas felt his heart skip a beat, his eyes nearly bulging from their sockets. “Caitlin?!”

Carmen slammed both palms on the table, leaning forward as if she couldn’t believe her eyes. She stared at Caitlín. “Caitlin? What are you doing here?!”

“You invited me, didn’t you? To talk about perfume?”

Carmen looked like her world had just shattered. She shouted, “You’re Odessa?! That’s impossible! *You* said Odessa was your friend!”

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