

# Billionaire's Regret: Finding Her

## Chapter 501

A message arrived on Zinnia's phone from Shadow Moon Pavilion. No words, just a single photo: her family, tied up and held captive.

No explanation was needed. That one image said it all—her family had fallen into Shadow Moon Pavilion's hands. Zorro was losing patience. He wanted results, and fast.

Zinnia quickly tucked her phone away, her gaze drifting dazedly toward the stage where Caitlin was still dancing gracefully. What was she supposed to

do?

Ever since she started following Caitlin, she'd met new friends—genuine, kind people who welcomed her like family. They made her feel warmth, care, and belonging. The last thing she wanted now was to betray any of them.

On the dance floor, Caitlin and Sebastian had just finished their first waltz. The enchanted elf kingdom transformed into a dreamy ocean of light and music, and the floor opened up for others to join in.

Molly was the first to jump up, yanking Simon by his tie. “Come on, Simon, dance with me!”

Simon couldn't say no to her. He'd go along with anything she wanted, even if dancing wasn't his thing. Especially dancing.

“Let's go dance too!” Madison said, turning to her husband.

“I don't really know how.”

“No worries, I'll teach you.”

Madison pulled Felix onto the floor. Benjamin caught Wendy's eye. She tried to avoid his gaze, but there was no escape.

“Pudding, come dance with me.”

“I'm not dancing.”

“You are now.”

He grabbed her hand and pulled her into the crowd. Their dancing was awkward but full of personality.

Couple after couple filled the dance floor. Even Raymond and Eliza joined in, swaying gently to the waltz as though they'd been transported back decades to their youth.

Jillian hadn't planned on dancing. She was just tagging along with her brother and keeping a low profile behind a mask, hoping Sebastian wouldn't

notice her.

She definitely didn't expect anyone to approach her.

But then Hayden stepped forward and offered his hand. "May I have this dance?"

He was drawn to her the moment he noticed her mysterious mask. Something about her stood out.

"I... I'm not very good," she stammered.

"That's okay. I'm learning too."

He took her hand and led her gently into the crowd.

Quincy grabbed Faith's hand and joined the dance as well. He wasn't much better at it, constantly stepping on her toes, but **it was one of the few chances** he had to be close to her.

Meanwhile, Xavi noticed how everyone around him had paired off. He stole a glance at Zinnia standing nearby, heart **pounding harder than before his**

college entrance exam.

Should he ask her?

Would she say yes?

Or would she reject him and leave him to die of embarrassment?

He spent a good minute psyching himself up.

he was about to speak, Zinnia suddenly stood and quietly walked out of the **ballroom**.

She looked off.

Worried, Xavi followed her.

Outside the hotel, Zinnia found a secluded emergency stairwell and made a long-distance call.

Xavi followed her silently and stopped at the door, peering through a narrow opening.

Her voice wasn't loud, but if he listened closely, he could catch parts of it.

“...I've been doing everything I can to earn Caitlin's trust... As soon as I find the codex, I'll contact you... Yes... I think it'll be soon...”

The call ended. Zinnia slipped her phone into her pocket and turned to leave.

But the moment she opened the door, she froze.

Xavi was standing right there.

“Xavi?”

His expression was stunned. “So... you were faking it this whole time?”

Zinnia panicked. “No! I mean... I’m not... I just...”

“Save it. Do you realize how much the missus trusted you? And all **this** time, you were after the codex too? I’m telling Mr. Vanderbilt and Caitlin right

now!”

“No!”

Zinnia rushed forward and hugged him tightly. “Please, Xavi, let me explain!”

Tears filled her eyes. That raw emotion made Xavi hesitate. He gave her a chance to speak.

Leaning against the cold wall, Zinnia wiped her tears and shared everything—about her family, the threats, her unwilling involvement.

When she finished, Xavi was furious.

“They’re using your family to blackmail you? That’s insane! You have to tell Caitlin. She’ll help you.”

“I... I can’t.”

“If you’re scared, I’ll go with you. I’ll speak up for you.”

“No.” Zinnia grabbed his arm and pulled him close again, burying her face against his chest,

“This is my problem. I’ll handle it myself. I **don’t** want to drag you into this.”

**For** once, she wasn’t the icy assassin. She was a fragile, helpless woman with no one else to turn **to**.

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“Zinnia...” Xavi’s voice softened. He’d dreamt about this moment for so long. Holding her felt surreal.

He took a chance. He leaned down and kissed her.

To his surprise, she didn't pull away.

Encouraged, his kiss deepened.

Back in Florence Hall, the birthday party was still going strong.

Zora noticed Thomas stepping away to answer a call. Her eyes flicked to the half-full glass he left behind.

An idea took shape. Bold and dangerous.

Everyone else was distracted, gathered around Reese for the birthday song. Zora seized the moment.

She took a small vial from her purse and added a few drops into Thomas's drink.

Glancing around—no one seemed to notice.

She casually returned to her seat, scrolling her phone as if nothing had happened.

A few minutes later, Thomas returned and sat down.

Zora looked up, smiled sweetly, and raised her glass.

“Mr. *Quick*, I really enjoyed our conversation earlier. Thank you for all the insight. I’d like **to** toast to that.”

Thomas raised an eyebrow, then his glass. “Thank you, Miss Harris. I wouldn’t want to refuse a drink from a beautiful woman.”

As he brought the glass to his lips, Zora’s heart raced with anticipation.

He was just about to drink when one of his men entered the hall and whispered something in his ear.

Thomas paused, then slowly lowered the glass, his expression darkening.

*Zora* froze.

Her heart *pounded* in her throat.

Did they see what she did?

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“Excuse me, Miss Harris,” Thomas said, setting down his wine glass. “I have to step away.”

Without another word, he turned and left the banquet hall with his assistant in tow.

Zora stared at the untouched glass, frustration simmering just beneath the surface. Another plan gone to waste.

But fate had other ideas.

Moments later, Connor walked over looking for his own drink, mistakenly picked up Thomas’s glass, and downed it in one shot.

“Hey! Connor-”

Zora reached out to stop him, but she was too late.

“What?” Connor asked, blinking as he set down the glass.

“N-Nothing...” Zora forced a smile, quickly pulling her hand back. At this point, there was no use explaining. He’d just have to deal with **the**

consequences.

At first, nothing seemed wrong.

But soon, Connor, who had been dancing casually among the guests, began acting strangely.

He started peeling off his clothes.

Then, right in front of Yasmin, he lunged at Reese, grabbing her and pressing his lips against hers.

“Ah! Let go of me!” Reese screamed, shoving at him in panic. The women around them froze in shock.

“Connor, what the hell are you doing?” Yasmin shouted, rushing over to pull him off.

Freed from his grip, Reese immediately slapped him across the face. “You sick bastard!”

“I’m so sorry, Reese... he must’ve had too much to drink...”

But this was clearly more than just alcohol.

Connor stumbled, dazed and glassy-eyed, staggering from one woman to the next, trying to grope and kiss them as chaos broke out.

“Ah-get off me!”

Shrieks echoed throughout the room.

It wasn’t long before everyone realized the truth: Connor wasn’t just drunk—he was completely out of control. A total predator when intoxicated.

“Connor! Get over here!”

Yasmin stormed into the fray, dragging him away from the dance floor and forcing him onto a couch.

But Connor was far from settled. He looked up and saw Zora sitting nearby.

Without hesitation, he pounced.

“No! Get off!” Zora screamed, struggling as Connor clung to her, kissing and clawing, tearing at her clothes.

She had drugged that wine, yes—but never intended to be the one affected by it.

Now it had come full circle, and she was the one paying the price.

\*Connor!!!”

Yasmin’s voice cracked with fury. She couldn’t believe what she was seeing. Her boyfriend, assaulting another woman, right in front of her.

Connor didn’t even seem aware of what he was doing. He was a beast now, acting purely on impulse.

With no other option, Yasmin grabbed a wine bottle and smashed it over the back of his head.

Connor finally collapsed, unconscious.

Zora pushed him off and scrambled to cover herself, her face pale and terrified.

She had never imagined that a scheme meant to trap someone else would backfire so spectacularly,

She had just set the trap for herself.

“I’m sorry!” Yasmin cried. “I had no idea he would act like this. That bastard!”

Fuming, she kicked Connor and called for his bodyguards to come collect him.

She couldn’t stay another moment. Humiliated and disgusted, Yasmin apologized quickly to Reese and left the party.

The atmosphere in Florence Hall was completely ruined.

Reese ordered someone to bring Zora fresh clothes. After changing, Zora made up an excuse and quietly slipped out.

Several other women also lost interest in staying after the scandal and left early.

One by one, the guests trickled out. Eventually, only family remained.

Reese stood alone by the untouched birthday cake. Her jaw clenched, she tore the tiara off her head and hurled it to the ground.

This had to be the worst birthday of her life.

And it wasn't over yet.

Suddenly, the banquet doors opened and a bruised, bloodied man was shoved inside. He stumbled across the floor, crawling toward her.

“Help... someone help me...”

He collapsed at Reese's feet, clutching her shoe.

She stared down in shock, barely recognizing the man through all the blood,

“Fatty? What happened to you?”

“It... it was Mr. Quick...” he whimpered, trembling.

At that moment, heavy footsteps echoed through the hall.

The Talon Quarters men entered first, forming a line on either side. Then Thomas walked in.

“Uncle, why did you beat him up?” Reese asked, confused.

Thomas stopped in front of her, towering and cold..

“Two hours ago, on Showhe Road, he led a group to ambush Caitlin’s car. Was that your doing? Hm?”

So that was what this was about.

Reese flinched at his tone but lifted her chin. “Yeah. I told him to. So what?”

“Why?”

“She’s always trying to mess with me! I went to the salon, and she stole my stylist. Stuff like that happens all the time! I just wanted to teach **her**

lesson!”

Before she could finish her rant, Thomas slapped her.

Hard.

The sound rang out in the hall.

Reese staggered back, stunned, her cheek burning. “You hit me? You’ve never hit me! Why would you do that?!??

Tears welled in her eyes. She felt betrayed. “You’re the one who told me I could call Fatty if anyone bullied me! And now I get punished for defending myself?”

“Utter nonsense!” Thomas snapped.

“I investigated everything. At Queen11, you tried to scam Caitlin with fake designer pieces. At the salon, she had an appointment—you tried to cut in. When you couldn’t, you threw a tantrum and called my men to pick a fight. Isn’t that right?”

Reese couldn’t deny it.

Thomas pointed a finger at her nose.

“Our entire family has spoiled and protected you. But that doesn’t give you the right to act like a thug. Look at what you’ve done! You’re out of control!”

“But I was just mad...”

“*You* keep going down this path, *no one* will be able to help you. You’ll destroy yourself.”

He took a deep breath.

“From now on, stay away from Caitlin. Don’t provoke her again. Do you understand me?”

Reese blinked. “What?”

“You heard me,” Thomas said firmly. “Now come with me. You’re going to apologize to Caitlin. In person.”

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“I won’t! I’d rather die than apologize!”

Reese shook her head furiously. No way was she going to apologize to Caitlin.

“You won’t?”

Thomas’s eyes darkened. He waved his hand.

Immediately, one of his men stepped forward, slammed his boot down on Fatty’s hand, and drove a blade straight through the back of it.

“Aaaargh!”

Fatty let out a bloodcurdling scream, and Reese's eyes went wide as she watched him get stabbed right in front of her.

"Help... Miss Reese, help me..."

Fatty, his hand soaked in blood, tried to reach for her, but Reese recoiled in horror.

Thomas's voice was ice-cold. "You do something wrong, you deal with the consequences. If you don't go apologize, you'll end up just like him."

He turned, and his assistant moved to grab her. Terrified, Reese rushed forward and grabbed Thomas's arm.

"I'll go! I'll go! I'll apologize, okay?"

She had no other choice. Everyone knew Thomas Quick was infamous for being ruthless—he didn't care about blood ties when it came to discipline.

Reese followed Thomas to the Vienna Hall. His men had already contacted the staff inside, and security let them through.

The moment she stepped inside, Reese was struck dumb.

She had only seen a short video Jillian sent earlier, but now that she was here in person, she finally understood how breathtaking the venue really was.

The décor was flawless, magical. Every inch of the place radiated thoughtfulness and elegance.

Thomas led her through the crowd. The party was still in full swing/some were dancing, others chatting and drinking. Everyone looked like they had stepped out of a fairytale.

And there, in the middle of it all, stood Caitlin. Radiant. Glowing.

Reese couldn't help but compare-her own party at Florence Hall was a joke in comparison. A total joke.

And the guests here? Yates, the VX boys, world-renowned pianist Federico, even members of the European Royal Symphony... Every man here was stunning, successful, and surrounding Caitlin.

Jealousy gnawed at her heart.

Caitlin and Sebastian noticed Thomas's arrival and walked over to greet him.

"Thomas, welcome," Caitlin said warmly.

“Happy birthday, Caitlin.”

Sebastian glanced between Caitlin and the head of Talon Quarters, his brows furrowed. “You two know each other?”

Thomas nodded. “We’ve known each other for a while.”

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“Thomas has looked out for me,” Caitlin added with a smile.

Sebastian nodded slowly. “Well, Mr. Quick, care to join us for a drink?”

“Thank you, Mr. Vanderbilt, but I’m here for a reason. I’ve brought my niece to apologize to Caitlin. I deeply regret what **happened earlier**

Sebastian blinked. “What happened earlier?”

Thomas gave him a quick explanation, and Sebastian’s expression turned grim. “Your niece has some nerve.”

“She’s spoiled, I admit. That’s on us. But now she’s here to take responsibility. Reese, get over here!”

Everyone around turned their attention to the commotion. The music and dancing slowed as all eyes fell on the girl walking out from behind a **floral** arrangement, head bowed low.

Caitlin immediately noticed the red mark on Reese’s cheek. It wasn’t hard to guess what had happened—Thomas must’ve slapped some sense into **her**. Otherwise, a girl like Reese would never come here willingly.

Reese stopped a few feet from Caitlin, the center of everyone’s attention. Thomas barked, “She’s right here. Now own up to what you did.

Reese was seething inside but had no choice. Tears welled in her eyes as she choked out the words.

“I’m sorry, Caitlin. I shouldn’t have caused you trouble. I shouldn’t have sent people to stop your car... or trash it. I was wrong. Please forgive me.”

“And what happens if you do it again?” Thomas asked coldly.

“If I do it again... I’ll cut off my hands...”

Reese sobbed, her voice trembling.

Thomas turned to Caitlin. “She’s been out of control. Nearly caused a disaster. I’ve brought her here to face the consequences. Please, Caitlín, for **my** sake, let this go.”

Everyone watched in silence. Jillian couldn’t help but remember her own past mistake. She was only spared because her brother begged Sebastian to let her off the hook.

Thank God she had finally come to her senses.

Caitlin gave Reese a long look. Then, in a voice calm as still water, she said, “This time, I’ll let it **go**—for Thomas’s sake. But if it happens again, it won’t be your hands. I’ll take your feet too.”

Her tone was even, her gaze steady. But her words cut like a blade.

Reese instinctively stepped back, clutching at her own ankles.

“Thank you, Caitlin, for your generosity. I’ll take her and leave you all to enjoy the rest of your evening,” Thomas said, bowing slightly.

“Let’s get together another time,” Caitlin replied politely.

Thomas nodded, then escorted Reese out of the venue.

The party inside Vienna Hall continued.

Caitlin's eyes caught Xavi and Zinnia walking in together from outside. Zinnia looked nervous, her mind swirling with the decision.

She'd promised herself she'd confess to Caithin—but just as she gathered her courage, Federico came over to speak **with** her.

Maybe later. There would be another chance.

it hadn't **made**.

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“Trinity, I've made up my mind,” Federico said. “I'm going to stay in the US for a while.”

Caitlin smiled. “We'd be happy to have you. But what about your

concerts?”

“I’m taking a break. Besides, I’ve got another reason for coming.”

“Ob?”

“I want to take on a student.”

“Do you have someone in mind?”

you might help.” “Yes. I saw a very promising child. The problem is, I don’t know who he is or how *to* find him. I was hoping)

Federico showed her a short video on his phone. In it, a child sat at a piano, fingers gliding across the keys with astonishing grace.

Caitlin only needed a second to recognize the boy.

“That’s my son.”

“Your son?” Federico was already aware Caitlin had four children, but he was still visibly stunned. “Which one?”

He turned to look at the three identical little boys among the group of “fairy children and blinked in disbelief.

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“The one in the middle wearing stripes. That’s my eldest son.”

“Seriously? I’m so lucky!”

Federico’s eyes lit up like a man who’d been?

n searching for a treasure forever and suddenly stumbled upon it without trying. He practically beamed with excitement as he headed straight for Howard.

“I want to test him on the piano!”

Federico looked like a teacher who'd just discovered a prodigy—excited, eager, and full of joy. He had no doubt Caitlin's child could be gifted. After all, Caitlin herself had always had a natural instinct for music.

As he rushed off to find Howard, Sebastian walked up

to

Caitlin.

“What's he up to now?”

“He's taken a liking to Howard. Wants to mentor him.”

“What? First he can't win over you, now he's got his sights:

“Come on,” Caitlin said with a laugh. “If Federico genuinely wants

set

on my son?”

Sebastian looked utterly exasperated. From his perspective, Federico might as well be robbing them blind.

**to**

teach Howard, you should be thrilled. Not everyone gets a chance like this.”

She wasn't wrong. Federico didn't teach just anyone. Plenty of wealthy families had tried to pull strings or throw money **at** him to mentor their kids, but he never agreed—always waiting to find the right talent.

If he was really ready to take on a student, and Howard was the one, Caitlin would happily let him learn under Federico. Howard truly had a gift for piano.

Soon, the soft, elegant sound of a piano filled the hall, drawing everyone's attention.

People turned to see that Federico had indeed taken a few kids with him. Sitting at the grand piano now was Howard, confidently playing the same piece Federico had performed earlier.

Federico was blown away. The boy's precision, rhythm, and expression were spot-on. He clapped enthusiastically.

"Excellent, excellent! That was wonderful!"

When Howard finished, he gestured for Kyle to give it a try. Kyle looked back at his parents. Madison gave him an encouraging nod.

"Go on, sweetheart! Be brave!" she called.

Getting a chance to play in front of a master was a rare honor.

Kyle stepped up and played a piece of his own. Federico nodded approvingly at his performance as well, but it was clear his heart leaned more toward Howard.

The decision had been made—Howard would be his student.

As the evening wore on, the grand celebration gradually came to an end. One by one,

the guests said their goodbyes.

It had been the most unforgettable birthday of Caitlin's life—joyful, heartfelt, and magical in every way.

While she was getting ready to head home, Sebastian quietly made other arrangements. He asked Quincy and Faith to take the kids **back** first. He wasn't done with surprises yet.

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He took Caitlin to a private villa by the sea, where everything had been prepared in advance. As they arrived, warm golden **lights** stretched along the path, twinkling like a trail of stars under the night sky.

Waves lapped gently at the shore. The night was calm and dreamy. On either side of the walkway, glowing decorations shaped like little angels and animals lit their path.

Caitlin's eyes sparkled.

"You're really trying to overwhelm me with emotion tonight, huh?"

"That's the point. I want this to be a night you'll never forget."

Sebastian held her hand as they walked down the magical path. But it wasn't easy to walk in heels on such terrain. Caitlin stopped and began taking off her shoes to go barefoot.

Before she could, Sebastian crouched down in front of her.

“Hop on. I’ll carry you.”

“Are you sure?” she asked, hesitant.

“Drop the ‘are you sure.’ Just get on.”

His tone brooked no argument. Smiling, Caitlin climbed onto his back.

Sebastian carried her effortlessly. She rested her chin on his shoulder, overwhelmed with peace and happiness. Neither of them said a word. They didn’t need to. Just being with each other was enough.

“Sebastian?”

“Yeah?”

“Do you ever feel like loving just one woman for life is... a waste?”

“What’s to waste?”

“Well, I mean... so many men are out there chasing variety. Wanting to experience different women, different relationships. You’ve never thought about

that?”

She voiced a fear many women had: was her love enough to keep him forever?

“If I wanted women, all I’d have to do is wave my hand and they’d come running. But I don’t want just anyone. I want you.

“Because I love you, there’s no space in my heart for anyone else. Those men who go from woman to woman? They’re not players. They’re just sad. They haven’t found their soulmate. Their hearts are empty, so they use their bodies to distract themselves.

“But when a man finds real love, he stops searching. He builds a home. He stays. And he stays willingly.

“You are my real love, Caitlin. I just want to spend every day of the rest of my life with you.”

His words were simple, but they silenced every doubt in her heart.

Caitlin grinned and kissed his cheek. That was her reward for him.

The starlit path eventually led them to the villa by the shore. It, too, was glowing with soft lights and surrounded by fresh **flowers**.

Sebastian set her down gently on a cushioned bench outside. They sat side by side as he gave a signal.

Suddenly, tiny lights appeared in the sky. At first, just a few. Then more. Then dozens. Hundreds.

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Drones.

They lit up the night, dancing in perfect harmony. Caitlin watched in awe as they shifted shapes, forming words.

A man kneeling. A woman's delicate hand. A dazzling diamond ring. The words "I Love You." Then her own face, beautifully formed in the stars above

"Wow... this is incredible."

As the drones displayed a scene of a man placing a ring on a woman's finger, and the couple holding hands, Caitlin leaned into Sebastian's embrace, her heart completely full.

He kissed her forehead, held her hand, and pressed a kiss to her knuckles.

"I love you, Caitlin. I want to grow old with you."

"I love you too."

As the drone show faded, Sebastian leaned down and kissed her.

A deep, warm kiss that lingered... one filled with passion, promise, and everything they had become together.

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Their **kiss** started at the villa door and didn't stop until they made it inside. The night unfolded with deep affection and **intimacy**.

No one would disturb them tonight. Security had been arranged in advance, ensuring they could spend the evening in peace and bliss

Morning.

The sea breeze rustled the curtains.

Inside the bedroom, everything was bathed in a soft, tangled mess of love and sleep.

Even the crashing waves outside didn't wake the sleeping woman. But Sebastian was already awake, gazing at her beautiful face. He couldn't **resist** leaning closer.

“I’m so tired...” Caitlin mumbled, not opening her eyes, only vaguely aware as he pulled her into his arms.

“Then go back to sleep...”

But she never really got the chance to.

Hours passed before they finally fell into an exhausted sleep, only to be woken by the vibration of a phone.

Sebastian groaned, reaching blindly to silence it—until he saw the caller ID. It was his close friend from S Nation, Xero.

“Hello? Xero? What’s going on?”

Caitlin stirred awake too, hearing Sebastian’s hushed voice as he answered the call.

Xero’s voice crackled over the line. “The royal family is about to investigate Graystone Castle!”

“What?”

“I got this directly from a high-level source. Count Zorro is suspected of treason and attempting a coup. The king is planning to strip him of his title and banish him from Graystone. His lands will be confiscated.”

Sebastian sat up straighter, the seriousness of the news kicking in.

“Got it. That’s good news. Keep watching and report anything new immediately.”

“Will do.”

Sebastian ended the call and turned to Caitlin, who was now fully awake.

“There’s movement in S Nation. Zorro might be stripped of his title and lose everything.”

“If that happens, I bet the military will be reassigned too.”

“But there’s also the risk he won’t go down without a fight. This could trigger a real conflict.”

“I just hope Zeke stays safe.”

Caitlin knew this had to be Zeke's birthday gift to her. The timing was too perfect. It was time to put their plan **into** motion.

They left the beachside villa and headed back to the Vanderbilt estate. It was already past 10a.m. Sebastian had **Caitlin return home to rest and prepare** while he went off to coordinate operations,

Back at the estate, Caitlin showered, changed, and tidied up before heading out again.

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Just as she **stepped** outside, she ran into Zinnia and **Xavi**. **Xavi** gave **Zinnia a look**, urging her to speak up

But before Zinnia could say anything, Caitlin said, "You two, come with me, Xavi, you're driving."

"**Got** it. Where to?"

"DanCa Estate first."

Seeing Caitlin's decisive tone, Xavi guessed something urgent was going on and started the car right away.

In the backseat, Caitlin pulled out her laptop and began scanning for news from S Nation. Nothing about Zorro or the loss of his title **had been released**

yet.

It made sense. Xero had access to high-level intel through royal connections. That meant they still had a window of time to act before **the** news broke publicly.

Zinnia glanced at Caitlin several times, wanting to confess, but Caitlin was busy typing away, clearly in *the* middle of something critical

By the time they arrived at DanCa Estate, Zinnia still hadn't said a word.

The estate was normally unoccupied, but always kept in immaculate condition by staff.

As they entered, the housekeepers bowed politely.

"You're all dismissed for now. I'll call if I need anything."

“Yes, Miss Caitlin.”

Once the staff left, Caitlin turned to Zinnia and Xavi.

“Wait in the living room. I’ll be right back.”

She headed upstairs. Xavi looked at Zinnia.

“Why didn’t you say anything earlier?”

“I was going to, really. But she was so focused. I didn’t want to interrupt.”

It wasn’t the kind of thing you could blurt out. It needed the right moment.

“Fine. Just make sure you find that moment soon.”

At least Xavi could vouch for her sincerity. She was clearly struggling with guilt.

Moments later, Caitlin came back downstairs holding a box. Both Zinnia and Xavi stood as she entered.

“Xavi, wait outside. Don’t come in unless I call for you.”/

“Okay.”

Still unsure what was happening, Xavi glanced at Zinnia, then exited and shut the door behind him.

Caitlin set the box on the coffee table. Zinnia’s curiosity got the better of her.

“What’s in the box?”

Caitlin sat down, casually flipping her hair over one shoulder. Her voice was calm, but firm.

“Isn’t this what you’ve been trying to get your hands on? The codex? Take a look.”

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Zinnia froze.

Her legs gave out, and she dropped into the nearest seat. A cold dread spread through her body.

It was too late, wasn't it? Caitlin had already figured everything out?

"You want me to open it for you?"

Caitlin's tone was cool and measured.

"Caitlin, !..." Zinnia's voice cracked. Her eyes brimmed with tears. She didn't even know where to begin.

Caitlin opened the box herself, revealing the ancient text inside: "Yun's Aromatic Codex.\*"

The sight of it stunned Zinnia. Her mind spun. Her throat closed.

"You knew all along?" she asked, barely able to speak.

"You think I wouldn't figure it out?"

Caitlin's gaze sharpened.

“Back in Silverstone, when I asked if Zorro forced you to sign a death pact, you said yes, and told me it was to protect your

“I asked you what he wanted in return. Do you remember what you told me?”

Zinnia lowered her head in shame. She’d had a chance then to tell the truth. Caitlin had given her an out. But she had lied.

Now, all she felt was regret—and overwhelming guilt.

family.

“I’m sorry... I lied to you. Zorro did force me to sign the pact. He used my family as leverage. I just didn’t tell you the whole truth. His goal... was the codex. I’m so sorry, Caitlin...”

“Sorry doesn’t fix it. I want to know what’s going on in your head. Were you really ready to serve Zorro?”

Caitlin wasn’t here to punish her. She was here to convince *her* to switch sides. To break free from Zorro’s control.

Zinnia shook her head through tears. “No... I never wanted to work for him. But I was so scared...”

“You’re afraid he’ll hurt your family, right? But tell me something—if you do everything he wants, do you honestly believe he’ll let you and your family go free?”

AD

Comment

## Billionaire's Regret: Finding Her

### Chapter 506

Zinnia shook her head. She didn’t know what the final outcome would be. Most likely, she wouldn’t be able to complete the mission, **and** both die zrút her family might end up dead,

“Caitlin, I know I’ve wronged you. You trusted me, helped me so much, but ...”

The more Zinnia spoke, the more upset she became. “There were so many times I wanted to tell you the truth, but I just didn’t have the courage. I was afraid that once I told you, you’d never forgive me.”

She lowered her head, tears falling onto the back of her hand.

Caitlin sighed and reached out to hold her hand. “Did you really think I was that narrow-minded? I’ve been waiting all this time for you to come **clean**. But you kept hiding it. So I had to come find you instead.”

“You’re not mad at me, Caitlin?” Zinnia asked in surprise. She had thought that once Caitlin discovered her true intentions, there would be no way out

“I’m very clear about who’s been good to me. And you’ve helped me before. How could I hold a grudge against you?”

Caitlin handed her a tissue. “Dry your tears.”

“Thank you, Caitlin... Thank you for forgiving me...”

Zinnia was overwhelmed with emotion. She’d made everything out to be worse in her own mind, putting herself under unnecessary pressure.

“Alright, that’s enough crying. In my eyes, you’re supposed to be the unstoppable Iron Lady. Who knew you had tears in you?”

Caitlin teased lightly, then smiled and said, “Back to business. If you want to save your family, I have a way to help you.”

“What way?”

Zinnia wiped her tears and sat up straighter, realizing she had to pull herself together. Caitlin was giving her a second chance—she had to take it.

“I have the codex here. I want you to contact Zorro and tell him you’ve found it.”

Zinnia nodded. “Last night, I **got** a message from Shadow Moon Pavilion. They’re pressing me too.”

“Then contact Zorro now. You and I need to work together if we’re going to defeat him and rescue your family.”

“Yes!”

With Zinnia on board, Caitlin’s operations in the US were officially underway.

S Nation.

Graystone Castle.

Zorro stood with Zeke on the terrace overlooking the castle's massive coliseum. Below, countless operatives of Shadow Moon Pavilion were assembled in perfect formation, having traveled from all over the country.

"Everyone," Zorro's voice rang out, "the reason I summoned you back today is to make an official announcement. From this moment forward, my son

will be named Vice Commander of Shadow/Moon Pavilion. He will share my authority and, in time, take over operations as we cr

He pinned the symbol of command on Zeke's chest.

A wave of cheers rose from below. "Vice Commander!" they shouted in unison.

Zeke waved to the crowd, then stepped forward to speak.

1/3

"Thank you, all members of Shadow Moon Pavilion. Starting today, I stand with you through glory and **hardship alike. We'll fight side by side** together, that believe, together, we will make Shadow Moon Pavilion a leading force among global organizations!"

Applause erupted. Even Zotro clapped, his eyes filled with pride.

Ever since Zeke returned and pledged loyalty, their relationship had improved. Zorro had started frustrating him more, even assigning him undisciplined responsibilities.

He believed Zeke to be his finest creation, raised and trained by his own hand.

What Zorro didn't know was that this was all part of Zeke's plan. Every step was leading Zorro deeper into a trap he couldn't see.

After the speech, father and son descended from the terrace.

As they walked, Zeke brought up his thoughts on the organization's next steps. "Father, if we want to obtain Yuri's Aromatic Codex, I will do **everything** in my power to get both volumes for you.

"But one of the codexes is in Caittin's hands. She's in the US, and we're all the way here in S Nation. Trying to acquire it remotely through our agents **will** be nearly impossible. I have another idea."

"Oh? Let's hear it," Zorro said with interest.

"I suggest we move Shadow Moon Pavilion's headquarters to the US. That way, we'll have far more opportunities to get close to them and reach **our goal**

“You could come with me. With both of us there, our chances of defeating Caitlin and Sebastian will increase dramatically.”

Zeke finished, watching his father carefully.

He knew that getting this sly old fox to leave Graystone wouldn't be easy. It would take effort and persuasion.

“Move to the US?” Zorro repeated, frowning.

It sounded risky.

“Wouldn't that be too dangerous? Graystone is my domain. If we go

to the US, we lose our home-ground advantage.”

That had always been his reason for staying in S Nation. Graystone Castle was his fortress. As a count, he had noble status, his own army, and even the king had to tread lightly around him.

Leaving Graystone was a gamble—and not a smart one.

“You’re right,” Zeke agreed. “But only if you’re thinking short-term. To truly get close to the codex, you have to be there. Do you realize how many fakes exist? Only you can tell the difference between real and counterfeit.

“And even if you leave Graystone, your lands will remain protected by the army. With Shadow Moon Pavilion’s elite following you, you’ll be safe.

“Besides, I already have a growing power base in the US. With Shadow Moon Pavilion joining forces with me, we’ll be unstoppable,”

He leaned closer to Zorro, lowering his voice.

“There’s one more thing I must report.”

“What is it?”

“Do you know who I ran into in the US?”

Zorro didn’t get the chance to answer.

“It was Ximena,” Zeke continued. “And guess what she told me?”

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“She wanted to reunite with you?” Zorro guessed.

“She did. But how could I ever accept her? After everything she did to betray you? I will never forgive her.”

Zeke’s voice was cold, full of hatred.

“And that woman—she’s insane. She actually told me her daughter is my sister. That her daughter is your child. Can you believe that?”

“What? My daughter?” Zorro froze, stunned.

## **Billionaire's Regret: Finding Her**

### **Chapter 507**

“Yes! She said her daughter is yours. Isn’t she just trying to deceive me on purpose? I think this is something you’ll have to investigate yourself in the US?”

As Zeke spoke, he subtly watched Zorro's expression.

Zorro went from initial shock to thoughtful silence, a hint of complexity in his eyes.

He knew Ximena's daughter was named Zora. Could it be that she wasn't Dean's child... but his?

If that girl was truly his, that meant Zorro had a biological daughter out there in the world.

The idea stirred a strange and unexpected feeling in his heart—something like excitement. But it didn't last long.

A subordinate came rushing in with an urgent report.

“My lord, urgent news from our informant in the royal court!”

“What is it?”

The man glanced at Zeke, uncertain if he should speak in front of him.

Zorro, no longer wary of his son, ordered, “Speak freely!”

“The King has learned of your supposed plot to rebel. He’s furious and plans to strip you of your title and lands, as well as seize your military forces.

And...and...”

Zorro’s face darkened. “And what?”

“He intends to arrest you for treason.”

Zorro’s expression shifted to fury. “Nonsense! When have I ever plotted rebellion?”

He couldn’t believe what he was hearing. With

his power and status, if he wanted to rebel, he would’ve done it already—why now?

Zeke acted equally stunned. “How could something like this happen? Could it be a false report?”

“Ridiculous!”

“Maybe His Majesty heard some malicious rumor? Maybe it’s all just speculation. But your military strength has always been a thorn in the King’s side- maybe this is just an excuse to weaken your power?”

Zeke’s suggestion wasn’t far-fetched. The more Zorro thought about it, the more plausible it seemed.

“Who’s spreading these lies? Clearly someone is trying to bring me down!”

“No matter if it’s true or not,” Zeke said seriously, heed a backup plan. If we wait for the royal army to make a move, it might be too late to retreat.

“You’re right.”

Zorro nodded, though his hands clenched in anger. After everything he’d done for the royal court, was this how they repaid his loyalty?

He turned to his men. “Keep digging. I want to know exactly what the King’s next move is.”

“Yes, my lord!”

As the subordinate left, Zeke continued, “We have

surround Graystone, we'll be sitting ducks.”

to

act now. All our Shadow Moon Pavilion forces are centralized here. If the King sends **troops to**

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Zorro fell into deep thought.

Just then, his phone rang. He glanced at the screen—Zinnia.

He held up a hand to silence Zeke before answering.

“Hello?”

“My lord, I finally have the codex. Will you release my family now?”

Zorro’s eyes lit up. “You actually got it?”

“Yes. I’ve been close to Caitlin long enough to learn where she hid it. I even recorded a video to prove it. I’ll send it to you.”

Zorro quickly opened his messages and played the video. Sure enough—it was the real thing.

“Excellent. This is fantastic.”

After a lifetime of searching, he had finally laid hands on the codex. Nothing thrilled him more.

“My lord, how should I give it to you?”

“You can return to S Nation and hand it to me personally.”

“But what if I return and you don’t release my family? To ensure their safety, I want to make the exchange in the US. Send someone with my parents. We’ll trade—my family for the codex.”

Zinnia laid out her terms, but Zorro scoffed.

“You dare bargain with me? Aren’t you afraid I’ll kill them right now?”

“If my family dies, I won’t survive either. And the codex? I’ll destroy it and bury it with them.”

“Wait!” Zorro’s tone shifted. “I was just testing you. Fine. I accept your terms. I’ll contact you once everything is arranged.”

It was time to make new plans.

If the King truly intended to move against him, then he couldn’t stay in S Nation.

Zeke’s suggestion to relocate Shadow Moon Pavilion to the US suddenly made more sense. The codex had been found. He might have a daughter there. The stars were aligning. It was time to go.

After hanging up, *Zorro* gave his orders.

– “Zeke, perhaps you’re right. Graystone is no longer safe. Start preparations to relocate Shadow Moon Pavilion to the US. Also, bring Zinnia’s family with

you—we’ll use them *to* exchange for the codex.”

“Yes, Father. I’ll make arrangements immediately.”

Zeke left at once to execute the plan. Everything was unfolding exactly as he had hoped.

Cracking Zorro's stronghold was only the first step. The real goal was dismantling his power.

1. US.

Under Sebastian's command, forces from The Obsidian Order were assembling across the country. Their target: Shadow Moon **Pavilion** and **its leader**,

Zorro.

Now it was up to Zeke to draw him in. As long as Zorro stepped foot on US soil, he'd have nowhere to run.

2/3

**While** Sebastian prepared for the conflict ahead, Caitlin had another matter to focus on: **the** upcoming International **Expo** Competition.

She was getting ready **to** leave for the office when a housekeeper came to report that someone named Federico had arrived.

**"That** guy? **What's** he doing here?"

Sebastian glanced at Caitlin. She gave instructions calmly. "Let him in."

A few minutes later, Federico walked in, flashing his usual charming smile.

"Hi, darling Trinity! We meet again!"

He went in for a hug, but Sebastian quickly stepped forward, catching his hand in a firm shake and gently blocking the embrace.

"Mr. Colli, what brings you by so early?"

Federico didn't beat around the bush. "I'm here to take on a student! Figured I better act fast!"

"You've decided to take my son Howard as your student?" Caitlin asked.

At the birthday party, Federico had tested the kids on the piano, but hadn't said much afterward. She hadn't expected he'd already made a decision.

"Yes! I want that little guy. Do you both agree?"

This was clearly good news. Caitlin and Sebastian exchanged a look. Sebastian smiled and said, "I'll leave the choice to you."

Caitlin nodded at Federico. “Thank you, Federico. We’re honored. I think Howard will be happy too. Come on, I’ll take you to ask him yourself.”

“Great!”

As Caitlin led Federico to the Carriage House where the children stayed, Sebastian headed out on business. They parted ways at the villa’s **front** gate.

In the Carriage House, the children were playing together when Caitlin arrived. She called Howard over and said, “Howard, Federico really likes you. He wants to teach *you* piano. Would *you* like to be his student?”

AD

Comment

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The little guy looked up at the dashing piano prince. He knew this Federico used to have a thing for his mommy. **If Fedanes spent** all his time ins him piano, wouldn't that keep him too busy to chase after her?

Thinking this through, Howard nodded. "I'd love to, Mommy."

The adults burst into laughter at his serious tone. Caitlin smiled. "Alright then, from today on, you'll officially start lessons with Federico"

"Come here, let me get a good look at my little protégé!"

Federico pulled Howard over, giving his cheeks a squeeze and ruffling his hair affectionately.

He turned to Caitlin with a grin. "You can rest assured—I'll make sure he becomes an incredible pianist someday."

"Federico, I don't have such lofty goals," Caitlin replied with a gentle smile. "I just want things to happen naturally. He's still a kid. Being happy is what matters most."

"Of course. I completely understand."

They walked out of the Carriage House together, continuing the conversation.

“Now that you’ve taken Howard under your wing,” Caitlin asked, “how do you plan to teach him?”

“Well... are you okay with him coming back to my home country with me?”

Federico usually resided in S Nation. He traveled for performances but was based there for most of the year.

Without hesitation, Caitlin answered, “I’m sorry, Federico, but I can’t let you take Howard away. You might not know, but we were separated for five years. I only recently found him. I need to be with him—I told myself I wouldn’t leave him again.”

Federico nodded with understanding. “That makes sense. Looks like I’ll have to settle down here, then.”

For a student this promising, he was willing to make sacrifices.

“Won’t that be a lot to ask of you?” Caitlin said with a hint of guilt.

“What? If I become your neighbor and get free meals all the time, I’m not complaining.”

He had already fallen in love with her cooking. If being nearby meant more home-cooked meals, he was in.

Caitlin gave him a skeptical look. “Don’t tell me you’re only taking Howard as a student **to** mooch food off me?”

Federico’s lips curved into a handsome grin. “Half and half. But seriously, here’s another idea: you can hire me as his private tutor. That way I **get to teach** -and still mooch.”

“...Are you serious?”

Caitlin looked at him like he was from another planet.

“For someone of your caliber, I’m pretty sure we can’t afford your rate.”

She laughed and walked ahead. Federico followed quickly. “I’ll give you a discount! I’m cheap! Think about **it**, okay?”

The once-dignified piano prince, reduced to begging for meals. Shameless.

Federico’s easygoing nature and sincerity made him a likable companion. To show her appreciation, Caitlin decided **to skip the office that morning and** take him to the art exhibit at Lisson Gallery.

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She had been personally invited by the gallery owner, Louis, to attend this special exhibition she even had two pieces on **display**

Upon arriving, Caitlin and Federico were welcomed by Louis, who greeted them warmly.

“Joe, go take care of the other guests. We’ll look around ourselves.”

“Of course. Please, enjoy.”

With Louis excusing himself, Caitlin led Federico through the exhibit, starting from the entrance.

Each painting showcased in the gallery was a carefully curated treasure with immense artistic value.

As they moved through the space, they happened to run into Zora, who had arrived with a male companion.

Both parties stopped in front of the same painting—one of Caitlin’s.

Zora raised an eyebrow and offered a thin smile. “Well, if it isn’t Caitlin. You really stole the spotlight at last night’s birthday party.”

“What? Miss Harris is paying such close attention to me?”

“I only heard about it,” Zora replied smoothly, her tone laced with sarcasm.

She thought of the upcoming expo and asked smugly, “With how busy you are, do you even have time to prepare for the competition? It’s the day after tomorrow, you know.”

“Thanks for your concern, but you should worry about yourself. Is your entry ready?” Caitlin shot back calmly.

“Of course. You don’t need to worry about me.”

Zora then turned her attention back to the painting in front of her—the one Caitlin had created under the name O’Brien. She looked at her companion and said loud enough for Caitlin to hear, “Hey, have you seen this one? What do you think of it?”

The man wore a mask and carried himself with quiet reserve. “It’s... average,” he said flatly.

Zora laughed. “Just average? Wow! Hard to believe a piece this bland is worth such an absurd price. I really don’t get it.”

It was obvious she was trying to mock Caitlin.

Caitlin didn’t respond, but Federico did.

“I think this painting has depth and soul. It’s beautiful. Some people just have poor taste and can’t appreciate real art.”

Caitlin nodded. “Exactly. These days, plenty of people pretend **to** understand art. It’s laughable.”

Their back-and-forth wiped the smugness off Zora’s face. She opened her mouth to respond, but Caitlin was already walking away with Federico.

Zora clenched her fists. Why did she always come out looking worse in these encounters?

Fine. Let her be smug for now. The design competition would be Caitlin’s downfall. Just wait.

Caitlin and Federico continued to stroll through the gallery, stopping at a particular painting.

Federico glanced **at** the placard and exclaimed, "Whoa! This is my friend Ashfall's work."

"Your friend?" Caitlin leaned in, first drawn by the artist's unique perspective and technique. It wasn't like anything **she'd** seen **before**.

The painting depicted **a** woman sitting behind a barbed wire window, her head bowed slightly, her profile delicate **and hauntingly beautiful**.

**Despite the** rusted wire and crumbling walls suggesting despair, **the** woman's figure was painted with life **and depth**. **Her hopelessness, loneliness, and**

2/3

wear **zu** Aug

quiet resilience were almost palpable.

**Yet** her gaze was fixed on a lone blade of grass growing through a crack in the broken windowsill—a single, subtle **sign of** hope:

The entire composition was stunning. The details were exquisite.

Caitlin found herself staring at the woman's face in the painting, struck by an uncanny sense of familiarity.

"The woman in this painting..."

A

## **Billionaire's Regret: Finding Her**

### **Chapter 509**

When Caitlin realized what she was seeing, she was stunned.

She stared at the woman in the painting, scrutinizing every detail of her expression and posture—especially her face.

Her hand flew to her mouth in disbelief, an overwhelming wave of emotion crashing over her.

"Federico! Are you sure this painting is by your friend Ashfall?"

“I’m sure! Though, when I first met him, he wasn’t very well-known,” Federico replied, curious about her reaction. “Why? What’s wrong?”

Caitlin blinked, her eyes reddening. “This woman... she looks like...”

The lump in her throat made it hard to finish the sentence. Her chest tightened as if stuffed with cotton, achy and suffocating.

Federico glanced between Caitlin and the painting, then guessed, “Honestly, I think she kind of looks like you. There’s a real resemblance.”

“No... not me... she looks like my mother...”

“Your mother?”

Federico turned back to the canvas, looking more closely. “Could it really be her? Why would your mother be behind barbed wire?”

Pain squeezed Caitlin’s chest. A heavy weight pressed down on her, and she struggled to hold herself together.

“I don’t know! But if I can find your friend, maybe he can tell me when and where he painted this. Can you reach Ashfall?”

Seeing her distress, Federico tried to calm her. “Don’t worry. I’ll try to contact him right away.”

Federico stepped outside to make the call. Meanwhile, Caitlin went to find Louis, asking about where the painting had come from.

Elsewhere in the gallery, Zora was preparing to leave with her friend when she spotted Connor walking in through the entrance. Just the sight of him brought back the tension from the previous night.

Not wanting another awkward encounter, she made an excuse and ducked into the restroom.

But Connor had already seen her—and he was here for one reason to find her.

He followed her, and when Zora entered the women’s restroom, he didn’t hesitate to go in right after her.

Seeing him appear, Zora’s eyes widened in alarm. “Connor, what are you doing? This is the women’s room!”

“I know, Miss Harris,” Connor said coolly, his gaze unsettling as he approached.

“I came here to talk to you.”

“What do you want from me?” she asked, frowning and backing away until she was pressed up against one of the stall doors.

Connor shoved her into the stall and locked it behind them. In the next instant, he was on her, kissing her hungrily.

Zora struggled to push him away. “What the hell are you doing? Are you insane?”

He grabbed her wrists, holding her in place. “Yeah, I probably am. Last night, I wouldn’t have lost control like that if you hadn’t put something **in my** drink. I wouldn’t have made a fool of myself, and Yasmin wouldn’t have broken up with me.

“I want to know—why did you drug me? Do you have a thing for me or something?”

1/3

**After** investigating the hotel surveillance, Connor had learned the truth. Zora had tampered with his drink, **and now** he **couldn’t** stop **wondering** h30- done **it** out of jealousy? Was she secretly in love with him?

“Me? Like you?” Zora scoffed. “You’re delusional! Let go of me!”

“Come on, don’t lie,” he said, narrowing his eyes. “You were sending me signals all night. Just admit it. Lucky for you—I kinda like you too

Then he kissed her again.

Despite herself, Zora found her resistance fading under his aggressive advance. She couldn’t believe it—how had she ended up like this? After things ended with Abel, she’d been left with an empty space inside her.

And now, somehow, Connor was filling it.

Two people who should never have been involved had just become entangled in ways neither of them could undo.

Back in the gallery, Caitlin got the information she needed from Louis about the painting’s origin.

It had been purchased from a private general store in the capital city of Country A. The painting wasn’t acquired directly from the artist.

“Why?” Louis asked. “Are you hoping to connect with the artist?”

“Yes,” Caitlin answered vaguely. “I admire his work and would love to speak with him/”

“I see. I’ll get in touch with the store owner and see if he has any way of reaching the artist.”

“Thank you. Also, I want to buy that painting.”

“Of course. We can handle the paperwork shortly. I’ll have someone take it down for you.”

“Appreciate it.”

“You’re welcome.”

As Louis walked off to take care of it, Federico returned from his phone call.

“Well?” Caitlin asked quickly.

“No luck reaching him,” Federico said with a shake of his head. “I spoke to his family. They said he hasn’t returned to Country S in over a year. No one

knows where he is right now.

“But don’t worry. His family promised to contact me as soon as they hear from him. Just give it a little time.”

Caitlin felt a growing sense of frustration. This was going to be harder than she thought.

If she wanted to know whether the woman in the painting was truly her mother, she had to find Ashfall.

But how do you find someone who’s constantly on the move?

She thought of the barbed wire, the decrepit window, the haunting expression of the woman in the painting. Where had **that** image come from? Where was that building?

An idea sparked in her mind. “When was the last time you saw him?” she asked Federico.

“That would’ve been about three years ago. I was performing in Country A, and I happened to see him painting **on** the street.

“He’s a bit of a wanderer—never stays in one place for long. He spends most of the year traveling, painting wherever he goes.”

“A traveling artist?”

\*Exactly.”

“So... you’re saying he sells his paintings on the go, and when he’s low on money, he might sell them to anyone, **anywhere?**”

“That’s right. We talked about it.

It. That’s how he lives—free, spontaneous, always on the move!”

Caitlin felt like she was getting closer. “The

in Country A.

if that painting ended up in a shop in Country A, he must have sold it there. **That** means it was likely created

“And if you saw him there three years ago, the painting was probably made around that time. My mother disappeared four **years ago...** so **that would** place the painting sometime in her second year of captivity.”

Her voice broke slightly at the end. She closed her eyes, overcome by grief.

Her mother had been imprisoned. God knows what kind of suffering she'd endured.

Her heart ached.

All Caitlin wanted now was to find her.

"Your reasoning makes perfect sense," Federico said gently. "If I'd known what your mother looked like back then, maybe I could've asked **him**."

Ideas were spinning in Caitlin's head, forming a plan. Then her eyes lit up.

"I think I might know a way to find him."

"What is it?" Federico asked.

Comment

## Billionaire's Regret: Finding Her

### Chapter 510

“The simplest way—put out a missing

person

notice.”

6

Caitlin voiced her idea clearly. “As long as he’s alive and still free to move around, there’s always a chance he’ll see it. If I advertise globally, **he might** come across it somewhere.”

Federico nodded thoughtfully. “That could work, but worldwide advertising might bankrupt you. I think we should be strategic—target **platforms** with the highest global user bases. It’ll be much more effective than casting a net in the ocean.

“And if you really want to find him, I can help post a search video. With my international following, it’ll get more attention.”

Federico’s plan was even more thorough than she had expected. Caitlin looked at him gratefully. “Alright, then I’m counting on you for this. **Thank you**, Federico.”

He grinned. “No need to thank an old friend. Just feed me

**a**

good meal and we’re even.”

Caitlin laughed. “Fine, you’re invited over for dinner tonight.”

“Perfect,” he beamed, happy as a kid who’d just scored candy. “Let’s head back now and get started.”

“Let me just grab that painting first.”

While waiting for the paperwork, Caitlin stepped into the restroom. But as soon as she entered, she heard muffled sounds—intense, breathless, unmistakably intimate.

And then she saw it—a man with a rod poking something into one of the

stalls from above. A camera.

“Hey! Someone’s recording!”

From inside the stall, a woman screamed. The couple inside scrambled apart, startled.

The man with the device yanked it back and bolted before Caitlin could even catch a good look at his face.

What kind of day was this? She couldn’t even go to the bathroom without walking into something like this.

She glanced at the shoes visible beneath *the* stall door—familiar. She was almost certain they were the same pair Zora had been wearing earlier.

Her brows furrowed. Could Zora really be the woman in there?

That didn’t make sense. As arrogant and self-righteous as Zora was, she’d never risk her image like this... would she?

Either way, Caitlin had no interest in getting involved. She turned to leave quietly, but just as she reached the door, the stall creaked open.

Caitlin turned—and locked eyes with Zora’s flushed face.

Zora froze like a deer caught in headlights, as if snapping out of a dream. Panic set in.

Connor stepped out behind her, adjusting his disheveled shirt.

So it really was them.

Caitlin didn’t say a word. She turned to leave, but Zora called out, “Caitlin, stop right there!”

“What is it?”

Caitlin halted without looking back.

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“I **can’t** believe how low you’d stoop! Sneaky and disgusting!”

Zora was furious. She thought Caitlin had been the one recording them. “You better hand over whatever you just filmed!”

“I have no interest in whatever you and Connor were doing. And I wouldn’t waste a single byte of memory on something **that** gross. Besides (met the one who was recording you.”

Zora’s face flushed a deeper red, twisting with embarrassment and fury.

“You really think I’m buying that? Hand over your phone right now so I can see for myself!”

She didn’t believe Caitlin for a second. She’d clearly seen the camera above the stall. If Caitlin wasn’t holding it, then who?

Zora gave Connor a look. He stepped forward and closed the restroom door behind Caitlin.

“I’m sorry, Caitlin,” he said stiffly. “But you’ll need to delete whatever you’ve got—*now*.”

“I already told you—it wasn’t me. It was some short guy sneaking around. I saw him run off.”

Caitlin kept calm, explaining.

“Save it,” Zora snapped. “There’s no one else here but us three. If there was a ‘short guy,’ he was probably working with **you!**”

Zora was convinced this was Caitlin’s setup. She just knew the evidence had to be in her phone or bag.

“If she won’t hand it over, then search *her!*” Zora barked. “We can’t let her leave until we’re sure!”

Connor nodded. “Right.”

The two of them stood united, ready to force Caitlin into giving up her phone.

“If you try to search me by force, that’s illegal,” Caitlin warned coldly.

Her refusal only made Zora angrier.

“You’re disgusting, Caitlin! You’re so desperate to beat me in the competition, you’re resorting to this? You trying to destroy me with a scandal during the exhibition?”

Caitlin looked at her as if she were watching a car crash in slow

motion. “Destroy you? Miss Harris, haven’t you already done that to yourself?”

She narrowed her eyes. “Weren’t you just parading around with your high morals not long ago? And now you’re hooking up with Connor, who, last I checked, was dating Yasmin?”

Zora’s face turned pale. Her lips parted but no words came out.

Connor quickly interjected, “Yasmin and I broke *up*. Who I’m with now is none of your business.”

“I’m not interested in who you’re with,” Caitlin said. “But just some advice, Miss Harris—if you want to be loved, learn to love yourself first.”

Her words hit like a slap, cutting straight through Zora’s ego. Her face twisted in shame and fury.

Caitlin had more important things to do than argue. She walked toward the door, glaring at Connor.

“Move.”

“Not happening. Not unless you hand it over Connor said, stepping in her way and reaching for her shoulder.

Big mistake.

19:49 Wed, 20 Aug 1

Caitlin grabbed his wrist and twisted it sharply.

“Ah-!”

Connor howled in pain, his whole e arm jerking as he stumbled.

“Caitlin! Let him go!” Zóra screamed.

But Caitlin didn’t let go. She applied more pressure, driving his arm downward until his knees buckled and he fell in front of her with a painful **thud**.

“Ahh! That hurts! Stop!”

Connor was practically crying, his forehead slick with sweat, face twisted in agony.

“Still want to search me?” Caitlin asked, her gaze sharp and cold.

“N-no... forget it...”

Caitlin shoved his arm away and walked out the door, leaving both of them stunned and humiliated.

Zora stood frozen, burning with anger. Connor was utterly useless—he couldn’t even handle one woman.

Fine, Caitlin had something on her now. But Zora also had dirt on Caitlin.

Let’s see who takes the other down first.

AD

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## **Billionaire's Regret: Finding Her**

G21

Caitlin walked out of the gallery and got into the car, instructing Xavi to drive. They first dropped Federico off at his hotel before heading to TIG. She still had to finish the final design piece for the competition.

While Caitlin was buried in her work, unaware, major shifts were unfolding in S Country.

At Graystone Castle, upon learning in advance that the royal family was planning a crackdown, Zorro immediately began making arrangements to safeguard his retreat. Shadow Moon Pavilion's forces were quickly dispersed and relocated in full to the US.

After overseeing the transition, Zeke went to Zorro. "Father, everything is in place. You should come with us now."

Zorro looked at Zeke, his sharp eyes locking onto his son without a word.

Zeke was confused. "Father, the royal command to surround Graystone has already been issued. If you don't leave now, it might be too late."

Indeed, the royal decree had been officially released, and the imminent threat of military action left Zorro both furious and bitter.

He already knew that the royal army was en route to Graystone, led by none other than General Harvey-Xero's older brother.

But what truly shattered him wasn't the royal decree. It was Zeke's betrayal.

"Guards!" Zorro barked.

Several highly trained men rushed in from the shadows. In a flash, Zeke was seized and forced to his knees.

"Father!" Zeke cried out in shock. "Why are you doing this?"

"You think I don't know what you've been up to?" Zorro said coldly. "You leaked the rebellion rumors to the royal family, didn't you?"

Zeke's heart sank. His cover was blown. But he struggled to maintain composure.

"Father, someone's lying to you! They're trying to turn us against each other. You can't believe them so easily!"

Zorro didn't respond. Instead, he gave another command. "Bring him in."

Another man entered the hall—Samir.

Zeke's eyes widened. "Samir?"

He never imagined that Samir, someone who had grown up beside him, fought with him, bled with him—would be the one to betray him.

"Apologies, Vice Commander. I've always been loyal to the Commander."

Samir turned to Zorro. "Commander, you've been deceived. The Vice Commander is the real traitor. He plans to overthrow you and take full control of Shadow Moon Pavilion and the Graystone forces."

"You liar!" Zeke shouted, his voice tight with fury.

He had miscalculated. He never thought Zorro would plant a mole right beside him.

9:46 pm &

Even with Samir's betrayal, Zeke couldn't afford to admit guilt. If Zorro confirmed his plot, the outcome would be disastrous—worse than what had happened to Zeke's birth father.

He had no choice but to defend himself. “Father, don’t listen to his lies! This man’s manipulating you to create division and seize power for himself!”

But Zorro wasn’t swayed by either side. He trusted no one—not even his own son. He only believed in what he could see for himself.

“No smoke without fire, Zeke. Your performance was impressive—just a little too much.”

Zorro had already been suspicious when Zeke suddenly returned and apologized. He knew his son’s nature well. The boy who once cut ties with him over Caitlin wouldn’t just crawl back with no agenda.

He knew from the start that Zeke had an ulterior motive. Why else would he be so eager to relocate to the US?

What was he really after? As if Zorro didn’t know.

“Father, you’ve misunderstood. I’m your son. We’re blood—nothing can change that!”

Zeke played the family card, but Zorro wasn’t buying it.

He knew the truth about Zeke’s origin. Sentiment wasn’t going to change anything.

“Enough. Bind him. Take his communication devices.”

Zorro’s order was swift. The guards stripped Zeke of his phone and all electronics, handing them over to Zorro.

Zeke was tied up and dragged out of the main hall.

‘Father—please, believe me!’

His voice echoed toward the door before fading into silence. No matter how he pleaded, it was no use.

Panic welled up inside him. With the plan now exposed, everything was about to spiral out of his control.

After locking Zeke away, Zorro summoned the senior mentors of Shadow Moon Pavilion to strategize their next move.

Not long after, the royal army reached the outskirts of Graystone. In response, Zorro summoned troops back from his outposts to block the royal army’s advance. A tense standoff began at the border.

General Harvey sent word to Zorro demanding that he disarm and surrender control of his military forces.

But Zorro's reply was defiant. *Not* only did he refuse, he declared he would defend Graystone's sovereignty and would not allow a single royal soldier to step foot on his land.

The split in control over the region was reported back to the king, who immediately issued a formal summons for Zorro to appear before the royal court.

Zorro refused again—this time with a threat. If the king insisted on believing false rumors and chose to invade Graystone, then he would not hesitate to defy the crown.

He claimed he had no intention of rebellion, but if the royal family wanted war, he would give them war.

His response enraged the king. A new decree followed: eliminate the forces at Graystone by any means necessary.

9:46 pm &

Thus, war broke out between the royal army and the Graystone military.

News of the conflict quickly spread through the media. Xero passed it on to Sebastian at once.

Back in the US, Sebastian met with Caitlin to discuss the situation.

Caitlin frowned. “Honestly, this was within expectations. Zeke reported Zorro to the royal family, and of course they responded. But Zorro was never the kind of man to go quietly. His power alone rivals the crown... still, this wasn’t supposed to happen.”

She had gone over the possible outcomes with Zeke when the plan was formed.

One, Zorro would realize the threat and escape to the US with Zeke and the rest of Shadow Moon Pavilion, where they could ambush him on foreign soil.

Two—what was happening now—Zorro would stay in Graystone and dig in for a war against the royal family.

“Going head-to-head with the crown is the worst option,” Caitlin said. “I thought for sure he’d give up Graystone and

retreat.”

“This is bad,” Sebastian agreed. “Zorro’s no easy target. We’ll have to wait for a ceasefire before we can make our next move.”

“With the codex bait, Zora’s existence as a daughter, and pressure from the royal court—any fool would’ve fled Graystone to save their own skin. So why didn’t he?”

Caitlin’s voice dropped. A troubling thought began to form in her mind.

“Something’s off. Has something happened to Zeke?”