

Billionaire's Regret: Finding Her

Chapter 572

8 61%

20

The massive screen lit up, playing a professionally edited video that documented Caitlin and Sebastian's charitable work—every project, every donation, even certificates of the exact amounts and dates.

It showed shipments of supplies, timelines of deliveries to disaster zones, and behind-the-scenes prep work they had personally

overseen.

Toward the end, clips of grateful beneficiaries played—people standing together, expressing heartfelt thanks, and children offering hand-drawn cards filled with color and love.

Every touching moment stitched together painted a picture of dedication and sincerity.

When the video ended, thunderous applause filled the hall.

Something was wrong.

Zora sat frozen, eyes wide, shaking her head in disbelief.

This wasn't right!

She had arranged everything in advance. The video that was supposed to play tonight was a compromising one-Caitlin and Yates in a "too-close-for-comfort" moment that would destroy Caitlin's image forever.

So why hadn't it aired?

Panic rising in her chest, Zora hurriedly texted the contact who had promised to release the video. But her messages failed to go through-she had been blocked.

Only then did it hit her.

She'd been scammed.

The person had taken her money and vanished, leaving her with nothing—worse than nothing. She'd missed her golden opportunity.

On stage, Caitlin and Sebastian were all smiles, holding their award and delivering a heartfelt, modest speech about using their privilege to help others and encouraging more people to join them.

Zora's insides twisted.

They had won again.

And Caitlin, standing tall with yet another trophy, was even more untouchable than before.

As the couple returned to their seats, Caitlin's gaze flicked to Zora for the briefest of moments—a glance that pierced like a blade before drifting away.

Zora's chest heaved. She couldn't read the full meaning behind Caitlin's look, but she assumed it was smugness.

Fine. *You* win this time, Caitlin.

But that doesn't mean it's over.

#

61%

20)

The ceremony continued.

Another five recipients were called onstage, and once all 25 awards were given out, the host stepped forward with a surprise.

“In addition to our 25 official recipients tonight, we're proud to announce one final honoree—our 26th awardee. Please welcome... Miss Zora Harris of XEG!”

Applause rang out again, and heads turned to Zora.

Stunned, she blinked. What?

She'd actually been selected?

For a moment, joy overtook suspicion. Maybe her mother's earlier efforts had paid off after all.

"Zora, your turn," Ximena whispered, nudging her.

With a radiant smile, Zora stood and made her way to the stage, accepting the microphone with practiced ease.

"I'm deeply honored by this recognition," she began, voice steady. "At XEG, we believe in giving back. Our contributions are modest, but come from the heart. Thank you for this encouragement."

The host smiled back. "Thank you, Miss Harris. Now, let's take a look at your journey in philanthropy."

Zora turned, prepared to see more footage of her "public image" at work.

The screen began by showing the XEG corporate building, a narration detailing the company's annual output and community outreach.

Clips followed—Zora visiting remote villages, handing out supplies, giving speeches, and smiling in photos with children.

But then... things changed.

The footage cut to raw, unedited clips.

Zora complaining about the poor village conditions, wrinkling her nose as she inspected local housing.

A moment showed her posing with a child for a photo—smiling sweetly—only to immediately turn away, disgusted, wiping her hands and muttering, “Get me some Evian. I need to disinfect.”

She washed her hands with imported Evian water—then proceeded to clean her phone, arms, and face with it, muttering about “airborne diseases.”

Gasps echoed across the room.

From heartfelt humanitarian to pretentious diva... the fall was brutal.

The same child she'd posed with so small and trusting—now felt like a tragic prop in a PR stunt.

The audience began to murmur, confused and uncomfortable.

Ximena looked horrified. Her hands clenched tightly in her lap.

She had worked tirelessly to help her daughter repair her reputation... and now it was crumbling again—this time by Zora’s own

hand.

On stage, the host struggled to stay composed. “Miss Harris... the video we just saw—was that all real? Were your charity efforts staged?”

Zora panicked. “No! No—it’s not what it looks like! I didn’t mean it like that!”

But the video didn’t lie.

Caitlin watched from her seat, calm and expressionless.

Now, Zora would learn what it meant to live a double life—and suffer the consequences.

More clips played.

Interviews.

Some were with staff who had accompanied Zora on her charity visits.

“Zora? She was... exhausting,” said one woman. “Overly dramatic, always complaining. Acted like the world owed her something.”

“She used up half the supplies we brought—just to bathe,” another added. “She washed with Evian water and demanded steak for breakfast. In a village that barely has rice.”

The crowd was stunned. The whispers grew louder.

Zora sat trembling, her world spinning. Her carefully crafted image... was disintegrating.

And then came the final blow.

A new video clip began.

It was Abel—seated in a visitation room in prison.

“I’ve known Zora for years,” he said casually. “I came back to the States at her invitation. We had... a friends-with-benefits arrangement.”

The audience gasped.

“She wanted me to seduce Caitlin. Said she wanted to ruin her relationship with Sebastian. I tried—but Caitlin’s bond with Sebastian was too solid,”

The screen flashed to another shot—Abel looking directly into the camera.

“I did manage to record a clip—Caitlin joking with some of Sebastian’s friends. Zora took it, edited it, and told me she was going to release it during the awards show to destroy her publicly.”

Zora’s mouth dropped open. Her lips moved, but no sound came.

“No. No. He’s lying. That’s not true—he’s framing me! I didn’t-!”

But the crowd was *no* longer listening.

They were watching, judging, whispering.

15:19 Tue, 2 Sept WOJ

Everyone now saw her for who she truly was.

And it wasn't over yet.

Because Abel still had more to say.

Billionaire's Regret: Finding Her

“I heard Zora is pregnant. Based on the timeline, the child should be mine. Regardless of whether I'm in prison or not, I hope Zora keeps the baby. When I get out, I'll take responsibility for both her and our child.

“And one last thing I want to say to Zora—do more good deeds if you can. Keep giving back to society. Think of it as accumulating blessings for our child.”

Abel's interview ended, and the crowd collectively gasped. Everyone now knew Zora was pregnant—with Abel's child.

But in the audience, one face turned green with fury: Connor.

He recalled how Zora had recently told him she was pregnant and demanded he break up with Yasmin to marry her. Looking back now, it was clear—she had tried to make a fool out of him.

That conniving woman!

He almost fell for it.

The host brought everyone back to the present. “It’s truly surprising to learn about Zora’s actions behind the scenes. Charity should never be a performance. Given what’s been revealed, we at the organizing committee and judging panel will have to reconsider. I’m afraid this award cannot be presented to Miss Harris. We apologize.”

There was no way they would still give her the award after that exposé.

Zora stood frozen on stage, her mind blank, unable to react.

The host continued, “Thank you to all our guests for attending tonight’s ceremony. This concludes our award show. And to all our honorees, may you continue striving forward and working together for the greater good.”

Zora had become nothing more than an unfortunate interlude. The ceremony proceeded and concluded without her.

Applause erupted as the event wrapped up, and attendees began to exit.

No one paid attention to Zora, still standing alone on the stage. But just then, she snapped out of her daze, pointing an accusatory finger at Caitlin, who was already standing up.

“Caitlin! It was you! All of this was your doing! *You* set me up!

“I get it now—everything that happened today was your plan. You wanted to ruin me!

“You’re so cruel! You did all this just for revenge!”

Ximena pushed through the crowd, rushing onto the stage to calm her daughter. “Zora, stop it! Please, stop yelling. Don’t lose your

mind here!”

“Don’t you touch me! Get away from me!”

Zora’s face contorted in pain and rage. She truly believed her mother had turned against her. After all, only her mother and Connor knew she was pregnant—so how had Abel found out? How had the world found out?

It had to be her mother who told Caitlin.

Ximena wept helplessly. She had tried everything to help Zora, to cover her mistakes and shield her from the consequences—but

there was nothing more she could do.

Just then, Zeke entered through the side, noticing that Sebastian and Caitlin were still inside. He walked straight to the stage and helped his mother up.

“Mom, stop worrying about her. Let her face the consequences of her actions. Think about yourself for once. You’ve done enough- too much, even—and she never appreciated it.”

Zeke led Ximena off the stage as more people filed out.

Caitlin turned to Sebastian. “Wait for me outside. I need to say something to her.”

“Alright. Reporters are swarming the front. I’ll bring the car around to the back to pick you up.”

With a quick nod, he left the auditorium.

Most guests had already left, but Connor remained, heading straight toward the stage.

He stopped in front of Zora, his eyes filled with contempt.

“You told me the baby was mine.”

“I...” Zora’s face went pale. She had no excuse.

77

“It’s his. It’s that guy’s. You slept with him, and now he’s in prison, so you tried to pin it on me? You disgusting liar!”

He slapped her hard. Zora stumbled backward and fell to the floor.

“From now on, stay away from me. Don’t ever contact me again. We have nothing to do with each other!”

Connor spat out the final words and walked out without looking back,

Zora sat trembling on the stage, tears streaming down her face—but beyond the tears was burning hatred.

Her gaze locked on Caitlin, who hadn't left.

"You! This is all your fault!"

Caitlin stepped forward, her voice cold.

"Who was the one scheming every step of the way, trying to ruin me during this awards ceremony? You."

She stopped a few feet from Zora, her eyes sharp and calm.

"You were born a wealthy heiress. You could've become a strong, resilient woman like your mother. But instead, you chose to be consumed by hatred. You've tried time and time again to trap me, to hurt me.

you understand the consequences of what you've done? When you let evil poison your heart, it eventually devours you from the inside out. What you're facing now is your own doing."

"Don't lecture me! You're evil! I hate you!"

Zora's reputation was in ruins, and she blamed Caitlin for all of it.

214

Caitlin sighed softly.

“If you hadn’t bribed someone to sabotage me at the ceremony, I wouldn’t have had to strike back.

“I’ve told you before—you are not my match. Stop wasting your time plotting against me. You already lost. You just refuse to accept

1. it.

“You know why I kept giving you second chances? Because of your mother. Because she raised Patricia. I respected her. That’s the only reason I let you go again and again.

“If not for her, do you really think you’d still be standing?

“Zora, your mother gave everything for you. If you could just let go of your resentment and start over, you might still redeem yourself. But if you continue down this path, you’ll destroy yourself.”

With those final words, Caitlin turned and walked off the stage.

Zora collapsed into sobs, overwhelmed—not just by grief, but by the sheer humiliation of losing to Caitlin yet again.

All her secrets were exposed. Everyone knew.

And it felt worse than death.

As emotions overwhelmed her, a sharp pain twisted through her abdomen. She couldn't get up.

Outside the theater, James and Zinnia were waiting.

Just then, a staff member walked over, holding an elegant gift box.

“Caitlin, this is a gift prepared for you. Please take it with you.”

“A gift?”

Assuming the man was with the event organizers, Caitlin thanked him and took the box.

But the moment she opened it, she screamed.

“Ah!”

The box slipped from her hands and fell to the ground—a severed, bloodied arm rolled out.

The scene was grisly and horrifying,

Zinnia recoiled in shock. Who would do something like this?

“Caitlin! Go find Sebastian. I’ll go after him!”

James realized something was wrong. He spotted the “staff member” running away and immediately gave chase.

“Caitlin, go to Mr. Vanderbilt. I’ll handle this.”

Zinnia didn’t want Caitlin to see anything more disturbing.

“Alright, be careful!”

15:19 Tue, 2 Sept WOJ

@61%

20

Caitlin ran off. Zinnia crouched down to examine the severed limb—only to discover it wasn't real. It was a synthetic prosthetic.

It had been a twisted prank designed to scare Caitlin.

Zinnia rushed to alert theater security. Meanwhile, Caitlin ran to the back exit in search of Sebastian.

A black Rolls-Royce pulled up. She recognized the license plate. Vaughn, the driver, opened the door for her.

She climbed into the backseat.

The luxury car pulled away.

But just minutes later, another black Rolls-Royce with the exact same license plate pulled up to the back door.

Sebastian stepped out.

Billionaire's Regret: Finding Her

Sebastian told Vaughn to stay in the car while he went inside to find Caitlin. But after searching the entire theater, she was nowhere to be found. Instead, he ran into James and Zinnia, both of whom were rushing around.

“Harrison, Zinnia, where’s Caitlin?” he asked urgently.

James, drenched in sweat and panting, said, “She didn’t come to find you?”

Zinnia added, “Caitlin said she was heading to the back door to meet you. You didn’t see her?”

“No. I was at the back door and didn’t see her. I came inside to look. I’ve been calling her but I can’t get through,” Sebastian explained.

James’s eyes widened in alarm. “Shit!”

He quickly explained to Sebastian what had happened earlier. "I think someone set us up with a diversion. They were targeting Caitlin all along!"

Sebastian's expression darkened. Hearing that someone had delivered a fake severed arm to Caitlin, combined with the fact that she was now unreachable, sent a chill down his spine.

"Let's move! We need to find her, now!"

He felt a wave of dread rising in his chest. They had clearly agreed to meet at the back door—Caitlin would have definitely gone there. Something had gone wrong.

Sebastian made a swift decision. "Harrison, Zinnia, go check the theater's internal surveillance. Start from where everything happened and trace her movements to the back exit. I'll search outside. If you find anything, contact me immediately."

"Got it!"

They split up. Sebastian ran toward the rear entrance while calling his men to mobilize and assist in the search.

He thoroughly searched the back entrance and surrounding area. According to a security guard, a woman had exited the door and gotten into a car.

"What kind of car was it?" Sebastian pressed.

The guard thought for a second, then pointed to the Rolls-Royce parked nearby. “It looked just like that one.”

Could Caitlin have gotten into a Rolls-Royce?

Could it have been Zeke?

As the thought crossed his mind, his phone rang—Zeke.

“Hello?”

“Mr. Vanderbilt, I can’t reach Caitlin, so I called you. Do you have time tonight? I was thinking we could all go out to celebrate.”

Zeke was still parked near the theater with his mother, planning to toast their double win at the awards.

“Now’s not a good time. Caitlin’s missing—I’m looking for her!”

“What? Where? What happened?” Zeke’s tone instantly turned serious.

Sebastian gave a quick rundown. Zeke listened and responded immediately, “Alright, I’m on my way. I’ll bring people with me.”

Sebastian was now almost certain someone had picked up Caitlin in a luxury car. Based on the direction the guard pointed, he could guess which way the car had gone.

He called Felix and asked him to tap into the city’s traffic surveillance to track the suspicious vehicle.

Felix was already home, about to wind down for the night, but as soon as he heard Sebastian’s request, he jumped up to get

dressed.

His wife Madison asked, “Where are you going at this hour?”

“Mr. Vanderbilt just called. It seems Caitlin’s in trouble. I’ve got to help.”

“Caitlin’s in trouble?” Madison was visibly shaken. “Go! Go quickly!”

As he left, Felix contacted the city's traffic command center to access footage.

Meanwhile, out front of the theater, Zora staggered out the main doors only to be immediately swarmed by waiting reporters.

They bombarded her with ruthless questions, their cameras flashing as she tried to cover her tear-streaked, disheveled face. Her makeup had run, she looked an absolute mess, and her stomach ached horribly. She wanted nothing more than to escape.

Snapping, Zora snatched a camera from one reporter and hurled it to the ground—then promptly lost her balance and fell too.

The crowd gasped and recoiled.

“Oh my god! So much blood!”

Someone screamed.

“She's having a miscarriage!”

One of the reporters stammered, “She grabbed my camera and fell. This isn't my fault!”

“Someone call an ambulance!”

The chaos intensified. Some people rushed to help, others continued snapping pictures.

Zora writhed in pain, her hands gripping her abdomen as warm blood soaked through her dress, pooling beneath her.

That was her child.

She was losing her baby.

She could feel the life draining from her, and with it, her strength.

She had never known such pain or humiliation. And in this moment, she felt it all.

Through her haze of agony, a familiar voice broke through.

“Stop filming! Please, stop filming!”

+20

It was her mother.

Ximena pushed through the reporters, her heart nearly stopping at the sight of her daughter sitting in a puddle of blood.

“Zora!”

Zora was so helpless. The moment she saw her mother, she broke down completely.

“Mom...”

Ximena quickly pulled off her coat and wrapped it around her trembling daughter, trying to comfort her while waiting desperately for help.

“It’s okay, it’s okay. The ambulance is coming. Just hang in there, sweetheart...”

No matter how disobedient or rebellious her daughter was, she was still her child. And what mother doesn’t love her own child?

Seeing Zora like this broke Ximena's heart into pieces.

Finally, after what felt like an eternity, the ambulance arrived. EMTs rushed over, lifting Zora *onto* a stretcher and carrying her into

the vehicle. Ximena climbed in after her.

As the sirens wailed, she silently prayed this would be the moment her daughter finally saw the truth and turned her life around.

At the theater's back entrance, Zeke had arrived with his men and joined Sebastian, both of them deeply concerned for Caitlin.

"There's no way to tell which direction the car went after it left the lot," Zeke said.

"I've already contacted Felix. We should get something soon."

Just then, Sebastian's phone rang—it was James.

He answered immediately. "Did *you* find anything?"

“Yes! Two minutes after the incident, my sister walked to the back entrance. A black Rolls–Royce pulled up, and the driver got out and opened the door for her. She got in, and the car drove off. A few minutes later, your car pulled up and parked. Based on the footage, the car that took her had the same model and license plate as yours. The driver looked exactly like Vaughn.”

James and Zinnia had reached the theater’s security office and reviewed the surveillance footage. The moment they spotted the critical clip, they called Sebastian right away.

“That’s impossible. Vaughn is with me!”

Sebastian ended the call, eyes dark and anxious. “Someone impersonated Vaughn and picked her up.”

The more he thought about it, the worse he felt. Caitlin must’ve seen the matching license plate, the same car model, and even a familiar face—there would’ve been no reason for her to suspect anything.

But now...

Where were they taking her?

Enemy 575

@61%

Half an hour earlier, Caitlin had gotten into the luxury car, which soon pulled away and began moving swiftly through the city.

She glanced at the driver through the center rearview mirror. Vaughn's face was expressionless.

Noticing Sebastian wasn't in the car, Caitlin raised an eyebrow. "Where's Mr. Vanderbilt?"

"In the car behind us," the driver replied in a low voice.

Caitlin turned to check, but saw no vehicle following them. She figured it might be a surprise Sebastian had arranged, maybe sending Vaughn ahead to drive her to the beach house.

The car was filled with the scent of flowers. On the passenger seat and the one next to her were large bouquets of roses.

Definitely Sebastian's doing. Another surprise.

She picked up the bouquet next to her and spotted a red heart-shaped card tucked among the flowers. The printed words read:

****I love you.****

A soft smile spread across Caitlin's lips. She lifted the roses to her nose and inhaled their scent.

"These roses smell so unique... What kind are they?"

The driver didn't respond.

As she tried to recall the smell, a sudden wave of dizziness hit her. Her vision blurred.

She shook her head, sensing something was off.

Looking once more at the driver, her heart skipped a beat. He looked different—colder, more detached than usual. Too cold.

And they weren't taking the route to the beach house.

Something wasn't right.

She fought to keep her expression neutral and discreetly pulled out her phone to call Sebastian. But as soon as she picked it up, it slipped from her weakening hand and fell to the floor,

Her limbs were going numb. Her strength was fading.

It had to be the scent in the car... or maybe the roses?

"You're not Vaughn..."

She slumped back in her seat, staring hard at the man behind the wheel.

The fake Vaughn glanced at her through the mirror, his eyes icy. He didn't respond confirming her suspicion.

Terror surged through her. Who was he? Why was he impersonating Vaughn and driving Sebastian's car?

Where was Sebastian? What about the real Vaughn?

15:19 Tue, 2 Sept W

Uncertainty gnawed at her from the inside.

"Who are you... Where are you taking me..." she asked, her voice barely above a whisper.

"You'll know soon enough."

His voice was deeper than Vaughn's, and by now, Caitlin knew she had fallen into a trap.

The man pulled over, picked up her phone from the floor, and powered it off.

Caitlin tried to snatch it back, but her body wouldn't cooperate. She could only watch as he restarted the car and continued

driving.

61%

+20)

Back at the theater.

Felix had just called in with intel, and Sebastian, Zeke, and the others were speeding down the route the Rolls-Royce had taken, hot on the trail.

City traffic control and police had joined the search, and with Felix's help, they pinpointed the car's last known direction.

The final camera caught the Rolls-Royce veering onto a dirt road near the hills. The headlights lit up the rough path, and deep tire

tracks could be seen.

Following the trail, they reached a wide slope. At the bottom lay a deep ravine. The tire marks led straight to the cliff's edge.

Sebastian slammed the door and jumped out, sprinting toward the edge. Zeke and the others followed close behind. One of the men handed out searchlights.

Beams of light swept the ravine—and there it was.

The Rolls-Royce lay at the bottom, completely wrecked. It was crushed, mangled, its wheels facing the sky, still spinning slowly.

“No... No!”

Sebastian let out a gut-wrenching roar, a stabbing pain seizing his chest.

James shouted from the edge, his voice echoing through the ravine. “Caitlin!”.

“Caitlin!”

Zeke’s heart ached too, unable to believe what he was seeing.

This had been a setup from the beginning.

Zinnia’s eyes streamed with tears. She blamed herself—if only she’d stayed closer to Caitlin.

“I’m going down there. I have to find her! Get me a rope!”

Sebastian’s eyes were red, his mind barely functioning. He ordered his men to find climbing gear.

Zeke held him back. “You can’t! It’s too dangerous! The car might explode!”

in

15:19 Tue, 2 Sept W

“But Caitlin’s in there! I have to get her out!”

He shoved Zeke aside, frantically searching for rope.

Felix and his team arrived just in time, catching the sight of the wrecked car and Sebastian’s desperation.

“Mr. Vanderbilt! If you go down there recklessly, you could die! What if she’s not even in the car?” Felix shouted.

“How do we know unless we check? What if she is?!”

No one dared take the gamble.

Sebastian’s heart was being ripped apart. He didn’t care about risk—only about saving his wife.

“I’ll go!” Zeke grabbed the rope. “You have kids and a family. I don’t. Let me do it.”

“No! You have your mother! I’ll go!”

They argued, voices escalating.

James pushed in and grabbed the rope. “Let me go! She’s my sister—my responsibility!”

They were all ready to risk their lives to save her.

But then, a deafening explosion erupted from the ravine.

The destroyed Rolls-Royce exploded, sending a shockwave that shook the ground. It echoed like thunder through the valley.

A plume of fire and smoke shot into the sky, lighting up the night and the surrounding forest.

Birds scattered into the air in terror.

Everyone stared, horrified.

The flames devoured everything.

“Caitlin...”

Sebastian fell to his knees, his entire body trembling, letting out an anguished scream that pierced the night.

“Caitliiiiiin!”

James dropped beside him, yelling her name in despair.

Zinnia sobbed uncontrollably, hands over her mouth.

Zeke’s eyes filled with tears, his voice caught in his throat as he silently screamed her name.

Only Felix remained composed enough to act. He had already called for backup from police and emergency services.

They arrived soon after, springing into action with practiced urgency.

Sebastian, James, and the others stood by, trembling with fear and hope, waiting for a sign.

61%

20

15:20 Tue, 2 Sept W

The answer would come soon.

Billionaire's Regret: Finding Her

Due to the accident occurring deep in a mountain ravine in the middle of the night, visibility was extremely low and the rescue operation proved difficult and time-consuming.

Rescue workers had to first douse the flames using water before preparing to rappel down and investigate the scene.

The first team descended using ropes and found that the vehicle had been almost entirely consumed by fire—nothing remained but a charred shell.

A preliminary search didn't reveal any human remains. However, due to the force of the explosion, any organic material could have been completely destroyed. A forensic team would need to investigate at daylight to confirm.

When the first rescue team returned and reported their findings, Felix gave Sebastian an update.

“No human remains were found. That might be good news.”

Sebastian's bloodshot eyes lifted. “She wasn't in the car?”

“Correct. There's a real possibility Caitlin is still alive.”

“She's alive...”

Sebastian's voice cracked with emotion. Still in mourning, he clung to that hope like a lifeline. "She wasn't in that car... then she's still alive... Caitlin wouldn't leave me like this..."

James rubbed his burning eyes and added, "If my sister wasn't in that car, then this was a setup. The person who took her faked the crash to throw us off."

-

Zeke nodded, seeing the same possibility. "Exactly. We assumed from the start she was in that vehicle and wasted critical time waiting for rescue. But what happened during those lost hours? Where did they take her? We have to keep searching."

Sebastian shook off the weight of grief. "Then let's move. We're not stopping now."

Felix told them, "Split up and follow any leads. I'll coordinate with the police. If the forensics report confirms anything new, I'll update you immediately."

"Understood."

Learning that Caitlin wasn't in the car reignited their determination. The search resumed with renewed energy.

They began checking every possible exit route near the mountain. As dawn broke, the misty forest and ravine came into full view.

The forensic and police teams descended again, this time equipped with thermal imaging devices to scan for organic material. After thoroughly analyzing the wreckage, they concluded the car was empty when it went off the cliff.

Felix relayed the news to Sebastian the moment it was confirmed.

This solidified Sebastian's belief—Caitlin was still alive. He immediately requested the police keep the information confidential to avoid alerting the kidnapper, while they continued the search with urgency.

Sebastian, James, and Zeke divided into three teams to look for Caitlin.

15:20 Tue, 2 Sept

But the crash had caused them to lose crucial time. Now, finding her was like trying to find a needle in a haystack.

Sebastian ordered people to check all major transportation hubs—bus terminals, shipping docks, and airports.

Nothing turned up.

61%E

+20

Meanwhile, news of the awards ceremony dominated the front page of every media outlet in New York. Entertainment columns were flooded with scandalous headlines—most involving Zora.

The rumor about her miscarriage went viral.

When Zora finally regained consciousness, she found herself in a hospital bed. Pain consumed her body, and her mind spiraled into despair as the memories of the awards night came flooding back.

She had lost everything.

Her child was gone. Her salvaged reputation was destroyed. Even without checking the news, she could imagine how humiliating her downfall must look to the public.

She felt utterly defeated and hopeless... and for a moment, she even wished she were dead.

But she couldn't let go.

This was all Caitlin's fault.

In the hospital room, Ximena was on the phone with Zeke, who was updating her on Caitlin's disappearance. Her face was full of

worry,

"I understand. Keep looking and let me know if there's any progress."

As she hung up and turned around, she saw her daughter awake.

"Zora, you're awake!"

"Mom... I lost the baby..." Zora murmured, tears rolling down her cheeks.

Ximena sat beside her and gently consoled her. "Then let it go. That child was never meant to come into this world. You're still young. You'll have more chances in the future. Right now, you need to focus on recovery."

"When you're well again, I'll arrange for you to go abroad for some time. Rest, reflect, study—heal your body and your mind. Then come back?"

“Okay... Zora said quietly. What else could she say?”

She knew she couldn't stay in New York anymore. Leaving the country was her only option.

But just then, something Ximena **said** earlier came back to her.

“Mom, were you on the phone with Zeke? What happened? Who's missing? Was it Caitlin?”

Ximena had promised her son not to tell anyone, but Zora wouldn't stop pressing. “Mom, am I not your daughter? Why are you keeping secrets from me now?”

Ximena sighed. “Yes, it's about Caitlin. After the awards ceremony last night, she went missing. Your brother and the others are all

searching for her.”

“She was kidnapped?”

“We don't know who took her. It's very concerning.” Ximena looked out the window, missing the flicker of satisfaction in Zora's

eyes.

The moment Zora heard the confirmation, her sorrow disappeared.

Finally-karma.

Caitlin had played dirty at the awards show, and now look at her. Gone. Kidnapped.

She couldn't help but smile.

Maybe the kidnappers would just kill her and be done with it.

+29

Another day and night passed.

Still no progress.

Every possible lead was chased down. Surveillance footage from the night of the disappearance had been reexamined multiple times—nothing useful.

The most likely route out remained the mountain slope where the crash had been staged. But even after canvassing every nearby household, not a single witness had seen anything.

It was possible Caitlin was still being held somewhere in the city. The police launched a citywide, block-by-block search.

But secrets never stay buried for long.

News of Caitlin's disappearance began to spread and quickly made headlines.

Sebastian's friends all reached out. They rallied their own contacts and helped circulate missing person alerts.

Yates, Benjamin, Simon—all of them joined the search,

The entire Vanderbilt family was informed, though the elders kept the children in the dark.

“What do we do now?” Eliza asked anxiously.

Beatrice was hit hard by the news. She swayed on her feet and nearly fainted.

“Grandma, hold on–don’t scare us!” Molly caught her just in time.

Beatrice clutched the doorway, trembling/“Go... go find Caitlin...”

But before she could say more, she collapsed.

“Grandma!” chaos erupted inside the Vanderbilt estate.

Billionaire's Regret: Finding Her

Due to the accident occurring deep in a mountain ravine in the middle of the night, visibility was extremely low and the rescue operation proved difficult and time-consuming.

Rescue workers had to first douse the flames using water before preparing to rappel down and investigate the scene.

The first team descended using ropes and found that the vehicle had been almost entirely consumed by fire–nothing remained but a charred shell.

A preliminary search didn't reveal any human remains. However, due to the force of the explosion, any organic material could have been completely destroyed. A forensic team would need to investigate at daylight to confirm.

When the first rescue team returned and reported their findings, Felix gave Sebastian an update.

"No human remains were found. That might be good news."

Sebastian's bloodshot eyes lifted. "She wasn't in the car?"

"Correct. There's a real possibility Caitlin is still alive."

"She's alive..."

Sebastian's voice cracked with emotion. Still in mourning, he clung to that hope like a lifeline. "She wasn't in that car... then she's still alive... Caitlin wouldn't leave me like this..."

James rubbed his burning eyes and added, "If my sister wasn't in that car, then this was a setup. The person who took her faked the crash to throw us off."

-

Zeke nodded, seeing the same possibility. “Exactly. We assumed from the start she was in that vehicle and wasted critical time waiting for rescue. But what happened during those lost hours? Where did they take her? We have to keep searching.”

Sebastian shook off the weight of grief. “Then let’s move. We’re not stopping now.”

Felix told them, “Split up and follow any leads. I’ll coordinate with the police. If the forensics report confirms anything new, I’ll update you immediately.”

“Understood.”

Learning that Caitlin wasn’t in the car reignited their determination. The search resumed with renewed energy.

They began checking every possible exit route near the mountain. As dawn broke, the misty forest and ravine came into full view.

The forensic and police teams descended again, this time equipped with thermal imaging devices to scan for organic material. After thoroughly analyzing the wreckage, they concluded the car was empty when it went off the cliff.

Felix relayed the news to Sebastian the moment it was confirmed.

This solidified Sebastian's belief—Caitlin was still alive. He immediately requested the police keep the information confidential to avoid alerting the kidnapper, while they continued the search with urgency.

Sebastian, James, and Zeke divided into three teams to look for Caitlin.

15:20 Tue, 2 Sept

But the crash had caused them to lose crucial time. Now, finding her was like trying to find a needle in a haystack.

Sebastian ordered people to check all major transportation hubs—bus terminals, shipping docks, and airports.

Nothing turned up.

78% . 61%E

+20

Meanwhile, news of the awards ceremony dominated the front page of every media outlet in New York. Entertainment columns were flooded with scandalous headlines—most involving Zora.

The rumor about her miscarriage went viral.

When Zora finally regained consciousness, she found herself in a hospital bed. Pain consumed her body, and her mind spiraled into despair as the memories of the awards night came flooding back.

She had lost everything.

Her child was gone. Her salvaged reputation was destroyed. Even without checking the news, she could imagine how humiliating her downfall must look to the public.

She felt utterly defeated and hopeless... and for a moment, she even wished she were dead.

But she couldn't let go.

This was all Caitlin's fault.

In the hospital room, Ximena was on the phone with Zeke, who was updating her on Caitlin's disappearance. Her face was full of

worry,

“I understand. Keep looking and let me know if there’s any progress.”

As she hung up and turned around, she saw her daughter awake.

“Zora, you’re awake!”

“Mom... I lost the baby...” Zora murmured, tears rolling down her cheeks.

Ximena sat beside her and gently consoled her. “Then let it go. That child was never meant to come into this world. You’re still young. You’ll have more chances in the future. Right now, you need to focus on recovery.”

“When you’re well again, I’ll arrange for you to go abroad for some time. Rest, reflect, study—heal your body and your mind. Then come back?”

“Okay... Zora said quietly. What else could she say?”

She knew she couldn’t stay in New York anymore. Leaving the country was her only option.

But just then, something Ximena **said** earlier came back to her.

“Mom, were you on the phone with Zeke? What happened? Who’s missing? Was it Caitlin?”

Ximena had promised her son not to tell anyone, but Zora wouldn’t stop pressing. “Mom, am I not your daughter? Why are you keeping secrets from me now?”

Ximena sighed. “Yes, it’s about Caitlin. After the awards ceremony last night, she went missing. Your brother and the others are all

searching for her.”

“She was kidnapped?”

“We don’t know who took her. It’s very concerning.” Ximena looked out the window, missing the flicker of satisfaction in Zora’s

eyes.

The moment Zora heard the confirmation, her sorrow disappeared.

Finally—karma.

Caitlin had played dirty at the awards show, and now look at her. Gone. Kidnapped.

She couldn't help but smile.

Maybe the kidnappers would just kill her and be done with it.

+29

Another day and night passed.

Still no progress.

Every possible lead was chased down. Surveillance footage from the night of the disappearance had been reexamined multiple times—nothing useful.

The most likely route out remained the mountain slope where the crash had been staged. But even after canvassing every nearby household, not a single witness had seen anything.

It was possible Caitlin was still being held somewhere in the city. The police launched a citywide, block-by-block search.

But secrets never stay buried for long.

News of Caitlin's disappearance began to spread and quickly made headlines.

Sebastian's friends all reached out. They rallied their own contacts and helped circulate missing person alerts.

Yates, Benjamin, Simon—all of them joined the search,

The entire Vanderbilt family was informed, though the elders kept the children in the dark.

“What do we do now?” Eliza asked anxiously.

Beatrice was hit hard by the news. She swayed on her feet and nearly fainted.

“Grandma, hold on—don't scare us!” Molly caught her just in time.

Beatrice clutched the doorway, trembling/“Go... go find Caitlin...”

But before she could say more, she collapsed.

“Grandma!” chaos erupted inside the Vanderbilt estate.

Billionaire's Regret: Finding Her

Chapter 577

Everything was pitch black.

Caitlin’s head throbbed as she slowly regained consciousness, only to realize she was confined in a tight, enclosed space.

Her instincts kicked in instantly.

She tried to move, but found her hands and feet were tightly bound, and her mouth had been sealed with tape.

Fragments of memory came flooding back—she had exited the back of the theater and gotten into a Rolls–Royce. But the driver hadn’t been Vaughn.

There had been a strange floral scent in the car, something that had made her limbs weak. Just before she passed out, she'd seen the imposter driving her out toward the suburbs.

After that, everything went black—until now.

She lay in a space that swayed slightly, and there was a rhythmic sound, like waves crashing.

A boat.

She was likely trapped inside a cabin of a moving boat.

She had been kidnapped.

Desperate to escape, Caitlin began to slam her shoulder against the wooden panel above her, again and again, until someone opened it.

A cold, unfamiliar face appeared above her. He was lean, his eyes sharp and glinting with an icy glimmer.

Phantom had heard the noise and come to check.

“You’re awake?”

His voice was devoid of emotion.

“Mm! Mmm!” Caitlin groaned, trying to speak through the tape.

Phantom ripped it off her mouth.

“Where are you taking me?” she demanded.

“That’s none of your concern.”

He reached to seal her mouth again, but Caitlin blurted out quickly, “Wait! I have to use the bathroom. I can’t hold it!”

Sweat beaded on her forehead, and after a **moment’s** hesitation, Phantom yanked her out of the hidden compartment and threw

her onto the floor.

Now able to take in her surroundings, Caitlin confirmed it—she was on a boat. Through the small cabin window, she could see the blue of the sea beyond.

The sunlight filtering in told her it was daytime. That meant she had already been missing for several hours, at the very least.

Tue, Sept

Her heart ached as she thought of Sebastian. Were they frantically looking for her? What about the kids? Were they scared?

She had to stay calm. She had to think.

60%

+20)

Phantom showed no sign of removing her restraints. Caitlin pressed on, “How am I supposed to use the bathroom if I’m still tied

up?”

The man hesitated.

That's when Caitlin noticed the discarded prop on the floor—a hyper-realistic mask. The one he'd used to impersonate Vaughn.

Everything made sense.

The planning. The precision. The impersonation.

A chill ran down her spine.

“I know who you are,” she said, her voice trembling. “You're the one who kidnapped Patricia.”

She remembered the masked man who had escaped from the woods. The one James had chased. The one *who* used a grappling hook to vanish without a trace.

This had to be the same man. The way he manipulated people and situations. The calculated disguises. The elaborate setup.

Phantom didn't deny it. He merely sneered and remained silent.

He pulled out a pair of handcuffs, shackled her wrists, then cut the ropes binding her ankles and torso.

“You have two minutes,” he said coldly, motioning to a tiny restroom before walking out of the cabin.

Caitlin hadn’t really needed to go. It was just an excuse.

Now alone, she scrambled to her feet, only to stumble and fall again.

Whatever she’d inhaled earlier had left lingering effects. Her body hadn’t fully recovered, and she was still too weak to stand properly.

She’d have to wait—regain her strength—then figure out a way to escape.

Two days had passed with still no sign of Caitlin.

Sebastian had mobilized every resource at his disposal. Zeke, the police, and all of their allies had joined the search. A citywide sweep was underway, yet they had nothing.

Each hour that passed ate away at Sebastian’s sanity. He hadn’t slept, hadn’t rested. He led every search personally, refusing to let even a second go to waste,

Zeke had called in his Lightwing team as well, but even they came up empty.

They'd scoured every exit point in and out of New York—airports, harbors, train stations—but found nothing. All signs pointed to

one conclusion;

214

15:20 Tue, 2 Sept

Caitlin was still somewhere inside the country.

At the Vanderbilt estate, no one had peace of mind.

Beatrice had fallen ill from the stress and had been hospitalized. Eliza stayed at her side, and Molly visited often to check on her.

When Eliza asked if there was any news about Caitlin, Molly could only shake her head.

Eliza broke down, wiping away tears, and reminded Molly to return to the mansion *to* take care of the children.

Though the adults tried to shield the kids, the older ones—like Bruce—had already picked up on the truth from the internet. With their mother gone for days, they were terrified.

When they saw Molly, they asked, “Did you find our mommy yet?”

There was no hiding it anymore.

Molly knelt down and hugged them tightly. “Everyone is looking for her. We’ll find her. I promise.”

“I want my mommy...” Patricia sobbed, tears streaking down her little cheeks.

Molly hugged her close, trying not to cry herself.

20

Elsewhere, Wendy had also learned the truth. Her brother confirmed the rumors, and she was beside herself with worry. She didn’t know what else to do—until she thought of Benjamin.

She called him immediately. “Benjamin! Did you hear what happened to Caitlin? Can you help-”

“I know,” he cut her off. “We’re all already searching. Just wait for news.”

He hung up without another word.

“”

It was clear: every second mattered, and everyone was doing everything they could.

Back from Country A, Federico and Ashfall arrived safely in the U.S., accompanied by Tyler and King.

They had already heard about Caitlin’s disappearance before boarding the flight. Once they landed in New York, Tyler and King got Federico and Ashfall settled before heading straight to Sebastian.

When they found him, they were stunned.

Their usually composed Mr. Vanderbilt looked exhausted, haunted. His eyes were bloodshot, and he was hunched over a map with Zeke, analyzing every lead, every possibility.

“Mr.Vanderbilt, we’re back,” Tyler said.

“Still no news?” King asked.

Sebastian shook his head. “You’re just in time. I need you to check this route–now.”

“Yes, sir.”

15:20 Tue, 2 Sept

The two immediately set off.

60%

Sebastian stared at the massive map, red X’s marking all the dead ends. He turned to Zeke. “Is it possible Caitlin’s already out of the country?”

“But we’ve checked every exit point. There’s nothing,” Zeke said, his voice raspy from exhaustion.

Before they could say more, Sebastian's phone rang.

It was Felix.

"Felix? Did you find something?" he asked urgently.

"Mr. Vanderbilt..." Felix's tone was grim. "We just got a call. Someone reported seeing a woman's body near the reservoir. We're heading there now... You might want to come."

Sebastian's phone slipped from his hand.

He collapsed onto the ground.

Zeke rushed to him. "What is it? What happened?"

AD

Comment

Send gift

Billionaire's Regret: Finding Her

Chapter 578

“Quick... pull me up...”

For a moment, it felt as if all the strength had drained from Sebastian’s body. He collapsed onto the ground, weak and unsteady.

“What happened?”

Zeke hauled him to his feet. Sebastian snatched his phone back, his face dark and taut with tension. “They found a woman’s body in the reservoir... I have to see it for myself.”

The words sent a chill through Zeke. He immediately fell in step behind Sebastian.

Sebastian’s hands were shaking so badly from the tension that he couldn’t even get the car started

after several tries.

“Let me drive. Get in the passenger seat.”

Switching places, Zeke had the engine roaring within seconds and the car speeding away from the temporary command post.

+23)

The hour-long drive to East Reservoir felt like it stretched on for a century. Sebastian’s fists remained clenched the entire way, knuckles white, jaw locked, as if holding himself together was the only thing keeping him from shattering. His chest felt tight, and his mind had gone blank, drowning out even Zeke’s attempts at conversation.

When they finally neared the reservoir, the yellow police tape and flashing lights of patrol cars came

into view.

Sebastian wasn’t even sure how he got out of the car. His body moved on autopilot, but inside, his soul felt like it was drifting somewhere outside himself. His entire frame was cold, trembling, afraid of

the truth he was about to face.

“Come on. Let’s go,” Zeke urged, striding toward the cordon with Sebastian right behind him.

No matter what they were about to see, they had to confirm it with their own eyes.

“Felix!”

Hearing his name, Felix turned, spotted them, and gestured for the officers to let them through.

They joined Felix, and Sebastian’s face was already pale as paper when he asked, “What’s the situation? Who is it?”

1/4

16:00 Wed, 3

48%

+23)

Felix's expression was grim. "A fisherman hooked a woven sack while casting in the reservoir. When he pulled it in, he found it contained dismembered female remains—not a complete body. The medical examiner is checking now. Identity still needs confirmation."

Sebastian's ears roared. It was as if someone had swung a sledgehammer into his skull, splitting it

open.

A body. Cut in half.

The thought turned his blood to ice.

Zeke, equally stunned, felt his stomach knot. Could it really be Caitlin?

They exchanged a glance and decided to see for themselves. But the moment they stepped close enough to glimpse the scene, the sight was nearly unbearable.

Sebastian doubled over, his empty stomach convulsing, bile and acid burning his throat. Zeke, despite all the violent scenes he'd witnessed before, turned his head away, his skin crawling.

Half a corpse, marked by dozens of knife wounds, as if sliced apart piece by piece.

“No... no... That’s not Caitlin...”

Sebastian’s voice was hoarse, his reddened eyes glistening with tears.

Felix placed a firm hand on his shoulder. “Step aside for now. We’ll run a DNA test to confirm. Sebastian, we’ll need one of her samples.”

“I’ll handle it,” Zeke said quickly. “I still have one of Caitlin’s hairs.”

He ordered one of his men to bring the framed art piece containing her hair to the station.

Once the medical examiner finished the initial on-site assessment, the remains were transported back

for further forensic work. Sebastian and Zeke followed Felix to the station, where Zeke handed over

the sample for testing.

“Go get some rest,” Felix urged, watching Sebastian’s hollow, lifeless expression. “If there’s any update, I’ll contact you immediately. We’ll do everything possible to find Caitlin.”

“I’ll take him,” Zeke said, steadying Sebastian and steering him toward the car.

On the drive toward the Vanderbilt estate, Sebastian finally slumped into a half-doze from sheer exhaustion. When they arrived, Zeke tried to quietly open his own door to step out and make a call, but the sound roused Sebastian instantly.

48%

“Caitlin!”

His eyes flew open, panic-stricken. Then reality hit—she wasn’t there.

“We’re at your place. Go inside and rest,” Zeke told him.

Sebastian rubbed at his tired eyes, shaking his head. “No. Back to the command center. Caitlin’s not

dead... she’s not dead...”

It was like he was chanting a spell, trying to force himself to believe it.

Zeke exhaled heavily and turned the car around.

The ship kept cutting across the waves.

Inside the cramped cabin bathroom, Caitlin had locked herself in, desperately trying to figure out how

to break free of the cuffs on her wrists.

There was nothing useful around her. She twisted and pulled until her skin burned, but she couldn't

slip her hands out.

A pounding came at the door.

"Time's up!" Phantom's deep voice called.

"Just a second!" she replied, abandoning her efforts for now.

When she emerged, she looked pale and unsteady, as if seasickness had hit her hard.

Phantom's gaze swept over her. "Don't try anything stupid."

"I'm not... I think I'm seasick. Dizzy. Weak. Nauseous..." she murmured, then gagged and spat a mouthful of water in his direction.

He recoiled in disgust, his guard slipping slightly.

Just then, his phone rang. He glanced at the screen, stepped outside, and locked the cabin door behind him.

Caitlin pressed her ear to the gap, straining to listen.

"I've got Caitlín," Phantom's voice was low. "Heading back toward the city now."

On the other end, Raze—the boss of Black Wolf Fortress—sounded pleased. "Good, Keep her under

3/4

16:00 Wed, 3 Sept

lock and key. Don't let her escape. With Caitlin in our hands, Sebastian won't be far behind."

"Understood."

The call ended.

48%

+23

Caitlin scrambled back to her spot as the door opened. Phantom looked in, saw her lying on the floor

as if asleep, then shut and locked the door again.

The cabin dimmed once more.

Her eyes snapped open, sharp and unwavering.

Now she knew exactly who was behind this.

Black Wolf Fortress.

And if they had gone through all this trouble to take her, their real target was Sebastian.

Her jaw tightened. She had to find a way to escape.

But how could she take down the man outside?

Billionaire's Regret: Finding Her

Chapter 579

New York.

After what felt like an eternity of anxious waiting, the DNA results finally came in.

Felix called Sebastian immediately. “Mr. Vanderbilt! We have the results!”

Sebastian gripped the phone so tightly his knuckles whitened, barely daring to breathe. He forced himself to listen, clinging to a sliver of consciousness.

“The medical examiner has confirmed—the DNA from the woman found in the reservoir does not match Caitlin’s hair sample.”

Sebastian’s chest clenched, and then suddenly a flood of light burst through the darkness in his mind. He hung up, tears springing to his eyes. Turning to Zeke, he blurted out, “It’s not a match! Zeke, it’s

not Caitlin!”

“That’s great news! If the body isn’t Caitlin, then she’s most likely still alive!”

Relief washed over them both. The oppressive weight that had been crushing them finally lifted. Now, there was only one thing left to do—find Caitlin, wherever she was.

Not long after, an even more encouraging lead surfaced. While canvassing the docks, one of Sebastian’s men found a witness.

The witness claimed that on the night of the incident, he'd gotten up to relieve himself and saw a man carrying a large burlap sack onto a boat. The sack was shaped suspiciously like a person.

Shown a photo of Vaughn, the witness confirmed that the man he'd seen looked just like him.

This was the break they needed—it meant Caitlin had been taken by water. All other search efforts could now focus on the waterways.

Sebastian and Zeke rushed to the docks. Surveillance footage from nearby cameras backed up the witness's story: the man carrying the sack did indeed resemble Vaughn—likely the imposter who had abducted Caitlin,

The footage also showed the fake Vaughn boarding a mid-sized transoceanic cruise ship named "The Wavebreaker".

"Given the ship's tonnage and cruising speed—between 40 and 70 kilometers per hour—in about three days, they could already be in international waters," Zeke calculated,

16:00 Wed, 3 Sept

G

Sebastian nodded. “Exactly. We’ll confirm the ship’s course through the maritime signal stations.”

After an intensive search, they found it—one day earlier, *The Wavebreaker* had been tracked in southern waters, heading toward the South Pacific.

Hope surged, but so did fear.

48%

23

1

“From New York to the southern seas takes time. By the time we reach them, they could be deep into

the South Pacific. Once they’re in international waters, tracking them will be nearly impossible. We

have to move now.”

Helicopters were fueled and ready. Sebastian and Zeke each took a team and lifted off toward the southern waters.

On **The Wavebreaker**, Caitlin's strength had finally returned. Phantom had kept her alive with bread and water, but he had no idea she'd been working on an escape.

In the dim cabin, her fingers had found a small section of loose metal along the wall—a strip as thin as

wire. She'd painstakingly worked it free and used it to pick at the lock on her cuffs.

After a relentless struggle, the shackle clicked open. The weight on her wrists was gone. Time for the

next step.

Phantom stood at the helm, guiding the ship toward the South Pacific. Their final destination was a

small island—Black Wolf Fortress's new base of operations, safely beyond U.S. jurisdiction. Once there, they'd be untouchable.

Another half-day and they'd be home free.

A sudden knock on the deck above the cabin made him turn. Caitlin was calling for him.

Switching to autopilot, he headed below, opening the cabin door. "What is it?"

Caitlin lay curled on the floor, her face twisted in pain. "The bread you gave me... it was poisoned..."

Crumbs littered the floor. Foam bubbled at her lips. Her body twitched as if death were moments away.

Phantom frowned. If she died now, everything he'd done would be for nothing.

"That's impossible."

Still, he crouched beside her to check-

16:00 Wed, 3 Sept

▼

48%

And that was when the “poisoned” woman exploded into motion. She whipped the length of chain between her cuffs around his neck, tightening it with all her strength.

Caught off guard, Phantom’s breath hitched, his airway constricting.

He realized instantly—he’d been played.

Caitlin shifted her weight, pulling harder. This was her one chance *to* end him.

But Phantom was a trained killer. With a violent twist, he kicked off the floor, flipping his body to

break her hold, then drove his boot into her chest.

She crashed against the doorframe but used the momentum to scramble for the *exit*.

Phantom lunged after her, catching her ankle. Caitlin rolled, wrenching herself free.

+23

Out on the open deck, the sunlight blinded her for an instant. The cuffs dangled from her wrist—now

a weapon.

“Give up,” Phantom warned coldly. “Or you’ll die a miserable death.”

“You won’t kill me,” Caitlin shot back, eyes blazing. “If you were ordered to, you could’ve done it back

in New York.”

He didn’t bother replying. Enough talking. He charged.

The cuffs swung through the air, slamming into his face. Blow after blow landed—Caitlin was fighting like a cornered animal.

In the distance, several speedboats appeared, cutting through the waves toward them.

Phantom took a heavy kick *to* the ribs and slammed into a sharp-metal edge. Pain flared white-hot as something tore *into* his lower back, blood gushing from the wound.

Caitlin pressed her advantage,

“Go to hell!”

Her final kick sent him over the railing. He hit the water with a splash and vanished beneath the

surface.

Not wasting a second, Caitlin sprinted for the helm. She had to turn this ship around.

Billionaire's Regret: Finding Her

Caitlin had no idea how to pilot a ship, but at a time like this, she didn't care. She could only fumble. through the controls and hope for the best.

After some trial and error, the bow finally began to swing around. When the ship had completed a wide turn toward the direction she had come from, she steadied the wheel and locked it in place.

Her heart pounded with both excitement and relief. She was finally heading home.

But she celebrated too soon. In the distance, speedboats were closing in fast. One of them had already fished Phantom out of the water. The others—more than a dozen in total—were bearing down on the Breaking Waves.

In moments, the ship was surrounded. Caitlin saw that each boat carried several men, all armed with submachine guns in addition to the pilots.

“Don’t move! You’re surrounded!”

“Turn the ship around now!”

They shouted orders, demanding she reverse course. Caitlin ignored them. She didn’t care what they said—she was going back.

Gunfire erupted.

Bullets punched through the bridge windows, leaving spiderweb cracks and holes.

She dropped low to avoid getting hit, cursing inwardly. She had no weapon, while their firepower was

overwhelming.

Within minutes, men were climbing up the sides of the cruise ship. Weapons trained on her, they forced Caitlin to raise her hands in surrender.

Her hard-won return course was immediately undone. The men took control of the helm and steered the ship back in its original direction.

Half a day later, the Breaking Waves reached a coastal dock. The armed men escorted Caitlin onto an

island.

The island was large, linked to other islets and reefs to form a crescent-shaped chain. It was undeveloped, save for the remnants of a native settlement—its original inhabitants wiped out after Black Wolf Fortress had seized the land.

16:00 Wed, 3 Sept

This was their new base, far to the south, well beyond the northern territories where the Obsidian

Order had been searching in vain.

48%

They marched Caitlin toward a row of thatched buildings. Inside the largest hut, the warlord Raze, leader of Black Wolf Fortress, was waiting in the council hall.

Phantom was brought in first. Wounded but still on his feet, he reported, "Fortress Master, Phantom reporting back."

"Well done! You've earned yourself great merit."

Raze ordered him taken away for treatment, then barked, "Bring the woman in!"

He wanted to see the woman Sebastian was willing to risk everything for.

Caitlin was dragged in, bound tightly. Her clothes were disheveled and her hair a mess, but her

were still fierce, her posture unbroken.

Raze stepped closer, sizing her up. “You’re Caitlin?”

She gave a short, derisive laugh and turned her head away.

Raze grabbed her chin, forcing her to face him. His eyes burned with hatred. “Do you know why I brought you here?”

“No idea,” Caitlin replied coolly.

eyes

“Then I’ll tell you! Do you know what Sebastian did? He killed my only brother and nearly wiped out my entire Black Wolf Fortress. I have a blood feud with him that can never be resolved!”

Caitlin met his rage with contempt. “Tell me, Mr. Raze, why would Sebastian kill your brother and attack your Fortress? Wasn’t it because you kidnapped his father and forced his uncle to work for you? You kept the Vanderbilt brothers under your control for eighteen years, robbing Sebastian of a chance to see his father. The real culprit behind your brother’s death is you—and you alone.”

Her words hit him like poisoned arrows, piercing straight into his chest. He staggered back a few steps, shock flashing across his face. The pain lasted only seconds before he hardened again.

“No! It was you... it was Sebastian who killed my brother! I’ll kill him to avenge him. And you—you deserve to die too!”

In his fury, Raze drew his weapon, ready to shoot her. Caitlin knew there was no mercy in his hands and had already steeled herself *for* death. Better to die than be used as leverage against Sebastian.

Sept

24. 43%]

Before he could pull the trigger, Sheldon—the Fortress’s strategist and second-in-command—grabbed his arm, pushing the barrel down.

“If you kill her now, our entire plan falls apart.”

Reluctantly, Raze eased off. Caitlin let out a quiet breath, her eyes shifting toward the man in his thirties who had just saved her life.

Sheldon continued, “With Caitlin in our hands, Sebastian will have no choice but to come to us. Until

the plan is complete, she stays alive. No harm comes to her.”

“Fine.”

Raze returned to his seat, leaving Caitlin to Sheldon’s care.

“Take her below. Treat her well, but she doesn’t take one step outside that door.”

“Yes, sir.”

They led Caitlin away, unbound her, and placed her in a small room. Armed guards stood outside.

A woman around her age entered, carrying clean clothes and a tray of food. Caitlin eyed her warily.

“You don’t have to be afraid,” the woman said with a faint smile. “I won’t hurt you. These clothes and

the food are for you. You can wash up and eat something.”

Caitlin glanced at the food, still suspicious.

“It’s not poisoned,” the woman assured her. “I made it myself.”

She left, locking the door behind her.

Caitlin was starving and exhausted, but she refused to touch the food. She washed, changed into the clean clothes, and rested briefly.

Two hours later, the door opened again. Caitlin tensed.

Raze entered with several men. Her hand closed around a shard of glass she’d hidden behind her back.

Seeing her again, Raze’s eyes widened slightly. He took a deep breath, his gaze lingering before he muttered to Sheldon, “She really is a beauty. No wonder Sebastian is obsessed with her.”

Sheldon said nothing, his face unreadable.

16:00 Wed, 3 Sept

48%

23

Raze's expression turned smug. "Caitlin, for the sake of your looks and youth, if *you* agree to stay and serve me, I'll let you live."

"Keep dreaming."

Her answer was cold and short.

"Don't refuse a toast only to drink a forfeit. There's no woman I can't break."

He stepped toward her, clearly intending to take what he wanted by force.

Caitlin lifted the shard of mirror to her neck. "Touch me, and I'll die right here."

田

Billionaire's Regret: Finding Her

Chapter 581

Raze froze, his dark gaze locked on the shard of glass in Caitlin's hand.

This woman was even more unyielding than he'd expected.

48%

But what she didn't seem to understand was that the harder she was to break, the more it stoked a

man's desire to conquer her.

Sheldon stepped in quickly. "Don't ruin the bigger plan over a woman. With your power, there's no kind of woman in this world you can't have. Why waste your time on *one* who's already married and

borne children?"

"Hmph!"

Raze allowed himself to be swayed, shooting Caitlin one last murderous glare. “You’re right, she’s just a woman. Once I’ve crushed Sebastian, you’ll be a widow. Let’s see what you do then.”

He stormed out, and the door was locked again. Caitlin’s heart sank. She knew what would come next -Raze would use her to get to Sebastian. The thought filled her with dread.

Back in the council hall, Raze turned to Sheldon. “Since Caitlin is in my hands, contact Sebastian and tell him to come to the island and ransom her himself.”

He planned *to* lure Sebastian in, capture him, and avenge his brother.

Sheldon nodded but hesitated. “Boss, most of our main forces may have relocated here to Crescent Island, but many of our men’s families are still in the northern territories. If Sebastian uses their lives to force us to release her, what then?”

When they’d fled, only Raze, Sheldon, and a few others had managed to bring their families with them. Most had left loved ones behind, and the Obsidian Order had taken over the territory they

abandoned.

Even Raze’s elderly mother had stayed behind, refusing to leave her homeland. It was a real problem,

But Raze's eyes were cold. "How do you know they're still alive? For all you know, Sebastian has already slaughtered them all."

Sheldon fell silent. It was a possibility too grim to dwell on, and one they could never confirm.

"You saw it yourself—the way he butchered our people without mercy. You know exactly how ruthless

he can be."

16:00 Wed, 3 Sept

Sheldon finally nodded. "All right. I'll contact the Obsidian Order."

3

23

Sebastian and Zeke were in a helicopter heading south over US territory when a transmission came in from the Obsidian Order headquarters. The latest update had arrived.

Black Wolf Fortress had sent a direct message: they had Caitlin, and they wanted to negotiate with

Sebastian himself.

“They have news of Caitlin!”

After four days of agony, hearing his wife’s name brought a hot sting to Sebastian’s eyes. His *voice* was rough with emotion.

“What did they say? Where is she?”

“They took her. She’s with Black Wolf Fortress. They want to negotiate—directly with me.”

Sebastian relayed the message to Zeke.

“Did they say where?” Zeke asked.

“They’re holed up on Crescent Island in the South Pacific. They want me to come alone.”

“They’re obviously trying to lure you in. Don’t rush into it—we need a plan.”

“I already have one,” Sebastian said flatly.

Knowing Caitlin’s location allowed him to think clearly again. He told the pilot, “Reply to headquarters. Tell Black Wolf Fortress I agree to the negotiation. And warn them—if they harm my wife, they’ll pay dearly.”

“Yes, sir.” The pilot relayed the message.

The helicopter continued for more than two hours before they landed to refuel.

During the stop, Sebastian contacted headquarters again, ordering men to assemble at the South Sea base.

Several hours later, they reached the base. As the head of the Obsidian Order, Sebastian secured clearance for their aircraft to land.

Dozens of hours later, fighter jets roared in from the clouds, descending on the base. The coastal defense forces provided full support, including long-range naval vessels for the Order’s use.

16:00 Wed, 3 Sept

α 48%

23

Black Wolf Fortress received the Obsidian Order's reply quickly.

Sheldon reported to Raze, "They answered. Sebastian agreed to negotiate—he's already on his way."

"Good. Tell everyone to be ready. I'm going to trap him like a dog and make sure he never leaves this island."

Raze's eyes glinted with malice. "I'll make sure he begs for death before I'm *done* with him."

Sheldon added, "Revenge is one thing, but we also need to take back the northern territories."

"Of course. I won't rot on this rock forever. I'll return to the north, to my lands."

"When will Sebastian arrive?"

“Based on their last transmission, they’re already in the Pacific, heading for Crescent Island.”

“It won’t be long now. Let’s go to the watchtower.”

Raze and Sheldon headed up to survey the seas.

On the fifth day after Caitlin’s abduction, Sebastian’s forces sailed for the South Pacific.

The sun blazed over the wide ocean, heat radiating from the deck. Sebastian stood at the rail, eyes scanning the endless horizon. His expression was calm, but his mind was a storm.

Had Caitlin been mistreated in these lost days? The thought made his chest ache.

He had sworn to protect her, to never let her be harmed again. Yet here she was, in danger because of him. The guilt was crushing.

Zeke walked up beside him. He had come along knowing the risks, determined to help bring Caitlin home.

“Drink some water. Try to rest. You won’t do her any good if you collapse before we even start talking,” Zeke said, offering a bottle.

Sebastian took a few swallows “I can’t sleep. Every time I close my eyes, I see her in danger. I’ll keep going until she’s safe.”

Zeke didn’t argue. He turned to face the waves with him.

16:00 Wed, 3 Sept @W.

How much longer until they reached Crescent Island?

And what kind of shape would Caitlin be in when they got there?

3

Billionaire's Regret: Finding Her

Chapter 582

On Crescent Island, Caitlin hadn’t stopped thinking about escape for a single moment. The woman who brought her food, Ula, had a kind heart, and everything Caitlin had eaten from her so far had

been safe.

Now that her strength and focus had returned, it was time to put a plan into action.

The sound of a key turning came from the door. Ula stepped in, carrying a tray. "Caitlin, here's your dinner. Please enjoy it."

"Wait, Ula. What's all this?"

Caitlin moved closer, asking casually.

Ula was always quick to answer her questions. "These are shellfish we gathered from the sea. Very

fresh."

Caitlin nodded, and as Ula turned to leave, she struck with a precise chop to the neck, knocking her

out. "Sorry, Ula. Nothing personal."

She closed the door, then swapped clothes and hair ornaments with Ula, arranging the unconscious

woman on the bed so she looked like she was sleeping.

With the tray in hand and her head lowered, Caitlin stepped outside. The guards didn't look twice, and she slipped away.

She walked quickly, scanning for a way off the island. She might cross paths with Black Wolf Fortress men *at* any moment, but the disguise, along with the dimming evening light, worked in her favor.

From Ula, she'd learned that shellfish collectors left through a southwest exit to reach the sea. If Caitlin could find that spot, she could get off the island.

She was headed that way when someone grabbed her from behind, a strong arm clamping around her waist and dragging her toward a deserted hut.

She twisted and fought but couldn't break free—the man was too big.

Inside the dim hut, his voice was thick with lust. "Ula... I've missed you. Come make me feel good."

Revulsion hit her, Clearly Ula's looks had attracted unwanted attention in this male-dominated place.

When his hands groped for her, Caitlin didn't hesitate. One swift slash, and he staggered back with a choked sound, eyes wide in shock.

He never had time to realize that the "Ula" he'd cornered wasn't who he thought she was.

Wiping the blood from the curved blade on his clothes, Caitlin slid it back into its sheath. The knife was Ula's tool for harvesting shellfish—now it was her weapon.

Leaving the body behind, she continued toward the southwest exit.

She'd barely gone far when an elderly woman grabbed her wrist. "Ula, quick! The missus is in labor.

We've been looking for you!"

In the poor light, the woman didn't notice the mistake and pulled Caitlin toward a small courtyard.

From inside came the sharp, strained cries of a woman.

"Ahhh....."

Someone rushed out. “Go tell the master—she’s having trouble!”

A difficult birth. No wonder the screams were so raw.

“Oh no... if it’s a breach, what do we do? Ula, come help the lady!” The old woman hurried inside.

Night was falling. Amid the confusion, Caitlin knew this was her best chance to slip away. But hearing the laboring woman’s cries weaken, she felt that tug of conscience she could never quite ignore.

She hesitated for several long seconds—then stepped forward, pushing aside the straw curtain.

The scene inside was chaos. Two or three women clustered around the bed, while the woman on it

had no strength left to cry out.

“Come on, my lady... one more push...”

But the woman had gone limp.

“She’s fainted! What do we do?”

Before Caitlin could act, Sheldon burst through the door,

She turned her back quickly to avoid being recognized.

He didn't notice her at first, going straight to the bedside. "Wife, wake up... please, wake up!"

When shaking her failed, he asked, "Have you called the doctor?"

"Sheldon, the only doctor on the island was beaten to death days ago. There's no doctor left!"

O

"Damn it!" His voice cracked with anger and helplessness. Without help, both mother and child could

die.

Caitlin finally spoke. "Let me try. I might be able to save her."

Everyone turned to stare. The old woman's mouth dropped open at the sight of a stranger in Ula's clothes.

Sheldon's eyes went wide. "You..." Recognition flashed, but urgency overrode it. "You can help her?"

"I can try. But no promises."

It was enough. He stepped back, letting her through.

She checked the woman's eyes—the pupils were starting to dilate.

"I need a needle."

Sheldon barked the order, and moments later someone brought a sewing needle. Caitlin held it over a candle flame to sterilize it, then began pressing and pricking key points on the woman's hand and

arm.

After a tense minute, the woman stirred.

“She’s awake!”

Sheldon’s relief was palpable. “Wife...”

“Ahhh...” The renewed contractions tore another cry from her.

“Wait outside,” Caitlin told him, then asked for sugar water. When it arrived, she helped the woman

drink, restoring some strength.

With firm, calm guidance, she assisted through the delivery until the air was split by the high, healthy

wail of a newborn.

“Waaah-”

Outside, Sheldon froze at the sound. Emotion crashed over him like a wave.

“Sheldon! It’s a boy!” the old woman called out.

“And my wife?”

“She’s fine—both are fine now.”

16:01 Wed, 3 Sept @W.

“Thank God...”

48% -

+23

He was still absorbing the joy when a squad of torch-bearing patrolmen poured into the courtyard, surrounding it.

“The woman might be inside,” the leader barked. “Search every room!”

16:01

Wed, 3 Sept

🔊 48%

Billionaire's Regret: Finding Her

Chapter 583

The torchlight cast flickering shadows, lighting up the dark courtyard.

When Sheldon saw the armed men storm in, heard them talk about searching for a woman, he knew immediately—they were after Caitlin.

But she had just saved his wife's life and delivered his child. There was no way he'd let them take her without a word. He stepped forward to block them. "Stop right there! What do you think you're doing?"

"Sheldon, that woman Caitlin attacked Ula, disguised herself as her to escape, and killed the cook! The boss ordered us to bring her back immediately!" the patrol leader reported.

Inside, Caitlin heard

every word. She knew they had discovered her escape and were coming for her.

She scanned the room for another way out. The only option was the window.

Outside, Sheldon kept arguing. "If she's escaped, then go after her! Why are you in my yard? Do you even realize my wife is in there giving birth right now? Idiots!"

A newborn's cry echoed from inside, but the patrol leader stood firm. "We know about the birth, but

someone swears they saw that woman come in here. Orders are orders, Sheldon. No offense."

They tried to push past him, but he blocked them again. "So the boss's orders are orders, but mine

aren't?"

Just then, a shout came from the side. "There! She's climbing out the window!"

“After her!”

The men broke off and chased her. Caitlin ran until a massive boulder cut off her path.

The patrol closed in, surrounding her.

The torches lit every face clearly now. She was wearing Ula’s clothes, but her beauty was far beyond

Ula’s.

“Where do you think you can run? **This** island is far beyond any national waters. Even if you could swim, you wouldn’t make it. We have men everywhere. You’ll never get away.”

Noticing the curved blade in her hand, the leader gave a mocking laugh. “I’d advise you to come quietly. Our bullets don’t discriminate.”

Outnumbered and outgunned, Caitlin lowered her weapon and allowed herself to be taken.

“Bring her back!”

Bound, she was dragged before Raze.

Sheldon, watching her marched away, hesitated—then decided he needed to follow. He didn’t have to make the choice; the patrol leader came for him. “Sheldon, since the fugitive came from your yard, the boss wants you to explain yourself in person.”

“I’ll make it clear,” Sheldon replied grimly.

The council hall was ablaze with lamplight, Raze seated at the head.

The patrol reported, “Boss, we’ve recaptured the woman.”

“Bring her forward.”

His expression was hard, simmering with anger.

When Caitlin was shoved in, still dressed as Ula, he sneered. “I knew you were clever. Didn’t think you were this clever. Do you even realize what you’ve done?”

“I don’t,” she shot back.

Raze gestured, and the real Ula was dragged in, forced to her knees, weeping. “Boss, please! I didn’t do anything, I swear! I knew nothing about this!”

“You knew nothing? Then how did you swap clothes with her? How did she get out unless you were helping her? You know what happens to those who betray me!”

“I didn’t! I just brought her food as usual. I didn’t betray you...” Ula sobbed.

“Take her out and cut her down.”

His cruelty was plain in moments like this. Hearing her death sentence, Ula wailed in terror.

Caitlin couldn’t stand it. “Let her go! She had nothing to do with this, I attacked her when she brought my food, stole her clothes, and escaped. She’s innocent.”

Raze studied her, then waved for his men to release Ula. The woman stumbled away, her emotions a

storm.

“Good,” he said coldly. He motioned, and the cook’s corpse was brought in. “And him? Did you kill him

too?”

“That’s right. He mistook me for Ula and tried to put his hands on me. I dealt with him. He got what he

16:01 Wed, 3 Sept @

deserved.”

“Good. Very good. You’ve got guts.”

He turned to his men. “Where’s Sheldon? Bring him here.”

“Sheldon’s here!”

48%

+23

When Sheldon entered, Raze glared. “This woman was found in your yard. Explain yourself. Were you trying to help her escape Crescent Island?”

“I had no idea she was there,” Sheldon answered. “My wife was in labor. I rushed home and didn’t even look twice. I thought the one helping with the birth was Ula. She had on Ula’s clothes—I didn’t suspect a thing.”

Raze trusted no one. This interrogation was to see if Ula and Sheldon were in on it. Satisfied they weren’t, his anger cooled—slightly.

“Fine. Then today’s events are Caitlin’s alone. But for the sake of my plan, I won’t risk her slipping away again. Lock her in the water cage.”

It was a brutal punishment. The cage was submerged, damp, crawling with snakes, rats, and

venomous insects.

As they moved to take her, Sheldon spoke-up. “Let me say something. The water cage is filthy and swarming with vermin. If something happens to her, your plan could be ruined.”

Raze's eyes narrowed. "You're pleading for her? What is she to you?"

"She's nothing to me," Sheldon replied, stepping forward. "But just now, when my wife was dying from a difficult birth, Caitlin saved her—and my child.

"She owed me nothing, yet she gave up her chance to escape to save them. I can't stand by and watch

her be thrown to her death.

"I'm not challenging your authority. I'm saying that when we men pursue great ambitions, we shouldn't drag family and children into it. The innocent should never pay the price."

Silence fell.

Everyone in the hall was stunned—Sheldon was openly defending a fugitive. Did he not care if he provoked the boss?

Around them, the men could see the storm gathering in Raze's expression. His anger was a living

16:01 Wed, 3 Sept W

thing, building toward an inevitable explosion.

16:01 Wed, 3 Sept

24.48%2

Billionaire's Regret: Finding Her

24.48%2

Caitlin glanced at the man standing a short distance away. She hadn't expected Sheldon to step forward at such a critical moment and speak up for her.

His words—"Innocent wives and children should never be dragged into this, nor should the innocent be harmed"—truly showed the breadth of his vision. Compared to Raze, Sheldon carried himself with far more integrity.

It hadn't been in vain that she gave up her chance to escape earlier just to save his wife and child.

Raze's face was dark with fury. Sheldon's words had only fanned the fire. "Sheldon, do you even know what you're doing?"

“I do. I’m thinking about the bigger picture.”

Sheldon was prepared for the consequences of offending Raze. The worst case might be a harsh scolding or having Caitlin still thrown into the water cage. But it was something he had to say.

“You captured Caitlin to use her against Sebastian. But if Sebastian comes here for negotiations and sees that we’ve tortured and mistreated her, what do you think he’ll do?”

*If he brings the full might of the Obsidian Order against us, what strength do we have left to fight? We’ve already abandoned our homeland and hidden ourselves here on Crescent Island. Many of our people can’t even adapt to the climate.

“What is our true objective? Is it to torment one woman? No—it’s to use her as leverage for

negotiations. Revenge isn’t the only thing at stake here!

“If you believe I’m **wrong**, then I’ll resign my position and take whatever punishment you see fit.”

The hall fell into a dead silence. Only the sound of distant waves filled the gap.

Raze, *who* had been on the verge of exploding, sat in silence for a moment, then exhaled deeply “Fine. You’re right. I won’t let a single woman ruin my plans.

“But until the negotiations are over, if Caitlin suffers any accident or dares to escape, you and your entire family will pay the price?”

“I understand.”

Sheldon knew Raze had spared **her**, if only for the sake of strategy.

He turned and ordered the guards, “Take Caitlin back, and guard her well.”

16:01 Wed, 3 Sept

As Caitlin was led away, she glanced back at Sheldon, her eyes full of unspoken gratitude.

3

48%

+23)

This time, they shackled her wrists and ankles with heavy chains, ensuring she wouldn't get another

chance to escape.

After the dark night came a foggy dawn. As the sun rose, the mist slowly dispersed.

A massive battleship cut across the waves of the open sea.

Inside, Zeke and Sebastian pored over maps of the South Pacific.

"Judging by the signal coordinates, Black Wolf Fortress's new base must be on this crescent-shaped island." Zeke tapped the map.

Sebastian studied the terrain. "The island is surrounded by reefs. The battleship won't be able to get close. When the time comes, I'll take a speedboat in myself."

"I'll go with you," Zeke offered.

"No. You'll stay back for support."

They had already settled their plan when a sailor rushed over. “Mr. Vanderbilt, there are multiple vessels ahead. Likely Black Wolf Fortress ships. They’re demanding we stop!”

Everyone moved to the deck. Through the thinning fog, the island loomed into view. They had reached Crescent Island’s waters.

“Slow us down. Stop the ship,” Sebastian ordered.

The helmsman complied, and the battleship gradually reduced speed until it halted just a few dozen meters from the blockade of enemy boats.

The men of Black Wolf Fortress stared up at the warship’s massive silhouette, nervous but unable to

retreat.

Sebastian broadcast his message across the waters. “Is this Black Wolf Fortress territory? I am Sebastian. I’ve come to negotiate”

From the lead vessel, a man lifted a loudhailer and shouted back. “Sebastian! Only you are allowed to set foot on the island. No one else is to move a step closer!”

“Fine. Take me to your leader, Raze.”

wed, Sept

48%

The warship lowered a speedboat. Alone, Sebastian boarded it and followed their boats toward

Crescent Island.

On the battleship, Zeke and the others stood ready as backup. If negotiations failed, they would launch a rescue immediately.

23

News of Sebastian’s arrival was quickly relayed to the main camp. Raze knew the time had come and

called for full alert.

“Everyone, be ready! Once he’s inside, I’ll trap him like a rat in a cage. He came in—he won’t be going

back out!”

“Yes, sir!” the fortress men roared in unison.

It didn’t take long before Sebastian’s speedboat landed on the island.

Black Wolf Fortress soldiers lined the road, weapons in hand, watching him with predatory stares.

He was searched, then escorted by a commander toward the main council hall where Raze was waiting.

Even at a glance, it was obvious Black Wolf Fortress had chosen poorly by abandoning the northern territories for this island. The climate was harsh, the land undeveloped, survival here was tenuous at

best. Sooner or later, they would wither like castaways.

Sebastian walked through their ranks, unarmed, every eye on him, until he reached the great hall.

“Leader! Sebastian is here!” a guard announced before stepping aside.

Sebastian’s gaze locked on Raze, seated on the throne.

At last, the two leaders faced each other. Their eyes met, and though no words were spoken, the air filled with the smoke of battle yet to come.

“Raze, I’m here. Where is she?” Sebastian’s voice was low, his anger burning beneath the surface.

Raze sneered. “So you had the guts after all, Sebastian. To come here alone, into my hands.”

He reveled in the sight. Sebastian was deep in his den now. No matter that his warship lingered beyond the reefs. They wouldn’t dare attack, not with the terrain against them. Here, Sebastian was alone, isolated, powerless.

“For my wife, I would walk into the jaws of hell itself.”

Sebastian stood in simple clothes, weaponless, under the aim of countless guns—and yet not a flicker

16:01 Wed, 3 Sept @ W

of fear crossed his face.

“Good! Since you’ve come, then it’s time we settle our old accounts!”

ū & 48%2

Raze slammed a palm onto the table and pointed at him. “You slaughtered over a thousand of my men in Black Wolf Fortress. You killed my brother with your own hands. Don’t you think it’s time to pay that debt in blood?”

Sebastian stayed silent, but the fortress soldiers erupted.

“Blood for blood!”

“Blood for blood!”

+23)

The memory of the Obsidian Order's night raid still burned in their minds. They wanted nothing more

than to tear Sebastian apart.

Raze raised his hand, silencing them. His voice dropped to a chilling growl. "Sebastian! You hear that? With a single word from me, they'll rip you to pieces—scatter your ashes to the wind!"

E

Billionaire's Regret: Finding Her

Chapter 585

Sebastian raised his brows sharply, his expression cold as he said,

"Since Mr. Raze wants to settle the score with me, then I've got one to settle with you *too*! You imprisoned my father for eighteen years, used my uncle to do your dirty work for Black Wolf

Fortress, nearly got my whole family killed, and dragged my family's business into ruin. You were the *one* who

struck first!"

"If hadn't held back, do you really think any of you would still be breathing today? The one who should've been torn to pieces and ground into dust is you, Raze!"

The two locked eyes, their gazes clashing like blades. Neither one was willing to back down.

Looking at the past, Raze owed Sebastian far more. But there was no way Raze would ever admit he

was in the wrong.

His face twisted with anger as he barked,

"Sebastian, you're getting way too cocky! Don't think I won't kill you just because I haven't yet!"

Sebastian let out a cold laugh.

“I know. The moment you give the order, I’m dead for sure. The reason I dared to come here today is because I’ve already made peace with dying.

“You want to kill me? I get it. Same way I want to kill you.

“But I have to ask—after all the trouble you went through to capture my wife—was it really just for my

life?

“Is my

life worth more than the thousands you lost in Black Shark? More than your brother’s?

“Will killing me really bring your brother and your men back? Will it fix anything? Have you even thought about the consequences?”

“I’ve thought about it plenty. If I can take you down, I’ll pay any price!”

His words hit Raze where it hurt. Revenge was all he’d ever wanted. Of course, he’d considered the consequences. If he didn’t kill Sebastian in this life, how could he face the men who’d died? How could he show his face in front of his brothers?

“So you’re willing to give up Black Shark’s entire northern territory, to hole up on this tiny island, all just for my head? But have you thought about what’s behind me?”

16:01 Wed, 3 Sept

6 4 6 48%

+23

“The full power of The Obsidian Order! If I die here today, their wrath will wipe this island off the map. Every single one of you will be buried with me.”

“And your families still in the north? You think they’ll be spared?”

“The worst-case scenario for me is mutual destruction. Are you really prepared for that?”

Sebastian’s voice was icy, his gaze piercing.

Raze’s eyes narrowed dangerously.

“Even if I die, dragging you and your wife down with me is worth it!”

All the men around them had their weapons raised, just waiting for Raze’s signal.

One word from him, and Sebastian would be full of holes.

But Raze didn’t give the order. He just stared Sebastian down, locked in a tense standoff.

Sheldon stepped in, sensing things were getting out of control.

“Big bro, we didn’t bring Mr. Sebastian to Crescent Island to end in a bloodbath. This was supposed to be a negotiation, something that benefits both sides. Why don’t we talk first?”

It was obvious Raze had no intention of negotiating anymore. He wanted blood.

Sheldon knew his brother well. When Raze got this angry, he really might give the order to shoot.

Raze scoffed.

“His wife’s in my hands. What right does he have to negotiate?”

He shot Sebastian a mocking look, confident that Caitlin was already captured and that Sebastian had walked right into his trap.

“Sebastian, you’ve clearly forgotten your place. You should be on your knees, begging me to spare her life. And yet, you’re threatening me? Aren’t you afraid I’ll kill her right now?”

He gave a command to the men beside him. Moments later, Caitlin was dragged out to the watchtower nearby,

“Caitlin!”

Sebastian’s heart clenched the moment he saw her. He instinctively tried to rush forward but was immediately stopped at gunpoint.

16:01 Wed, 3 Sept@

. 48%

23)

Caitlin was tied up, her mouth gagged. They yanked the cloth from her mouth, and she finally managed to speak.

“Sebastian! Don’t worry about me...”

Seeing Sebastian walk straight into danger for her—like a lamb *to the slaughter*—tore her apart.

And Sebastian? Watching his wife bound and helpless broke his heart all over again.

He turned his bloodshot eyes to Raze, fists clenched as he roared,

“Raze! You shameless bastard! Using such low tactics to catch my wife!”

“Haha, what’s the matter? Scared now?”

Raze was beyond smug. He’d found Sebastian’s weakness and was relishing every second of it.

Sebastian lowered his head, falling silent for a few seconds. When he looked up again, his expression had gone completely calm.

“There’s really nothing to be afraid of. She’s just a woman. Kill her, and I can find another one. I could have a dozen wives if I wanted. But a mother... you only get one. Isn’t that right?”

His sudden shift in tone and attitude completely threw Raze off.

“What the hell are you talking about?”

When a weakness is no longer a weakness, the only one panicking is the one doing the threatening.

On the watchtower, Caitlin heard every word. She knew he was saying it on purpose. Only if he “let go” of her would they have a real chance of surviving.

“What I mean is simple. I didn’t come here empty-handed today. I brought someone with me. Someone you know very well.”

Sebastian revealed his first card.

Raze’s expression tightened. He had no idea what Sebastian was planning.

“What are you trying to pull?”

“What I’m saying is... I came all this way to see you, and I brought your mother along too. She’s been waiting a long time to see you, I’m sure she misses you dearly.”

The moment Sebastian mentioned Raze’s mother, Raze shot up in fury.

16:02 Wed, 3 Sept

“Sebastian! That’s low, even for you! You went after my mother?!”

3 48%

Now he understood what that line earlier meant: “You can have a thousand wives, but only one mother.”

That bastard—he actually took his mother hostage!

Sebastian gave a mocking shrug.

“You started with dirty tactics, I’m just returning the favor.”

The tables were starting to turn. Watching Raze begin to lose his cool, Sebastian stayed calm and composed.

“So? Should I have her brought in?”

Raze paused. He nearly fell for it.

He sat back down with a sneer.

“Don’t play games with me. You think I’d fall for that crap?”

23)

“If you don’t believe me, go check. Send someone to our warship. See for yourself whether I’m lying.”

Raze’s face darkened. He turned to look at Sheldon. Sheldon immediately stepped forward.

“Big bro, I’ll go check it out myself. See if he’s bluffing.”

“Do it.”

Raze had no other choice. As Sebastian had said, you only get one mother.

Raze had taken countless lives, but he was always respectful to his mother.

If she really was in Sebastian's hands, things could get messy fast.

But if Sebastian dared to lie to him—then he wouldn't get the chance to regret it.

AD

Comment

Send gift

No Ads

16:02 Wed, 3 Sept

Chapter 586

Billionaire's Regret: Finding Her

Chapter 586

48%

Sheldon led a group toward Sebastian's warship, and sure enough, there she was—Raze's mother, standing right at the bow.

As soon as she spotted Sheldon, she waved her arms impatiently.

"Sheldon! Where's Raze? What's taking him so long to come get me? I traveled all this way across the sea, and now I have to stand here roasting in the sun? I'm about to pass out from the heat!"

Raze's mother was known for her fiery temper. Sheldon kept a respectful *tone*, replying,

"Ma'am, please wait inside the cabin where it's cooler. I'll go let Raze know and bring him here."

“You mean you can’t just take me over now?”

“We’ve still got a few things to deal with. Just a little longer, please.”

Sheldon quickly returned and reported everything to Raze. The moment Raze heard that Sebastian had really brought his mother, his face turned dark as night.

“Despicable! Despicable! Despicable!”

He spat the word three times through clenched teeth, eyes locked on Sebastian like he wanted to crack his skull open.

“I didn’t think you knew the meaning of ‘despicable,’ Mr. Raze. Seems you’re more fluent in Chinese than I thought,” Sebastian said coolly.

With the advantage now in Sebastian’s hands, the balance of power had shifted. Both sides had cards on the table—it was time to negotiate.

“Why did you bring my mother? If anything happens to her, I swear, I’ll make you pay.”

Raze was furious just thinking about it. His mother had a heart condition—any stress or mishap during the trip could have been fatal.

“I understand your concern, Raze. It’s exactly how I felt when you kidnapped my wife.

“If all you wanted was my life, you could’ve taken it long ago. You wouldn’t have needed to go through all this trouble, setting up such a complicated trap.

“So don’t tell me all this was just for me and my wife. That’s hard to believe.

“I’m sure you have other goals. So how about we stop dancing around and have an honest

16:02 Wed, 3 Sept

conversation? Let’s see what my life—and hers—is actually worth to you.”

9

48%

23

No one at Black Wolf Fortress really wanted mutual destruction. Sheldon jumped in at the right time.

“Why not talk now? Lay all the conditions on the table. Let’s see what he’s really offering.”

At this point, Raze had already lost his upper hand. Dragging things out, or worse, triggering a fight,

would be disastrous.

And his mother—he only had one.

It burned him up inside, but he gritted his teeth and said,

“Fine. We’ll negotiate.”

Sheldon gestured,

“Mr. Vanderbilt, this way, please.”

The two sides finally sat down across a long table to begin talks.

Sebastian glanced around the Black Wolf Fortress base and let out a low whistle.

“This place doesn’t quite measure up to your old base in the North, does it?”

“Hmph.” Raze shot him a sharp glare.

“Thanks to you.”

It was a loaded question and they both knew it. They were northerners—of course they didn’t belong

out here in the southern seas.

They’d been forced to flee *to* Crescent Island to escape The Obsidian Order. Now they were practically pirates.

“My conflict with Black Wolf Fortress didn’t start for no reason. You brought it on yourselves. So of course we hit back hard.”

Sebastian took a breath and continued.

“But if we keep going like this—me killing you, you killing me, your men seeking revenge, my family seeking revenge—when does it end?”

“So instead of dragging this out forever, let’s have a serious discussion. Is there a way we can settle this?”

16:02 Wed, 3 Sept W

Sebastian wasn’t just looking to stop the bleeding—he wanted to cure the wound entirely.

Unless Black Wolf Fortress gave up on revenge, he and his family would never know peace. Ambushes, sneak attacks... they’d never be able to rest.

“Settle our hatred with a few words?” Raze scoffed.

“You took my only brother. And didn’t your father and uncle both walk free in the end?”

“I know it’s not easy to let go. So let’s talk about compensation.”

48%

+23)

“Fine! I want our northern territory back. And I want KM International *Group* to be under our control- unconditionally-for the next fifty years!”

Raze wasn't negotiating. He was making demands like a warlord.

Sebastian shook his head.

“I'll return your northern territory. But KM International Group will never be under your thumb again.”

Bang!

Raze slammed his hand on the table.

“Then there's nothing left to discuss.”

In an instant, all his men raised their weapons, aiming straight at Sebastian.

On the watchtower, Caitlin's heart clenched as she watched everything unfold.

1

Sheldon was startled and quickly stepped in.

“Raze! Come on, calm down! Let's talk this through!” He waved at the men, signaling them to lower their guns.

Sebastian didn't flinch. He stared Raze down.

“You've said what you want. Now it's my turn.”

“You're in no position to make demands.”

“And yet, I'm the one holding your dearest mother on my ship, And your men? Their wives and children are still up north. Or have you all forgotten about them?”

Sebastian's words hit hard. Sheldon raised an eyebrow.

E

48%

+23

"Mr. Vanderbilt... Are you saying you didn't kill our families?"

"That's right. I never ordered the killing of your loved ones. If you return to the North, they'll be waiting for you."

The men looked around at each other, stunned. Their expressions shifted—complicated, uncertain.

Who wants to live in exile? Who wouldn't want to go home, to be with their family?

Sebastian's words struck a nerve. Deep down, they all wanted to go back.

Raze hadn't expected this. He thought his mother was the only bargaining chip Sebastian had. He'd assumed their families had been wiped out. But now\...

"And why should I believe you?"

Sebastian had anticipated the doubt. He pulled out his phone and played a video.

"Here. This was recorded by The Obsidian Order right before I left. Take a look."

The video played scenes from their homeland—familiar buildings, familiar streets. Women, elderly folks, and children looked into the camera, some waving, others holding signs.

They all said the same thing: they missed their families. They wanted them to come home.

The voices of their wives and children broke through whatever walls they'd put up. Some men had tears in their eyes. Some looked away, fists clenched.

Raze didn't speak. Not for a long time.

Sheldon finally said,

“Mr. Vanderbilt, thank *you* for not harming them. On behalf of all of us from the North... thank you.”

Sebastian saw the tide turning and struck while the iron was hot.

“Raze. If we keep this feud going, there’s only one ending—mutual destruction. Is that really what you

want?

“If you’re willing to let me and my wife go, to let the past die here, then I’ll return the northern territory to you. You’ll be free to go home and reunite with your families.

“What do you say?”

Everyone turned to look at Raze.

16:02 Wed, 3 Sept @W.

Waiting for his answer.

But Raze... didn't look convinced.