

# Billionaire's Regret: Finding Her

Chapter 602

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Benjamin dragged Wendy by the hand straight into the elevator, taking her all the way up to the presidential suite at the top floor of the hotel.

When they had left earlier, the suite looked perfectly ordinary. But now, when they returned, it had been transformed.

“Go in and see for yourself,” Benjamin urged.

Wendy stepped in cautiously, her every move careful as though she might ruin the atmosphere.

Candles lined the floor in two neat rows, leading toward the center of the room where they formed a large heart. Inside the heart lay a massive bouquet of roses, surrounded by balloons and sparkling fairy lights.

It was breathtakingly romantic, the kind of scene most girls only dreamed about, the sort you usually saw in television dramas. Never had Wendy thought she would experience it herself.

She followed the candlelit trail through the glass doors and onto the terrace, where the view was even more stunning. Tiny lights twinkled like fireflies, the table was decorated with candles and fresh flowers, and soft music floated through the air.

The entire setting was like something out of a fairytale. Dressed the way she was tonight, Wendy almost felt like she had stepped into another world, like she had somehow become a princess.

But thinking back on her childhood, her heart ached. Since she was young, she had been mocked for her weight, left insecure and lonely, never once pursued by any boy. The only attention she ever got was when people teased her.

And now, for the first time in her life, a man had done all of this—something so beautiful and romantic—just for her. From the ballroom to this suite, her heart was caught between disbelief and overwhelming emotion.

She almost wondered if she was dreaming.

“Do you like it?”

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Benjamin's voice came from behind her.

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Wendy turned slowly, candlelight flickering across her tear-streaked cheeks.

"Why are you crying? Do you not like what I've done?" he asked quickly, worried.

She shook her head, forcing a smile through her tears. "It's not that. I just... I can't believe this is real. Am I dreaming?"

"No," he said softly, stepping closer. His eyes glowed with warmth. "This is real."

"Then why?" Her voice trembled. "Why would you do this? Why make me think you're chasing me? I thought you hated me."

The old words he'd once thrown at her still cut deep.

"Hated you? When did I ever say that?" Benjamin frowned, clearly not remembering.

"You told me yourself. You said I wasn't your type, that even if someone gave me to you, you wouldn't want me."

Wendy's gaze dropped, her voice low. Just saying it again made her chest ache.

Benjamin wanted to smack himself. Why had he ever said that? It was probably the one thing he truly regretted in his life.

He leaned closer, almost desperate. "That? You're still hung up on that? I was joking, Wendy. Just a stupid joke."

"You're always joking. Always saying cruel things like they don't matter. How am I supposed to know when you're serious? I've told you before—we're not from the same world. We shouldn't even have crossed paths. I don't deserve someone like you."

Her voice was steady, but her heart was fragile. She had always known her background, had always been painfully aware she wasn't meant to aim for a man like him. Their story had started by accident, a drunken mistake, nothing more.

“Come here.”

He caught her wrist and guided her toward a swing chair on the terrace. They sat

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side by side.

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“If what I said before hurt you, then I take it all back. I’m sorry.” His tone was quiet, uncharacteristically sincere.

He studied her profile in the warm glow of the lights and smiled faintly. “But you don’t need to feel inferior. To me, you’re the best. You’re the most special. You’re priceless. I like you. I mean it.”

It was the first time Benjamin had ever confessed like this. For a man who had always lived carefree and unruly, this was monumental. Even Sebastian’s advice couldn’t have prepared him for how hard this moment hit.

Wendy's chest tightened, her eyes flicking to his. "But... there are so many girls better than me. Why would you like someone like me... a fat girl?"

"You idiot." Benjamin laughed softly. "You think I look down on you? I liked you because of that. You were soft, warm, real. That's what gave me a sense of safety."

Her eyes widened. "You're insane."

"I don't care. Fat or thin, I like you. Because you're you."

Her heart twisted, overwhelmed.

Benjamin leaned in, voice dropping low. "Do you remember the days you spent in Goat Horn Village?"

Her breath caught. Goat Horn Village... her grandmother's village. After her parents' divorce, her mother had taken her and her brother back there. Wendy had spent her entire childhood growing up in that village.

"Do you remember a sickly little boy? The one who hardly spoke? He was bullied by the local kids, pelted with stones, too weak to fight back. They all laughed at him and called him Goof."

Wendy froze. Her eyes widened. "Wait... you mean... you're Goof?"

Benjamin nodded. Back then, he had been sent to the countryside because of his autism. That was when he had met her—Fat Wendy, the only girl who had befriended him.

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The two outcasts had clung to each other, finding comfort in their shared loneliness.

All this time, Wendy had never understood why Benjamin was so stubbornly attached to her. Now she knew.

“Unbelievable... it was you,” she whispered.

“Yeah,” Benjamin said with a smile. “Don’t you think Goof and Fat Wendy make a perfect match?”

Her laughter bubbled up, shaky and wet, before it melted into tears.

That was when he pulled a velvet box from his pocket. Dropping to one knee before her, he flipped it open. Inside gleamed a diamond ring, brilliant under the lights.

“Wendy,” he said, his eyes steady and filled with emotion. “Will you accept Goof’s proposal? Will you marry Goof, and give me a whole brood of little Goofs?”

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The moment was almost unbearably romantic. Tears shimmered down Wendy’s cheeks while Benjamin’s eyes gleamed like liquid fire. They stared at each other, swept up in a tide of emotion neither of them had ever known.

Benjamin was waiting for her answer—when suddenly, a raindrop hit her face.

“It’s raining!” Wendy gasped, tilting her head up.

“You still haven’t answered me!”

The sky opened in an instant, heavy drops drumming down fast and hard.

“The rain’s too heavy—let’s go inside!”

Lifting her skirt, Wendy darted toward the suite.

Benjamin threw a frustrated look at the dark sky, but he had no choice except to follow.

By the time they made it back inside, the candles had already been cleared away by the staff. Wendy brushed the rain from her dress. Benjamin moved in close, pressing her lightly against the wall.

“I just proposed to you,” he said, his voice rough with impatience. “You still haven’t answered me. Do you or don’t you?”

His masculine scent wrapped around her. Wendy shrank back, avoiding the heat in his gaze. His eyes were too deep, too intense—just one look made her feel like she might melt.

“Answer me! Are you trying *to* drive me crazy?”

It was the first time in his life he had ever proposed to a girl, and he was being left hanging. If she rejected him outright, it would be the greatest humiliation he had ever faced.

Finally, Wendy lifted her flushed face, her lashes trembling as she whispered, "I think... marriage is *too soon*. I'm not ready. And I don't believe I can make it work with you. I don't trust marriage. My parents' divorce left scars on me I can't

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erase..."

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It was the raw truth. Because of her parents' broken marriage, Wendy carried deep insecurity, an ingrained lack of confidence that made her doubt love itself.

"I know," Benjamin said softly. "But I want you to trust me. Just give me a chance."

For once there was no arrogance in his tone, no mocking. Just sincerity.

"I'm sorry. I still can't accept your proposal."

With her family background, she would never truly belong in the Jones family. Better to draw the line now than fight and **hurt** each other later.

The rejection hit hard. His chest felt tight, his pride wounded, but Benjamin understood her reasons. He had said too many things that hurt her. He had given her no security. The only way to fix it was to prove himself, from now on.

“I get it. Fine. Forget the proposal.”

He tossed the velvet ring box into the trash.

Wendy’s eyes went wide. “Wait—how could you just throw it away?”

She made a move to pick it up, but he pressed her back against the wall again, his

voice low and firm.

“Listen to me. We can put marriage aside for now. But I want to date you—with marriage as the goal. Let’s start as boyfriend and girlfriend. Let me show you what I can do. Then decide if I’m worth marrying. Deal?”

The honesty in his voice shook her. After a moment, she nodded. “Alright.”

“So now... we’re officially together, right?”

“Yes.”

“Then...” His eyes darkened with mischief. “Can I kiss my girlfriend?”

Wendy’s lips parted but no sound came.

Benjamin leaned in slowly. Her heart pounded so hard she could barely breathe.

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When their breaths mingled, the air between them sparked.

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Outside, the rain beat harder against the windows, but inside the suite the heat

rose steadily. The young couple sank into their first real moment as lovers,

wrapped in sweetness and fire.

From this night on, nothing between them would ever be the same.

It was late by the time Zeke stopped by the Vanderbilt villa. He spent some time with Sebastian, Caitlin, and the children, chatting casually until he finally rose to

leave.

“You two should rest early. I’ll see you in the morning,” he said.

“Alright. Good night.”

Sebastian and Caitlin walked him to the door, watching him leave before shutting it again.

“Zeke mentioned the Gonzales family disappeared strangely too,” Caitlin said thoughtfully. “Do you think they were all killed?”

“Not necessarily,” Sebastian replied. “It feels deliberate—like they’re in hiding. And I have a bold guess.”

“What?”

“Maybe Alicia is still alive. The explosion and the Gonzales family’s

disappearance... what if it was all her plan? What if from the very start, when she decided to help Zeke, she was already plotting her escape?”

Caitlin nodded. “That’s possible. Alicia was always clever. She would never fight without a backup plan. Honestly, I hope the explosion was just her cover to escape. If she’s alive... where could she be now?”

The couple fell silent, lost in thought.

Sebastian finally scooped Caitlin into his arms. “If she’s alive, one day she’ll resurface. Until then, we should focus on us. How do you want to spend our romantic night?”

“Didn’t we already... during the *day*?”

“Not nearly enough. I want you all the time.”

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Her body sank into the mattress as his lips claimed hers again, fiery but tender. This vacation was their honeymoon, and he refused to waste a single moment.

Meanwhile, Zeke returned to his own suite in the villa hotel. He tossed his keycard aside, shoulders heavy with fatigue, and walked to the window.

Rain poured down over the night. He pulled out the forget-me-not pocket watch from his jacket and held it tightly in his palm.

Lonely as he was, he had finally found something—or someone—he couldn't let

1. go.

His longing was as deep and relentless as the storm outside, growing stronger with each passing day.

On the rain-streaked glass, a vision shimmered into being: Alicia's playful smile, so vivid it felt real.

“Zeke, if we both survive this... you have to come back and marry me. I’ll be waiting.”

Her voice echoed in his ears as if she stood right there.

But the image flickered, fading into the reflection of a stranger—a shadow with a blade.

Zeke’s expression sharpened. He spun just as the knife slashed toward him. The blade missed his head by inches, but the assassin pressed forward, relentless.

The suite had been compromised. Zorro’s men, no doubt.

There was no time to think. Zeke fought back hard, every strike deadly. Furniture crashed as the two clashed.

The killer, fast and ruthless, slammed Zeke onto the table, driving the knife toward his face...

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Zeke caught the blade just in time. Pain ripped through his palm as the steel sliced into his skin, blood pouring down his fingers.

The two men strained against each other in a deadlock. At the critical moment, Zeke suddenly barked, “Chief, why are you here?”

The assassin instinctively turned his head. It was only a two-second distraction, but that was all Zeke needed. He wrenched the man’s wrist sharply and drove the dagger deep into his chest.

The blade slid in with a sickening sound, blood spurting hot and fast.

Zeke kicked him backward, but the killer yanked the knife free and tried to lunge again. Zeke slipped behind him, locked an arm around his neck, and with one brutal twist, snapped it.

The body crumpled lifelessly, blood still streaming from his chest wound.

Breath ragged, Zeke collapsed into a chair. His palm throbbed, dripping crimson, trembling with pain. His gaze stayed fixed on the corpse, grim and heavy.

Shadow Moon Pavilion. Their assassins were everywhere now, infiltrating the States. No one knew how many or when they would strike. He was exposed. They were in the shadows. The only answer was to tighten defenses.

But how did one defend against the invisible?

The persistence of the attacks made one thing clear—Zorro would not stop until Zeke was dead.

With steady hands, Zeke bound his palm with a handkerchief. He pulled the mask from the assassin's face, confirming what he already suspected. A Shadow Moon Pavilion killer. He knew this one.

Zeke dialed his men, voice low. "Clean this up. Take photos and send them to Zorro. Let him see it."

"Yes, sir."

It would be as if this killer had never existed, like all the others before.

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Outside, the rain poured on, wrapping Cloudtop Resort in mist and silence.

But a few kilometers away, inside a deep pit, the Smith family and Sydney were living a nightmare.

"Dad, what do we do? No one's coming! And it's still raining!"

“The rain’s getting heavier! Are we going to drown down here?”

Soaked, freezing, reeking of filth, they huddled together. They had fallen into a forgotten cesspit. And now rainwater swelled it higher and higher.

They had tried sheltering in the car, but the pit water had risen to half the doors, threatening to submerge them alive. So they clambered to the roof, shivering through the night, praying somehow they’d survive until morning.

At last the storm broke. Sunlight cut through the clouds.

Wendy stirred awake in Benjamin’s arms, only to find his fiery eyes locked on her. Startled, she bolted upright.

Though she had agreed to be with him, the line hadn’t been crossed. Benjamin had promised he’d wait until she gave her heart freely. But that didn’t stop him from claiming every kiss and touch he could steal.

He pulled her back and kissed her again.

“Why are you running? You don’t like it when I kiss you?”

How could she not? She only feared she was falling too fast. What she didn't realize was that Benjamin had already fallen faster, deeper.

He wanted nothing more than to lie with her, kiss her for twenty-four hours straight, never letting go.

“Enough, Benjamin. We need to get up.”

She cupped his head to stop him. His gaze lingered, hungry, like he could devour her whole. Finally, he stole one last kiss before letting her go.

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“My sweet Pudding. So obedient.”

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After changing into the clothes he had picked for her, they shared breakfast in the suite before Benjamin tugged her downstairs, saying he had something fun to

show her.

In the garden, the others had gathered, buzzing with curiosity. Word was, something strange had happened outside the resort.

Felix's instincts as a cop prickled. "I'm going to check it out," he told his wife before heading off.

Benjamin arrived with several sightseeing carts. "Let's go take a look."

Caitlin and Sebastian brought the children along as everyone piled on. The carts rolled out through the resort gates.

Just beyond, fire trucks and a crowd of reporters swarmed the roadside.

The carts stopped. Guests stepped out to peer down a slope where a rescue operation was underway. Felix was already on-site. Cameras flashed wildly as reporters streamed live.

Apparently, four people had been trapped in a disused cesspit overnight. The storm had nearly drowned them.

One by one, the fire crews hauled them out. But after hours soaking in filth, their bodies were coated in sludge, foul and unrecognizable.

The stench hit like a wall.

“Oh God, the smell!”

“This is revolting!”

Reporters gagged, retreating as the victims collapsed on the ground, too weak to

even rise.

Landon and Wanda sprawled face-first in the mud, exhausted. Tonya and Sydney lay beside them, crying too hard to breathe.

Hoses sprayed them down, rinsing off the filth until their faces showed.

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“Wait a minute... isn’t that Mr. Smith?” a reporter blurted.

Recognition spread. Murmurs surged.

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Up on the road, Caitlin put the pieces together. The victims... were the very ones who had won the “grand prize” last night. Her eyes cut to Benjamin.

His face was calm, unreadable, as though none of it touched him.

“That woman—wasn’t she number nineteen last night?” Jillian gasped. “The one who won the luxury car?”

“That’s right! She was also the one who fell at Benjamin’s feet at the start! You’re telling me they drove their prize car and ended up in a cesspit?”

The crowd buzzed louder, the irony too sharp to miss.

Wendy froze. She recognized them too—her father’s family. Her stomach turned as horror dawned.

She looked at Benjamin, her voice trembling.

“Was this your doing?”

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Benjamin leaned close to Wendy's ear. “So what if it was me? They bullied you first. What, are you not happy about it?”

Wendy shook her head and laughed. “How could I not be happy? I'm over the moon. This is the kind of joke I can laugh about for a whole year.”

Knowing Benjamin had punished the Smiths on her behalf touched her deeply. Still, she sighed. “Such a pity though... that luxury car. All that money, gone!”

“It was a refurbished secondhand car. Not worth much,” Benjamin said casually. He'd never waste a brand-new Bentley for something like this.

His goal was simple—teach the Smiths a lesson, make sure they knew what happened when they crossed Wendy. Last night had just been a warning. If they tried again, the punishment wouldn't be so merciful.

When the Smiths were dragged out of the cesspit, the media had a field day. After the spectacle, the sightseeing carts headed back to the resort.

Not long after, Felix returned and sought Benjamin out. "I checked. Those people crashed driving the car you gave them as the grand prize. Tell me honestly—was this your doing?"

"What does this have to do with me? I hosted the ball, I handed out prizes. That's a crime now? If they can't drive, that's their problem." Benjamin wasn't about to confess to Felix.

"That car's been pulled up. If the Smiths push for a forensic inspection, you might be in trouble." Felix's tone was official, detached.

"Let them inspect. They fell in on their own. How's that my fault?" Benjamin replied lazily.

As the two spoke, Madison appeared. "Why are you interrogating my brother? What's this got to do with him? They crashed on their own. No one pushed them."

"I just find it suspicious—" Felix started.

“That suspicion shouldn’t fall on Benjamin,” Madison snapped. “Listen carefully.

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This was an accident. It has nothing to do with the Jones family. Benjamin, come with me.”

She pulled her brother away. Felix could only watch, frowning, when his phone buzzed again.

It was the rescue team. After pulling the car out, they’d found something else. Half a female corpse.

Felix’s expression froze. Seconds later he was sprinting back toward the scene.

Outside the resort, police converged as Felix led the investigation. Meanwhile, inside, friends gathered at the golf course.

The men split into groups to play. Sebastian invited Zeke to join, but he shook his head. “You go ahead. I’ll just watch today.”

His injured hand couldn't grip a club. He sat in the rest area, sipping tea, watching his friends play. Peaceful moments like this were rare; he intended to savor it. Who knew what danger lurked the next time he turned around?

Children's laughter drifted from a smaller practice area designed for kids. The women chatted nearby, occasionally drawing the men's eyes. Caitlin, Wendy, and Jillian were all there, helping the little ones with their swings.

The kids played with surprising focus, their shots making everyone smile.

Caitlin guided Wendy's hands on the club, showing her the right swing. When Wendy finally hit the ball clean, Caitlin smirked. "So... last night. Romantic, wasn't it? You and Benjamin..."

"Nothing happened!" Wendy's eyes went wide, her cheeks scarlet as she rushed to explain.

"Nothing? What, you two just talked under the covers all night?" Caitlin teased.

"Really, nothing happened. Not like that."

Looked like Benjamin's efforts had still fallen short. He'd set up everything perfectly, yet hadn't managed to win her over fully.

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“But it was sweet at least, right? I can see the hickey on your neck.”

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“Stop teasing me!” Wendy tugged her collar higher, her face so red it might bleed. Caitlin chuckled and handed her club to Jillian before strolling toward the rest

area.

She sat beside Zeke. “Everyone’s playing. Why aren’t you?”

Zeke turned his calm face toward her. “Watching is enough. I prefer sunshine and tea.”

Caitlin sighed. “You know, my friends really aren’t honest enough.”

His brow lifted. “Why do you say that?”

“I ask why you’re not playing, and you say you like drinking tea. But the truth is, it’s because your hand is injured, isn’t it?”

Her words struck clean. Zeke straightened, fingers twitching inside his pocket.

“Don’t bother hiding it. What could you keep from me? I already noticed. So, tell me—how did it happen?”

Her sharp eye caught everything. She must have noticed the night before, when he instinctively reached to steady her getting off the cart. Nothing escaped her.

With a small sigh, Zeke pulled out his hand. The bandaged palm peeked out from under a bloodstained handkerchief. “After I left under a bloodstained handkerchief. “After I left you last night, I was ambushed in my room.”

Caitlin’s breath caught. “You hurt your hand fighting them?”

“Yes,”

“Did you capture the assassin?”

“He’s been dealt with. Definitely one of Shadow Moon Pavilion’s men.”

“They’ve already infiltrated the resort?” Her face paled.

“Don’t worry. I’ve deployed my people quietly. They’ll sweep the grounds. Everyone here will be safe.”

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“Good.” Caitlin nodded. All she wanted was peace, just a few quiet days with her family. No more chaos.

Zeke had told no one else about the attack, not even the police. The body had been quietly disposed of. But not before he’d sent photographs to Graystone

Castle.

At Graystone, Zorro sat cloistered. Ever since his son Samir's death, he had been unraveling, his mind fraying at the edges. Days of convalescence had steadied him only slightly.

Now his first demand was Zeke. "What news from the States? Has he been

eliminated?"

"Count, I was just about to report."

The Shadow Moon Pavilion men handed him the photos. One glance at the images of his assassin lying dead, and Zorro erupted. He smashed everything within reach, his rage filling the hall.

"Useless! Every one of them is useless! Send word—if they don't bring me Zeke's head, they needn't ever come back!"

"Yes, my lord."

When the hall finally quieted, another subordinate rushed in.

"Count! We've captured a spy!"

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“What spy? Bring them in!” Zorro barked.

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Moments later, his men dragged in a bound figure, head covered with a black sack, wrists and ankles tied. tight.

“Count, this is the spy. She was sneaking near the Graystone borders, trying to **cross** into our land.”

The sack was pulled off, revealing a young woman in shambles, hair matted and messy enough to hide her features.

“Ask her who she is.”

One of the guards ripped the tape from her mouth.

Finally able to speak, Zora lifted her chin. She looked at the stern man seated high above—the same face she’d seen in **photos** and news reports. She had found him at last.

“Answer! Who are you? Why were you lurking near the borders of Graystone?” the guard snapped.

“I... I am the Count’s daughter! He is my father!” Zora blurted out.

The guards scoffed. “Our lord? Yours? Absurd! You filthy liar!” One of them raised a hand to strike her.

“Stop!” Zorro commanded. His eyes narrowed, fixed on the bedraggled girl. “What did you just say? **Say** it again.”

Tears welled in Zora's eyes. Her voice trembled. "Father... my name is Zora. My mother is Ximena. I am your daughter. I came all this way just to find you."

The name struck him like thunder. "You're... Zora?"

He had known of her, but never seen her face. To see her now, looking like a beggar, shook him deeply.

"I really am Zora. I struggled to escape the US and reach S Country. But when I arrived, I was robbed of everything my luggage, my money. I had no choice but to walk **until** I reached Graystone. And then your guards caught me, thought I was a spy..."

Her voice cracked with sobs.

Zorro's expression flickered. He had lost his son Samir and it had gutted him. To suddenly have his daughter appear, flesh and blood, was like a spark reigniting his cold heart.

"If you truly are my daughter, we'll prove it. I'll order a DNA test. If you lie, I'll kill you myself. If you speak the truth, I'll claim you as mine."

With his words, Zora's heart steadied. She had no doubt the test would prove her claim.

"Take her down, **clean** her up, and treat her well."

“Yes, Count.”

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Servants bathed her, gave her fresh clothes. When she reappeared, her features clear under the grime, the resemblance spoke for itself.

Zorro studied her closely, already convinced in his gut, though the test would still be carried out.

The following evening, the results came in.

“Zora, it’s true. You are my daughter.”

“Father!” She **threw** herself into **his** arms, crying hard. “I finally found you. I finally have a father.”

“Yes. From today, you are Zorro’s daughter, my heir. Everything in this castle is yours to inherit.”

Zora’s lips curled into a triumphant smile. She **had** found the **ultimate** backer. From now on, no one would dare make her **bow**.

“Father, back in the US I was bullied, cast out. You must help me get revenge!”

“Who?” His voice dropped to a dark growl

“Caitlin. Zeke. Sebastian.... all of them!” Her eyes burned with **venom** as she spat their names.

Zorro’s face clouded. He stroked her back **slowly**, **his** voice low **and** cold. “Don’t worry. Your father will never forgive them. I already have a plan—one so perfect it will ensnare them all. Just wait.”

Zora’s tears gave way to a smile. Soon, she would see Caitlin crushed beneath her heel.

Back in New York, **the** holiday ended, and everyone drifted back to their own paths.

The upper

half of the corpse found near Cloudtop Resort was confirmed to match the lower half from before. Felix **and** his team dove back into forensic work, while Caitlin and Sebastian took the children home.

Tyler returned from Country A, though results from his task would take more time. In the meantime, Caitlin planned to fly to Departure City in V Country to handle matters at Fragrance &

Dye Studio. Sebastian would fly out to Obsidian Order territory to oversee the Vanderbilt family's purge of the Nortons.

Their reunion had barely lasted a few days, and already they **had** to part again. Sebastian was reluctant, but at least the Black Wolf Fortress threat had been neutralized, and safety was no longer such a constant concern. James, Zinnia, and Xavi would accompany Caitlin, while Tyler, Vaughn, and King stayed at **Sebastian's** side.

The couple separated at the airport the next morning.

Caitlin also brought Jillian along to Departure City,

When their plane landed, Hayden himself came to pick them up. Seeing Jillian step out alongside Caitlin, he blinked in surprise. "Caitlin, Jillian too? What's going on?"

Caitlin smiled knowingly. "I'm showing her the ropes. I may have her join Fragrance & Dye Studio **as** a designer. I'll leave her in your care."

Her words carried a quiet message: Honestly, this is as much as I can do for you. The rest depends on you, Hayden.\*

"That's great. Really great. Come on, let's get in the car?"

He drove them to a stylish **villa** under his name, where they would be staying.

Caitlin couldn't use the Yancey family's ancestral home anymore—it had been fully renovated into the Silverstone Perfume and Dye Museum. Today was its official opening, and the inauguration ceremony was about to begin.

It was a special day. The once-grand Yuncey mansion had been transformed into a cultural landmark under Yosef's supervision.

Government officials from Departure City were in attendance, alongside journalists and media outlets. Crowds of locals gathered at the square, eager to see the spectacle.

Even Billy had put on his best clothes, standing anxiously at the museum doors. He craned his neck, peering at the crowd. "When will Caitlin get here?"

"Any y minute now," Yosef reassured him.

As if on cue, a commotion stirred in the square. A luxury car rolled to a stop at the edge of the plaza, and from it stepped a stunning figure.

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“She’s here, she’s here!”

Billy spotted the familiar figure and cried out with joy.

Everyone turned to look. Caitlin entered the square, flanked by Hayden, Jillian, and others.

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The crowd instinctively **parted**, their eyes following the heir of the Yuncey family. Young, beautiful, brilliant, and fearless—she embodied the courage and clarity few could claim.

Because of her, buried history had been unearthed, rigid traditions had been forced to yield, and Departure City had taken on new life **and** energy.

Caitlin walked humbly, nodding and waving to the locals as she passed.

When she reached the front, Yosef immediately stepped forward. “Caitlin, we’ve been waiting for you.”

“Sorry to keep you waiting. Is everything ready?”

“All set. Come, I’ll introduce you to the city leaders.”

With Yosef guiding her, Caitlin shook hands with Departure City’s leadership, including several cultural officials who had helped her before. “Thank you so much for coming today.”

“Caitlin, you’ve done so much for our city. Supporting you is the least we can do.”

Their respect was well-earned. Since taking over the Yuncey Group, Caitlin had audited the books, corrected years of tax evasion, and contributed massive sums to the local treasury—relieving a financial crisis.

**Turning** the Yuncey estate into a museum would boost tourism and culture. Reviving Fragrance & Dye Studio had already drawn international attention. Caitlin’s decisions had directly driven the city’s economic revival.

With her arrival, Yosef stepped onto the stage to open the ceremony.

“Welcome, citizens of Departure City, honored leaders, distinguished guests, and members of the press. Thank you for coming!

“After months of hard work, the Yuncey estate has been fully transformed into the Departure City Yun’s Fragrance & Dye Studio Museum. Today marks its official opening.

“Now, please welcome the chairwoman of the Yuncey Group and heir to Yun’s Fragrance & Dye Studio- Caitlin!”

**Applause** thundered as Caitlin ascended the stage. Dressed in an elegant beige gown, she stood tall, scanning the audience before speaking in a steady, low **voice**.

“Thank you for your support. Since my return to the Yuncey family, we’ve endured tremendous change. Restoring the truth of our history could not have happened without your witness.

“It has not been easy to bring us this far, Fragrance & Dye Studio is still in the process of revival, but the estate’s transformation is now complete.

“We did not turn it into a museum merely for tourism, but to lay the foundation for industries yet to come.

“Our future depends not only on me, but on all the people of Departure City. I hope together we can make this vision real. Thank you.”

She pressed a hand to her chest and bowed deeply.

A woman with such breadth of vision and humility commanded admiration. Applause rolled on, long and heartfelt. Even casual onlookers felt moved, as though they too bore a share of responsibility in **this** story.

The ribbon-cutting ceremony followed smoothly. Once finished, Caitlin announced, “Today, on our opening day, entry to the museum will be free for all.”

Cheers erupted. For the locals, the Yuncey estate had always been a closed, mysterious place. Now they could, finally step inside, and no one wanted to miss the chance.

Caitlin led the officials in for a tour. Reporters jostled for photos and coverage.

Inside, the first gallery traced the history of the Yuncey family and Fragrance & Dye Studio. Precious relics were displayed under glass, antique furniture roped off with protective barriers.

One hall honored the true ancestors of the Yuncey line—Clayton, Alexandra, Lloyd, and others.

The estate was no longer just a museum. It also housed theaters for local opera, cultural showcases, and landmark features—more like a cultural park than a single exhibition space.

Foreign journalists attended as well, eager to spotlight Caitlin’s revival of dyeing culture to the world.

After touring with the officials and attending a lunch with Hayden, Caitlin returned to the estate in the evening to visit Billy.

“Billy, thank you for all you’ve done,” she said warmly, clasping the old **man’s hands**.

“No thanks needed. I’m happy. Seeing all this change... it **makes** me proud.”

He had waited all day just for a chance to speak with her, and his joy was plain.

These days, he wore a uniform and staff badge, diligently serving at **the** museum. Having given his life to the Yunceys, Caitlin could only feel deep gratitude.

“Come, let’s see your new place. I asked Harrison to get some groceries. Tonight, I’ll cook for you.”

With the estate converted, Billy and Tiger had moved to a nearby residence provided by Yosef. It was a comfortable home with its own courtyard.

Caitlin found it **charming**. That evening she cooked a full meal, inviting Hayden, **Jillian**, Jarnes, and **Zinnia** to join.

16:05 Tue, Sepy B

Seeing Jillian unfamiliar, Billy asked, “And this young lady, whose child is she?”

**Caitlin** grinned. “Hayden’s.. friend.”

“Oh, his girlfriend **then!**” the old man chuckled.

#55 vouchers

Jillian blushed crimson. Hayden didn’t correct him—if anything, he looked pleased at the title.

Over dinner, with wine warming his cheeks, Billy grew talkative. “Yosef’s arranged a housekeeper for me, so life is good. But tell me... have you found that bastard Forrest yet? Have you found your mother?”

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

Chapter **608**

“For now, there’s still no trace of Forrest,” Caitlin replied with a small smile. “But we’ve finally found a lead on

my mother.”

“Really? Where is she?” Billy asked, his voice full of concern,

“We tracked her to Country A. I’ve already sent people there. If nothing goes wrong, when we return home, we should be able to follow this lead and finally find her.”

“Good, good, **good!** The sooner you find her, the sooner your family can be whole again.” Billy’s expression softened with hope.

The evening ended on a warm note. After dinner, Caitlin and the others left Billy’s home and returned to their villa.

Before bed, Caitlin tried to call Sebastian. He didn’t answer. She sent a message, but there was still no reply long after. Her chest tightened with unease. What was happening in the far northern seas?

Far north, across the vast, icy waters.

With the help of the Obsidian Order, the surviving members of Black Wolf Fortress who had been hidden **on** Crescent Island were finally relocated back.

They had returned to the north, but their fortress itself remained under the control of the Notans family.

Looking **at** his homeland from afar yet unable to set foot inside, Raze felt as if his flesh were being carved away.

Still, he had one thing to be thankful for. If Sebastian and the Obsidian Order hadn't taken in their abandoned families, the Notans clan would have surely butchered them.

Now, thanks to that intervention, the men of Black Wolf Fortress were reunited with their loved ones.

Raze, with Sheldon at his side, met Sebastian again.

This time, Raze's tone was different, less savage, more measured. "Mr. Vanderbilt, whatever else, I owe you thanks."

"No need. What matters now is deciding how to deal with the Notans family."

The two leaders sat across from each other on **Obsidian** Order **ground**, laying out their plan.

Sebastian's strategy mirrored the earlier raid on Black Wolf Fortress—swift infiltration and overwhelming assault. But this time, with Black Wolf Fortress and the Obsidian Order united, the odds were far better.

"What do you think, Mr. Raze?" Sebastian asked.

Raze didn't hesitate. "I have no objections. We'll do it your way. From now until this battle ends, every man of Black Wolf Fortress will follow your command."

"Good. Then let's begin."

55 vouches!

Orders rippled through both camps. That night, under cover of darkness, the joint forces prepared for a silent

strike.

Midnight cloaked the fortress in stillness.

Ships glided across the frigid waters, avoiding searchlights. Teams of trained men scaled the cliffs with hooks and ropes, slipping into the fortress while guards dozed.

A flash of steel.

One guard slumped forward, his throat marked by a cut so fine it barely bled before his life ended.

The gates cleared, the attackers poured inside.

The Notans family scrambled to resist, chaos erupting.

Then came the clash—gunfire, blades, explosions, screams—shattering the night. Fire lit the dark fortress. flames reflected on the ice-cold sea. The north burned.

By dawn, most of the Notans fighters were dead. A few scattered, fleeing like beaten dogs.

The rising sun spilled crimson over the horizon.

On the prow of his ship, Raze raised the Black Wolf Fortress banner high, his voice breaking with emotion.

“Leader, we’re home!” his men roared.

“Home!” Raze bellowed back, and the cheer spread like wildfire.

At last, his fortress was his again.

“Mr. Vanderbilt,” Raze **said** solemnly, “thank you for Obsidian Order’s aid. I’ll remember this debt. When Black Wolf Fortress is rebuilt, I’ll invite you to drink with me.”

Sebastian’s expression didn’t change. “I’ve kept my word. I expect you to keep yours—never cross

“I swear it.”

**Raze** had never bowed his head to anyone. But to Sebastian, he did so willingly.

The two parted. Sebastian’s fleet turned back, bound for Caitlin.

Departure City.

me

The next day, Caitlin arrived with Hayden **and** Jillian at Fragrance & Dye Studio, where Julie and her daughter greeted them.

“Caitlin, we meet again!” Julie’s smile was bright. Caitlin noticed how different she seemed now—healthier, sharper, almost reborn.

16:05 Tue, Sep 9 B\*\*\*

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"Let me introduce someone. This **is** Jillian, our new lead designer. The two of you will be working closely together."

"Hello, Jillian."

"Hello, Julie." Jillian replied warmly, shaking her hand.

Inside, the studio's restoration was nearly complete, Soon, they would begin producing cloth using traditional dyeing methods, from fabric-making to finished garments.

"I want Fragrance & Dye Studio to have an online presence internationally," Caitlin explained. "We'll need influencers. My plan is to build Julie into a meaningful content creator."

"That's a good idea," Jillian said.

"But better than one influencer is two," Caitlin continued with a smile. "If you join her—one focusing on embroidery, one on design—you'll be a pair of sisters online. I think it will **have** real impact."

"Me? An influencer too?" Jillian blinked in surprise.

“Anyone can, if they’re willing. With a professional team behind you, your skills and looks make you perfect.”

“Then I’m in. I can hardly wait.”

Jillian’s eyes shone with excitement.

After touring the completed studio, Caitlin was satisfied. Then they visited a lotus pond outside the city, acres of green leaves and fragrant blossoms swaying in the wind.

Jillian had never seen such a place before. She bent down, laughing like a child as she plucked a lotus bloom. Behind her, Hayden watched quietly, lips curving into an unguarded smile.

But Jillian was too focused on the flower to notice her footing. Her shoe slipped, her balance gave way.

With a startled cry, she toppled headfirst into the lotus pond.

AD

Comment

# Billionaire's Regret: Finding Her

“Jillian!”

Voucher

Caitlin spun around just in time to see her slipping, a cry escaping her lips. Julie and Zinnia both gasped, eyes wide with horror.

They were too far away. None of them could reach her in time.

Just as Jillian was about to plunge headfirst into the **pond**, a strong hand shot out and seized her wrist.

Hayden.

He had moved like lightning, striding forward in three powerful steps, yanking her back with a firm pull.

Jillian tumbled straight into his chest, her face pale as paper, her heart pounding so violently it hurt.

The others finally exhaled in relief. Jillian lifted her head from Hayden's embrace, her lips trembling as she whispered. "Thank you."

"Idiot. Watch where you're going," Hayden said, his voice laced with reproach—but under it was something softer, warmer, protective.

"I got it."

Instead of getting angry at being called an idiot, Jillian's cheeks flushed scarlet. She quickly pulled away and hurried ahead to catch up with Caitlin and the others.

At the lotus pond, Hayden led them into a workshop he oversaw, where older women were busy at work.

"What are they doing?" Jillian asked curiously.

"Extracting lotus fibers," Caitlin explained.

Jillian's eyes lit up. She had studied textiles before and remembered how rare lotus thread was. "Wow! Workshops like this barely exist anymore."

“That’s right. Most natural fabrics are silk or cotton. Lotus fiber is one of the rarest materials in the world. It’s indispensable for crafting the high-end Fragrance Garments at Fragrance & Dye Studio. Only a handful of skilled artisans even know how to extract it.”

Caitlin spoke with such passion and depth that it was obvious how much heart **she** had poured into this work.

Jillian nodded thoughtfully. “I see. Just the cost of extracting lotus fiber must be enormous. By the time a Fragrance Garment is completed, every stitch would carry months of painstaking effort. No wonder it’s considered a royal treasure.”

“Exactly,” Caitlin said with a smile. “Do you know how long it takes to make even a single lotus-**silk** scarf?”

The others shook their heads.

> 55 vouchers?

“Two months,” Caitlin explained. “And it can only be harvested from April to October. Fibers must be extracted and spun within 24 hours or they’ll snap. It’s ten times more expensive than silk, and every step has to be done by hand. Rare things are **always** precious—and **expensive.**”

Everyone listened in awe, realizing **just** how difficult it was to produce such garments.

When the **inspection** ended, Caitlin walked back with the group, discussing next steps with Julie and Jillian. First, they needed to dye the fabrics using traditional methods. Then, the real challenge would begin: turning them into designs that could stun the world.

Both girls offered ideas, their **inspirations** colliding in a flurry of creativity. Caitlin felt reassured—Fragrance & Dye Studio was in good hands.

That evening, after dinner, Hayden drove Caitlin **and** Jillian **back** to the villa.

As soon as Caitlin opened the door, she froze.

The room was filled with flowers. And in the middle of it all stood Sebastian.

“Sebastian?” Caitlin breathed, stunned.

He turned slowly, his gaze soft and warm. “My love.”

Jillian instantly understood. Smiling, **she** said, “Caitlin, Sebastian came for you. You two talk. I’ll stay at Julie’s tonight.” She slipped out and closed the door behind her, giving them privacy.

“When did you get back? I called and texted you—you never answered. Do **you** know how worried I was?” Caitlin’s eyes shimmered with tears as she looked at **him**.

“Forgive me,” Sebastian said gently. “I only wanted to surprise you.”

“You nearly scared me to death,” she muttered, stepping **closer**, her hands instinctively clutching him for injuries. Only when she confirmed he **was** unharmed did her shoulders relax.

“You really were worried,” he murmured, pulling her into his arms, lowering his forehead to rest. Their eyes met, sparks igniting.

“You’re my man. Of course I was worried.”

His lips curved. “I’m sorry for that. Punish me then. Punish me by kissing me a hundred times.”

against hers.

His grip tightened around her waist, pulling her close. Then words disappeared, replaced by a searing kiss that drowned her completely.

With Jillian gone, the villa belonged to them alone. Tonight, they could lose themselves in each other.

Outside, Hayden’s car still hadn’t moved.

When Jillian came out, intending to call a cab, she noticed his vehicle still idling by the curb.

“You didn’t **leave?**” she asked.

Hayden flicked ash from his cigarette, his tone casual. “Just finished a smoke. About to go. Where are you headed?”

In truth, he’d been waiting, knowing Sebastian’s return meant Jillian wouldn’t stay.

She admitted softly, “Caitlin’s with Sebastian now. I thought I’d stay at Julie’s tonight”

“Get in. I’ll arrange a place for **you,**” Hayden said, opening the passenger door for her.

Jillian slipped inside, stealing a shy glance at **him.** “Thanks.”

Suddenly, he leaned across the seat. Jillian startled, heart pounding, eyes wide. “Hayden?”

His face brushed so close she could smell the faint smoke and masculine scent of him, dizzying her senses.

Then—click. The seatbelt locked into place.

She froze, realizing he'd only been fastening her seatbelt.

By the time she came back to herself, he was upright again, starting the car as if nothing had happened. Jillian, however, couldn't stop her cheeks from burning. She turned her face away, too flustered to meet his

eyes.

He drove her to his own estate. When the car stopped, he leaned over. "We're here. Get out."

But *lit*

didn't move.

Thinking she'd fallen asleep, Hayden bent closer to check. Just then, she turned her head.

Their eyes locked.

Breath mingled. A strange, heated energy pulsed between them, sharp enough to cut. Hayden's heart shifted. Before he could think better of it, he leaned toward her lips.

And Jillian's heart nearly gave out

Was he... about to kiss her?

E

## Billionaire's Regret: Finding Her

554cuchert.

Hayden's lips were a breath away from Jillian's when he noticed her wide, startled eyes, like a frightened little doe. He pulled **back** at the last second, his voice steady.

"We're here. **Time** to get out."

He stepped out first. Jillian's body slackened, but her heart still thudded wildly.

He didn't kiss her.

Why?

A small, secret part of her had been hoping he would. Now the missed kiss left a faint, inexplicable ache in her chest. Did this mean he didn't like her?

She followed him into the estate, eyes widening at the sight of the low-key yet extravagant manor. "This... **is**

ate.cyes The Fixer's home?"

"Mm.

Hayden led her inside. Jillian's pulse raced faster. For a man to invite a woman into his most private space- didn't that mean she was different from the others?

He arranged a guest **room** for her. That night Jillian tossed and turned, unable to sleep, her mind filled only with his face.

What should she do? Should she confess first, tell him she liked him?

While Jillian wrestled with insomnia, Caitlin and Sebastian spent the night wrapped in each other's arms.

The next day Sebastian accompanied Caitlin to meet with Yosef, Hayden, and others to finalize The Yuncey Family's development plans. Once everything in Departure City **was** properly arranged, they flew back home that evening. With Yosef and Hayden managing things locally, Caitlin had no more worries. Her next priority was finding her mother.

Back at the Vanderbilt estate, Caitlin immediately asked Tyler, "What did you **find out**?"

Tyler had just returned from Country A two days earlier with the DNA test results. He handed her the file. "Two samples were compared. See for yourself."

Caitlin flipped through the report. At the bottom, the conclusion was clear: a biological relationship existed.

"Yes. Exactly as I suspected. The girl we rescued in the sanatorium, Ida, is indeed Black Hawk's sister."

Her face lit with triumph. She handed the file to Sebastian, who read it and could only admire his wife's sharp intuition.

"Never imagined Black Hawk had a sister."

**Chapter 610**

bu vouchers

“**And** now I’ve finally found his weakness.”

All this time she had been at a disadvantage against Black Hawk’s iron will, unable to pierce his armor, Who could have guessed that their chance encounter with Ida would turn everything around?

But Tyler’s next words tempered her excitement. “Ida’s condition isn’t good. The disease has flared again. she’s getting worse.”

That was why he’d delayed his return. He had stayed in Country A until doctors managed to stabilize her.

“I feel so sorry for her,” Caitlin murmured, frowning. “Let’s find a specialist who can help. Maybe there’s **still** hope.

“Contact Simon,” Sebastian suggested. “He’s a doctor. He might know someone.

“Good idea.

Caitlin called Simon immediately and explained. His response made her sit up straighter. His mentor abroad was a specialist in genetic disorders. Even better—the mentor’s research team had just launched a project. specifically targeting Ida’s disease.

“They don’t **need** payment,” Simon said. “They’ll take her into the program. Send me her medical records, and I’ll forward them to the **team**.”

Tyler **had** already digitized Ida’s medical history. Caitlin sent everything over. Soon after, Simon called back, confirming Ida was eligible.

Caitlin’s eyes gleamed. “If I help cure Black Hawk’s sister, will he finally tell me where my mother is?”

Her resolve hardened. “Ida is the key. I’ll use her to open Black Hawk’s mouth. Let’s see how long he can stay silent.”

Sebastian placed his hand on hers. “I’ll go with you.”

The paperwork for a prison visit was quickly approved. Together they went to the New York penitentiary.

Black Hawk sat on the other side of the glass, expression calm, as though he had expected her.

“Black Hawk,” Caitlin greeted, lifting the phone receiver. “Didn’t think we’d meet again so soon, did you?”

He sneered. “Does your husband know how much attention you’re giving a **criminal**? Isn’t he jealous?”

“Funny. Since when does the cold-faced **assassin** crack jokes?” Caitlin’s lips curved faintly. “Don’t worry. My **husband** knows. He’s aware you’re always on my mind.”

“If you came here about your mother again, I’ll save you the trouble. No comment.”

He shut her down before she could even ask. Caitlin, unruffled, leaned forward. “I didn’t come only for **that**. I came to **talk**. Just talk.”

“I told you—we have nothing to talk about.”

56 vouchers:

“Then let’s talk about something you care about.” Caitlin’s tone softened. “Remember the girl I mentioned last time? The one I saved at the sanatorium in Country A? Idla?”

At the sound of the name, Black Hawk’s pupils flickered. His **face**, however, remained frozen in its mask.

“She tried to jump off a building because she hadn’t seen her brother in years.” Caitlin continued gently. “Before I stopped her, she gave me something. Said her brother would recognize it immediately.”

Caitlin pulled out the strawberry bear hairpin Ida had entrusted to her and held it up.

For a fraction of a second, Black Hawk's hands trembled beneath the table. He clenched them into fists on his knees, fighting to hide it.

"She's a pitiful girl," Caitlin went on softly. "Parents gone in a car accident, lost an arm, diagnosed with spinocerebellar degeneration. The only person who ever loved her—her brother—vanished. If I were her, I'd feel abandoned by the world too."

Her voice dropped even lower, almost tender. "But I think her brother must have loved her deeply. Otherwise, he wouldn't have spent years traveling the world just to find a cure for her. The question is, where is he now? Why hasn't he gone to see her? Do you know?"

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AD

## Billionaire's Regret: Finding Her

Chapter 611

Caitlin studied Black Hawk's face, cold and sharp as a blade. His composure was terrifying—no flicker, no weakness, not even the faintest twitch. His control was flawless.

“Why **ask** me?”

The realization struck him like ice water: she had begun to suspect. This woman was dangerous. She wanted to use Ida to pry open his defenses—he **could not** afford to take the b

Caitlin’s smile faded. Her voice cut sharper. “Why do you think I asked? You really believe I came here to chat for fun? I already know the truth. Ida is your sister. You’re her brother, aren’t **you?**”

His fingers dug into his palms, his stare fixed and hard on her.

Caitlin pulled a faded photograph from her folder, sliding it against the glass. “Your sister’s picture. She’s only a child in it, and her brother was barely a teenager, but the resemblance is there. The eyes don’t lie. Without this photograph, I wouldn’t have guessed it. Your real name is Neil.”

She produced a second document and held it up. “I had Ida’s hair taken from Sanctis Clinic in Country A. DNA analysis confirmed it—she’s your sister. The evidence is irrefutable. Still want to deny it?”

For the first time, the assassin’s mask cracked. His body stilled, and after a long breath he muttered, “Fine. She’s my sister. So what?”

“Your sister’s life hangs by a thread. Does that not worry you?” Caitlin’s eyes sharpened, her voice cool, cutting straight into his heart.

The room felt like a battlefield. It was no longer about weapons—it was about who could hold their nerve, whose hand was stronger.

Neil's lips twisted bitterly. "If you know her condition, then you know she won't live long. Threaten me with her all you want. If she dies... I die with her."

He **was** caged, powerless to protect her. If someone struck at Ida, there was nothing he could do.

Caitlin sighed softly. "I never wanted to hurt her. At first, yes, I wanted leverage. But once I met her... she's just a child, young, with a whole life ahead. I couldn't look away. She told me her only wish was to see her brother again. I gave her my word I'd help. So I'm helping. And I thought you'd want to see her too. I brought something."

She slid a tablet toward the glass and hit play.

The screen lit with Ida's bright smile. She stumbled through a garden, fell, then picked herself up stubbornly. With one arm missing, she was still strong, still determined. A butterfly fluttered past; her gaze followed it with yearning.

The footage shifted. Ida in therapy, struggling with exercises that seemed impossible. She failed again and again, biting her lip through tears, only to try once more.

"Neil, I'm doing well. I'll wait for you."

16:06 **Tue**, Sep 9 **B**

“Neil, a **kind** lady is helping me. I’m really happy.”

“Neil, look! Ida folded this paper crane—does it look right?”

She laughed, holding up a crumpled paper charm, eager for her brother’s praise.

The laughter faded when the next clip showed her collapsing mid-session. Sirens, rush into the ER.

Neil’s hands pressed against the glass, knuckles white. His eyes reddened.

The last clip showed her in bed, **pale and frail**, whispering, “Neil, I’ll be good. I’ll wait for you. Come **back**

5001.”

The video ended. Neil’s face vanished behind his hands, his shoulders shaking with the weight of grief he couldn’t contain.

Caitlin slid the tablet back into her bag, then laid down another file. “You saw it yourself. She’s getting worse. If she doesn’t receive treatment, she won’t last. A doctor I know is working with a research team—genetic disorders like hers are their focus. They’re recruiting patients worldwide. This is their enrollment form. All it needs is her guardian’s consent. If you sign, we’ll get her there immediately.”

For a long while, silence. His scarlet eyes lifted, haunted. “Why? Why would you help my sister? Do you really think this will make me talk?”

Caitlin **shook** her **head**. “No. I don’t expect you to. Finding my mother is my burden, not yours. I’ll do it myself. I’m helping Ida because she deserves it, not because she’s your sister. Even if she weren’t, I’d still help. Because she crossed my path. Because she’s a child who deserves a chance.”

That was who she was—too kind, too resolute to **stand** by.

She set down the receiver, rose, and asked the guard to pass the file to him.

Neil sat with the papers in his hand, fingers trembling. For a long time he didn’t move, didn’t speak.

Her words gnawed at **him**. For years, his world had been forged of blood and iron, his faith sharpened. through death. He had slaughtered, destroyed, told himself it was all for a cause.

But Caitlin’s actions screamed a different truth: that there were **things** greater **than** vengeance. Greater than hatred.

She had found his sister and could **have** crushed her **in** front of him, could **have** twisted the knife. Instead, she chose to **save** her.

Tears stung his eyes, an emotion he thought he **had** killed long ago. For the first time, the walls he had built around his heart began to crumble.

## Billionaire's Regret: Finding Her

Chapter 612

65 vouch

Outside the prison, Sebastian waited until Caitlin came out. He stepped forward and asked, “How was it? Did he talk?”

“Not yet. Let’s just go back first.”

Caitlin got into the car, and Sebastian drove them away.

On the way back, Sebastian said, “You’re being too gentle. For someone like him, who’s killed so many, the only **way** is to fight fire with fire. If it were up to me, I’d bring his sister here to the US. Only if he sees her in danger with his own eyes will he compromise.”

“I’ve thought about that. But Ida’s health isn’t good enough for long–distance transfer. She needs treatment as soon as possible. As for the grudge between me and Black Hawk, his sister isn’t the one to bear it.”

Caitlin remembered the pained look on Black Hawk’s face as he covered himself, and she wanted to gamble on one last chance. “I think we can wait a few more days. Maybe he’ll reach out to me himself.”

“Alright.”

Sebastian **didn’t** press the matter further. When they returned to the Vanderbilt estate, they learned that Beatrice had little appetite after leaving the hospital. Caitlin went into the kitchen, cooked something herself, and brought it to her.

Beatrice had been home for two days, resting, hoping for company. When she saw Caitlin come in, her face lit up. “Caitlin, you’re back!”

“Yes, I’m back.”

Caitlin sat beside her, set the insulated container on the table, and took her hand. “How are you feeling?”

“I’m much better. Oh, Caitlin, I have something for you.”

Beatrice unclasped a gold cross from around her neck and pressed it into Caitlin's hands. "This is a charm for protection. Wear it. I want you to be safe."

"Beatrice..."

Caitlin tried to decline, but the older woman held her hand firmly. "Take it, Caitlin. It's not about value, it's about keeping you safe. You can't **have** any more accidents."

To reassure her, Caitlin accepted, **and** Beatrice personally fastened it around her neck.

"Thank you, Beatrice."

Caitlin was deeply moved, grateful for the woman's care.

Beatrice shook her head, and Caitlin added, "I heard you haven't had much of an appetite, so I cooked something for you to try."

"You run around enough **already**. I don't want you tiring yourself out making food for me," Beatrice said with

concern.

“It’s fine.”

Caitlin lifted out a bowl of tomato seafood noodles. The aroma spread instantly, and Beatrice’s eyes lit up. when she **saw** it. “Tomato seafood noodles?”

“Yes. I made it for you.”

“Oh my... how did you know I was craving that?”

Beatrice didn’t know what to say. Her granddaughter-in-law was thoughtful and caring, even guessing what she was longing for.

“I just guessed. Something simple, maybe it’ll suit you.” Caitlin set the bowl in front of her. “Try it.”

She fed Beatrice a bite of shrimp. The old woman’s thumb shot up immediately. “Delicious! So good!”

She ate some fish, some noodles, sipped the broth, and her eyes grew moist.

“It reminds me of when I first came to the US with my mother as a child. A hot bowl of tomato seafood noodles back then... it was the happiest thing”

The simple bowl stirred memories of her youth, when she and her mother came to a foreign land with nothing but hope.

Moved by the taste, Beatrice dabbed at her eyes with her sleeve. Eliza walked in and asked, “What’s wrong? Why are you crying?”

“Nothing, Caitlin’s noodles were too good. They reminded me of being little... and of my mother.” Beatrice blinked away tears, a little embarrassed.

She was so old now, and still **talking** about missing her mother. Wouldn’t the younger ones laugh at **her**?

Caitlin gave a helpless smile. “If I’d known it would make you cry, I’d have made something else instead.”

“It just means it really touched her. She’s missing her family. Beatrice came here with her mother when she was young. She’s endured a lot,” Eliza sighed.

“Beatrice, where was your hometown? Do you still have family or friends there?” Caitlin asked gently.

“My home **was** in Santa Aurelia, in S country. I had a brother, two **years older** than me. When we immigrated, we lost each other. I never heard from him again... he’s probably gone by now.”

“S country? Santa Aurelia? I’ve been there,” Caitlin said, surprised.

Beatrice looked at her in wonder. “You have?”

“Yes. What was your **brother’s** name? You never tried to find him?”

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“I only remember his name was Javier. But no matter how I searched, I never found a trace. In those chaotic years, he probably didn’t survive. So I stopped mentioning it.”

Her sigh carried deep regret.

“His last name was Gonzales?”

“Yes”

Caitlin knew Gonzales was a major family name in S country. She couldn’t help but think of Alicia and her family, who bore the same name. Was there a connection?

“But Beatrice, you don’t use Gonzales anymore. Isn’t your current name Zhou Yueying?”

“Yes. Not long after we came here, my mother died of illness. I was taken in by the Sanders family and given a new name. My real name was Valentina Gonzales.”

“Do you still have anything from your childhood? If I go back to S country, I can ask around. I know quite a few people named Gonzales.”

Caitlin wanted to help the old woman find some closure, so she wouldn’t carry regret forever.

Really?”

Hope sparked in Beatrice’s eyes. “The cross I just gave you... I’ve worn it since I was a girl. I remember my brother had an identical one.”

“Alright. I’ll remember.”

Caitlin glanced at the charm on her chest. She would keep this in mind.

After visiting Beatrice, Caitlin prepared to return to Vanderbilt Manor. On her way out, she ran into Molly.

“Molly.”

“Caitlin, how’s Grandma doing?”

“She just went to sleep.”

“Oh, good. I was looking for you.”

Molly linked arms with her and tugged her outside, a smile on her face. Caitlin asked, “What’s got you so **happy**?”

“I’m going to Simon’s house today, to meet his mother. I’m so nervous. Can you come with me? Give me some courage?”

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

“So it’s meeting the parents, huh? Alright then. First you’ll need a gift”

“Right, right. But it’s my first time meeting her mother. What should I bring?”

Molly had no experience with **this** and wanted Caitlin’s advice.

“Rebecca raised two kids on her own. She’s thrifty and practical. If you give her something too expensive, it might not win her favor.”

“You’re right.”

“Better if it’s something meaningful you made yourself.”

“I could... but what should I make?”

“As far as I know, Rebecca was once a ballet dancer. Why don’t we start from there?”

Molly looked embarrassed. “Ballet? You mean I should perform for her? No way, I can’t dance!”

“I’m not asking you to dance. Here’s what I mean...”

With Caitlin’s coaching, Molly finally had the perfect gift prepared and dressed appropriately.

Caitlin accompanied her to meet Rebecca. “Molly, let’s stop by the café on the way. I asked Wendy to join us.”

“Okay.”

Caitlin had already called ahead. Knowing Molly was going to Rebecca’s, Wendy arranged for a coworker to cover her shift. Everything was in order. She stepped out of the cafe, ready to wait by the roadside, when she suddenly spotted Mrs. Jones in the distance.

“Wendy, I’ll only take a few minutes of your time.”

Mrs. Jones nodded slightly, **then** turned.

Wendy’s heart sank. A bad feeling spread through her chest, but she had no choice except to follow.

Inside the Jones family’s car, Wendy sat stiffly beside Mrs. Jones. “Auntie, what did you want to see me about?”

“I’ve already looked into your background. Your parents divorced years ago, your father remarried, and your mother’s mental health isn’t stable. She’s been dependent on medication. Your brother is a doctor. You studied abroad for two years, but you’re now working in a café, correct?”

Wendy nodded quietly.

“I don’t **know** how you and Benjamin met, but I need to be honest. I’m not satisfied with your circumstances, especially the fact that your parents divorced. I don’t want Benjamin’s future wife coming from that kind of family. I hope you can understand.”

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Her tone wasn't sharp, but calm and factual.

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Wendy understood immediately—just as she'd feared—this woman did not want her with Benjamin.

“I understand. Honestly, nothing's really happened between us. I know I'm not a match for him. I've never thought of climbing above my station. He and I are impossible,”

Her chest tightened with hurt, but she kept her voice even.

“I'm glad you realize that. As compensation, I can arrange a far better job for you—salary, benefits, vacation, ten times what you earn now. Or anything else reasonable you want. I can make it happen.”

“No, thank you. I don't need anything. I'm fine where I am. If that's all, I'll excuse myself.”

Wendy gave a polite nod, opened the door, and got out.

Mrs. Jones watched her walk away and let out a long sigh. The girl wasn't nearly as calculating or greedy as she had imagined. If not for her family background, she might have been acceptable.

Wendy held her tears in until she left the car. Then they fell freely. She thought of all Benjamin had **done** for her, of the words he'd whispered that night, and the ache inside her deepened.

When she had been heavier, she had still carried a certain confidence. But after she slimmed **down**, she somehow lost it—because she had fallen for Benjamin. Facing a man so far out of her league, how could she possibly feel secure?

Her broken family was a scar she could never erase, a mark she had never chosen.

Standing by the roadside, she saw Benjamin's name flash on her screen. Her chest tightened painfully. She ignored the call once, but it came again. With a shaky breath, she answered.

“Hello?”

“Little Pudding, what are you up to? Miss me?”

Benjamin leaned back in his office chair, fresh from a meeting, his feet propped casually on the desk, his tone. playful.

“What about you? I’m heading home.”

“I’m thinking about you. Why home! Don’t you have a shift today?”

“Molly’s coming over. I should be there. Nothing else, I’m hanging up.”

She wanted to end it quickly before he could hear the tremor in her voice.

“Wait-” Benjamin stopped her. “What did I tell you? Before you hang up, you owe me a kiss. You forgot **again?**”

“There are a lot of people around. Not now.”

She used the excuse to end the call, just as Molly’s car pulled up.

“Hop in, Wendy!” Molly called.

“Coming!”

Wendy slid into the backseat. Caitlin glanced at her red eyes through the mirror. “What’s wrong? Your eyes. look puffy.”

“Oh, **just** a bug flew into my eye. Nothing **serious.**”

She laughed lightly and rubbed at her eye, refusing to share what had just happened. Her situation with Benjamin was her burden alone.

Caitlin let it drop, and the three women chatted about other things until the car stopped outside Wendy’s apartment

A **few** minutes later, Simon’s car pulled up. He eyed Molly, then Caitlin. “Sorry to keep **you** waiting. Caitlin, you came too?”

“Of course. I’m here to keep Molly from running away,” Caitlin teased.

“Alright, let’s go.”

“Don’t forget the gift.”

Together, the four carried their presents upstairs.

**As** soon as they reached the fifth floor, Simon and Wendy froze. From inside the apartment came furious shouting.

The security door was closed, but the inner door stood ajar. A woman's voice shrieked, raw with hatred.

“Get out! You worthless piece of trash! I hope **you** go bankrupt and your whole family ends up begging on the streets! I curse you to be hit by a car **the** moment you walk out!”

“**You** damn woman, are you looking to die-”

A man's violent roar cut her off. Then came a piercing scream.

“Ahhh!”

“Mom!” Wendy cried, panic flooding her face.

Simon fumbled out his keys, shoved the lock open, and rushed inside. The scene **that** greeted him left him. utterly stunned.

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## Billionaire's Regret: Finding Her

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The beast of a man who had once been Simon's father was at that very moment kicking and punching his defenseless mother.

Rebecca's face was covered in blood, her body curled into a ball on the floor. She had no strength to fight back, only the broken cries of someone in unbearabl

pain.

Simon's fury exploded. He **charged forward**, driving his foot hard into Landon and knocking him away from his mother.

"You bastard!"

Rage consumed him. Every strike he threw at his father was fueled by the sight of his mother's suffering.

Father and son wrestled violently, crashing into furniture, leaving the room in ruins.

"Mom..."

Wendy ran to Rebecca, sobbing as she lifted her up. Blood streamed from a gash on her forehead.

Caitlin was shaken and furious. She had never imagined Landon could be so depraved, storming into his ex- wife's home in broad daylight and beating her bloody.

Molly, on the other hand, froze **in** shock at the doorway. She had only known that Simon's parents were divorced. She never imagined this—never imagined his father was so vicious. The sight left her terrified.

Caitlin rushed to help Wendy support Rebecca.

The reek of alcohol on Landon made it clear he had come drunk, looking for trouble. Humiliated after Benjamin had made a fool of him, **his** family left to rot overnight in a septic pit and their disgrace splashed all **over** the news, the Smith company's already failing stock had crashed completely. Desperate, he had begged his children for help, but they refused. Left with no one, he came to threaten his ex-wife. When words failed, he turned to violence.

Simon could tolerate no more. His fists hammered his father's gut and chest again and again.

**One** final punch sent Landon crashing back over the coffee table, where he slumped unconscious.

Simon immediately scrambled to his mother's side. "Mom! Mom, are you okay?"

“Simon.” Wendy wept as Caitlin dialed emergency services.

Simon rushed for the medical kit, hands trembling as he cleaned and dressed his mother’s wounds.

Molly finally broke free of her shock and hurried **to** help. Rebecca lay pale and weak on the couch, her injuries worse than they had feared—clearly she had already suffered repeated blows before they arrived.

Molly had only ever read about domestic violence in the news. Seeing it unfold in front of her left her **sick**, with **fear** and disbelief. That Landon could still storm into the home of a woman he divorced years ago,

brutalize her without shame—it was monstrous.

“What do we do?” Molly whispered, horrified.

“I’m calling for backup,” Caitlin said, stepping out into the hall to ring Sebastian’s.

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Inside, Simon worked desperately to staunch his mother’s bleeding while Wendy pressed cloths against the **wounds**.

None of them saw Landon stirring until it was too late. Groggy, bloodied, he groped blindly across the table and his fingers found a fruit knife. With a drunken snarl, he lurched to his feet and drove the blade toward Simon's back.

Caitlin came back through the doorway at that moment. She screamed. "Watch out!"

Molly turned, Instinct seized her. She didn't think—she just threw herself forward.

The knife never reached Simon.

Thwack-

The sound of steel tearing flesh rang out sharp and clear. Blood spurted as the blade sank deep into Molly's stomach.

"Molly!" Caitlin's cry shook the walls.

"Molly!" Simon's roar was raw, guttural.

"Molly!" Wendy screamed in terror.

The knife pulled free, and Molly crumpled, blood pouring from her wound, bubbling at her lips.

Still crazed, Landon raised the knife again.

But Caitlin was already there, seizing his wrist with both hands. She wrested the blade free with a force born of fury and smashed her fist across his jaw.

Staggering and reeking of blood, Landon clawed blindly for something else to strike with.

Simon's eyes burned red. A howl of grief tore from his throat as he launched himself at his father. His kick slammed into Landon's chest, sending the man sprawling backward.

His heel caught on a broken stool leg lying on the floor. He pitched back and landed directly on its jagged splintered edge.

The shard pierced his chest clean through.

Landon's scream cut short. He went still.

Caitlin and Wendy had witnessed the whole grisly moment. Neither wasted a second on the corpse. They rushed to Molly.

"Molly! Hold on, Molly!"

Blood seeped hot and thick between Simon's fingers as he pressed down on the wound. His voice cracked with desperation. "Call the ambulance! Now!"

"They're almost here! Molly, stay with us, you have to stay with us!" Caitlin's hands shook as she supported Molly's head.

She checked Landon's body quickly. No pulse. No **breath**. "He's dead."

Wendy's **face was ashen**, her body frozen against the wall.

Simon, though shattered inside, forced himself to act. He wrapped gauze around Molly's abdomen as tightly as he could, desperate to slow the bleeding. He was a doctor, and right now **every** ounce of his training was focused on saving **the** woman he loved.

Caitlin called Felix directly to report the situation.

The ambulance hadn't yet arrived, but Felix—nearby on another case—reached them first, Sebastian with

him.

The **men** rushed upstairs to find the carnage. Felix began ordering his team to secure evidence and photograph the scene.

Sebastian, stunned at first, could barely process what he saw. His sister, lying in blood. Landon dead on the floor.

“How is she?” he demanded, dropping to Simon’s side.

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Simon had managed to fit an mask to Molly, his hands slick with her blood. “She needs surgery now. She can’t wait.”

“Then we don’t wait. I’ll drive.”

Sebastian and Simon lifted Molly together, James and Tyler carrying Rebecca. They charged downstairs just as the ambulance screeched into the complex.

Molly was rushed straight into emergency surgery. Rebecca, with lesser injuries, received stitches and was moved into a ward to recover.

Simon staggered out into the hall, his face drained of color, his fists trembling. He slammed one into the wall hard enough to smear it with blood.

The pain barely registered.

All he could feel was the crushing weight inside his chest, the terror of losing her again, the unbearable guilt that she had **been** hurt because of **him**

His heart felt like it was shattering.

## Billionsaire's Regret: Finding Her

“Don't lose **hope**. My sister will be **fine**.”

Sebastian gripped Simon's shoulder, steadying him, though worry gnawed at his own chest.

“I'm sorry... it's all because of me...”

Simon's voice cracked. Tears spilled as guilt consumed him. He had promised Molly he would take her to meet his mother, that they would begin planning **their** wedding. And now everything had been shattered- destroyed by his vile father.

Sebastian exhaled slowly. “None of us wanted this to happen. But your father-”

“Don’t say his **name**.”

Simon dropped to his haunches, clutching his head as grief and rage twisted his features.

For more than twenty years, he and his sister and mother had lived through misery because of that man. Landon. Pig. Dog, Monster,

Now he was dead. And good riddance.

Simon felt no sorrow, only bitter satisfaction. If that jagged stool leg hadn’t finished him, Simon might have driven the knife into him himself—for what he had done to his mother, to Molly, to the only woman Simon truly loved.

Sebastian kept silent. He had already called their family. Half an hour later, members of the Vanderbilts rushed in.

Eliza and Raymond arrived first, followed by Jasper and Vincent. All wore the same stricken look.

“Molly, my daughter. how is she?” Eliza grabbed Sebastian’s sleeve, tears spilling freely.

Raymond’s face was drawn. “Sebastian, is she badly hurt?”

“What happened?” Vincent pressed. “How did she get hurt?”

“Weren’t you going to meet Simon’s mother?” Jasper asked, baffled. How had a simple visit ended in bloodshed?

Sebastian spoke carefully. “We were on the way to meet his mother. Something went wrong. Molly was seriously injured. She’s in surgery now. We’ll know more when the doctors come out.”

He didn’t mention the Smith family’s chaos.

**But** Eliza turned on Simon, her grief boiling over. She seized his arm, voice sharp with anguish. “What happened? You said you’d protect her! How could you let this happen? What did you do to her?”

Simon bowed his head. “I’m sorry. It’s my fault...”

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“Mom, don’t blame him.” Sebastian interjected. “This **was an** accident. The one who hurt Molly was Landon.”

“Landon? Isn’t that Wendy’s father?”

“Why would your father stab Molly?” Raymond demanded, staring at Simon.

The Vanderbilts had never interfered in Molly’s love life, but after she and Simon began dating, they had looked into the Smith family. They knew the parents were divorced. Now to learn that it was Simon’s own father who had nearly killed her—that **was** harder to swallow.

Simon said nothing, shoulders slumped, lips pressed shut.

Sebastian pulled his parents aside. “Listen. It really was an accident. Molly was at the Smiths’ when Landon came home drunk, violent. She stepped in **to** protect Simon. She was stabbed... but Landon’s dead now.”

The words stunned them into silence.

Finally Vincent whispered, “Dead? How? Did Simon kill **his** own father?”

The suggestion shocked them all, and their eyes turned to Simon.

He froze like stone, unable to move, unable to answer.

“No.” Sebastian said quickly. “He fell—impaled himself. Caitlin and Wendy are already giving statements to the police. I’ll go down there now. Stay here and wait.”

He left for the station.

At the precinct, Caitlin and Wendy had already been separated and interviewed. Each told the truth, recounting the events as they happened. When Caitlin emerged, Sebastian was waiting outside.

“All done?”

She nodded.

“Let’s go.”

“Wait. Wendy’s still inside.”

Minutes later Wendy came out. Her eyes were red and swollen, her face ghostly pale.

The **ordeal** had shaken her to the core.

Caitlin slipped an arm around her shoulders. “Come on. Let’s go back to your place.”

The Smith family apartment complex was still crowded. Police cars idled outside, tape cordoning off the building. Neighbors clustered, murmuring excitedly.

“I **heard** the woman screaming upstairs—never thought it would end in a killing.”

“She’s always been unstable. Maybe she snapped.”

“What was the dead man to her? Some grudg

Inside the unit, the coroner finished a preliminary exam. Evidence techs sealed samples and bagged the body. Felix gave the order to secure the apartment, then led his team downstairs.

When the gurney appeared with the covered corpse, the gathered residents stepped back.

At that moment, two women burst through the crowd—a middle-aged wife and her grown daughter.

Wanda collapsed at the sight of Landon’s body, wailing, while Tonya fell beside her, sobbing for her father.

To outsiders, it looked like a scene of domestic tragedy—wife and daughter weeping, neighbors spinning lurid tales of love and betrayal gone **wrong**.

But **Wanda** knew exactly whose apartment this was. Her husband had died **inside** his ex-wife's home. She was sure Rebecca **and** her children had something to do with it.

When Felix emerged, Wanda grabbed his sleeve. "Officer, who killed my husband? Was it that whore or her

son

"We're still investigating." Felix said evenly. "The medical examiner will issue a report. For now, the body must be taken for autopsy."

He refused to reveal more in front of gawking neighbors. With a wave, he dismissed the crowd and ordered the body removed.

Once the police cleared out, Wanda and Tonya stormed upstairs, only to find the apartment sealed and guarded. Denied entry, they stomped back down.

Just then, Sebastian's car pulled in. He stepped out with Caitlin and Wendy.

Wanda's gaze locked on Wendy instantly. Her eyes blazed with hate. She barreled toward her like a fury

unleashed.

“Bitch! **You** and your family killed him, didn’t you? You all worked together to murder Landon! Where’s that shameless mother of yours? Drag her out here right now!”

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## Billionaire's Regret: Finding Her

“Who are you calling shameless? Say it again if you dare!”

Wendy’s eyes reddened. Her mother had suffered enough already, all thanks to this woman, and now Wanda had the gall to come to their doorstep shouting insults?

“So what if I say it? My husband is dead, my daughter’s father is dead, and unless you give me answers I’m not leaving!” **Wanda** screamed, her voice hoarse with rage. Tonya was crying too, shouting, “My dad is dead! He was fine yesterday–how could he die in your house?”

“You killed **him**! You murdered my husband, and I’ll make you pay!”

Wanda’s fury exploded. She lunged forward and wrapped her hands around Wendy’s throat.

Caitlin was faster. She shoved Wanda back, shielding Wendy with her body. “I was there. I saw everything. Your husband showed up drunk, started a fight, beat his ex-wife, and stabbed an innocent woman. His death was an accident. No one killed him. If you don’t believe me, ask the police. But if you keep causing trouble here, I’ll personally escort you both to the station.”

The crowd of onlookers murmured. The truth was out—Landon had been drunk, violent, and **abusive, even** stabbing someone else. A man like that well, maybe he deserved the **end** he got.

But Wanda and Tonya wouldn’t hear it. “We’ll wait for the police report,” Wanda spat. “If you killed my husband, then blood will pay for blood.”

The two women left in tears, Wanda still muttering curses under her breath. Without Landon, her days of comfort were over. His company was collapsing, and she, aging and without beauty or wealth, had nothing left to cling to.

Once they were gone, Caitlin raised her voice **to** the neighbors. “Alright, show’s over. Go on home.”

The crowd dispersed. Caitlin brought Wendy upstairs, only to find the apartment sealed by police tape. They couldn’t go in.

“Come on. Let’s head to the hospital.”

They hurried there together.

Outside the emergency room, Caitlin spotted Simon slumped on a bench, his face pale and rigid. On the other side sat Eliza and the Vanderbilts, their **eyes** red from crying.

“Sebastian, Caitlin, Vincent greeted quietly.

Caitlin nodded, then went straight to Eliza. “Don’t worry too much. Molly’s strong—she’ll make it.”

Eliza gave a shaky nod. Caitlin sighed softly, then turned to Simon. “You stay here. I’ll take Wendy to see Rebecca. When Molly’s surgery is done, I’ll be **back**.”

Leaving Sebastian to stay with Simon, Caitlin led Wendy to Rebecca’s ward.

Rebecca lay unconscious, bandaged and pale. Wendy sat beside the bed, silent, staring at her mother’s face.

Caitlin **knew** how heavy Wendy’s heart was. There wasn’t much **she** could do except sit with her.

Her phone buzzed. Benjamin.

“Caitlin, can you reach Wendy? Her phone’s off, I can’t find her.”

Caitlin stepped into the hall. “Something happened at Wendy’s house. We’re at the hospital now. You should

come.

“I’ll be right there.”

He didn’t ask for details, just dropped everything and rushed over.

Twenty minutes later, Benjamin arrived breathless, spotting Caitlin outside the ward. “What happened? Is she hurt?”

Caitlin didn’t let him go in. She pulled him aside to the end of the corridor and told him everything about the Smith family incident.

“What? Landon’s dead?” Benjamin was stunned.

What was supposed to be a happy day had turned into bloodshed. He clenched **his** jaw.

“Go see Wendy. She needs you. She’s been through a lot.”

**For** Caitlin, blood and violence had become grimly routine. But for Wendy, soft-hearted and sensitive, this was a trauma **she might** never shake.

“Alright.”

Benjamin frowned, his eyes dark, and headed for the ward. Caitlin didn’t follow—she turned back down toward the emergency room.

Two officers were now standing outside. Caitlin stopped beside Sebastian. “What’s going on?”

“They’re asking Simon to come to the station. Standard procedure,” Sebastian explained,

Simon rose slowly, his eyes locked on the emergency room doors. He didn’t want to leave while Molly was still inside.

Caitlin read his thoughts and touched his arm. “Go. We’ll be here. She’ll be alright.”

He nodded and left with the police.

It was only natural—everyone involved in the incident had to be questioned. Caitlin and Wendy’s statements weren’t enough; the full truth had to be established.

The rest waited in silence. A nurse came out halfway through, and they hurried to **ask**. “Her abdominal **injury** is severe, second degree. There’s organ damage. The doctors are operating. It will take some time.”

Eliza broke **down** again, tears spilling. Between sobs she warned everyone, “Don’t tell Beatrice. She just got out of the hospital. She can’t **take** another shock. Do you understand?”

“Yes, Mom. We won’t say anything.” Sebastian promised.

Everyone nodded grimly, the weight of worry pressing down on them all,

Meanwhile, in the ward, Wendy stayed beside her mother, watching her breathing, watching the bandages. Her heart ached at what their home life had become, at how broken everything now was.

The door opened behind her. She thought it was Caitlin returning and didn’t even look up.

“You alright?”

The voice was deep, familiar. She startled, glancing up to see Benjamin standing there. Her heart skipped, and she quickly lowered her gaze again.

Benjamin studied the girl hunched on the chair, her eyes red, her face tight with pain. His chest tightened with pity. He pulled a chair closer and sat beside her.

“She’s going to be fine,” he said gently. “Don’t cry. This will pass.”

The man who so often spoke with sharp wit was, for once, tender. He slid an arm around her shoulders.

“If you want to cry,” he murmured, “my shoulder’s right here. Want to use it?”

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