

Billionaire's Regret: Finding Her

Chapter 587

“The Northern Territory was mine to begin with. You think I need your charity?”

“Then what do you want?”

Sebastian slammed his hand on the table.

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“You don’t have a choice anymore, Raze! Listen to me–The Obsidian Order’s forces are on their way here right now! If this turns into a fight, you won’t stand a chance!”

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“If I die, you’re all going down with me. And even if I fall, I’ve got children and a legacy. My people will carry on everything I’ve built. But you? What do you have left if you die?”

His words struck a nerve. Raze and the others fell silent, the grim reality setting in. Total defeat, complete destruction—who wanted that?

Just then, a low rumble echoed in the sky. Some of the men glanced upward.

“That’s a plane!” someone shouted.

“No—it’s a fighter jet!”

Several warplanes appeared in the distance, heading straight for Crescent Island. Panic swept through the fortress.

Sebastian seized the moment.

“You hear that? Those are Obsidian Order jets. If anything happens to me, they’ll launch a full-scale

attack!”

The jets roared overhead, streaking across the island’s sky. Chaos erupted below. Soldiers scrambled in fear, shouting orders and ducking for cover.

Sebastian had played his final, most powerful card—first offering peace, now backing it with force.

Raze's face was as dark as coal. Once the undisputed ruler of the North, now forced into a corner by Sebastian with no easy way out.

“Mr. Raze,” Sebastian continued/“this is your last chance to make a decision. If you agree to my terms, I'll send people to help you relocate and rebuild your home.

“More than that, to show my sincerity, I'll use The Obsidian Order's power to eliminate the biggest threat that's haunted Black/Wolf Fortress for decades.”

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“Eliminate a threat? What do you mean?”

“After you fled the North, your deadliest enemy—the Nottans family—took over your old base. It's not under Obsidian Order's control at all.”

“The Nottans? Those bastards!”

Raze slammed the table again. If Black Wolf Fortress had any true nemesis, it was the Nottans. Always lurking just beyond the northern borders, they were the real reason Black Wolf Fortress had never known peace.

When The Obsidian Order drove Black Wolf Fortress out, the Nottans wasted *no* time swooping in and

taking over.

“Think it over carefully.”

Sebastian’s offer was tempting—almost too tempting. Help with relocation, rebuilding, and wiping out the Nottans? It was more than generous.

None of them expected Sebastian to offer so much. He had every reason to wipe them out, yet here he was offering peace—and even help.

If he could really destroy the Nottans, Raze would regain everything he’d lost and more.

But Raze was too proud, too suspicious to trust Sebastian fully. What if this was all a trick? What if the

so-called “relocation” was just a setup to finish them off once and for all?

If that happened, it would be too late for regrets.

As a leader, Raze had to weigh every possibility. It wasn't an easy choice.

Sheldon saw the struggle in Raze's eyes.

“Mr. Vanderbilt has shown incredible sincerity. Maybe it's time we trust him, just once. You have to make a decision, fast.”

Other lieutenants echoed the plea.

“Chief, we can't miss this chance./Everyone's waiting on you.”

Under the pressure of his men and the situation, Raze finally nodded.

“Fine, Sebastian. I'll trust you this once. But if you screw me over—even if I die—I'll make sure you go

with me.”

Sebastian gave a slight smirk.

“A real man keeps his word. I promised, and I’ll keep that promise. As long as you stop with the ambushes and sneak attacks.”

The air was still tense, and trust wasn’t quite there yet.

Sheldon suggested,

“Why don’t we draft a formal agreement? Something both sides can sign, as a guarantee for future cooperation?”

“That works for me,” Sebastian agreed.

“Fine by me,” Raze added.

With Sheldon mediating, both sides sat down and signed a formal peace agreement.

Sebastian and Raze both added their names to the document.

Caitlin had been watching everything from the side. Her heart swelled with emotion. Sebastian had swallowed his pride, made concessions, and offered far more than anyone expected—just to keep her safe.

If it weren't for her, he would've never treated Raze and his people this politely.

Finally, the two men shook hands.

Sheldon raised his arm and gave the signal.

“Everyone, lower your weapons! And get Mrs. Vanderbilt down from the watchtower—bring her here!”

Caitlin was finally freed.

As soon as she was released, Sebastian rushed out of the meeting hall.

“Caitlin!”

“Sebastian!”

They ran to each other and fell into a tight embrace.

The sight of the couple reunited left many speechless—even Raze had to glance away.

“Tch. Women. Always trouble,” he muttered.

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Sheldon, watching the scene, sighed.

“Not trouble. That’s love. A man who’s willing to go this far for a woman... that’s what real love looks like.”

Sebastian had marched alone into enemy territory for his wife. That alone earned respect.

How many men in the world had that kind of courage?

Not many, surely.

Their embrace ended. Sebastian gently cupped Caitlin's face, studying her carefully.

"Did they hurt you?"

Caitlin shook her head, eyes misty with tears.

But when he saw the bruises on her wrists, his heart twisted with guilt and anger.

"You're hurt. I'm sorry. I didn't protect you."

"It's okay. It'll heal soon."

To Caitlin, none of that mattered. Just being alive, seeing Sebastian again—that was enough.

Sebastian brushed his fingers along her thinner, paler face. His voice softened.

“I’m taking you home.”

“Okay.” Caitlin nodded.

Sebastian wrapped his arm around her and turned to Raze.

“Mr. Raze, I’m taking my wife now. Please escort us off the island.”

Raze had no choice. He had to personally go retrieve his own mother anyway, so he led them to the dock.

Back on the warship, Zeke had been standing at the bow for hours, keeping watch on the island. Still no sign of Sebastian or Caitlin. He was getting worried.

The Obsidian Order’s jets had flown over twice, but there’d been no real movement from Black Wolf Fortress. Was Sebastian being held?

Zeke was just about to order a landing party when the signal operator shouted.

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“Movement on the island!”

Zeke grabbed his binoculars. Sure enough, a group of people was approaching the shore—and among

them were Sebastian and Caitlin.

Yes!

That had to mean the negotiation was a success.

Sebastian, Caitlin, Raze, Sheldon, and a few others boarded a transport vessel and began heading toward the warship.

Within minutes, the vessel pulled up alongside the ship. Zeke’s face lit up as he waved from the deck.

“Sebastian! Caitlin!”

Caitlin looked up and waved back at him.

Zeke, still beaming, shouted,

“Lower the boarding ramp! Hurry!”

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The boarding ramp, fitted with handrails, clanked onto the deck. Sebastian held Caitlin by the arm, helping her up onto the ship.

Zeke stood waiting, reaching out a hand to pull Caitlin the last step up.

“Caitlin, you’ve been through hell.”

He gave her a light hug, heart aching at the sight of her thinner face and weary eyes.

“Thank you... Thank you all for coming to find me.”

Just being able to see her friends again made Caitlin light up. She could imagine how worried they’d been, how much effort they’d put into finding her.

“It’s what we had to do.”

Zeke turned to Sebastian.

“How did the negotiation go?”

“Smooth enough. If it hadn’t, we wouldn’t be standing here.”

Zeke's expression darkened as he noticed Raze and his men boarding behind them. Once Raze stepped onto the deck, Zeke stormed over, grabbed him by the collar, and growled,

"You despicable bastard! If you ever lay a hand on Caitlin again, I'll kill you where you stand!"

"Zeke!"

Sebastian and Caitlin rushed to pull him off.

Raze looked furious, but said nothing. Sheldon stepped forward in his place, speaking calmly.

"We're sorry. A peace agreement has been signed. The hostage has been returned. Please don't make things difficult for our leader."

Zeke was dragged back, still fuming.

Raze straightened his collar with a huff.

“Where’s my mother?”

Zeke stared him down for a moment before signaling to bring her up from below deck.

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The moment Raze saw his mother, all his arrogance drained away. He stepped forward, his voice soft.

“Mom...”

His mother finally laid eyes on him—but her first reaction was to scold.

“You little idiot! Look at what you’ve done! Kidnapping someone’s wife? What the hell is wrong with you? Were you raised by wolves?!”

She grabbed his ear and gave it a good twist, berating him right there in front of everyone. Like all mothers, she hoped her son would be strong—but not like this. And when he screwed up, she didn’t

hold back.

“Alright, alright! Mom, enough! You’re embarrassing me!”

Raze quickly held onto her.

“Let’s go, Mom. I’m taking you off the ship.”

To the world, Raze might be the ruthless boss of Black Wolf Fortress—but to his mother, he was just a scolded son.

As Raze left with his mother, Sheldon paused and turned back to Caitlin.

“Mrs. Vanderbilt, before I forget—thank you. Thank you for saving my wife and child.”

He bowed a full ninety degrees in front of her, his gratitude sincere.

“There’s no need to thank me, Sheldon. I should thank you for helping me.”

Without Sheldon’s efforts to mediate, Caitlin might not have made it out alive.

“I’ll be going now, I hope, from here on out, we can live in peace.”

Sheldon waved goodbye to Sebastian and Caitlin before disembarking.

As soon as they returned to their ship, the warship's boarding ramp was pulled back up, closing this long chapter between two sides.

Sebastian turned to Caitlin, gazing at her face with aching eyes.

"You've suffered,"

"You too."

Caitlin finally got a good look at him. His handsome face was roughened by unshaven stubble,

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bloodshot eyes, and the weight of exhaustion in his brows.

Seeing him like this made her heart ache.

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He pulled her into a firm embrace, holding her like he would never let go. It was a moment neither of them would forget—quiet, powerful, and so precious.

Zeke, sensing the intimacy, respectfully turned away. He only spoke once the hug had ended.

“Take Caitlin to freshen up. I’ll have the kitchen prepare some food.”

“Thanks.”

Sebastian helped Caitlin back to their cabin. She took a hot shower, changed into clean clothes, and stepped out—only to be immediately scooped into Sebastian’s arms.

He kissed her without warning. It was a deep, urgent kiss that said everything he couldn’t put into

words. He kissed her like he needed her in his bones, like he’d die if he didn’t.

Tears rolled down Caitlin’s cheeks, their salty taste slipping into their kiss.

She couldn't hold back anymore. She began to cry—deep, gasping sobs muffled in his arms.

“I thought I'd never see you again...”

“I was scared too...”

Sebastian kissed her tears, her nose, her lips again. Only the touch of her made him believe this was

real—that she was really back in his arms.

“But I had to find you. No matter where you were—even if it meant chasing you to the ends of the earth—I would've found you. Because without you, I can't survive.”

“Me neither...”

They held each other tightly, both in tears, hearts pounding, overwhelmed by emotion they could no longer contain.

After a long moment, Sebastian gently said,

“Let’s go eat something. Get your strength back. We’re already on our way home.”

“Okay.”

They walked to the dining area, where the chef had already prepared a meal for Caitlin. Zeke waved

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her over to a seat.

She sat down, finally able to enjoy a hot meal—rice, savory dishes, the smell of home. She ate quickly, not leaving a single grain behind.

Sebastian and Zeke sat across from her, watching as she devoured the food.

When she started to choke from eating too fast, Sebastian immediately handed her water and gently patted her back.

“Slow down, love. It’s okay.”

“The food’s just so good,” Caitlin said with a little smile.

When she finished, Zeke asked,

“You full? I can have the chef make more.”

“No, no, I’m good. I haven’t eaten like this in so long.”

Since the moment she was kidnapped and dragged across the ocean, she hadn’t had a proper meal.

Just having a hot bowl of rice now felt like pure happiness.

“Tell us what happened—after you were taken.”

Zeke leaned in. He wanted to know everything.

Caitlin wiped her mouth, her mind pulling back to that night.

“It was after the award ceremony. I got a fake severed arm covered in blood. My brother chased after

the

guy, Zinnia stayed back, and I went to the back entrance to find Sebastian.

“I saw Sebastian’s car pull up. Vaughn opened the door for me. I got in.

“At first, nothing seemed strange. There were roses in the front and back seats—I thought Sebastian had prepared them. I leaned over to smell them... but something was off.

“By the time I noticed the scent was strange, my strength was already fading. I wanted to call Sebastian, but I couldn’t even lift my phone.”

Sebastian clenched his fists silently.

“That car wasn’t mine. The guy driving wasn’t Vaughn either. Someone impersonated him. They even used a fake license plate on a Rolls-Royce to trick you.”

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“Yes... when I woke up again, Vaughn was gone. A complete stranger was there instead. I was tied on a boat... no idea how long we drifted.”

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Zeke added,

“We didn’t know you’d been taken. That guy drove the car off a cliff. By the time Sebastian and I got there, the whole thing went up in flames. We thought you were still inside. We thought...”

“You thought I was dead,” Caitlin said softly. “I’m sorry. I made you worry.”

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“Don’t apologize,” Zeke said gently. “You being alive... that’s all that matters.”

Caitlin let out a soft sigh. “When did you realize I wasn’t dead?”

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Sebastian answered, “The police ran forensics and found no trace of you in the exploded vehicle. That’s when we started thinking maybe you’d been moved. But after that... there was a false alarm.”

“What kind of false alarm?” Caitlin asked, frowning.

Sebastian hesitated, but Zeke picked up the story with a wry smile.

“Let me tell it. It’s kind of ridiculous now, but it wasn’t at the time. We were searching every inch of New York for you when Felix got a report that a woman’s body had been found near a reservoir. He

called us in to check.

“When Sebastian heard the news, he collapsed. No exaggeration. He was sure it was you.

“We rushed to the scene, and what we found was... horrific. It was only the lower half of a woman’s body, slashed to pieces. Brutal. We were both shaken to the core.

“Thankfully, the coroner confirmed it wasn’t you.”

Zeke stopped there. Silence settled over the room. Sebastian held Caitlin’s hand tightly, eyes quietly

fixed on her.

Retelling it now made it sound like some harrowing adventure—but the truth was, every second had been torture. No one who hadn’t lived it could ever understand.

And none of them ever wanted to live through it again.

After a moment, Zeke broke the silence with a curious question.

“By the way, why did that guy Sheldon thank you? Something about saving his wife and kid?”

“Oh... that.”

Caitlin shared how, during a moment when she tried to escape, she stumbled into Sheldon's wife who was in labor, struggling through a life-threatening childbirth, Caitlin had helped deliver the baby and saved both mother and child.

When she finished, Zeke let out a long exhale.

"Damn. That's insane. If you hadn't helped... that probably would've been two lives lost."

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Sebastian nodded in understanding.

"No wonder Sheldon kept trying to mediate. He must've been repaying that debt."

"Exactly. Thanks to him, I was able to avoid disaster more than once."

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Now that everything was out in the open, and both sides of the story had been shared, Zeke stood up.

“You two go get some real sleep. When we reach port, I’ll come wake *you*.”

“Alright.”

Sebastian took Caitlin by the hand and led her out of the dining hall.

They both desperately needed rest. Sebastian hadn’t slept properly in days, and Caitlin had been

living in constant fear and exhaustion.

Back in their cabin, Sebastian wrapped his arms around her. Caitlin rested her head on his shoulder and finally, peacefully, closed her eyes.

They slept deeply, undisturbed, until the warship arrived safely back at base.

When they stepped out again, they looked well-rested, their energy restored. After returning the warship, they boarded a helicopter for the final leg home.

During the flight, Caitlin couldn't hide her excitement. She couldn't wait to see her family, her friends,

her children.

She missed them so much.

News that Caitlin had been found was already sent ahead to the temporary command center in New

York. Zeke had ordered all search teams to stand down.

After more than three hours of flight time and a short refueling stop, the helicopter finally touched

down on the Vanderbilt family helipad in New York.

Vincent, Molly, Hazel, Quincy, Faith, and the four children were already waiting.

All of them stared into the sky.

"There! That's the helicopter!" Arthur shouted, pointing at the white dot on the horizon.

“They’re here! Daddy and Mommy are coming home!” Patricia cheered, bouncing with joy.
“Mommy’s back! I missed Mommy so much!”

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The adults hadn’t told the kids what really happened. They just said Caitlin and Sebastian had gone on a trip for an event.

But except for little Patricia, the three boys already knew something was wrong. They knew their mom had been taken, that their dad and Uncle Preston were out searching for her.

They’d been worried sick.

If they had been older, they’d have gone searching themselves.

But they also knew they had to stay put—they couldn’t let the grownups worry about them too.

Every day, they waited for their parents to come home. And now... finally, that wait was over.

The helicopter's rotors chopped louder and louder as it came in to land.

"Everyone step back!" Quincy and Faith each held two of the kids by the hand, leading them away from the landing zone.

The chopper touched down smoothly. The spinning blades began to slow. The door opened.

And there they were—Sebastian and Caitlin.

"Daddy! Mommy!"

The kids shouted in unison.

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Hearing her children call out to her, Caitlin felt a tight knot in her throat. Tears welled up in her eyes.

She fought them back, trying not *to* let the kids see her break down.

Zeke jumped out first. Then Sebastian stepped down and turned to help Caitlin out, carrying her in his arms.

“Caitlin!”

Molly was the first to rush over and throw her arms around her.

Always the cheerful one, Molly completely lost it and broke down crying.

“You’re finally back! We were all so scared...”

Caitlin couldn’t hold back anymore. Her tears streamed down.

“I’m sorry. I’m so sorry for making you worry...”

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“No, don’t apologize. You’re home now, that’s all that matters.”

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Molly pulled back, taking in Caitlin’s thinner face. She could see the suffering etched into her features.

Vincent stepped forward, giving Caitlin a firm hug.

“Welcome home.”

Then came the children, running straight into her arms.

“Mommy! Mommy!”

“Patricia... Bruce, Howard... Arthur...”

Caitlin opened her arms wide, catching all of them. Tears of joy spilled down her cheeks. She’d nearly lost the chance to ever see them again.

“Mommy, we missed you so much!”

“I missed you too, my loves...”

Patricia nestled into her mother’s arms, reaching up to wipe away her tears.

“Don’t cry, Mommy. You got skinnier!”

The boys all reached up to help wipe her tears too. Caitlin cried and smiled, overwhelmed with love

and relief.

“Let’s go home, Mommy!”

The children tugged at her hands. Caitlin stood up, smiling through her tears.

“Yes. Let’s go home.”

After Caitlin was safely back, Zeke received a call from his mother—something had happened at home, and he had to leave immediately.

Sebastian and Caitlin returned to the house.

And as soon as James heard his sister was back, he came running in from outside.

“Caitlin!”

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Caitlin turned toward the door when she heard the voice.

James rushed in with long strides. The moment he saw his sister alive and standing before him, he wrapped her tightly in his arms.

“I’m sorry... I’m so sorry...”

James, usually the carefree one, sobbed like a child who had done something terribly wrong. His guilt poured out uncontrollably.

He had sworn to protect her. Yet that night, he’d failed. He’d fallen for the enemy’s diversion, left her vulnerable, and let them take her.

After the explosion in the canyon, he was convinced she’d died. His heart had been shattered.

He hadn’t known how he’d gotten through those days. But in this moment, holding her again, his soul finally felt alive.

Tears rolled down Caitlin’s cheeks as she gently comforted him.

“Don’t blame yourself. I’m okay now. We still have to find Mom. We still have so much to do. I’m not going anywhere.”

James nodded, wiping his tears. “As long as you’re okay...”

He let go of her and held her hands. When he saw the bruises on her wrists, pain stabbed through his

chest. She must have suffered so much.

“I’m back now,” Caitlin said softly. “Nothing like that will happen again. Sebastian’s settled everything with Black Wolf Fortress. They won’t bother us anymore. Don’t be sad.”

She gently soothed his emotions until he finally calmed down.

Back at the Vanderbilt estate, Caitlin saw everyone—but she didn’t see Beatrice or the children’s grandparents.

Molly sighed and no longer hid the truth.

“Caitlin... Beatrice collapsed after hearing what happened to you. She’s in the hospital.”

“She’s in the hospital? Because of me?” Caitlin’s voice trembled. “How is she now?”

Molly shook her head, her expression grave.

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Clearly, things weren’t looking good. Caitlin’s heart clenched.

“We need to go see her. Right now.”

“Alright. I’ll have a car ready.”

Sebastian, just learning about this himself, immediately ordered a vehicle to take them to the hospital.

Molly joined them. When they arrived, they ran into Simon.

Seeing Caitlin, the worry in Simon’s heart eased.

“Molly said you were back—I was just about to head over to see you.”

“Thank you. Beatrice’s in the hospital, so we came straight here.”

“I’ll go with you.”

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They walked together toward the hospital wing. Along the way, Simon explained what had been going on—and it didn’t sound promising.

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Inside the hospital room, Beatrice lay pale and motionless in the hospital bed, an oxygen tube hooked to her nose.

Eliza and Raymond were by her side. Eliza stared at the IV drip, her heart sinking deeper with each drop.

“What do we do... There’s still no word from Caitlin? And Sebastian hasn’t called?” she asked her husband.

“Nothing yet. We just have to wait.”

“I’m afraid she doesn’t have much time left. If she passes before Caitlin and Sebastian get back...”

Tears streamed from Eliza’s eyes. Raymond pulled her into his arms.

“Don’t cry, I know Caitlin is blessed. Sebastian will bring her back. And my mother will be okay.”

Just as they were anxiously worrying, Raymond’s phone buzzed with a new message.

He glanced at the screen—and immediately lit up.

“Molly says Sebastian and Caitlin are back!”

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“They’re back? Caitlin too?”

“They found her!”

Joy and relief flooded Eliza. She clasped her hands together.

“Thank God! Thank heavens!”

She rushed to Beatrice’s bedside and leaned down, whispering,

“Caitlin’s okay. She’s coming. You’ll see her soon.”

Not long after, voices came from the hallway.

“Dad! Mom!”

Sebastian entered first. Eliza and the others turned, their eyes wide with joy.

“Sebastian! Caitlin!” Eliza rushed forward, pulling Caitlin into a hug. Her tears couldn’t be stopped.

“Caitlin...”

“I’m okay. I’m back.”

Caitlin hugged her tight. The two women clung to each other, their embrace filled with emotion.

When they finally pulled apart, Eliza wiped her eyes.

“Thank God. You’re home. We were so worried.”

“You don’t have to worry anymore,” Caitlin said softly, brushing Eliza’s tears away. She looked toward

the bed. “Let me check on Beatrice.”

She walked over and examined the old woman’s condition.

“She’s been unconscious since she collapsed?”

“Yes,” Eliza nodded. “The doctor said it was extreme emotional distress. Her age didn’t help...”

She didn’t mention that the hospital had already issued a critical condition notice. Everyone feared she wouldn’t hold on much longer.

“Grandma... Grandma, it’s me/Caitlin. I’m back.”

Sebastian leaned down, calling softly into her ear.

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Caitlin took her hand and rubbed it gently.

“Beatrice, I’m here. I’m okay now. I’m sorry I made you worry...”

But Beatrice didn’t stir. She looked like she was just sleeping, still and silent.

“I want to try what I used to treat Molly. Maybe it’ll help wake her up.”

“Yes, yes, go ahead. Try anything.” Eliza said quickly.

With everyone’s agreement, Caitlin unpacked the gold needles she’d brought, disinfected them, and began placing them at key acupoints.

Her hands moved steadily. After a few minutes of focused work, she withdrew the needles and gently massaged the old woman’s pressure points.

Then—finally—Beatrice stirred.

“She’s waking up! Grandma’s waking up!” Molly shouted.

Eliza saw one of the old woman’s eyes flutter open and gasped in delight.

“She’s really awake!”

With a faint sigh, Beatrice opened her eyes fully, her vision gradually clearing.

“Grandma!”

“Grandma...”

“Mom!”

Their voices called her back to consciousness.

As soon as Beatrice was fully awake, her first words were,

“Where’s Caitlin? Has she come back?”

The love in her voice was clear. Caitlin’s disappearance had nearly broken her. Now, waking from near-death, she only cared about one thing.

“I’m here. I’m right here.”

Caitlin stepped forward so the old woman could see her clearly.

Beatrice looked up at her face. Slowly, a frail hand reached out.

“Good. You’re home. That’s all that matters.”

Caitlin held her hand tightly.

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“You need to get better now.”

“Yes, Grandma. Caitlin’s home safe. Everything’s alright. You have to get better,” Sebastian added.

But the old woman seemed to know how fragile her condition truly was. There was a faint sorrow in her eyes as she looked toward Eliza and Raymond.

“Raymond... Jasper... Have they all come? I have something I need to say...”

The room fell silent.

Everyone could feel it—the heaviness in the air. It was the kind of silence that came before a final farewell.

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“I’m here, Mom. Jasper hasn’t arrived yet, but I’ve already notified him—he’s on his way,” Raymond said as he stepped forward.

Beatrice’s gaze softened, her voice hoarse and low.

“I still want to see the great-grandchildren... Quinton, Kyle, Howard, Arthur, Bruce, Patricia... I want to see them all again.”

She slowly recited each child’s name, and everyone in the room felt their throats tighten. It was as if she were saying her goodbyes.

“What do you

think...?” Eliza whispered, pulling Sebastian aside.

Sebastian’s eyes dimmed. “I think she knows... It feels like she’s preparing to say farewell. Like she just wants to see everyone one last time.”

Molly couldn’t take it anymore. She turned around and quietly wiped away tears. Simon silently placed a hand on her shoulder to comfort her.

He wanted to say something like “This is the cycle of life,” but here, now, it just felt cruel to speak those words out loud.

He respected Beatrice deeply—everyone here did. No one was ready to lose her.

People began whispering about whether to call all the kids and younger family members to the hospital. Caitlin, however, said softly,

“Don’t call anyone yet. I want to talk to Grandma alone. Please... just give us some time.”

“Alright, alright.”

Everyone quietly exited the room, leaving Caitlin by Beatrice’s side.

She gently held the old woman’s hand and spoke with a warm smile.

“Grandma, don’t overthink things. I had someone check your fortune—you’ve got at least twenty more years to live.”

Beatrice gave her a doubtful look.

“**Is that** true?”

“Of course it’s true! You’ve heard of Master Zephyr Han, right?”

The old woman nodded.

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“Well, he’s a master of astrology and destiny. He personally read your fortune. If he twenty years, it’s twenty years. No doubt about it.

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“Instead of worrying, you should be thinking about how to enjoy every day, especially with your great-grandkids around. Wouldn’t that be lovely?”

“...You’re right.”

Beatrice let out a long breath, her mind slowly following Caitlin’s hopeful rhythm.

“Grandma, you have to get better. Sebastian and I... we’re thinking about having a second child. When that time comes, we want you to name the baby.”

Caitlin knew she had to give her a reason to hold on—something to look forward to.

As expected, Beatrice’s dim eyes lit up

with a faint glimmer.

“The Vanderbilt family... adding a new generation? Good. I’ll wait for it.”

“Then it’s settled. From now on, this is your mission—name our next baby and be there when they’re born.”

Beatrice gave a small nod, and her complexion seemed to brighten just a little.

Caitlin hadn’t used any special treatment—she simply gave the old woman a reason to live.

Seeing her looking more stable, Caitlin asked gently,

“Grandma, you’ve been lying here so long... are you feeling hungry?”

“...Now that you mention it... maybe just a little.”

“Then wait for me. I’m going back to make you some soup myself. You always say mine tastes the best, right? You better hang on for it.”

“Mhm...”

Caitlin tucked the blanket around her, then stood and left the room.

Outside, many people had gathered—Jasper had arrived, and Richard had come with his whole family and their kids.

When they saw Caitlin emerge, they rushed forward, voices anxious.

“How’s Grandma?”

Caitlin closed the door behind her and lowered her voice.

“I think she’ll be okay. I’m going home to make her some soup.”

“She’s hungry? That’s a good sign, right?” Raymond asked quickly.

“The best news I’ve heard all day,” Eliza breathed a huge sigh of relief.

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“I think we should all wait outside for now. Molly, Simon—you two can go in and keep her company. Maybe talk about your wedding plans. It’ll make her happy. I’ll be back soon.”

Everyone nodded. Molly and Simon went into the room while the rest stayed outside.

Sebastian accompanied Caitlin home. She prepared the soup herself and returned to the hospital later.

As soon as she arrived, Molly ran up to her with a bright smile.

“Caitlin, your trick really worked! I talked to Grandma about the wedding—she was so happy. She even said she wants to attend it!”

Simon added,

“I ran some quick checks on her. Her vitals have stabilized. I don’t think she’s in any immediate danger anymore.”

“That’s such a relief.”

Caitlin finally allowed herself to exhale.

Eliza smiled with emotion in her eyes.

“It’s all thanks to Caitlin. If she hadn’t stepped in, things might’ve turned out very differently.”

“Thank

you, Caitlin,” Richard added, his entire family echoing the sentiment.

After everything that had happened, they understood now more than ever what family really

meant.

Beatrice was like the eternal tree at the heart of the Vanderbilt Family. As long as she stood strong, the family would stay whole. But if she fell, the roots might come undone.

Fortunately, things were looking up again.

Caitlin returned to the room and personally fed Beatrice the hot soup.

“Mmm... Caitlin’s soup is always the best. Even the flavor warms the heart,” the old woman

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said, sipping contentedly.

Everyone who came in to visit noticed that her spirits were visibly improved.

Caitlin chatted with her a little longer, and once the old woman drifted off to sleep, Eliza came to urge them.

“Alright, it’s time you both got some real rest. We’ve got things under control here. Don’t worry.”

“Got it, Mom. Caitlin and I will head home now.”

Sebastian and Caitlin left the hospital together. On the way, Sebastian wrapped his arm around her and leaned in close.

“That thing you told Grandma... about having another baby. Were you serious?”

He’d overheard it earlier from the old woman’s own mouth—and he still wasn’t sure if he’d

heard right. He couldn’t believe Caitlin would actually want a second child.

Caitlin laughed and pinched his nose.

“You actually believed me? I said that to make Grandma feel better!”

Sebastian pulled her even closer, nuzzling into her neck.

“Still... I think we should follow through. If we don’t give her that second baby, she might be really disappointed.”

“You’re too greedy! We already have four kids—isn’t that enough?”

Caitlin had never really considered having another child—at least not for now.

But Sebastian... he wanted it. He wanted to see the full journey—her carrying the baby, giving birth, holding it in their arms together.

Still, the moment he thought about how much pain she'd have to go through again, he gave

1. in.

“Alright, fine. We already have four. I don’t want you to suffer again.”

Caitlin was touched by his understanding. Then she remembered something.

“By the way, Zeke left The Vanderbilt Family yesterday in a hurry. I should check in.”

She took out her phone and called.

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“Zeke, what’s going on with you? You rushed off yesterday. Did something happen?”

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Billionaire's Regret: Finding Her

At his private estate, Zeke answered Caitlin’s call calmly.

“It’s nothing urgent—just something with my sister.”

“What happened to her?” Caitlin asked.

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“After the awards night, she had a miscarriage. She was hospitalized for a bit, but yesterday, just after being discharged, my mom called saying she’d gone missing.”

“Missing?” Caitlin frowned.

“Yeah,” Zeke confirmed. “We tried looking for her, but then we found a note she left, asking us not to look for her. I think she couldn’t handle the emotional blow and went into hiding.”

He sighed. “Honestly, let her be. I’ve got no affection for that sister of mine. She’s selfish, spoiled, and completely reckless—reminds me way too much of Zorro.”

He didn’t want anything to do with it. But his mother was still worried—worried that after such a trauma, her daughter might not recover or worse.

Zeke could only do his best to comfort her. But as for actively looking for Zora? He didn’t think it was necessary.

Zora had left of her own free will. That was completely different from what had happened to Caitlin.

She needed time to cool off—nothing more.

After hanging up, Caitlin filled Sebastian in. He snorted.

“She brought it all on herself. Who else can she blame? If she’d changed earlier, she wouldn’t be in this mess now.”

“Yeah,” Caitlin agreed. “Ximena’s love for her was all for nothing.”

“Don’t waste time thinking about people like that,” Sebastian said as he pulled her gently into his arms. “We should be planning something better.”

Caitlin tilted her head.

“Planning what?”

“A family vacation. I want you to rest and recover. You’ve lost weight, and I’m going to get it all back on you.”

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With the Black Wolf Fortress situation finally behind them, they had some breathing room. Sebastian wanted to take the opportunity to get away with her and the kids—to reset.

“Sounds great. You plan it, I’ll follow.”

Caitlin also wanted a break—to recharge before tackling anything else.

When they returned to the Vanderbilt estate, they found quite a few people waiting. Zinnia, Xavi, Tyler, King, Vaughn—all were there.

“Caitlin!”

Zinnia rushed forward, hugging her tightly. Her eyes welled with tears as she checked her

over.

“Are you okay? I was worried sick...”

“I’m alright now. Don’t worry,” Caitlin reassured her.

“Ma’am, I’m so sorry...”

Vaughn stepped up, guilt written all over his face. If that assassin hadn't impersonated him, Caitlin never would've ended up in such danger.

"It's not your fault," Caitlin said with a smile. "Don't blame yourself. You didn't do anything wrong."

Sebastian then addressed the group.

"Everything's settled now. I'm giving everyone two days off. Go on a date, visit your families- do whatever you need."

Tyler and King stepped forward. "Mr. Vanderbilt, we don't need time off. Our duty is to protect you."

"Fine by me," Sebastian said.

Caitlin suddenly remembered something and turned to Tyler.

"Since you and King are back, what about Federico and Ashfall? Are they still in A Country?"

"They returned with us, but Ashfall's already left. Federico went back yesterday-something came up with his family," Tyler replied.

Caitlin didn't know what happened with Federico, but she made a note to check in later.

"Got it. But there's something else I need you to do."

"Anything, ma'am."

She handed him a slip of paper.

"Go back to A Country. Follow these instructions exactly."

"Yes, ma'am. I'll head out immediately." Tyler took the note and left.

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The vacation came together quickly. Sebastian booked a luxury villa suite at Cloudtop Resort. It had beachfront access, a private pool, and even a kids' play zone—perfect for a family

retreat.

Once they arrived, Quincy and Faith took the kids to the beach. Sebastian and Caitlin went up to their suite.

Caitlin looked around as they entered.

“This place... looks familiar.”

Sebastian set the luggage down, came up behind her, and wrapped his arms around her waist.

“You forgot? Six years ago, we spent three unforgettable nights here.”

“Ohhh—so that’s why...”

She finally remembered. This was the place where it had all started.

“Consider it a trip down memory lane,” Sebastian whispered, scooping her up in his arms.

He carried her straight to the spacious bathroom and sat her on the glass countertop.

“This time, you don’t need to lift a finger,” he said with a grin. “Just relax and let me take care of you.”

“My queen, please wait while your humble servant prepares your bath!”

The tall, charming man went about cleaning the tub, then filled it with steaming hot water.

“Come now, Your Majesty. Allow me to assist with your royal robes.”

Caitlin laughed.

“I think I can manage that myself.”

She eased into the warm water and let herself sink back, thoroughly enjoying the comfort. Sebastian bustled around, tossing in rose petals until the surface bloomed in fragrant color.

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“You take your time. I’ll be right back.”

He left briefly, returning with a tray holding a bottle of red wine, two glasses, and a dish of freshly washed fruit.

“Here you go, my love. A little wine to unwind.”

He poured her a glass, and when she took a sip, he picked up a plump cherry and held it to her lips.

“Open up. Let me feed you.”

Caitlin leaned forward, but just as she was about to bite it, he pulled it away—and popped it into his own mouth instead.

Before she could protest, he leaned in and kissed her, sharing the fruit in the most intimate

way.

“Mm...”

She tried to push him away, laughing breathlessly, but she didn’t really mean it.

The tart sweetness of the cherry mixed with his lips, melting into a tender, lingering kiss.

“How was it? Do my cherries taste amazing or what?” Sebastian teased, leaning over her with a playful glint in his eyes.

“They’re delicious,” Caitlin said with a smile, her eyes twinkling with warmth.

Being with someone you love—sometimes it’s the small things that feel the sweetest.

Though they were in the same place they’d stayed six years ago, everything felt different now. There was more love, more connection, more understanding. Even the air between them seemed sweeter.

“Want another bite?”

With the fruit still in his mouth, he leaned in again. This time, they shared it together, slowly and intimately.

The sweetness of the fruit faded, but Sebastian didn’t stop. Instead, his kisses grew deeper—more passionate.

And Caitlin, wrapped in his arms and surrounded by rose-scented warmth, responded without hesitation.

Billionaire's Regret: Finding Her

That kiss seemed to last forever—hot, wild, and utterly indulgent. What started as a solo bath quickly became a steamy soak for two.

By the time they realized how much time had passed, the water had already gone cold. Sebastian lifted Caitlin out of the tub, rinsed them both off, and carried her out into the

bedroom.

The soft bed barely had time to recover from their last tumble before Sebastian launched a new round of passionate assault. Just as things were heating up again, the phone on the nightstand rang.

“I think I have a call...” Caitlin murmured breathlessly.

“Don’t answer it,” Sebastian growled. “I want you to think about nothing but me.”

Reaching for the phone to shut it off, he accidentally hit the wrong button—and answered the call instead. It went silent on their end, but the line remained open.

Elsewhere, in another room at the resort, Wendy had just walked in—furious.

“You liar! You said we were coming here to find Caitlin, but she’s not even here! Where is she?!” she snapped at Benjamin.

Wendy had been worried sick about Caitlin. As soon as she heard Caitlin was back, she insisted on seeing her. But Benjamin, true to form, had stalled her and dragged her to Cloudtop Resort under the promise that Caitlin was there.

Now she was livid, storming toward the exit.

Benjamin tried to hold her back.

“If you don’t believe me, just call her.”

“I **will** call her! And if you’re lying, I’ll castrate you!”

Benjamin winced as she threw him a deadly glare.

“That harsh? You’d really do that to me?”

“Try me!”

Wendy flopped onto the sofa and angrily dialed Caitlin's number.

It rang a few times before connecting.

"Hello? Caitlin? Caitlin?"

No response. Only silence.

Wendy frowned and turned on speaker mode.

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Suddenly, a different kind of sound filtered through—breathy, low, unmistakably sensual sounds.

Wendy blinked, confused.

“What’s going on? Caitlin? Are you okay?”

No one answered.

She leaned in closer, trying to decipher what she was hearing.

“Is she... in pain? She sounds like-like something’s wrong...”

Meanwhile, Benjamin loosened his tie. The temperature in the room seemed to rise by the second. He knew **exactly** what was going on on the other end of that call.

And so, he just sat back and watched.

“I think Caitlin’s in trouble. I need to go help her!” Wendy stood up in a panic.

But Benjamin swiftly snatched the phone from her and held her down on the sofa.

“What are you doing?! Didn’t you hear that? Caitlin needs help!”

Benjamin leaned in, eyes gleaming as he whispered,

“Wendy... you **really** don’t get it? That’s not pain. That’s what a woman sounds like when she’s with a man.”

“...What?”

“Think about it. A man and a woman. Alone. In a hotel.”

It finally clicked.

“Oh my God!” Wendy gasped. “Turn it off! Turn it off right now!”

Her cheeks turned scarlet as realization slammed into her. She covered her face, too mortified to look up.

Benjamin grinned devilishly. Instead of ending the call, he tossed the phone onto the bed.

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Wendy lunged for it, but he pinned her down again.

“Why the rush? I was enjoying the free show.”

“You pervert!”

She was both furious and flustered.

“Pervert? How would you know? Have you been spying on me?” Benjamin teased, boxing her in on the sofa with his arms.

“I haven’t-!”

“Oh, really? But you’ve touched me before. And I’ve helped you. I think we have some debts.

to settle.”

Wendy squirmed to escape but failed.

“By my count, you owe me at least a thousand kisses. Let’s start with one.”

His handsome face closed in on hers. Wendy’s eyes went wide as his lips captured hers in a breath-stealing kiss.

Time froze. The world went silent.

Her mind went completely blank.

Just as his kiss deepened, seeking more, Wendy pushed him away, breathless.

“No! We can’t do this!”

Benjamin looked stunned.

“What’s wrong?”

“Stay away from me!”

Wendy shoved him hard, her head colliding with his nose.

“OW-!”

He grabbed his nose, wincing in pain.

Wendy scrambled for the bed, grabbed her phone, and finally ended the call. The heated sounds stopped at last.

Turning around, she glared at Benjamin.

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“We can’t do this! We’re not right for each other. This needs to stop. From now on, let’s just not see each other again!”

She darted toward the door, but Benjamin caught her before she could open it.

“Did you forget our deal?”

“I didn’t-”

“No excuses. You promised that if I helped you find Caitlin, you’d be my date to the Jones Family Ball. You said it yourself.”

Wendy froze. He had her cornered again.

She hesitated, then said,

“Fine. I’ll go with you. But you can’t treat me like that again. You have to promise.”

“I promise! Ow, my nose... my head’s spinning. You definitely gave me a concussion.”

Benjamin slumped dramatically against her shoulder.

“You’re being ridiculous.”

“With a head like a steel ball? Of course I’ve got a concussion. Help me back to the bed. I feel faint...”

He really compared her head to a *steel ball*. Wendy seriously considered smacking him with something harder.

Meanwhile, after an intense and passionate session, Caitlin and Sebastian finally drifted into peaceful sleep,

By the time they woke again, it was already late afternoon.

Caitlin lazily reached for her phone—only to freeze when she saw the call history.

There had been a call from Wendy. Not just a missed call—it had lasted over twelve minutes.

She blinked. Then smacked Sebastian on the chest.

“You jerk! I told you someone was calling, but you didn’t let me answer. Look! It was Wendy!”

Sebastian caught her hand and kissed it.

“So call her back. Problem solved.”

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“It’s not just that! The call lasted twelve minutes! Do you *remember* what we were doing twelve minutes ago?”

He raised an eyebrow.

“So she might’ve heard us... making love? So what? Call it a free lesson.”

Caitlin groaned and facepalmed.

“You’re impossible!”

Laughing, she jumped out of bed, got dressed, and left to find Wendy—hoping desperately that she could salvage her dignity.

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Caitlin dialed Wendy's number. It rang twice before Wendy's familiar voice came through.

"Hello? Caitlin!"

"Wendy, I'm sorry I missed your call earlier. Where are you now?"

Just as Caitlin finished speaking, a man's voice came from the other end.

"Ahh, Wendy... that feels so good... harder..."

Caitlin froze for a second, recognizing Benjamin's voice instantly.

"What's this? Are you with Benjamin? You two... Am I interrupting something?"

"No, no, no! Caitlin! You've got it all wrong... Just hold on a second!"

Wendy turned and glared at the man sprawled out on the bed, enjoying a massage with a

smug

look on his face. She punched him twice in the back, then quickly got up and walked out.

“Caitlin, I’m at Cloudtop Resort! Are you free? I’ll come find you!”

She took the chance to escape—otherwise, that guy would keep milking the fake concussion excuse to have her wait on him hand and foot.

The two women had booked rooms in different parts of the resort, and they agreed to meet at the iconic sculpture garden.

From a distance, Wendy spotted Caitlin walking toward her and broke into a run, pulling her into a tight hug.

“Caitlin...”

Knowing how close Caitlin had come to death, Wendy felt a surge of emotions and sadness.

“I thought I’d never see you again...”

They held each other for a moment, overwhelmed with emotion. Caitlin wiped Wendy's tears gently.

"Alright, Wendy. Don't be sad. I came back safe and sound, didn't I?"

"I'm so glad. I'm just happy you're okay."

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Wendy looped her arm through Caitlin's and sighed with relief.

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"Good thing you made it back, or I probably would've gained weight again. And if I gain weight, I'm done for—you know Benjamin's got his eyes on my fat!"

Caitlin blinked. "Wait, so you're not dieting to look better—you're doing it to reject Benjamin?"

“Exactly! That guy’s such a pain!”

Wendy clenched her teeth, visibly annoyed at the mention of Benjamin.

Caitlin laughed. “Alright then, I’ll wish you success in your diet.”

Wendy had already lost quite a bit of weight. She no longer looked round and puffy—her figure was curvy and attractive now. Honestly, this kind of healthy fullness was the type many men found more desirable. After all, beauty comes in all shapes.

Caitlin remembered the Jones Family’s ball and asked, “By the way, did you come to the resort with Benjamin because of the Jones Family’s ball tonight?”

She and Sebastian had already been invited. Since they were already here at the resort, attending the event would be easy.

“I didn’t want to come, but he dragged me here.”

“Well, you’re here now. Don’t stress over it. Just enjoy yourself. Let everything happen naturally.”

Caitlin reassured her. They were about to chat some more when someone called out to Wendy.

They both looked up to see a few people approaching. Caitlin stood and said, “Looks like your dad’s looking for you?”

Sure enough, it was Wendy’s father, Landon Smith, accompanied by her stepmother Wanda and her half-sister Tonya.

Wendy clearly didn’t want to see them, but Landon spotted her and made a beeline toward

her.

“You go talk to your family. I’m going to check on the kids. Let’s meet up later. If anything happens, call me right away,”

Caitlin didn’t greet the others, simply whispered to Wendy and walked away,

Landon walked up quickly and glanced toward Caitlin’s retreating figure. With a gleam in his

eye,

he asked, “Wendy, was that woman just now Mrs. Vanderbilt?”

“So what if it was? Why are you asking?”

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Wendy shot her father a sharp look, then glanced warily at her stepmother and stepsister lingering behind him.

“Well, since you’re close with Mrs. Vanderbilt, could you talk *to* her for us? The Shen family wants to work with the Vanderbilts. Maybe she can help us make the connection.”

Landon’s company had hit some trouble recently, and he’d been desperate for a way out. His daughter Tonya had told him Wendy’s friend Caitlin was actually Sebastian’s ex-wife—maybe even his wife again. That alone was enough reason to pursue the connection.

If Wendy could help get his foot in the door, the Shen family’s problems might be solved overnight.

“You want to partner with the Vanderbilts? Seriously? Do you even hear yourself? Why would I help you?”

“My mom and you divorced years ago. I have nothing to do with you anymore, Landon. Nothing.”

Wendy wasn't about to play nice. After the divorce, her mother had raised her and her brother alone, struggling just to survive. Landon had never paid a single dime in child support. Instead, he married his mistress and brought her and her daughter into their home.

Wendy and her brother had long since cut ties with him. And now he had the nerve to ask for help?

It was a joke.

Landon's face darkened after being turned down so directly.

"You little brat, is that any way to speak to your father? I'm still your blood!"

"Oh, now I'm your daughter? Where were you when Mom was sick and we needed help with school tuition? Huh?"

Wendy's voice trembled with rage. Her father had abandoned them for his new wife, giving them nothing but silence and rejection for years.

Landon, knowing he was in the wrong, shifted tactics.

"I also heard your brother's dating someone from the Vanderbilt family. Is that true? One of their daughters?"

“I don’t know. Why don’t you ask him yourself?”

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“I can’t reach him. He’s always in surgery or preparing for surgery. I’m just asking—are they dating? Have they talked about setting up a meeting with both families?”

Landon was clearly hoping to leverage his son’s relationship to force an introduction.

“I don’t know anything about it. But even if my brother marries into the Vanderbilts, only our mom would be part of that. Not you. Trust me—our father died a long time ago.”

Wendy was done playing games. She wanted to cut his delusional hopes at the root.

“What kind of attitude is that?! You’re cursing me now, huh?! You little bitch!”

Landon snapped and slapped Wendy across the face.

She clutched her cheek, eyes wide, tears threatening to spill—but she refused to let them fall.

Her mother had divorced Landon because of the abuse, and now, years later, nothing had changed. He still raised his hand without a second thought.

But she wouldn't cry—not in front of her stepmother and stepsister, who were clearly enjoying the spectacle.

“So what if this is my attitude? Go ahead—try and hit me again.”

“Don't think I won't!”

Landon raised his hand again, but before it could come down, a tall figure suddenly appeared beside Wendy and locked his wrist in a firm grip.

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Fortunately, Benjamin had followed Wendy out and caught the scene just in time.

Seeing someone actually lay a hand on his little Pudding? That man clearly had a death wish.

Benjamin's tall figure stepped in front of Wendy, shielding her completely. He grabbed Landon's raised wrist and twisted it backward with force.

"Ahh! Let go! It's going to break!"

Landon howled in pain, his body arching from the pressure. Wanda rushed over in a panic when she saw her husband getting manhandled.

"Hey! What do you think you're doing? Let him go!"

"Dad!" Tonya hurried up too, catching a glimpse of the man who had grabbed her father—and she couldn't help but stare. He was absurdly handsome.

Benjamin finally let go, but not without delivering a hard kick to Landon's gut.

Landon stumbled backward, nearly falling. Wanda and Tonya rushed to steady him.

He looked up, stunned and furious, pointing at Benjamin. “Who the hell are you?! You kicked me!”

All eyes were now on Benjamin. His expression was cool, his gaze arrogant, clearly not intimidated by any of them.

He glanced sideways at Wendy, then turned back toward Landon and said, “Listen closely. I’m Wendy’s...”

He deliberately dragged the sentence out. Wendy’s eyes widened in panic, terrified he’d say something ridiculous.

Tonya and the others watched with interest, wondering—was this Wendy’s boyfriend?

What kind of luck did Wendy have, landing a guy this hot?

“...personal fitness coach,” Benjamin finished with a smirk.

Wendy nearly choked.

“Hmph! Just a coach? How dare you disrespect me!” Landon barked, putting up

in

anger.

Wanda jumped in too. “Wendy, what kind of coach is this? Meddling in family business? He

even laid hands on your father!”

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Tonya didn’t say anything, but hearing he was just a coach, she immediately lost interest. Just a poor trainer. She had her sights set on the Jones Family heir tonight at the ball.

“He deserved it! He hit me first!” Wendy snapped.

“You-” Landon fumed, his face darkening as he pointed a trembling finger at Wendy. In his eyes, she was nothing more than a disobedient brat.

“And *you*,” Benjamin smacked Landon’s finger away, “need to explain what you’re doing here.”

“We were invited by the Jones Family to attend the ball tonight,” Wanda snapped back, puffing herself up as if that made her important. She clung to Landon’s arm and said, “Let’s not waste time with these people. We have better places to be!”

She dragged Landon off, Tonya following close behind.

Benjamin could’ve easily used his real identity as the Jones Family heir to throw them out on the spot—but he had a better idea. He’d deal with those clowns later, in public.

After they left, Benjamin looked at Wendy again. The red mark on her cheek hadn’t faded, and it made his blood boil. He’d never so much as touched her roughly, yet someone dared to strike her?

He instinctively reached out to touch her face, but Wendy turned away, keeping her distance.

“Thanks... for earlier,” she murmured.

“Does it still hurt?”

Benjamin’s eyes locked on hers.

Wendy shook her head.

“Your parents got divorced because of those two women?” he asked gently.

Wendy didn’t want to answer. She quickly changed the subject. “I want to find Caitlin. Do you

know where she is?”

“Come on, I’ll take you.”

Benjamin casually slung his arm over her shoulder and started walking, but Wendy ducked away, only for him to grab her again with both arms.

“I just defended your honor, okay? Used up all my energy. Now you owe me. Carry me.”

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“What?! You want me to carry *you*?” Wendy nearly exploded. “You’re a grown man! How is that even remotely appropriate?!”

“Totally appropriate.”

Benjamin insisted, throwing himself onto her back until Wendy—somehow—actually carried him.

“Ugh! You’re heavier than a damn pig!”

“Did you just call your man a pig?”

Her irritation melted into laughter. He always knew how to disarm her—whether she was angry or upset, Benjamin could always draw a smile.

Cloudtop Resort had two distinct areas: one was a standard resort hotel used for events like balls and parties, while the other was a more exclusive beachside villa section, offering privacy for VIP guests.

The Jones Family’s ball would be held in the hotel ballroom. Caitlin and Sebastian, however, were staying in one of the oceanview villas.

Benjamin and Wendy had to check in and verify their identities before being allowed into the private area.

They found Caitlin and Sebastian on the beach, lounging under sunshades on soft recliners. The ocean breeze was light, the sound of laughter from kids splashing in the distance gave everything a serene, perfect vibe.

Benjamin couldn't help feeling a little envious of the peaceful family scene.

"Sebastian, Caitlin! Sorry to intrude," he called out, walking up.

Caitlin and Sebastian sat up when they heard him, glancing toward the approaching couple.

The moment Caitlin noticed the red marks on Wendy's face, her brows furrowed.

"What happened to Wendy's face? Did you hit her, Benjamin?"

"Me? Are you kidding? She hits me all the time! I wouldn't dare."

Benjamin plopped down on the lounge beside them. "It was her dad..."

“Don’t,” Wendy interrupted. “I’m fine.”

But Caitlin didn’t let it go. Her expression darkened. “Your dad hit you? How could he?!”

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Caitlin had known long ago that Wendy’s mother left Landon because of domestic violence. But she never expected he’d raise a hand to his daughter too.

Landon was even more disgusting than she thought.

“Let’s not talk about it. He’s just a terrible person. And he actually had the nerve to ask me to pull strings for him—to help him connect with the Vanderbilts. If he tries to come to you about any kind of partnership, please don’t agree to anything!”

Wendy was worried her father would use her or her brother’s name to approach the Vanderbilts, and that would be deeply humiliating for both siblings.

“Don’t worry. We would never help someone like that. Your mom had it rough raising you and your brother on her own. Your dad never paid a cent. He deserves to be taught a lesson.”

Caitlin was furious on Wendy's behalf, ready to take action. But Benjamin spoke up.

"Exactly. A proper lesson is long overdue. Leave this one to me. Anyone who dares lay a finger on my little Pudding? I'll make sure they regret ever being born."

Word was, Landon and his family were attending the Jones Family's ball tonight.

Perfect.

Benjamin was ready to show them just how painful it could be to mess with the wrong girl.

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Billionaire's Regret: Finding Her

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The Jones Family's ball was being held in the grand ballroom of the resort hotel, and preparations had begun early.

By four in the afternoon, guests were already arriving one after another. Luxury cars filled the parking lot, and every attendee was dressed to impress.

Most families with unmarried daughters had brought them along. Everyone had heard the same rumor—that tonight's ball was specifically arranged to help the Jones heir find a partner.

Who wouldn't want to marry into one of New York's most powerful dynasties?

Who wouldn't want to secure an alliance with the Jones Family?

Since it was still early, Benjamin invited Sebastian to join him for a round of golf, while Caitlin took Wendy to get styled.

Even if Caitlin couldn't personally deal with the Smith family tonight, she was determined to make Wendy the brightest star of the evening.

On the golf course, Sebastian and Benjamin had only played a few rounds when Nolan and Yates arrived.

“Sebastian!”

Yates jogged over. “Where’s Caitlin? How is she? I won’t relax until I see her!”

When Caitlin had gone missing, everyone had helped with the search. Now that she was back, Yates was desperate to see her in person.

“You’ll see her tonight,” Sebastian replied.

“She must’ve suffered so much. I’m going to make sure I comfort her properly,” Yates said with a mischievous grin.

Nolan immediately kicked him in the leg. “Would you stop running your mouth? Don’t make things worse!”

“Make things worse? When have I ever made things worse? Caitlin is my idol, my goddess. What’s wrong with caring about her?”

The two brothers bickered as usual, while Sebastian ignored them and focused on his swing.

Around five o'clock, Felix and Zeke showed up.

"They're here," Benjamin called out. Everyone turned to look.

"Felix!"

"Zeke!"

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"**Didn't mean to** interrupt your game," Felix said **as** he walked over.

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Zeke added with a half-smile, "I shamelessly tagged along. Hope you don't mind a little extra company."

“Of course not. The more the merrier,” Benjamin said.

Sebastian greeted them both, **then** said to Felix, “By the way, thank you for your help last time.”

Felix waved it off. “Don’t thank me. You were the one who brought your wife back.”

“Still, I owe you.”

The conversation naturally shifted to the events of Caitlin’s rescue, with Sebastian and Zeke recounting parts of what had happened. Everyone listening agreed it had been perilously close.

Toward the end, Zeke frowned. “By the way, that body we misidentified—did you ever figure out who it was?”

“That’s not something I can disclose,” Felix answered carefully. “What I can tell you is that it won’t be easy to find out. With only half a body and no ID, we’ve got nothing to confirm. Right now, the police are combing through missing persons reports. Unless we find the upper half and can match the face, the identity will stay a mystery.”

The men continued their game, chatting casually, while elsewhere a styling team had arrived to help Caitlin and Wendy prepare.

Leading the team was Émile, a friend of Yates and an ardent fan of Caitlin. For him, styling her was a privilege.

“What kind of look are you going for tonight?” Émile asked gently from behind Caitlin.

“I want something natural and understated. Nothing too attention-grabbing.” Caitlin smiled, then added, “But don’t start with me. Work on my friend first. I want you to make her shine—like a Cinderella about to attend the ball. You be her fairy godmother.”

“I understand completely.”

Émile moved to stand behind Wendy, studying her features. She had soft cheeks and a fuller figure. “She has a little roundness in her face, but with the right hairstyle and makeup, I can highlight her best features beautifully.”

“Don’t overdo it,” Wendy said quickly, “I’m not used to heavy makeup.”

“Trust me. I’ll handle it.”

With practiced precision, Émile began applying Wendy’s makeup. A true artist knew how to use shadows and highlights to minimize flaws and maximize natural beauty. The best looks weren’t gaudy or heavy—they **were refined**, subtle, and elegant.

While Émile **was** working, Jillian appeared, bouncing over to greet Caitlin.

“Caitlin!”

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She grinned as she ran up. “I heard you **were** here, **so I** came to check on you. How are you?”

“I’m fine.”

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When Jillian noticed who was doing their styling, her jaw dropped. “Whoa, you’ve got Émile himself? No wonder he wasn’t at his salon today!”

Caitlin smiled. “Your gown looks unique. Which designer is it?”

Jillian twirled proudly. “It’s not from any brand. I designed it myself.”

Caitlin studied the dress. It had a fusion of styles, with touches of cultural blending, and it worked surprisingly well. “It’s creative. Very fresh. I like it.”

“Really? Coming from you, that’s the best compliment I could ask for!” Jillian beamed.

“With talent like that, why didn’t you enter the design expo?”

“I wanted to, but there was a mistake during registration. I missed the deadline. So I just made this for myself.”

“Let me guess,” Caitlin said. “Zora never submitted your application.”

Jillian sighed. “Exactly. I missed out because of her.”

Caitlin nodded knowingly. “Don’t worry. True talent never stays buried. Your style leans classical, and I happen to be looking for a designer with that touch for Fragrance & Dye Studio. Would you be interested in becoming the lead designer?”

Jillian’s eyes widened. “Fragrance & Dye Studio? You mean the one in Departure City, V Country?”

“Yes.”

“Are you serious? Me? Really?” Jillian almost couldn’t believe what she was hearing.

“Of course. If you’re willing, we can try. The studio was founded to honor classical traditions, so classical elements are vital in its designs. I think you’d be a perfect fit.”

“Yes! Yes, I’d love to try!”

Jillian had always dreamed of pursuing design, but setbacks and a lack of family support had nearly crushed **that** ambition. Now, with Caitlin’s offer, she finally saw hope.

“Good,” Caitlin said. “But I do have one condition. The question is, can you do it?”

“What condition?” Jillian asked eagerly.

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10 vouchers

“You’d need to be based in V Country full-time,” Caitlin explained. “At most you’d be able to come home for holidays. Things over there are still in heavy preparation stages, and it takes a lot of energy. It won’t be **as easy** as it sounds. The real question is whether your family would be okay with you living there long term.”

She had **her** own reasons for saying this. Sending Jillian to Departure City would also conveniently **create** opportunities for Hayden.

“No problem,” Jillian answered firmly. “When I studied abroad, I sometimes only came home once a year. As long as my brother supports me, my parents will too.”

She had made up her mind. It wasn’t just about pursuing her design career—she also wanted more chances to see Hayden. Their relationship had been stuck in a standstill, limited to chats online and over the phone. If they could meet face-to-face more often, maybe something real could develop.

“Then it’s settled,” Caitlin said. “When I head to Departure City next time, you’ll come with me to check things out.”

“Yes, absolutely!” Jillian said quickly.

Once Caitlin’s styling was finished, Wendy’s transformation was finally complete as well.

Caitlin looked at her friend, now elegant and radiant, and couldn't help but smile. "Wendy, you look stunning."

"Émile really worked his magic," Jillian added. "It's flawless!"

"Do I really look okay like this?" Wendy asked, almost not recognizing her own reflection. She was used to going without makeup, but tonight she looked like a different person.

"You look amazing," Caitlin assured her. "You'll turn heads, I promise. Let me help you pick a dress to match."

She scanned the rack of gowns and pulled out a violet evening dress. "Try this one."

When Wendy stepped out wearing it, the effect was breathtaking.

"Wow," Jillian gasped. "That's perfection!"

"Caitlin's eye is impeccable," Émile agreed.

Caitlin smiled with satisfaction. Tonight, Wendy was going to dazzle everyone.

“Wait here,” Caitlin told her. “I’ll send someone to escort you later. Jillian and I need to head to the ball first.”

“Alright,” Wendy nodded,

That evening, Cloudtop Resort shimmered like **a** jewel on the edge of the **sea**.

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The grand ballroom of the hotel was ablaze with light, packed with New York’s **finest socialites** and **aristocrats**.

Benjamin’s parents were **busy** welcoming guests, while his maternal family, the Fowlers, were also in attendance. Madison arrived with members of the Xenos Family, and representatives from the Vanderbilts, Mitchells, Jacksons, Nguyens, and many other prominent families were present as well.

The young women in particular had gone all out, every dress dazzling, every smile calculated. They were all waiting eagerly for the Jones heir to appear.

Among the crowd was the Smith family. Wanda leaned close to whisper to her daughter. “Tonya, when Benjamin comes in, don’t you dare hesitate. Step forward boldly, make him notice you. Got it?”

“I will, Mom,” Tonya said with determination.

Her friend Sydney was on tiptoe, craning her neck. “I can’t wait to see what Benjamin looks like.”

“He’s supposed to be incredibly handsome,” Tonya replied. “Rich, too.”

Sydney grinned. “Then you’ve got to go for it. Imagine if he noticed you right away—you’d have to seize that chance!”

“I’ll try my best. You too. Let’s both go for it!”

But every girl there knew the competition tonight was fierce. Especially since Reese Nguyen had arrived with her parents. The Nguyens were close allies of the Jones family, and Benjamin’s parents were speaking warmly with them, clearly pleased with Reese.

To the outside world, Reese seemed like the perfect candidate for Benjamin’s future wife. But she herself knew the truth—Benjamin wanted nothing to do with her. No matter how hard she tried, she

couldn't catch his heart. Instead, he only seemed fixated on that plump girl from the Smith family. Reese couldn't understand it. What did that girl have that she didn't?

Just then, a ripple of excitement spread through the hall. Caitlin and Jillian had arrived, drawing countless

stares.

“That’s Caitlin! She’s here!”

“And the Mitchell family’s daughter with her!”

Caitlin’s outfit was almost startling in its simplicity—no jewelry, no ostentation. Yet her face was luminous, impossible to ignore. Standing next to the other women dripping in diamonds, she made them question whether they had overdressed.

She had long been whispered about as the “nightmare” of wealthy wives and daughters, a woman who could effortlessly steal the spotlight. But tonight, with rumors circulating that she and Sebastian were back together, most people assumed she wasn’t here to compete—just to attend quietly.

Still, even without trying, she drew attention. Beside her, Jillian shone in her own bright, polished way.

Caitlin greeted the Joneses, the Xenos family, and the Fowlers politely. When Reese **spotted** her, **she** deliberately turned her head away, refusing to acknowledge her. **She** still hadn't forgiven the humiliation

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Caitlin had made her endure.

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Madison, **however**, warmly took Caitlin's hand and introduced her to her parents, who greeted Caitlin with genuine pleasure.

"Most of the guests are here. Where's Benjamin? Why isn't that boy out yet?" Benjamin's father muttered impatiently.

As if on cue, the ballroom doors swung open.

A group of men strode in, Benjamin and Sebastian at the front, with Nolan, Yates, Felix, and Zeke close behind.

Six tall, striking men entered together, and the atmosphere exploded.

“Benjamin!”

“Oh my God, he’s gorgeous!”

“The one in the white suit—that has to be Benjamin. He’s unreal!”

“Yates is here too! Ahhh!”

“All six of them are so handsome they could debut as a boyband!”

Screams and squeals echoed through the hall. The women surged forward, desperate to catch a closer glimpse.

Tonya and Sydney elbowed their way through the crowd, eager to push ahead. But when they finally broke through the front line, they both lost their balance and tumbled straight to the floor—landing right at Benjamin’s feet.

Benjamin and the others were forced to halt, looking down from above at the two women sprawled on the ground.

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Tonya and Sydney hadn't expected to fall flat on their faces—let alone right at the feet of the most sought-after men in the room.

Every pair of eyes turned toward them. Both women knew they had just humiliated themselves, but at the same time, this was the closest they might ever get to Benjamin. They had to seize the chance.

“Ouch...” Tonya clutched her ankle and began to play up her pain. Maybe Benjamin would show pity, lean down, and help her up.

Determined to make the most of it, she even rolled herself closer, until she was nearly at Benjamin’s shoes.

Sydney had thought of trying the same tactic, but the moment she looked up and saw his face clearly, her blood ran cold.

That heir to the Jones family... wasn’t he the same man who had called her ugly in the coffee shop?

It couldn’t be—could it?

Benjamin glanced down at the woman sprawled in front of him and recognized her instantly. A faint, disdainful smile tugged at his lips.

“Need me to help you up?” he asked, extending a hand toward Tonya.

From where she *lay*, the light behind him made it impossible to see his face clearly. For a split second, Tonya felt like the sun itself was shining on her.

Benjamin was reaching for her!

Her heart skipped. She swallowed her excitement and reached for his hand—only for him to suddenly withdraw it.

“Oh, I forgot,” he said casually. “I have a thing about cleanliness. I don’t touch dirty things.”

With that, he tucked his hands behind his back and walked straight past her.

The other men followed without pause. Not a single one stopped to help.

Snickers rippled through the crowd.

“She **really** thought that trick would work?”

“He literally called her dirty. How’s she ever going to live that down?”

Every word stung like a slap. Tonya’s cheeks burned as she realized just how pathetic she had looked. What she thought would bring her closer to Benjamin had only made her the butt of the joke.

Sydney quickly scrambled to her **feet** and dragged Tonya away from the crowd. Once they **were** out **of** earshot, she hissed, “That man—he’s the one I told you about! The **one** who humiliated me **at the café!** That’s

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Benjamin!”

Tonya froze. “You mean... that was him?”

“Exactly. Everyone says he’s ruthless with his tongue. Now you’ve seen it for yourself.”

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The memory of his cold words still rang in Tonya’s ears. She wanted to claw her own face. Why had she tried something so stupid? If only she hadn’t pushed her way forward!

Still, neither of them considered leaving. Opportunities like this didn’t come often. Even if Benjamin was out of reach, there were plenty of other wealthy men to catch.

Tonya craned her neck, trying to get another glimpse of Benjamin in his immaculate white suit. When she finally saw his face clearly, her mind went blank, her ears filled with a buzzing roar.

No. It couldn't be.

That man... looked exactly like Wendy's so-called weight-loss coach.

Impossible. Absolutely impossible.

How could that pathetic woman Wendy possibly know the heir to the Jones family?

Across the room, Landon and Wanda were also whispering to each other.

"Doesn't he look exactly like that man we saw in the garden earlier?"

"The one who said he was Wendy's trainer? No, it can't be. Someone like Wendy couldn't possibly have ties to Benjamin Jones. Look at him—he's leagues above."

In their eyes, the coach had been playful, irreverent, almost unserious. This man was commanding, radiant, and untouchable. They convinced themselves there was no way they were the same person.

Benjamin and his companions entered fully, immediately becoming the center of attention. Married women, single women—it didn't matter. Every gaze followed them.

Each man was handsome in his own right, but each carried a different aura, a distinct magnetism. The women practically circled them like a pack, competing silently, every one of them hoping to catch an eye.

Benjamin introduced his friends to his parents, then stayed by their side to greet family allies and old acquaintances. The Joneses, with only one married daughter and Benjamin as their sole heir, were determined to see him matched with someone suitable.

“Benjamin,” his mother whispered, “I’ve gathered all the finest young ladies for you tonight. You’d better take your pick.”

“So you’re saying,” Benjamin asked with a mischievous tilt of his lips, “if I choose someone, she **gets** to be **my**

wife?”

“Of course,” Mrs. Jones said firmly. “**As** long as she comes from a respectable family, **is** unmarried and unencumbered, I’ll make it happen.”

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“**Good.** I’ll hold you to that.”

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10 vouchers

His parents, relieved that he seemed serious about looking, allowed him **to** scan the crowd. Tradition dictated **he** would choose a partner for the **first** dance, and whoever that girl was, she would be given special attention by the Jones family.

Benjamin looked across the ballroom once, twice... but Wendy was nowhere in sight.

Finally, he turned to Caitlin. “Where’s Wendy? Don’t tell me she ran off.”

Caitlin smiled knowingly. “You’re looking for her? Do you need her here?”

“Of course. You don’t think she’d actually ditch me, do you? I practically tricked her into coming.”

“She didn’t run,” Caitlin said, nodding toward the doors. “Look. She’s here.”

Benjamin turned—and froze.

There she was.

Wendy had just stepped inside, escorted at precisely the right time. She moved carefully, holding her gown as she walked, a little unsteady in her high heels.

Every head swiveled toward her. For a heartbeat she faltered, overwhelmed by the stares, wishing she had never agreed to this. But she forced herself forward, step by step.

“Who’s that?”

“She’s gorgeous!”

“Which family **is** she from? I’ve never seen her before.”

Murmurs swept through the hall. Some of the young women bristled with jealousy, realizing this newcomer might be the true rival for attention tonight.

And Benjamin-

Benjamin was struck dumb.

As the light fell across her, every detail of her transformation hit him like a blow.

That was Wendy?

His Wendy? His plump little pudding?

His peach blossom eyes lit with an astonished gleam.

He had never seen her like this before.

She had taken his breath away.

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Tonight, Wendy was breathtaking.

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She wore a flowing violet gown that shimmered with scattered sparkles, as if draped in silk touched by the glow of dusk. Her once-rounded features were now sharpened and refined, and her slimmed-down figure- still soft in all the right places-was shown off perfectly by the cut of the dress.

Her long hair was loosely curled, tumbling down her back, jeweled pins glinting under the light, blending seamlessly with her gown. The dress highlighted her curves where they should be full and tapered her waist where it should be slender, creating a figure that exuded a kind of allure no skeletal beauty could compare to.

It was exactly this look, this warmth, this softness, that Benjamin was utterly obsessed with.

The crowd buzzed with whispers, everyone curious about the mysterious young woman. Among them, the Smith family recognized her first.

“That’s... Wendy?” Tonya gasped.

“No way!” Sydney’s jaw dropped.

“It is her!” Tonya’s eyes filled with hatred as she saw Wendy entering last, radiant as if she were the star of the night.

“Which one’s Wendy?” Wanda asked sharply.

When she finally recognized the beautiful girl walking in, her eyes nearly bulged out of her head. “How... how is that Wendy?”

Even Landon was floored. “Wendy... how did she get here? Don’t tell me Benjamin is...”

He thought back to the man in the garden who had called himself a weight-loss coach. Then his gaze landed on Benjamin, standing tall and brilliant on stage. Suddenly his stomach dropped.

Wendy really did know Benjamin. And he—Landon—had offended him.

This was bad. Very, very bad.

Across the room, Mrs. Jones noticed the newcomer as well. She leaned toward her son. “Who is that girl?”

Benjamin feigned ignorance, eyes glinting with mischief. “I don’t know. But she does look... different, doesn’t

she?”

Mrs. Jones nodded. From the first glance, she liked the girl instantly.

Wendy, however, was anything but comfortable. With every pair of eyes fixed on her, she felt like an impostor Cinderella stepping into the prince’s castle. Her head spun, her steps faltered, and she fought to walk with grace—but the harder she tried, the worse it became.

At the center of the ballroom, disaster struck. Her heel caught on the hem of her gown, and she stumbled,

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crashing to the floor.

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A ripple of shock passed through the crowd, followed by laughter.

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Those who had envied her beauty now laughed the loudest, delighted *to* see her fall—literally—from her pedestal.

“Ha! What a joke.”

“She thought she was a princess, and look at her now.”

Wendy’s cheeks burned crimson. Her vision blurred with unshed tears. She wanted to dig a hole in the floor and disappear. She knew she should never have come. She didn’t belong here, and now she had humiliated herself in front of everyone.

As Caitlin started to move to rescue her, someone else beat her to it.

A figure in white strode forward, his polished shoes echoing against the marble floor, and stopped right before her. He extended his hand.

The laughter died instantly.

Benjamin.

Every woman who had sneered at Wendy just moments ago fell silent, their jealousy choking them. Benjamin himself had stepped forward to help her.

“Is he really going to-”

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“Benjamin... Benjamin’s offering his hand to her?”

“That girl’s so damn lucky!”

Wendy blinked up at him, following the line of his shoes to his suit to his face. His eyes were locked on hers, not with mockery, not with disdain, but with a steady, unwavering warmth. For once, he wasn’t teasing her. He was reaching for her.

Her heart squeezed.

In Benjamin’s gaze, Wendy sitting there with tears caught in her lashes was devastatingly beautiful. It hit him straight in the chest.

“Give me your hand,” he said, his voice low but commanding.

Snapped out of her daze, Wendy timidly placed her soft, round hand into his palm. His grip was warm, firm, pulling her effortlessly out of her humiliation and into his arms.

She stumbled against his chest. Their eyes met again, the room filling with envious murmurs.

“You’re so clumsy, Wendy,” he whispered, his lips curving faintly. “Without me, would you end up dying of your own stupidity?”

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55 vouchers

His words made her pout in frustration. Furious at being teased in front of everyone, she turned to storm off –but Benjamin caught her wrist and tugged her back.

“Where do you think you’re going? The ball has already started. Stay.”

With that, he released her hand and returned to the stage, leaving Wendy frozen in place, her heart pounding.

The emcee’s voice carried through the hall. “Ladies and gentlemen, welcome *to* this evening’s grand ball...”

Lights dimmed, music swelled, filling the space with elegance and romance.

“Tonight, Benjamin will open the ball by drawing lots to choose his partner for the first dance.”

The announcement rippled through the crowd like fire.

Everyone had assumed Benjamin would simply choose the girl he had just helped—but now, with a lottery, every unmarried woman had a chance.

Hope flared in their eyes. Hearts beat faster.

On stage, Benjamin approached the transparent box filled with slips of paper—duplicates of the invitations every single woman had brought with her.

His hand dipped inside, shuffling through the slips. The rustle of paper seemed to stir the hearts of everyone watching.

Finally, he drew one and handed it to the emcee.

“Ladies and gentlemen,” the emcee’s voice rang out. “The number Benjamin has drawn is…”

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The women held their breath, waiting for the emcee to reveal the result.

“Number 177! Congratulations!”

The emcee scanned the crowd. “Which young lady holds ticket number 177?”

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55 vouchers

Everyone pulled out their admission stubs, comparing with each other. None of the numbers matched.

So who was 177?

Wendy glanced at her own ticket. To her shock, the number was 177. Could it really be this much of a coincidence?

She stayed quiet, planning to tuck the stub away—she had no intention of dancing. But the sharp eyes of the woman beside her caught the number.

“She’s 177!”

Gasps spread, and soon all eyes turned to Wendy. Several women nearby confirmed it was indeed her number.

Jealousy flickered in their gazes.

“177 is her? No way, what are the odds?”

The emcee, having received confirmation, gestured toward Wendy. “Would the young lady holding ticket 177 please remain at the center of the floor. Everyone else, step back.”

The crowd shifted away, leaving Wendy standing alone under the lights, just as she had when she first entered.

Tonya and Sydney fumed.

“She’s way too lucky!” Tonya hissed. “How could it just happen to be her? Something’s fishy.”

The suspicion quickly spread among the other women. Many began whispering that Benjamin’s choice must have been rigged, that the mysterious girl was already preselected.

But Wendy remained frozen in place as Benjamin descended from the stage. He crossed the ballroom with steady strides, stopping in front of her.

“Wendy, dance the first song with me.”

He extended his hand with perfect grace.

“I don’t want to dance,” Wendy muttered, shrinking back. “There are plenty of other girls. Ask one of them.”

“But I only want to dance with you.”

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E55 vouchers

His words, as always, were infuriatingly direct. Wendy rolled her eyes in exasperation, but Benjamin only grew more cheerful.

Before she could protest further, he caught her hand, and as the orchestra struck up the first notes of a waltz, he led her onto the floor.

The first dance of the night had begun.

From the sidelines, Jillian leaned toward Caitlin, whispering, “How did it end up being Wendy? Isn’t that a little too convenient?”

Caitlin smirked and murmured something in her ear. Jillian’s eyes widened in realization. “Ohhh... so the lottery box was rigged. Every ticket in there said 177, didn’t it? That’s brilliant!”

Indeed, no matter how Benjamin drew, Wendy would always be the one chosen.

Watching the pair spin across the floor, Jillian sighed. “You know, they actually look really good together.”

“Perfectly matched,” Caitlin agreed softly. “The ultimate bickering couple.”

Seeing her friend in Benjamin's arms filled her with relief. For once, Wendy had stumbled into a fairy tale.

When the song ended, Benjamin didn't let go. He pulled Wendy from the dance floor.

"Come on. I'll introduce you to my parents."

"What? No!" Wendy panicked, tugging against his grip. "I'm not going!"

But Benjamin's hand only tightened.

Spotting Caitlin nearby, Wendy seized her hand in desperation. "Caitlin, help me!"

"Relax," Caitlin said with a laugh. "He's not going to sell you." With Sebastian at her side, she stepped onto the floor for the next round of waltz, leaving Wendy to her fate.

Benjamin guided Wendy to his parents. "Mom, Dad, this is Wendy."

Mr. Jones and Mrs. Jones both turned curious eyes toward her. Mrs. Jones smiled warmly and gestured for her to sit nearby. Up close, she found Wendy's round, healthy beauty surprisingly appealing.

“How old are you, Wendy?” Mrs. Jones asked.

“Twenty-four.”

“Good age. And what do you do?”

“I... work in a coffee shop.”

At that, Mrs. Jones’s brows rose slightly. She had assumed Wendy was some well-bred heiress. A barista was not what she had expected. Though inwardly disappointed, she maintained her polite smile, exchanged a few pleasantries, and then excused them to enjoy the party.

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55 vouchers

Benjamin whisked Wendy back to the floor. He bent close, murmuring in her ear, “My mom likes you.”

“Impossible,” Wendy muttered under her breath. Her instincts screamed otherwise—but that suited her fine. The less pressure, the better. It wasn’t like she planned to marry Benjamin anyway.

“Why not?” Benjamin grinned, his gaze flicking down her figure with obvious satisfaction. “You look plump and healthy, like you’d have strong children. Parents love that.”

“I don’t want to have kids with you!” she snapped, rolling her eyes.

Benjamin pressed her closer, his hand firm at her waist. He lowered his head until their lips nearly brushed. “What did you just say? Say it again.”

From the outside, it looked like he was about to kiss her. Wendy’s face went scarlet, and she quickly turned away, refusing to argue further.

Throughout the ball, Benjamin danced with no one else. Song after song, it was always Wendy in his arms. The other women grew restless, realizing he wasn’t even looking at them.

When the final waltz ended, Benjamin had a special surprise prepared—a finale that, unbeknownst to most, was aimed directly at the Smith family.

The emcee returned to the stage. “Ladies and gentlemen, it’s time for our grand prize giveaway. Tonight, three lucky guests will receive extraordinary gifts, courtesy of the Jones family. Benjamin, if you would do the

honors.”

Thunderous applause followed Benjamin back onto the stage. He reached into the lottery box and drew the first winner.

“Congratulations to Miss Number 72! Please come up!”

A girl shrieked in delight and hurried forward. Benjamin presented her with a jewel-studded necklace worth over a million, sending murmurs of envy rippling through the hall.

Then came the second draw.

“Congratulations to Miss Number 152!”

The lucky girl nearly fainted when she was awarded a custom haute couture gown paired with a limited-edition designer handbag. She had to be helped offstage, still swooning with joy.

Finally, the third and final draw—the biggest prize of the night. The crowd buzzed with anticipation.

Who would it be?

The emcee opened the slip and announced, “And tonight’s last lucky number is... 19! Who holds number 19?”

Tonya’s breath caught. She looked at her ticket and saw the number. It was her.

Sydney shrieked, clutching her arm. “Tonya, it’s you! You’re 19! You won!”

59

55 vouchers

Pushed forward by her friend, Tonya stumbled toward the stage, her head spinning. She hadn’t dared dream she’d be chosen.

Heart pounding with excitement, she mounted the stage, eager to see what prize awaited her.

C 591

Billionaire's Regret: Finding Her

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The women held their breath, waiting for the emcee to reveal the result.

“Number 177! Congratulations!”

The emcee scanned the crowd. “Which young lady holds ticket number 177?”

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Everyone pulled out their admission stubs, comparing with each other. None of the numbers matched.

So who was 177?

Wendy glanced at her own ticket. To her shock, the number was 177. Could it really be this much of a coincidence?

She stayed quiet, planning to tuck the stub away—she had no intention of dancing. But the sharp eyes of the woman beside her caught the number.

“She’s 177!”

Gasps spread, and soon all eyes turned to Wendy. Several women nearby confirmed it was indeed her number.

Jealousy flickered in their gazes.

“177 is her? No way, what are the odds?”

The emcee, having received confirmation, gestured toward Wendy. “Would the young lady holding ticket 177 please remain at the center of the floor. Everyone else, step back.”

The crowd shifted away, leaving Wendy standing alone under the lights, just as she had when she first entered.

Tonya and Sydney fumed.

“She’s way too lucky!” Tonya hissed. “How could it just happen to be her? Something’s fishy.”

The suspicion quickly spread among the other women. Many began whispering that Benjamin’s choice must have been rigged, that the mysterious girl was already preselected.

But Wendy remained frozen in place as Benjamin descended from the stage. He crossed the ballroom with steady strides, stopping in front of her.

“Wendy, dance the first song with me.”

He extended his hand with perfect grace.

“I don’t want to dance,” Wendy muttered, shrinking back. “There are plenty of other girls. Ask one of them.”

“But I only want to dance with you.”

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His words, as always, were infuriatingly direct. Wendy rolled her eyes in exasperation, but Benjamin only grew more cheerful.

Before she could protest further, he caught her hand, and as the orchestra struck up the first notes of a waltz, he led her onto the floor.

The first dance of the night had begun.

From the sidelines, Jillian leaned toward Caitlin, whispering, “How did it end up being Wendy? Isn’t that a little too convenient?”

Caitlin smirked and murmured something in her ear. Jillian’s eyes widened in realization. “Ohhh... so the lottery box was rigged. Every ticket in there said 177, didn’t it? That’s brilliant!”

Indeed, no matter how Benjamin drew, Wendy would always be the one chosen.

Watching the pair spin across the floor, Jillian sighed. “You know, they actually look really good together.”

“Perfectly matched,” Caitlin agreed softly. “The ultimate bickering couple.”

Seeing her friend in Benjamin’s arms filled her with relief. For once, Wendy had stumbled into a fairy tale.

When the song ended, Benjamin didn’t let go. He pulled Wendy from the dance floor.

“Come on. I’ll introduce you to my parents.”

“What? No!” Wendy panicked, tugging against his grip. “I’m not going!”

But Benjamin’s hand only tightened.

Spotting Caitlin nearby, Wendy seized her hand in desperation. “Caitlin, help me!”

“Relax,” Caitlin said with a laugh. “He’s not going to sell you.” With Sebastian at her side, she stepped onto the floor for the next round of waltz, leaving Wendy to her fate.

Benjamin guided Wendy to his parents. “Mom, Dad, this is Wendy.”

Mr. Jones and Mrs. Jones both turned curious eyes toward her. Mrs. Jones smiled warmly and gestured for her to sit nearby. Up close, she found Wendy’s round, healthy beauty surprisingly appealing.

“How old are you, Wendy?” Mrs. Jones asked.

“Twenty-four.”

“Good age. And what do you do?”

“I... work in a coffee shop.”

At that, Mrs. Jones’s brows rose slightly. She had assumed Wendy was some well-bred heiress. A barista was not what she had expected. Though inwardly disappointed, she maintained her polite smile, exchanged a few pleasantries, and then excused them to enjoy the party.

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Benjamin whisked Wendy back to the floor. He bent close, murmuring in her ear, “My mom likes you.”

“Impossible,” Wendy muttered under her breath. Her instincts screamed otherwise—but that suited her fine. The less pressure, the better. It wasn’t like she planned to marry Benjamin anyway.

“Why not?” Benjamin grinned, his gaze flicking down her figure with obvious satisfaction. “You look plump and healthy, like you’d have strong children. Parents love that.”

“I don’t want to have kids with you!” she snapped, rolling her eyes.

Benjamin pressed her closer, his hand firm at her waist. He lowered his head until their lips nearly brushed. “What did you just say? Say it again.”

From the outside, it looked like he was about to kiss her. Wendy’s face went scarlet, and she quickly turned away, refusing to argue further.

Throughout the ball, Benjamin danced with no one else. Song after song, it was always Wendy in his arms. The other women grew restless, realizing he wasn’t even looking at them.

When the final waltz ended, Benjamin had a special surprise prepared—a finale that, unbeknownst to most, was aimed directly at the Smith family.

The emcee returned to the stage. “Ladies and gentlemen, it’s time for our grand prize giveaway. Tonight, three lucky guests will receive extraordinary gifts, courtesy of the Jones family. Benjamin, if you would do the

honors.”

Thunderous applause followed Benjamin back onto the stage. He reached into the lottery box and drew the first winner.

“Congratulations to Miss Number 72! Please come up!”

A girl shrieked in delight and hurried forward. Benjamin presented her with a jewel-studded necklace worth over a million, sending murmurs of envy rippling through the hall.

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