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## Billionaire's Regret: Finding Her

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After breakfast, Sebastian was about to head to DanCa Estate with Caitlin when they ran into Eliza and Raymond.

“Caitlin, we were just about to visit DanCa Estate too,” Eliza said. “We want to see your mother and your brother. Shall we ride together?”

As in-laws, it was only right to pay their respects now that Kelly was safely back.

“Of course. Let’s all

*go.*”

Outside, a car waited while a houseman loaded gifts into the trunk. Caitlin frowned. “No need to fuss with presents.”

“How could I show up empty-handed? Let me handle it,” Eliza said with a smile.

When they arrived at DanCa Estate, Kelly had already finished breakfast and was doing exercises in the garden. As Caitlin and the others stepped out of the car, Eliza glanced over and said, “Your mother really knows how to take care of herself. You’d never guess she struggled with depression. Is she fully recovered

now?”

Caitlin cast a look toward Kelly and nodded. “She’s fine now.”

“Then let’s go say hello.”

Caitlin called out as they approached, “Mom, everyone’s here to see you.”

Kelly stopped, smiling as she walked over. “Eliza, Raymond, you came. Please, come inside.”

They settled in the sitting room. Eliza took Kelly’s hand and chatted warmly. “We’ve been meaning to visit since we heard you were back. Caitlin said you weren’t feeling well yesterday. Better today?”

“Much better. Nothing serious.”

“How’s Harrison?”

“He hasn’t woken yet. He’s upstairs resting.”

Seeing a driver bring in the gifts, Kelly said quickly, “You didn’t need to bring anything. I’m just happy to see you. We’re family.”

“We are,” Eliza agreed. “And since we’re on the topic, I actually came to discuss Sebastian and Caitlin’s wedding. I wanted to host it before, but Caitlin said she’d wait for you to return. Now that you’re back, it’s time to put it on the calendar, right?”

Kelly smiled. “Yes, yes. It’s time to do it properly.”

“Mom, you all talk. Sebastian and I are going up to check on Harrison.”

7:32 **Thu, Sep 18 W**

“Go ahead.”

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Caitlin and Sebastian checked on James first. He was still stable. Then they went to the study. Caitlin pulled an old photo album from the shelves, set it on the desk, and the two of them began to sift through the pages.

After a few minutes, Caitlin tapped a photo. "Here! Look."

Sebastian studied the woman in the old picture and saw it clearly—the small mole above her upper lip.

Caitlin took out the photo of Quarta and compared them side by side. "They're the same woman."

"If that's certain, then Quarta's motives deserve scrutiny," Sebastian said. "She created Scentbane, got your brother poisoned, and constructed this entire setup. Could she be the mastermind Black Hawk called Doña Dolores?"

"It's possible. Very possible." Caitlin's brows knit as she thought it through. "I still don't know how she was connected to my mother and grandmother, but clearly they knew each other. She must know the codex inside and out. Everything she's done may be to use it to accomplish a larger aim.

"And if she really is Doña Dolores—she had Black Hawk take my mother, yet didn't harm her. Maybe she intended to use my mother, not destroy her. She even helped treat my mother's illness. That suggests there was some lingering affection there."

Sebastian exhaled. “I’m starting to think she’s backed by something far bigger. Otherwise she couldn’t run a plan that crosses so many borders—S Country, A Country, V Country, the US, and now D Country. It wouldn’t surprise me if she has ties there too.

“At the very least, we know our trip to D Country is also part of her design. She’s meticulous, playing a massive game of chess. And we’re pieces on her board.”

Caitlin felt the weight settle in her chest. It was as if she’d stepped into a framework someone else had built, every step scripted.

How was she supposed to break out of it and see the whole picture?

They left the study and ran into their parents on their way upstairs to see James. Caitlin went with them. James still hadn’t woken. The monitors showed stable readings. Seeing him like that naturally made Eliza think of her own daughter in the hospital. She squeezed Kelly’s hand and sighed. “Try not to worry too much. Give it time. Maybe Caitlin and the others will find a way to help him.”

“We can only wait,” Kelly murmured. She looked at her daughter. “Caitlin, when do you leave?”

“Tomorrow.”

“Is everything ready?”

“Almost. Don’t worry.”

Remembering what she wanted to ask, Caitlin took out one of the old photos. “Mom, Sebastian and I were going through the album and found this. Do you remember who’s in the picture?”

Kelly glanced at it. “Your grandparents.”

“And?”

“That’s me. And this one is Cecilia.”

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“Can you tell me about Cecilia?” Caitlin asked. “How did you meet her? Where did she go afterward?”

“What do you want to know about her for?” Kelly asked, curious.

“Nothing in particular. I just saw her and wondered.”

“Oh. Your grandmother told me she was a descendant of the Yarbrough family, who were old friends of the Yunceys. She came to the US to find your grandmother—that’s how I met her. As for where she is now, I don’t know.”

“I see.”

Caitlin took the photo back and didn’t press further. She would analyze her mother’s answer in detail later. At least she’d confirmed something important.

Cecilia’s original name was likely Cecilia, and later she became Quarta.

Quarta and Cecilia were indeed the same person.

But when Caitlin had investigated the Yunceys in Departure City, she’d found no records of any Yarbrough family in their history. No one in Departure City had ever mentioned a Yarbrough family at all. So where did this story of close family friends come from?

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The shrill ring of her phone pulled Caitlin out of her thoughts. She glanced at the screen and saw Federico's

name.

"You all go ahead and chat. I need to take this call."

She answered. On the other end, Federico told her he had just arrived in the US and would be at the Vanderbilt estate soon.

When the call ended, Caitlin turned back to the others. "Mom, please stay for lunch here with everyone. Sebastian and I need to head back. A friend of ours just arrived."

"All right, I'll take care of things here," Kelly promised.

Caitlin also urged Eliza and Raymond, "You should stay and have lunch with my mother before you go. Sebastian and I will leave first."

"Of course, go handle your business."

Caitlin and Sebastian left DanCa Estate together.

At Vanderbilt Manor, Federico and Magnus were already waiting in the sitting room, tea placed before them.

The two men were mid-conversation. Ever since discovering that Esme was actually Federico's friend Trinity in disguise, Magnus had been intrigued. From Federico he learned much about her—her real name was Caitlin, she was married, and she already had children.

"A woman like that," Magnus mused, "I can't wait to see her with my own eyes."

Federico warned with a wry smile, "Just don't let yourself get carried away. She already has a husband, and men lining up behind him. You'd be wasting your time."

Magnus only smiled faintly. He knew what he wanted.

He had first gone to Federico's assistant Esme, only to realize immediately that she was not the same woman he had met in Sanctis. The voice, the figure, even the presence—everything was different. His suspicions led him to press further, and eventually the truth had come out.

Now, finally, he was here in the US, determined to meet Caitlin.

Soon, the low rumble of an engine drifted in from the drive. A moment later, a couple stepped inside.

“They’re here,” Federico said, looking toward the door.

Magnus lifted his gaze just as the pair entered. First came a tall, striking man—Mr. Vanderbilt himself, famous throughout New York. And beside him... Magnus froze.

The woman walking in had a tall, graceful figure and features so perfect they made his breath catch. He had been told she was beautiful, but the reality left him stunned.

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"Trinity. Mr. Vanderbilt. Finally," Federico greeted warmly as he stood.

"Federico!" Caitlin smiled as they approached. "Sorry to keep you waiting."

Then her eyes shifted, landing on the man seated beside Federico. Recognition jolted through her—he looked exactly like Prince Magnus of A Country.

Magnus? Here?

Her pulse quickened. Could it be that Esme's true identity had already been exposed?

“Federico, your friend is...?” Sebastian asked. He hadn't made the connection yet—he'd only glimpsed Magnus in news clips and didn't recognize him in person.

The man rose before Federico could reply. “Magnus,” he introduced himself with calm ease.

“Magnus?” Sebastian echoed, startled. “As in... Prince Magnus of A Country?”

Never in his life had he expected royalty to walk unannounced into his living room.

Caitlin's heart lurched. It really was Magnus. Today he wasn't in uniform but dressed in an impeccable suit, his tall, commanding presence impossible to ignore.

“Yes,” Federico confirmed, “Prince Magnus of A Country.”

Sebastian quickly extended a hand. “Your Highness, forgive the oversight. Welcome.”

“I apologize for arriving so suddenly,” Magnus said as they shook hands, then turned his gaze back to Caitlin.

“Welcome, Your Highness,” Caitlin said politely, offering her hand. “What brings you here unannounced? Please, sit and tell us.”

Once they were seated, Federico explained. “Trinity, His Highness came to thank Esme for saving his life. But as you know, he’s sharp. He quickly realized Esme wasn’t who she seemed, so I had no choice but to tell him the truth—that it was you.”

Caitlin had already guessed as much. At least if Federico had been honest with him, then there was no great danger. Magnus traveling halfway across the world simply to express gratitude suggested a decent character.

Still, Federico’s words made Sebastian uneasy. The prince had come specifically for Caitlin. What if he developed feelings for her? From the moment they entered, Magnus’s eyes had hardly left her. The thought made Sebastian’s chest tighten. Federico had only just been dealt with, and now Magnus?

Magnus finally spoke. “Yes. I came because of what happened that night. Thank you, Mrs. Vanderbilt, for you and your people saving me. I owe you my life.”

The title “Mrs. Vanderbilt” made Sebastian’s heart ease slightly. At least the prince showed proper respect.

“It was nothing. Truly. You didn’t need to come all this way,” Caitlin replied lightly.

“A debt of life must be repaid in person. No matter what, I owe you. Please, if there is anything you desire, let

me help.”

“I appreciate it,” Caitlin said with a small smile, “but I have everything I need.”

“Perhaps,” Magnus said, glancing at Sebastian, “but the debt remains. If ever you require assistance, I will be there. I give you my word.”

He took a black-gold card from his pocket and handed it to Caitlin. “This is my personal card. Should you travel to A Country, contact me. I will host you myself.”

Caitlin accepted it. She would be going back eventually, searching for her mother. This could prove useful.

“May I exchange contact details with you both?”

“Of course. It would be our honor.”

After swapping numbers, Magnus hesitated before asking, “And... Mrs. Vanderbilt, may I take a photo with you? Just as a keepsake. I promise it will never be made public.”

“All right,” Caitlin agreed.

She sat between Magnus and Federico, while Sebastian, with carefully controlled expression, took the photo on Magnus’s phone.

Given his status, Caitlin and Sebastian had intended to arrange a luxury hotel suite and formal dinner. But Magnus insisted on staying, preferring to eat with them like an ordinary guest.

Over lunch and tea, the atmosphere remained courteous. Then Quincy arrived with the results of Kelly’s

DNA test.

Caitlin’s pulse quickened. At last—the truth she had been waiting for.

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

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Caitlin held the envelope in her hands. It was light, but to her it felt impossibly heavy.

Quincy stood quietly nearby, waiting without saying a word.

After a long pause, Caitlin drew a steady breath, opened the envelope, and pulled out the report inside.

Her brows knit tightly as she scanned the lines. Just then, Sebastian returned from seeing Federico and Magnus off. “Well? What does it say?”

“See for yourself.”

She passed him the report. Sebastian read it carefully, then nodded. “Exactly what you suspected. No blood relation whatsoever. It rules out a biological mother–daughter link.”

“If she’s not my mother,” Caitlin murmured, “then where is she?”

That was what tormented her most. The hand behind all this had planted someone who could mimic her mother so well it was almost flawless. Yet her real mother remained missing.

“Then we take her,” Sebastian said darkly. “Force the truth out of her.”

Caitlin shook her head. “If she’s just a pawn, hurting her will only push the real mastermind to extremes. That could trigger chaos we can’t control.

“For now, she’s still pretending to be my mother. That means she won’t risk acting out, at least not yet. My plan is to go along with the charade, use her presence as a cover until I recover the second half of the codex. Once we have that and the leverage of Atlantis, then we can confront her and force the truth. That way, we’ll have bargaining power to trade for my real mother’s life.”

Sebastian studied her and nodded. “All right. You’re right. We’ll play it your way.

Caitlin turned to Quincy. “I need you to station people at DanCa Estate. Guard Harrison’s safety, but also keep a close eye on ‘my mother.’ She mustn’t realize she’s being watched.”

“Understood,” Quincy said firmly.

With arrangements in place, Caitlin turned her mind to another matter. Their flight was at dawn. That meant she wouldn’t be able to see Wendy off over the weekend. She decided she had to go see her one last time before leaving.

Her heart ached thinking of the rift between Wendy and Benjamin.

Dusk fell heavy and gray, the sky thick with cloud.

Benjamin leaned against his sports car, cigarette smoldering between his fingers. Smoke curled around his face, shadowing the anguish carved deep in his sharp features.

**18:02 Fri, Sep 19**

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After getting Wendy's new address from Caitlin, he had driven straight there. And now he waited.

He had no idea how long he'd been standing there when, in the distance, two figures appeared—one male, one female.

The girl was Wendy. Beside her walked a tall, good-looking man carrying two grocery bags. They were chatting easily, their laughter faint but audible.

The man was Dennis, a colleague of Wendy's brother and a longtime acquaintance. By coincidence, he lived in the same neighborhood. They'd run into each other after work. Seeing Wendy juggling heavy bags, Dennis had offered to help. They'd ended up talking about Simon, the conversation lively and pleasant.

Benjamin froze as he watched them draw closer. His chest constricted painfully.

He straightened from the car, trying to steady himself. He wanted nothing more than to walk to her, to speak with her, to beg her for another chance.

But then his eyes fell on Dennis again.

The man's shoulder brushed close to Wendy's. The distance between them was small, too small. From where Benjamin stood, it was obvious—his eyes gave him away. Admiration. Fondness.

Benjamin's jaw clenched. His gaze dropped to the shopping bags, heavy with groceries and household supplies. They looked like a couple walking home from the market together. Domestic. Intimate.

The sight seared him, slicing straight through his chest.

The words he had rehearsed for her dissolved instantly. All that remained was the surge of fury boiling up from his gut, uncontrollable and raw.

“Wendy!”

His voice cracked across the street like a whip.

Wendy flinched, heart lurching. Slowly, she lifted her head.

There he was—Benjamin, standing by his car. He flicked the cigarette to the ground and ground it under his heel with deliberate force.

Even across the distance, the storm in his eyes crashed into her. The cold fury radiating from him made her shiver.

As he strode toward her, Wendy turned quickly to Dennis. “Thank you for walking me home. You should go.” She reached to take the bags, but Dennis didn’t let go.

“Is he your boyfriend?” Dennis asked curiously.

Wendy didn’t have time to answer. Benjamin was already upon them, his voice sharp as a blade. “Who is he? Is this why you broke up with me? Because of him?”

Benjamin had tortured himself with questions since the day she left him. None of her excuses had ever

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convinced him. But now, seeing her with another man, the answer seemed painfully clear.

“It’s not like that—he’s just a neighbor, we live in the same community-”

“The same community?”

Benjamin’s eyes blazed. He didn’t believe a word. His hand shot out, seizing Dennis by the collar. “So it’s you. You’re the reason. You’re why she left me. You bastard!”

His fist crashed into Dennis’s face.

“Benjamin, stop!” Wendy screamed, panic in her voice.

Dennis staggered back, groceries nearly spilling, blood trickling from his lip. He hadn’t lifted a hand in defense.

Benjamin lunged again, rage blinding him, but Wendy threw herself between them. “Benjamin! Calm down! He has nothing to do with us. Stop it!”

“You’re protecting him?” Benjamin’s voice cracked, his eyes fever-bright and red. Jealousy burned all reason

away.

Dennis straightened, wiped the blood from his mouth, and actually chuckled. “Wendy, your boyfriend’s not much of a man. Leaving him is the right choice.”

The taunt poured gasoline onto Benjamin’s fire. His fury detonated.

“Get out of my way!” Benjamin roared.

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

### **Chapter 650**

“Benjamin! Don’t be so reckless!”

Wendy clung to his arm, then turned to Dennis. "I'm so sorry. Please, just go!"

She hated that Dennis was getting dragged into this mess because of her.

"I'm not leaving. I live here. Why should I go? He's the one who should leave."

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Dennis calmly undid the buttons on his jacket, ready for a fight. Benjamin shook Wendy off and lunged again. The two men clashed hard, fists flying.

"Stop it! Benjamin, stop!"

Wendy cried as tears streamed down her face, her voice breaking. Her heart was torn in two as she watched the man she loved brawl with someone else, fists cracking against bone, blood already drawn.

Dennis's cheek split under Benjamin's punch. Seeing him hurt made Wendy feel even more guilty. Then Benjamin took a blow himself, his nose bleeding. That sight made Wendy's heart ache unbearably.

She was terrified one of them would get seriously injured. Desperate, she shouted, “Benjamin! If you don’t stop right now, I’ll never speak to you again!”

That cut through his rage instantly. Nothing frightened Benjamin more than the thought of Wendy cutting him off. He froze. But Dennis’s fist was already midair, slamming into Benjamin and sending him crashing to the ground.

“Benjamin!” Wendy dropped beside him, reaching out.

“Wendy...”

The moment he saw her at his side, worried for him, Benjamin’s pain faded. Every punch had been worth it. If she still cared for him, he could endure anything.

Clutching her hand, he whispered hoarsely, “Just give me another chance. Please. Let’s talk.”

Wendy bit her lip, torn, and finally nodded. She helped him back to his feet.

Benjamin straightened, not looking the least bit defeated. Instead, he glared at Dennis with open challenge. “She’s my girlfriend. Stay away from her.”

Dennis scoffed, wiping blood from his mouth. “If you really loved her, you wouldn’t cling to her like this. You wouldn’t keep hurting her.”

He knew Benjamin's reputation. A spoiled playboy. He knew Benjamin had once humiliated Wendy, even calling her a fat nobody. A man like that didn't deserve her.

"You don't get to judge us!" Benjamin snapped, fury in every word.

**18:02 Fri, Sep 19**

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"You two don't belong together. You can't give Wendy the happiness she deserves."

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"You-" Benjamin lunged again, but Wendy wrapped her arms around him, holding him back.

"Didn't you say you wanted to talk to me? Then let's go. Now!"

She pushed him toward his car. Dennis picked up his jacket and the bags of groceries, calling after her, "Wendy, I'll carry these inside for you."

"Thank you, Dennis," she said softly.

Then she slid into Benjamin's sports car. He started the engine, tires screeching as they sped away.

Just minutes later, Caitlin's car pulled into the drive of LL Villa. She rang the bell. The housekeeper opened the door and greeted her warmly, ushering her inside.

On the coffee table sat several shopping bags. Caitlin glanced at them.

in Vendy's back?"

"She hasn't returned yet. But she had a gentleman bring her shopping in."

"A gentleman?" Caitlin frowned, puzzled. Just then, a man stepped out of the hall. His shirt was spotted with blood, his face bruised.

Caitlin stared for a moment before recognition dawned. "Dennis!"

"Mrs. Vanderbilt." He gave a polite nod.

“What happened to you?” she asked sharply.

“Wendy and I got caught in a fight on the way back.”

“You fought with Benjamin?”

Dennis nodded grimly. “He took Wendy with him. I’m worried for her. You’re close to her. Can you check on her? I don’t trust that man not to hurt her.”

“Thank you for telling me.”

Dennis grabbed his jacket and walked out.

Caitlin pieced together what must have happened. Benjamin and Dennis had clashed, and Benjamin had taken Wendy away. She doubted Benjamin would truly harm her, but still, she decided to wait at the Smiths’ villa until Wendy returned. She could check on Rebecca in the meantime.

Benjamin drove like a man possessed, refusing to slow down. He was afraid that if he stopped, Wendy would bolt. Only when he reached his private residence, the Cloudrise Villa, did he pull to a halt.

The ride had been silent.

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He got out quickly, circling to her side, eager to help her unbuckle. But Wendy had already freed herself and stepped out. Her eyes flicked to the blood staining his shirt, the cuts on his face. Her chest tightened with pain.

“This is my place,” Benjamin said. “We’ll talk inside.”

He caught her hand again, dragging her toward the door. But before he could open it, it swung inward.

Mrs. Jones stood there.

Wendy’s heart lurched. She instinctively tried to pull her hand back, but Benjamin gripped her wrist tightly, refusing to let go.

His mother’s eyes widened at the sight of her son, face bloodied. “Benjamin, what happened? Did you get into a fight?” Her gaze flicked to Wendy, who lowered her head in shame.

Mrs. Jones's stomach twisted. Wendy had promised to stay away. Why was she here again, and with her son beaten bloody?

"Mom, what are you doing here?" Benjamin asked, clearly irritated. The last thing he wanted was his mother interrupting.

"You haven't come home in days. I was worried. And now I find you like this? You're bleeding!"

"I'm fine."

"You're not! Come inside, I'll clean you up."

"No. Wendy will take care of it. Please, just go home." He tugged Wendy past her into the foyer.

Mrs. Jones stood frozen, her heart aching for her son, but even more troubled seeing Wendy still at his side. She forced a smile. "Fine. Then let Wendy handle it. Please, take care of him."

Her eyes lingered meaningfully on Wendy before she turned and left.

The door clicked shut behind her.

Benjamin exhaled heavily and leaned against it. He tightened his grip on Wendy's hand. "I'm hurt. Will you take care of me?"

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

Wendy pulled her hand free from his grip. "Go wash up first. I'll take care of it after. Where's the first-aid kit?"

"On that cabinet."

Benjamin pointed, then rushed toward the bathroom, still anxious. "Don't you dare sneak off. Don't leave!"

Wendy gave a small nod, and only then did he disappear inside to clean the blood from his face and shirt.

By the time he came back out, Wendy was waiting on the sofa. He sat down beside her, trying to steady the storm inside him. "I'm here."

She lifted her gaze. His handsome face was marred with cuts and swelling, the cleaned skin making every bruise stand out.

Wendy disinfected the wounds with alcohol, then rubbed ointment into the bruises and covered the obvious scrapes with bandages. Once she finished and began to put the kit away. Benjamin caught her hand and held her eyes with his own.

"Wendy, please... let's not separate. These past days, I've been losing my mind. Without you, I don't know how to keep breathing. I can't live without you."

He pulled her hard against him, wrapping her in his arms.

She hit his chest, warmth spreading from his hold, her nose burning, tears spilling despite her will. For one fleeting second she wanted nothing more than to stay. But Mrs. Jones's words echoed in her head, along with her own future.

Wendy pushed him back, eyes wet. "Benjamin, don't wait for me. Don't waste your time on me. You deserve better."

Her words detonated something inside him. His voice rose, ragged. “Don’t say that! Wendy, to me you are the best. No one else could ever compare. I like you, I love you, I only want you.”

His eyes reddened, anger mixing with despair, as if furious at his own helpless heart.

“There’s no future for us,” she whispered. “You like me, but... I don’t like you the way you think.”

He clamped his hands on her shoulders, his tone turning sharp. “So it’s because of him, isn’t it? You like that guy. When did it start? Was it before me?”

“No! He has nothing to do with this.”

“How could he not? If it weren’t for him, why else would you leave me? Don’t tell me we’re not right for each other. You accepted me before. I felt it—your heart was with me. Now you’ve hidden it, or you’ve given it to someone else.”

Benjamin let her go, raking his hands through his hair, then hammering his fists against his skull. “You still won’t take me back... still won’t come back to me. Why? Why?”

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“Actually...” Wendy hesitated, then sighed. “Your mother doesn’t want us together.”

He froze. "That's impossible. At the Jones gala, I chose you. She didn't object."

"She did."

Her head dropped.

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Realization hit him like a strike. "You're saying she came to you behind my back, told you to leave me?"

Wendy stayed silent. That silence was answer enough.

Fury lit his face. He shot to his feet. "I'll go confront her right now."

"Benjamin, no!" Wendy grabbed his arm. "This isn't about your mother. It's me."

He knew she was lying to protect him. His mother must have cut her down with cruel words, feeding the insecurity Wendy already carried about her background. He crushed her to his chest.

“Don’t listen to her. None of it matters. Love is ours alone. If my family feels like a burden to you, I’ll walk away from it all. The only thing I want is to be with you.”

“I know you mean it,” she said softly. “But I don’t want a relationship right now.”

She tore free, standing. “I should go. Please, Benjamin take care of yourself.”

She turned for the door, telling herself over and over that short-term pain was better than dragging it out. He’d suffer for a while, then forget her.

She underestimated him.

The moment she tried to leave, he snapped. He lunged, seizing her wrist.

“Wendy, don’t go! I’m begging you, don’t leave me.”

He looked wrecked, desperation hollowing his voice. This was Benjamin, the arrogant heir who had never bowed to anyone, reduced to pleading at her feet.

“Please. You’re the first woman I’ve ever let in, the first I’ve loved. Before you, I never thought I could. You know who I am, what I have. Women line up around me. I could have anyone, but it’s you—only you—who

shattered all of that.

“I never knew love could hurt this much. It feels like someone is carving out my heart.”

He crushed her from behind, chin buried against her neck, his voice raw with grief. She felt droplets, hot and wet, fall against her skin. He was crying. And her own tears fell to match his.

The pain wasn't his alone. She felt it too.

Madness broke loose inside him. In a blind rush, he swept her up in his arms.

“Benjamin! Put me down!” she gasped, kicking against his hold.

He didn't listen, carrying her upstairs to his master bedroom.

He laid her down on the wide bed. She barely had time to rise before his shadow loomed, his mouth crashing against hers in a storm of desperate kisses.

Terror shot through her. She struck at him, sobbing. “Benjamin, no, don't.....”

But restraint had shattered. Respect, patience—gone. He had wanted her so long he was unraveling.

His movements turned rough, frightening.

Wendy's mind spiraled. The violence of his body above hers dragged her back to memories of her father beating her mother. Fear consumed her; she shook all over, crying harder.

The sound of her sobs broke through his frenzy. He stopped.

Her tear-streaked face, her trembling body curling in on itself—one look at her, and he felt as if struck by lightning.

What was he doing?

How could he treat the woman he loved like an animal?

He recoiled, scrambling back, horror twisting his features. "I'm sorry, I'm sorry, Wendy. I love you. I never meant to hurt you. Forgive me. Please, don't be afraid."

Her sobs only grew. She hugged her arms to herself, small and broken. "I want *to* go home."

"Okay. I'll take you home."

Benjamin didn't dare touch her again. Gently, carefully, he helped her back into her clothes and lifted her to her feet.

He drove her to LL Villa in silence, neither speaking a word.

At the curb outside her house, Wendy reached for the door handle. He stopped her with a whisper.

"Wendy. Thursday night, I'll be waiting at our place. Promise me you'll come. No matter what—don't let me

wait in vain."

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Wendy heard his words, but without looking back, she ran straight into the house.

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Benjamin stood there watching her retreating figure vanish. Thinking of what he had just done, he slapped himself hard across the face—twice. Fear gripped him that Wendy might never forgive him.

Wendy closed the front door behind her. She had wanted to collapse into tears, but the housekeeper intercepted her.

“Miss, Caitlin is here.”

“Caitlin? Where **is** she?”

“In the dining room.”

Wendy walked in to find Caitlin sitting with Rebecca, feeding her dinner. Caitlin paused when she saw Wendy. “You’re back. You haven’t eaten yet, have you?”

“Thank you. You two eat first, I’m fine. I’m not hungry. I’ll just go upstairs for a while.”

Wendy forced a thin smile and hurried off.

Caitlin caught the redness in her eyes. She knew Benjamin must have been involved. Rising from her chair, she followed upstairs.

Wendy shut herself in her room, back pressed against the door, and finally broke down.

Minutes later came a knock, and Caitlin's voice. "Wendy."

Wendy wiped her tears quickly, steadied her breathing, and opened the door. "Caitlin."

Caitlin stepped inside, locking eyes with her. "I know what happened. Benjamin came, misunderstood you and Dennis, and ended up fighting him, didn't he?"

Wendy nodded.

Caitlin took her hand gently. "Don't be sad. You chose to end things, and I'll stand by your choice. A clean break is better for both of you. If it hurts this much, that only means you haven't fully let go yet."

Wendy bit her lip, holding back tears.

They sat on the bed together, Caitlin continued softly, "Meeting someone who leaves such a deep mark on your heart... that's rare. Benjamin is that someone for you."

Wendy lowered her head, silent as tears dripped steadily down her face.

Caitlin passed her **tissues**. “If you can’t be with him now, that’s fine. Keep him in your heart **if** you must, **or** throw yourself into other things. Don’t drown in grief. Love is not all of life—it’s only a part. Think about what kind of life you want for yourself.”

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She **didn’t** push reconciliation. Forcing two people together when they weren’t ready would only hurt **more**. **Better to** let fate play its hand. If there was real destiny between them, they would meet again.

“I don’t know, Caitlin. I really don’t.” Wendy’s tears streamed fresh. “I’m lost. I don’t even know what **my** purpose is. Why I’m alive. My goal. I picked bridal design just because I thought wedding gowns **were** beautiful in a shop window. But once I studied, I learned gowns represent happiness. And me? I don’t **even** know what happiness means.

“When I was overweight, I didn’t worry about much. I figured no one would ever love me, so I had no burden. But then I met Benjamin. He made me furious, he made me laugh, he made me happy. With him, **I was alive**. But the happiness brought fear—fear of losing it, fear of not being enough. I never knew how to handle it.

“I think the problem between us isn’t anyone else. It’s me. The more beautiful something feels, the more I want to run from it. Maybe I believe I don’t deserve it. If I never have it, I’ll never lose it.”

The words spilled out until she was sobbing uncontrollably.

Caitlin pulled her into her arms like an older sister. “You’re just too sensitive, too pessimistic. Love isn’t like business—you can’t cut it clean. You have to listen to your heart. But I won’t force you. If separation feels right, then take time apart. Cool your heads.”

She knew Wendy’s past too well. Her childhood had carved deep scars. A violent father, no safe home, no model of love—how could she know how to trust a man?

They say happy people spend their lives healing from childhood with joy, but the unhappy spend their whole lives healing their childhood wounds. Wendy’s scars might take a lifetime.

At last, after Caitlin’s comfort, Wendy’s tears slowed. “I know. It’s not fair to Benjamin. But I can’t help it.”

“Don’t blame yourself. There’s no right or wrong in feelings. He’s sincere, and you care too. You just can’t make it work right now. It’s a pity, but maybe this is a test. When you’ve sorted your heart, you can decide **again**.”

Caitlin dabbed her cheeks with tissues. “Enough crying. You’re leaving soon. Are you packed?”

“Almost.”

“I might not be able to see you off. I leave for D country tomorrow.”

Wendy nodded. “I know. You’re running yourself ragged for your brother. Don’t worry about me.”

“Just take care of yourself and Rebecca. And don’t forget to check in with me often once you’re abroad. Call **if anything** comes up.”

“I will.”

**Afterward**, Caitlin left LL **Villa** and drove to DanCa Estate.

She **greeted her** impostor “**mother**” the same **way** as always.

“Mom, **we leave for D country tomorrow. I’ll be counting on you here.**”

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“Don’t worry. I’ll look after Harrison and myself.”

“Alright. I’ll head upstairs to pack.”

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But once in her room, Caitlin immediately noticed things had been disturbed. Someone had searched through her belongings. No doubt the impostor had been looking for the codex. But she’d never be careless. enough to leave it here.

Leaving DanCa Estate, Caitlin returned to Vanderbilt Manor. Sebastian handed her a folder. “Here. The Jonathan family dossier. Everyone we could dig up is listed here.”

Caitlin flipped through, scanning the names and faces. “The Jonathan family has deep roots—ties in both the underworld and politics.”

She kept reading until one page made her eyes flash. “I’ve just thought of the perfect way to get close to them.”

“What way?” Sebastian asked.

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“Look **here**, Liliana. She’s Hector’s daughter with his second wife. Right now she’s the executive vice president of TGV Perfumes and their chief perfumer. She’s also recognized as the number one socialite in D country. I

know her.”

“You know Liliana?”

“Yes. Seeing her photo reminded me. Back when I competed in Paris, she and I crossed paths. She **was easy** to talk to, and we got along well. She won runner-up at that competition. Afterward, she even invited me to join TGV Perfumes. Of course, I had no idea at the time that the Jonathan family was connected to Walter.”

Sebastian nodded. “That could work. If you can get her to introduce you, you’ll have a natural way into the Jonathan family.”

“Exactly.”

Caitlin flipped through the file again and found another useful detail. “It says here Liliana’s birthday banquet will be held tomorrow night at the Regalis Grand Hotel. Isn’t that the same hotel you booked for us?”

“Yes.”

“Perfect. Everything’s ready—now we just need the right opportunity.”

With their strategy in mind, Caitlin and Sebastian said their goodbyes to family the next morning and headed to the airport.

There they happened to run into Magnus, who was preparing to fly back home.

“Your Highness, whenever your schedule allows, please come back to the US. We’ll make sure to host you properly. I’m sorry this visit was so rushed,” Caitlin said sincerely.

Magnus smiled. “Not at all. I hope I didn’t interfere with your plans. I’m only leaving now because urgent matters await me at home. You’ll always be welcome in my country.”

“Thank you. And when you arrive safely, could you send me a message?”

“Of course, Mrs. Vanderbilt.”

They shook hands and parted ways, Caitlin’s group boarding a flight to D country while Magnus’s plane headed elsewhere.

After a long flight, they landed in Regalis at 3 p.m. local time,

Their hotel was the Regalis Grand, not far from the venue for the upcoming fragrance competition. As they entered the lobby, suited security guards stopped them.

“Do you have invitations?” one asked.

Everyone froze. Caitlin asked calmly, “Invitations for what?”

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“Are you

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here for **Liliana** Jonathan’s banquet? Entry requires an invitation,” the guard explained.

So the rumors **were** true—the birthday banquet was being held here. But Caitlin and her team hadn’t been invited.

“We’re just hotel guests, not attending the banquet,” Caitlin clarified.

The guard gestured. “Then please use the side entrance.”

They were about to move when a luxury car pulled up at the main entrance.

“Liliana has arrived!”

The guards rushed forward as the car rolled to a stop.

Caitlin hesitated. If Liliana was here, this was her chance to say hello.

The door opened, and a tall, slender woman stepped out, chestnut curls cascading over a crimson floor-length gown. Oversized sunglasses hid her eyes, but her red lips and sparkling diamond bracelet caught every eye. She moved with practiced grace, her presence commanding attention.

The scent that drifted with her was unmistakable—Meo, the flagship perfume of the Jonathan family’s

company.

Behind her emerged a glamorous, youthful-looking woman.

“Careful, Mother,” Liliana said, linking arms with her.

Caitlin took a step forward. “Liliana, hello!”

Liliana stopped at the sound of her voice. Though her eyes were hidden, Caitlin saw the faint flicker of recognition.

“Do you remember me? I’m Odessa. We met in Paris, at the fragrance competition.” Caitlin smiled warmly, waiting for her to respond.

Liliana only stared for a moment, silent.

Her mother asked, “Liliana, is this your friend?”

“Hmph.” Liliana **gave a** cold laugh. “How could she be my friend? I don’t know them. These days everyone’s **desperate** to claim connections. Let’s go.”

**Her** words stung. Caitlin remembered clearly how warm Liliana had been in Paris, how she’d personally invited **her** to join TCV.

**But** now, in front of everyone, she dismissed her like a stranger.

**Liliana** pulled her mother toward the grand entrance, flanked by guards, and soon **disappeared from sight**.

“That Jonathan princess is **pretty** arrogant,” Zinnia muttered at Caitlin’s **side**.

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Caitlin said nothing, only gesturing for the group to head inside through the side door.

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They checked in and settled into their rooms. Sitting on the sofa, Caitlin frowned. "Looks like we won't be getting close through Liliana after all."

Plans were always fragile—one shift, and the whole strategy had to change.

Sebastian leaned against the wall. "Then we'll find another way. Worst case, I'll go with you and we walk right up to their door."

“Maybe.” Caitlin’s mind was still circling. “I just don’t get it. How can someone change so much? Back then she was genuine, friendly, even wanted to be friends. But today... she called me a stray off the street.”

“Maybe she was just playing a part in Paris. Some people show one face in public and another in private. Don’t take it to heart.”

Caitlin exhaled slowly. Maybe he was right. For now, rest was the only option. Tomorrow was the competition -and the Jonathan family would be there. Plenty of chances would come.

Not long after, Caitlin’s phone buzzed with a message.

\[Trinity, I’ve arrived safely in Sanctis.]

She typed back: \[Good. We just reached Regalis.]

Magnus smiled *at* her reply as he returned to the royal palace.

When the queen, Heather, heard her son had returned, she immediately summoned him.

Magnus entered her chambers and bowed. “Mother, I’m back.”

Heather's eyes sharpened. "Well? Was the trip successful? Did you find her?"

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"Yes. I found Esme, thanked her in person, and invited her to visit our country someday."

Heather had secretly worried her son might fall for Esme or even bring her back home, but clearly she'd been overthinking.

"Good. Then this matter **is** settled. You should focus on state affairs now."

"Of course. And this is a gift I brought back for you."

Magnus handed over the present before leaving. Heather accepted it with a smile. "Go, help your father with his burdens."

"Yes, Mother."

Magnus left her chambers and made his way to the king's study. There, he found his father bent over documents.

“Father, I’m back.”

Leif VI stopped writing, set down his pen, and looked up at the man entering the room. “Well? Did everything go smoothly?”

He maneuvered his wheelchair out from behind the desk. Magnus stepped forward to push him over to the sofa, then sat down to share every detail of his search.

Leif VI listened intently. Magnus had been raised by him personally, and the two always shared their stories openly. There were things Magnus would never tell his mother but would always tell his father. It was their bond.

When Magnus revealed that the Esme they had seen was not the real Esme, Leif VI was visibly shocked.

“What? You mean the woman we met wasn’t actually Esme? That the real Esme never even came here? Explain.”

“Father, listen. Esme was actually another woman in disguise—an American. After finding the pianist Federico, I learned the truth from him and his assistant. Then I flew to the US, where I finally met the person who really saved me.”

“And who was she?”

“Her name is Caitlin. She’s not only extraordinarily beautiful, but also very talented. Look—here’s a photo of us together.”

Magnus handed him his phone,

The moment Leif VI saw the woman on the screen, he froze. For an instant he thought his eyes were deceiving him. He zoomed in, looked again, and the color drained from his face.

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Magnus noticed his father’s stunned expression. “Father? What’s wrong?”

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Leif VI’s hands trembled as he clutched the phone. His voice shook. “You said her name is Caitlin? Who are her parents? How old is she? Where does she live in the US?”

Magnus laughed, a little confused by the sudden interrogation. “Father, why so intense? Yes, she’s beautiful. I was floored myself when I first saw her. She’s twenty-six now, married, with quadruplets. She’s from New York. I don’t know much about her father, but Federico told me she’s been searching for her mother for years...”

He paused, unable to recall the name.

Leif VI spoke without hesitation. “Kelly. Was it Kelly?”

Magnus stared. “Father... how do you know that?”

The confirmation left Leif VI shaking so violently the phone slipped from his hands and landed on his lap.

“Father! What’s happening? Are you all right?” Magnus quickly steadied him.

“I’m fine...” Leif VI whispered hoarsely, forcing himself to calm down. “Go on.”

Magnus frowned. “Wait. You knew Caitlin’s mother?”

Leif VI nodded.

Magnus's jaw dropped. "Unbelievable. You knew her? What are the odds!"

"I met her when I was studying abroad in France. You said Caitlin is twenty-six?"

"Yes. I even noted her exact birthdate." Magnus flipped open his notebook and handed it over.

Leif VI read the date, his pulse quickening. Twenty-six years ago—exactly the time he and Kelly had been together.

Could Caitlin be his daughter?

The thought made his heart race with both exhilaration and fury. Fury, because if it were true, then he had been deceived.

Years ago, after becoming paralyzed, he had never left his homeland. He had once sent his most trusted friend, Maxwell, to investigate Kelly's life in America.

And what had Maxwell reported?

That Kelly had married another man. That she had children with him. Maxwell had even brought back photographs, including a wedding portrait of Kelly with her supposed husband.

Leif VI had grieved deeply then. He believed her lost to him, forever. What could a broken man in a wheelchair offer her? All he could do was pray she would find happiness.

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Three years ago, haunted by dreams of her, he had once again sent an aide to America. This time the news **was** worse: Kelly had died of illness.

He had mourned her death in silence, lamenting fate's cruelty—his paralysis, his lost love, the life he could never have.

But now, staring at Caitlin's photo, hope flared where only ashes had remained. If the timing matched, then maybe...

Could Caitlin truly be his child?

His chest tightened. Memories, longing, anger, and grief collided inside him until tears welled in his eyes. After years of burying his emotions, they broke free all at once.

Covering his face with his hands, his broad shoulders shook.

“Father...” Magnus whispered, placing a hand on his back.

It took a long while before Leif VI steadied himself. He wiped his face and spoke in a low, pained voice. “I have never told anyone this. When I was young, I had a love more precious than anything else.”

And he told his son the story of Kelly.

Magnus sat stunned. His father—his dignified, guarded father—had once loved Caitlin’s mother?

Then Magnus remembered something. “Father, I need to tell you the truth. Caitlin’s mother isn’t dead. I’ve heard that Caitlin was searching for her, and recently, she found her.”

“What?”

Leif VI lurched forward in shock, instinctively trying to stand, only to topple from his wheelchair.

Magnus caught him just in time. “It’s true. I heard she was found on Ebonreach Isle, here in our own kingdom.”

Leif VI's lips trembled. "How... how could she be there? On Ebonreach Isle?"

"I don't know the details. It's complicated. But I do know she has since returned to the US."

Magnus hesitated, then asked quietly, "Father... do you want to see her again?"

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

### **Chapter 655**

He wanted to. He had never stopped wanting to see her.

But the cruel truth kept him from daring to hope.

"Look at me now... like this..."

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Leif VI's fingers dug hard into his knees. In his mind, he could still see Kelly as she had been in their youth- bright, beautiful, full of life. For so many years, it was the memory of her that had kept him alive.

But now he was just a crippled man. They had both built separate lives, separate families. How could he **face** her again?

There was an old saying: better to hold someone in memory than to see them again and destroy the illusion. He wanted her to remember him as he had been-proud, strong, whole-not the broken man he was now.

Magnus saw his father's pain, saw the self-loathing etched into his face, and spoke gently. "Father, it's all right. Some things cannot be forced. I understand. But if you and Caitlin's mother truly had a past together... then could Caitlin be your daughter?"

"I don't know..."

Leif VI's voice was raw. It was the question that tormented him most. "Back then, I gave up my claim to the throne. I chose her. We planned to go to America together. But on the very day we were to leave, I was in the accident. I never showed up. From then on, I never saw her again. She must have thought I betrayed her, lied to her. She must have hated me. And the child... she never told me..."

Magnus finally understood the depth of his father's love. To love so fiercely that he would renounce the throne, only to lose it all in a cruel twist of fate. His accident had left him crippled; Kelly had returned home and married another man. His father had been bound into a political marriage with Heather.

Two people who had loved each other deeply, separated forever by fate's hand.

It was tragic.

Magnus squeezed his father's shoulder. "Then let me help. I'll find out for you. I'll learn if Caitlin is really your daughter."

Leif VI's eyes glistened. He nodded, voice hoarse. "Yes... but don't let your mother know. She must never

know."

"I won't say a word. I can arrange a diplomatic visit to D Country. I've heard Caitlin and her people are there

now."

"Good..."

Their talk left Leif VI with a flicker of hope where there had been only ashes. Kelly was alive. That thought alone pierced him with both pain and longing.

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D Country, Regalis Grand Hotel.

The ballroom gleamed under golden chandeliers, filled with the hum of music and laughter. The Jonathan family had invited the city's most powerful to celebrate Liliana's birthday.

Nicoletta, Liliana's mother, glided through the room greeting guests. Years ago she had been Hector's secretary. Now she was his partner in every sense—his most trusted strategist, the quiet force behind Thompson Global Ventures.

It was she who had helped Hector scrub the family's name clean, who had guided TGV from a modest firm into the dominant perfume empire of D Country. Calm, capable, never demanding, she had borne his children, shared his battles, and built his empire with him. How could he not love her?

Their children were his pride and joy, none more so than Liliana. She had her mother's intelligence, her father's drive, and the whole country called her the first lady of society.

Tonight, Liliana basked in the spotlight. Yet beneath the attention, her thoughts lingered uneasily on the woman she had seen at the hotel entrance.

Stepping out of the circle of admirers, she called her assistant close and whispered, "Remove Odessa from the competition list. If she shows up tomorrow, don't let her through the door."

"Yes, Miss."

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The next morning, after a night of rest, Sebastian and Caitlin split up. He led his team on reconnaissance, while Caitlin went to the competition venue.

The event was being held at the Regalis Perfume Industry Tower. Delegates from all over the world streamed into the building, faces from every corner of the globe.

With Zinnia and Tyler at her side, Caitlin approached the entrance. But before she could enter, several Jonathan family security guards barred their way.

“Apologies, Miss Odessa. Your name is not on the competitor list. You cannot enter.”

Caitlin stopped short. “What? That’s impossible. I registered in advance. Check again.”

She had confirmed her registration only last night. How could her name suddenly vanish?

The guards produced the full roster. Caitlin scanned page after page—her name was nowhere.

“Strange,” one guard muttered. “Truly, you’re not listed.”

Zinnia frowned. “But we saw her name online. We checked. She was confirmed.”

“Let me try.” Caitlin pulled out her phone, hoping it was just a clerical error.

But when she logged into the official site, her name was gone there too.

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Her chest tightened. "I don't understand. I was confirmed. I saw it myself. How can it be missing now?"

"Perhaps you made a mistake," the guard suggested.

"No. I didn't make a mistake. Something's wrong here. I want an explanation."

"We're sorry, Miss. We can only go by the official list. We don't know what happened."

"Then bring your supervisor. I want to hear it directly."

"Our supervisor is Miss Liliana. But she's busy..."

Before he could finish, a woman's voice cut through the air. "Why are you blocking the entrance?"

Caitlin turned. Liliana swept toward them in heels, flanked by bodyguards. She pulled off her sunglasses, revealing a perfectly made-up face.

Her features were the same, yet not the same. Makeup perhaps—but her aura, her eyes, told another story. This wasn't the warm young woman Caitlin remembered.

The look Liliana gave her now was sharp, hostile.

Liliana stopped, brows furrowing. “You again? Odessa, isn't it? I don't recall seeing your name. I don't think you registered at all.”

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“Liliana, I did register. I even checked my name last night—it was there. You're the organizer, so tell me, why is my name missing?”

At Caitlin's direct question, Liliana's eyes flickered with a trace of mockery. She turned to her assistant. "When you submitted the applications, did you see Odessa's name?"

The assistant replied smoothly, "Yes, we received her application, but unfortunately, it came too late. By then, submissions were already closed. That's why her name wasn't added."

Liliana nodded, then looked back at Caitlin with an apologetic shrug. "I'm really sorry, but your registration missed the deadline. It's a pity, but we can't let you compete this year. However, we'll host another competition next year—you're welcome to try again then."

With that, Liliana slipped her sunglasses back on, lifted her chin, and swept into the venue.

Caitlin stood outside in silence. Zinnia slipped an arm around her shoulders. "Don't let it get to you, Caitlin. We'll find another way."

"Forget it. We'll regroup later," Caitlin said calmly. She hadn't come just for the competition, but it was **still** frustrating to lose an easy chance to connect with the Jonathan family.

As they headed out, Caitlin brushed shoulders with a man in a dark suit.

"Sorry," she said politely, lowering her gaze.

But the man looked at her sharply, his hands stuffed into his pockets. He backed up a couple of steps, eyes narrowing. “Wait... you look so familiar. Let me think...”

Caitlin gave him a quick glance. Slicked-back hair, polished smile—she dismissed him and walked on.

But he hurried after her. “Odessa! You’re Odessa, aren’t you? I remember you!”

Caitlin stopped, turned, and studied him with no recognition. “You are...?”

“Here’s my card.”

The man smiled broadly, pulling a card from his pocket, Caitlin accepted it and read the name: Carson Jonathan.

Her eyes flicked back up. “Carson? Vice President of Thompson Global Ventures?”

“That’s me,” Carson said with a practiced grin, brushing a hand through his styled hair.

He remembered her from the last perfume competition—one glimpse of her had left him smitten. He’d even come today hoping to see her again. To run into her at the entrance? Fate, surely.

Caitlin, meanwhile, felt a spark of opportunity. Carson wasn't just anyone; he was Hector's grandson, the Jonathan heir apparent, born into privilege and splashed across tabloids for his endless string of flings and

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scandals.

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"You're here for the competition?" Carson asked. "That was fast. Already finished?"

"No. I wasn't allowed in."

Carson raised a brow. "Impossible. Who would dare say you can't compete?"

"I registered, but was still turned away."

Carson saw his chance. "Hold on. Don't leave. I'll talk to the organizers. You'll be in, trust me."

Caitlin gave him a small smile. “That’s kind of you. Thank you.”

Carson strode back to the entrance and called for Liliana.

Liliana emerged, arms crossed, her expression cool. “Carson, why are you calling me out here?”

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“Why is Odessa being barred? Didn’t she register?” Carson’s tone was polite—Liliana might be younger, but she was still his aunt by blood.

Liliana’s eyes flicked to Caitlin, who stood waiting outside, and she let out a short, derisive laugh. “She missed the deadline and didn’t pass the preliminary round. I removed her name. That’s standard.”

Carson pressed, “I see. But can’t you make an exception? She came all this way. She’s... well, she’s my goddess. You can’t just send her home.”

“Why should I? She’s nothing to me. Why would I make exceptions for her?” Liliana’s voice was sharp.

“Come on, for my sake. At least for my father’s sake. I’m still VP of TGV—I do have some say.”

Carson’s father, Fletcher, was Hector’s eldest son and now a sitting senator. Between politics and business, the Jonathan reach was nearly absolute. Carson himself had little real power in the company, but his name alone carried weight.

Liliana, however, was unmoved. “Sorry, Carson. It’s not about you or Fletcher. This competition was my idea. I intend to keep it fair. If I start opening back doors, there’s no point in holding it at all. Even if you take it to Fletcher, it won’t matter—I’m in charge here.”

Her tone was final. Carson couldn’t push further.

When he returned, his face showed regret. “I’m sorry. She won’t bend. But if you like, I’ll call my dad. As CEO, he has the authority”

Caitlin stopped him with a gentle smile. “No need. Thank you for trying, but it’s fine. I didn’t come here just for the competition. I’d rather enjoy Regalis—maybe hire a guide, do some sightseeing.”

She didn’t mind playing along. Getting close to Carson might be a smoother way into the Jonathan circle than the competition ever was.

Carson perked up immediately. “A guide? Perfect. I’ll show you the city myself. My car’s right outside—it’ll be

fun.”

“Then thank you, Mr. Jonathan,” Caitlin replied.

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Just as they were about to leave, Liliana’s voice rang out behind them.

“Carson, aren’t you supposed to be working? Where are you running off to now?”

“Odessa is a friend of mine. I’m just keeping her company,” Carson said.

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Liliana’s lips curled. “You always say that when chasing a girl. Let me give you some advice—don’t chase every woman you see. Especially not married ones.”

“What?” Carson blinked, confusion plain on his face.

## Billionaire's Regret: Finding Her

Chapter 657 Official source is [findnovel.net](http://findnovel.net)

Liliana folded her arms and stepped closer, her tone sharp with mockery. “Maybe you don’t know yet, Carson, but your goddess Odessa is already married—with kids. She’s no glamorous single heiress. Don’t let her play you.”

“No way.”

Carson turned to Caitlin, disbelief written across his face. The idea that someone so young and stunning was already a wife and mother seemed impossible.

“She’s American,” Liliana continued, her voice dripping with disdain. “Her real name is Caitlin. Her husband’s name is Sebastian. If you don’t believe me, look it up on your phone.”

She shot Caitlin a cold, dismissive glance, then pivoted and walked back inside.

The moment hung heavy, awkward. Caitlin’s cover had been ripped away in front of Carson, killing any chance of using him as an inside connection.

“Yes, I’m married,” Caitlin admitted calmly. “But thank you for your kindness. I’ll be going now.”

“Wait, Odessa-” Carson called after her.

But Caitlin didn’t look back.

On the drive back, Tyler handled the wheel while Zinnia sat with Caitlin. Zinnia fumed, “That Liliana is insufferable. It wasn’t enough to block you from competing—she had to throw a wrench into things just to humiliate you.”

“She definitely wasn’t friendly,” Caitlin said quietly, frustration knotting in her chest. Two paths closed in a single day, and no way forward.

What gnawed at her most was the question, “How did she know who I really am? And in such detail?”

“You said you two met at a competition in Paris,” Zinnia reminded her. “Maybe she dug into your background afterward.”

“I was competing as Odessa,” Caitlin countered. “Even if she investigated, why would knowing my real identity make her attitude flip so drastically?”

From the driver’s seat, Tyler glanced at her in the rearview mirror, voice speculative. “What if Liliana’s... into women?”

Caitlin blinked. “Into women?”

“You know—lesbian. Maybe she fell for you back then. And when she later found out you were married with kids, she felt deceived. Hurt feelings turned to resentment.”

Caitlin let out a startled laugh. “That’s impossible.”

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Zinnia, however, tilted her head thoughtfully. “I don’t think it’s that far-fetched. Plenty of women like women. Love denied can easily twist into hate.”

Caitlin gave her a sly look. “So if it were you... could you fall for me?”

Zinnia's cheeks went pink. "Maybe. But for the record, I like men."

The tension eased, and Caitlin chuckled. "Alright, enough of that. Tyler, dig into Liliana's personal life. If she's dated women, we'll know if your theory holds water."

"Got it," Tyler agreed.

"Meanwhile, we'll need a third approach," Caitlin said. Her spirits had lifted, no longer as heavy as before.

By the time they returned to the hotel, Sebastian and his team had made it back as well. Over lunch, Caitlin filled him in on everything that had happened.

"So Liliana's path is closed," Sebastian concluded. "Then let's go straight to the source. We can pay the Jonathans a visit directly. Distant relatives are still relatives—they'll have to receive us."

"Agreed."

Caitlin nodded, ready to drop the detours and face things head-on.

"Did you uncover anything?" she asked.

Sebastian's expression sharpened. "Yes. We found one of the Jonathan family's holdings here in Regalis—a casino called The Seventh Door. Their empire didn't grow clean. They built their fortune through the underground."

He leaned closer, lowering his voice. "And we uncovered something big. Remember the underground bank in Departure City, V Country?"

"Yes."

"When we investigated Dustin and The Silent Order, we found ties to offshore accounts but lost the trail. Today, when we hacked The Seventh Door's system, we found links to multiple foreign operations. One account tied directly back to that underground bank in Departure City. And Dustin's name appeared in the records."

Caitlin's eyes widened. "You mean The Silent Order and the Jonathans are connected?"

"Exactly. Either partners—or the Jonathans are pulling their strings."

Caitlin thought further. "And Carlos-Forrest—the man running the Departure City bank. If he's in their network, then he's Jonathan's man. Hector's man."

The realization hit like a storm. Threads that once seemed unrelated suddenly wove together into a single

net.

“He’s been embedded with the Yuncey family all this time,” Caitlin whispered. “That means the Jonathans, the

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Yunceys, and The Silent Order are all bound together. Forrest’s true master could only be Hector,”

Her whole body tensed as the memory of Timothy’s dying words came back. “That’s it. Timothy’s last message—he was trying to tell me about Forrest’s connection to Hector.”

Sebastian sucked in a sharp breath. “If that’s true, then your grandfather’s massacre might finally have an answer.”

Caitlin stood, pacing the room, piecing it together. “The impostor who claimed to *be* my mother told me once that my grandfather had a brother named Hector. He immigrated abroad with his mother and severed ties with the family. But the estate was all handled by Carlos. If Carlos was Hector’s man, then Hector must have orchestrated the bloodbath.”

Her voice hardened. “If we find out why Hector left—and why he came back for revenge—we’ll know the truth. And if Forrest is here in Regalis, hidden in Hector’s shadow, we need to drag him out. He’s the key to everything.”

“You’re right,” Sebastian agreed. “We’ll set the investigation in motion.”

The pieces were aligning. The more Caitlin thought, the clearer it became. The past, the betrayals, the deaths -they all pointed to Hector.

And if Hector had truly slaughtered her grandfather's family, she would not rest until the debt was paid in blood.

That afternoon, Caitlin and Sebastian drove to the Jonathan estate.

The property sprawled over acres, its gates imposing, guarded by uniformed men. As Caitlin approached with Sebastian at her side, they were stopped at the entrance.

"Who are you?" one of the guards demanded.

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# Billionaire's Regret: Finding Her

## Chapter 658

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“Hello, my name is Caitlin. We are from the Jonathan family in the US. I am here to visit Mr. Hector Jonathan. Could you please inform him?”

The guard looked baffled. “We’ve never heard of any relatives from the US. You must have the wrong place.”

have This chapter is updated by findnovel.net

He had seen all sorts of people coming to the gate, especially impostors pretending to be relatives to curry favor or borrow money. When Caitlin mentioned she was here to see a relative, his first instinct was to reject her.

Just as the heavy gates were about to close, Sebastian held them open. Caitlin quickly added, “My grandfather Walter was Hector’s brother. If you don’t believe me, you can go ask your master yourself.”

The guard, seeing how serious she looked, finally said, “Fine. Wait outside. I’ll go ask.”

The gates shut again, leaving Caitlin and Sebastian waiting.

Inside the Jonathan estate, the gardens were lush and elegant. Hector, the family’s patriarch, lounged on a recliner in the courtyard, swaying gently as he listened to opera, tapping his fingers to the rhythm.

Beside him, Nicoletta, Liliana’s mother, was brewing tea. Just as she was pouring, the butler hurried over.

“Master, madam!” he said breathlessly.

Startled, Nicoletta’s hand shook, spilling tea over the rim. She set the pot down with irritation. “What’s the matter, rushing in like that and startling me?”

“My apologies, madam. Just now, someone came to the gate claiming to be relatives from the Jonathan family in the US.”

At those words, Hector, who had been reclining with his eyes closed, suddenly froze. His eyes snapped open.

“Relatives of the Jonathan family?”

He sat up abruptly. Nicoletta looked equally surprised. She exchanged a glance with Hector and asked, “Did they give a name?”

“She said her name is Caitlin. Her grandfather was Walter. She claimed he was your brother.”

“Caitlin...”

The name seemed to strike Hector like lightning. He rose from his chair, his expression turning grave. Gripping his cane, he turned to leave.

“Where are you going?” Nicoletta asked quickly.

“Back to

my room.”

Without another word, the old man walked away.

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The butler, left hanging, turned to Nicoletta. “Madam, what should I tell them?”

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“What else? Say the master is unwell and does not receive visitors. And tell them our family has no relatives from the US. Do not let them in.”

“Yes, madam.”

Outside the gate, Caitlin and Sebastian waited a good fifteen minutes before the guard finally reappeared.

“The master says he has no relatives from the US. He’s never heard of the names you mentioned. Now leave.”

Caitlin pressed on, unwilling to give up. “Are you sure you gave the right name? My grandfather’s name was Walter. Please, just let me meet Mr. Hector in person. If I explain, he will remember.”

“No use. The master is unwell and does not see anyone.”

With that, the guard slammed the gates shut.

The heavy thud echoed like a cruel rejection. For Caitlin, this was the third time today she had hit a dead end.

She wanted to pound on the gates again, but Sebastian caught her arm. “If they’re avoiding you, it’s because they’re hiding something. No matter how hard you knock, they won’t open.”

“Nothing works. What am I supposed to do now?”

Even Caitlin, usually calm and composed, was showing her frustration. Sebastian squeezed her hand. “If going directly doesn’t work, we can try another way.”

His other way was to start with The Seventh Door and work their way in.

That evening, Caitlin, Sebastian, Tyler, and Zinnia disguised themselves and headed to Regalis’s largest underground entertainment complex. After passing a metal detector, they entered without issue.

As they walked through the crowded chaos, Caitlin asked, “Did you find out who runs The Seventh Door now?”

“Yes. His name is Ignatius Powell. He’s Nicoletta’s brother.”

“Ignatius Powell?” Caitlin repeated, immediately thinking of Forrest. “Forrest’s surname is Powell too. Could that be a coincidence? Or is there a connection?”

“Could be family, could be distant relatives. We’ll know once we see him,” Sebastian replied, scanning the bustling crowd with sharp eyes. This was Regalis’s most dangerous hub, where countless shadowy forces converged. They needed to stay alert.

The Seventh Door was enormous, encompassing every kind of entertainment imaginable. But it wasn’t just a place for gambling and pleasure—it was a fortress. Any business wanting to survive in Regalis had to pay annual protection fees to The Seventh Door in exchange for cover.

This meant that even if the Jonathans sat idle, a steady stream of cash flowed in. And to launder those profits, they used legitimate ventures like their perfume empire, which polished their image in society and made

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them one of D Country’s most powerful families.

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The group made their way into the casino. Business was booming, with wealthy patrons laying down extravagant bets.

Chips runners approached them, offering to help, but Sebastian waved them off. He wanted to look around first.

“This casino is massive. Meeting the boss won’t be easy,” Caitlin murmured.

Sebastian’s lips curled into a confident smile. “Not easy, but not impossible. Watch me.”

He had already studied the casino’s internal layout beforehand. He knew the control center was the nerve hub, where staff monitored the entire operation. He suspected the boss’s office was nearby.

To get inside, Sebastian had a plan.

“Tyler, go exchange some chips.”

“Got it.”

Tyler returned with 100,000 in chips and handed them over.

Sebastian sat down at a poker table, choosing the most popular game—Texas Hold’em. Caitlin sat beside him, watching closely. It was the first time she’d seen him gamble, and to her surprise, he was excellent.

Starting with 100,000 chips, he won five hands in a row. His stack quickly multiplied to 3,000,000.

That wasn't unusual; casinos sometimes let newcomers win at first. But when Sebastian won nine consecutive rounds and his stack swelled to 15,000,000, the dealer began to sweat.

Discreetly, the man pressed a hidden alarm on his wrist before dealing the next hand.

In the control room, an alert flashed on the screens. Surveillance cameras zoomed in, locking onto Sebastian's table.

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The professionals monitoring the table quickly flagged it. Their analysis suggested that someone was cheating, and they locked their suspicion onto one man.

Normally, the dealer controlled the odds, but this time things slipped out of their hands. Sebastian's winnings of 15 million chips doubled again in the final round, soaring to 60 million.

He became the biggest winner on the floor. Just as he began gathering his chips to leave, several staff members from The Seventh Door stepped in to block him.

"Sir, sorry, but we suspect you've been cheating."

"I wasn't cheating. I won this fair and square," Sebastian replied coolly.

Caitlin jumped in. "Exactly, my husband won by skill. What do you plan to do about it?"

"Then you'll have no problem submitting to an inspection. Both of you, come with us."

When they refused to step aside, Sebastian lashed out with a sudden kick that sent one man flying, then grabbed Caitlin and moved to leave.

“Stop them! Don’t let them get away!”

Chaos erupted. Staff swarmed in, and the once orderly casino descended into disorder as Sebastian and Caitlin fought their *way* through.

Soon they were surrounded. The leader stepped forward, raising his hand. “You two have broken the rules of The Seventh Door. Come with us. Our boss wants a word.”

Exactly what they’d been waiting for. Sebastian sneered. “Fine. Lead the way.”

They were escorted into a large conference room in the control center.

Sebastian slammed a hand on the table, shouting theatrically, “What the hell do you want with us? Let us go, or you’ll regret it! My father will make every last one of you dogs crawl on your knees!”

Caitlin knew he was putting on an act, but she had never seen him play madman before. She had to dig her nails into her thigh just to keep from laughing.

Meanwhile, in the control center’s private office, a man in his sixties sat with his feet on the desk, puffing a cigar. He was Ignatius, the head of The Seventh Door.

Opposite him sat a burly man with a brutal face, speaking gravely. “Word just came in. They showed up today -at the Jonathan estate, no less. But Mr. Jonathan refused to see them. What now? Should we...”

Ignatius waved off the worry with a smoky exhale. “What’s there to fear? What can they dig up?”

“I’m not scared, just cautious.”

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“Relax. You handle the outside forces, I control everything in here. With both of us working together, who’s going to touch us?”

Their conversation was interrupted by a subordinate rushing in. “Boss, we just caught two cheaters.”

“Handle it the usual way. Do I really need to say it?”

The usual way was simple: only The Seventh Door was allowed to rig the game. Any player caught cheating lost their hands as punishment.

“But this one seems important. He claims his father’s some high-ranking official, that hurting him will bring trouble.”

“Oh? Then I’ll see what kind of brat thinks he can stir up trouble in my house.”

Ignatius began to rise, but the man across from him stood first. “You don’t need to bother. Leave a fool like that to me. I’ll deal with him.”

“Fine.”

In the conference room, Sebastian banged on the table again, shouting like a lunatic. “You dare keep me locked up? When my father gets here, he’ll have you all kneeling and begging for mercy, you mangy mutts!”

Soon the doors swung open. A line of men marched in and flanked the room, and then a hulking figure entered.

“Who dares cause trouble in The Seventh Door?” His deep voice rumbled.

“Manager, it’s these two. They were caught cheating and then made a scene,” one of the guards reported.

Both Caitlin and Sebastian turned to look. A huge, brutish man stood there, his face thick with flesh, radiating

menace.

They had called him “manager.” That meant he wasn’t Ignatius himself.

Caitlin’s eyes locked on his hand—and froze. Inked on the back was a black serpent, coiled around his arm. Her heart jolted.

She remembered what her brother had told her: Dustin’s most distinctive feature was the black snake tattoo wrapping his left arm.

And now... this man stood before her. Could it be James’s old master, Number Zero of The Silent Order- Dustin?

Before she could fully process it, the man swaggered forward, growling, “Do you know what happens to people who break our rules? Do you know the price for making trouble here?”

Caitlin slammed her hand on the table. “You’re Dustin!” The rightful source is find—[novel.net](http://novel.net)

He staggered back a step, visibly shaken. “You....!”

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“The Silent Order, Dustin! Do you still remember James? You poisoned my brother! I’ve been hunting you all this time!” Her voice shook with fury, her eyes blazing. “Finally, I’ve found you, you old bastard!”

“Caitlin? Sebastian?”

Dustin’s eyes widened. Recognition dawned, and for a moment the notorious man looked almost fearful, **as** though he’d walked straight into a trap.

“That’s Dustin?” Sebastian muttered in shock. They’d only heard James describe him; he had always hidden behind a mask. Now, face revealed, he looked every bit the vicious brute he was.

His nerve faltered. Even here, in his own territory, guilt gnawed at him. The moment they named him, instinct took over. He turned and bolted.

“Dustin! Stop!”

Caitlin vaulted the table in a single leap, sprinting after him. Sebastian was right behind her.

Everyone else froze, stunned. Dustin's men, seeing their leader flee, panicked and scattered as well.

Dustin barreled through the casino, shoving gamblers, upending tables, sending chips and cards flying. Screams rang out as patrons scrambled.

Sebastian leapt onto the tables, sprinting across them with long strides. He closed the gap to just a few feet, then launched himself forward, kicking Dustin hard in the back.

The man crashed to the ground. Rolling onto his back, he whipped out a weapon and aimed.

Bang!

Sebastian dodged, the bullet grazing past. He lashed out with a fierce kick, sending the weapon skittering across the floor, then drove his fist into Dustin's jaw.

Dustin staggered, lashed back with a brutal kick, and scrambled to his feet—only to find Caitlin cutting him off. She drove a fist straight into his face, forcing him back.

Trapped between them, Dustin had no way out. Snarling, he planted his feet. If escape was impossible, then he would fight.

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When Dustin faltered, his men quickly jumped in. Dozens of them surged forward to join the fight.

Zinnia, Tyler, King, and Vaughn all rushed in just in time, clashing har

d with the attackers.

The casino turned into chaos. Tables splintered, chips scattered, and terrified patrons scrambled to escape.

Word reached Ignatius almost immediately. When he heard that the people fighting Dustin were named Caitlin and Sebastian, his expression darkened. Realizing the gravity, he snapped, “Quickly! Send reinforcements to support the manager! And listen—bring them in alive if you can!”

“Yes, boss!”

Once his orders were relayed, Ignatius quietly slipped out of The Seventh Door through a hidden passage.

Inside, the fight raged for more than ten minutes. Finally, Sebastian drove his boot into Dustin’s chest, sending him crashing to the ground.

Caitlin rushed in, wrenching Dustin’s arm behind his back. “So this is where you’ve been hiding. Tell me- what is your connection with the Jonathan family?”

“N-no connection...” Dustin stammered, pinned and helpless.

But this was his stronghold. Reinforcements soon poured in, weapons drawn. At the front were Sable and Xian. Xian shouted, “You’re surrounded! Release the manager immediately!”

The fighting froze. Tyler, Zinnia, and the others tightened their formation around Sebastian and Caitlin, ready to protect them.

Sebastian hauled Dustin to his feet, twisting his arms behind him. Caitlin snatched up a weapon from the ground and pressed the barrel to Dustin's temple. Her voice rang out sharp and cold. "Your manager is in our hands. Unless you want his brains splattered across the floor, all of you drop your weapons!"

Dustin's face was bruised and bloody, his hands locked tight behind his back. Immobilized, he couldn't order his men to stand down—yet without his command, none of them would obey Caitlin.

She pulled back the hammer with a click and barked at Dustin, "Tell them to put their guns down!"

The bullet was chambered. One squeeze would blow his head open. With no choice, Dustin croaked, "Drop... your weapons..."

At his order, the men slowly lowered their guns.

Sebastian and Caitlin exchanged a look. Using Dustin as a hostage, they began forcing their way out.

The air was taut with tension. No one dared move without risking Dustin's life. Sable and Xian were visibly anxious, whispering to each other, plotting a way to save him.

“Out of the way!” Sebastian barked.

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The men blocking the doors reluctantly parted. Step by step, Caitlin and Sebastian’s group pushed through, dragging Dustin with them.

Once outside The Seventh Door, they hurried toward their van. But just as Sebastian tried to shove Dustin inside, the old fox lunged back, smashing his skull into Sebastian’s chest. With that sudden move, he broke free and bolted.

“Stop!” Caitlin raised the gun and fired.

Bang! The bullet tore into Dustin’s back, dropping him to the ground.

The moment he fell, Sable, Xian, and the rest opened fire in a hail of bullets aimed at their vehicle.

Bang bang bang!

Gunfire cracked. Metal screamed as bullets riddled the van, shattering glass. Outnumbered and outgunned, Caitlin's group had no chance of holding their ground. Vaughn floored the accelerator, and they sped away.

Inside the van, Caitlin twisted around. "Is everyone alright?"

"We're fine," Zinnia answered quickly.

But Tyler's sharp eyes caught something off. Sebastian's face had gone pale, his expression tight. When Tyler leaned closer, he saw blood seeping between Sebastian's fingers as he clutched his left arm.

"Damn it! Mr. Vanderbilt's hit!"

"Sebastian!" Caitlin's heart clenched.

"I'm fine..." Sebastian ground out through his teeth. The pain was sharp, but he forced himself to endure it.

“Hospital, now!” Caitlin snapped. She switched seats with Tyler, then shouted at Vaughn, “Take another route, not the closest hospital.” Read full story at [FundNovel.net](http://FundNovel.net)

Vaughn hesitated. “If we go to a hospital, The Seventh Door might hunt us down.”

“They may not catch us, but either way, don’t risk the nearby ones. Detour farther,” Caitlin insisted.

Zinnia nodded. “She’s right. Dustin was shot—his people will rush him to the nearest hospital. If we go there, we’ll run straight into them.”

Vaughn hit the gas, weaving through traffic.

Caitlin pressed a handkerchief tightly around Sebastian’s wound, her brows drawn. “I know it hurts, but hold on. I’ll stop the bleeding.”

He forced a faint smile. “Don’t worry about me. I’ll manage.”

Her chest ached. “This is my fault. If I hadn’t lost my temper, we wouldn’t be in this mess.”

“Don’t blame yourself,” Sebastian murmured. “We needed to be sure it was Dustin. Without that

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confrontation, we wouldn't have confirmed it."

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"Exactly," Zinnia added. "And now that we have, it's clear Dustin is tied to the Jonathan family, right?"

"Yes," Caitlin said firmly. "Forrest, Dustin, Carlos... they're all connected to the Jonathans. We'll have to keep digging."

"And figure out our next move," Zinnia added.

Caitlin's voice hardened. "We've stirred the hornet's nest. Dustin's wounded. The Seventh Door won't let this slide."

"Then we'll need backup," Zinnia said.

“Tyler, contact the Order.” Sebastian gave the command without hesitation.

“On it,” Tyler replied, already pulling out his secure phone to reach The Obsidian Order.

Vaughn finally pulled into a hospital on the far side of Regalis. Caitlin rushed inside with Sebastian.

As they waited in the corridor, a television mounted on the wall flashed breaking news: the prince of Aureliana was arriving soon for a state visit. Security in Regalis was already on high alert.

“Magnus is coming here?” Caitlin’s eyes lit up. “That’s perfect. With him in D Country, the authorities will be strict. The Seventh Door won’t dare make reckless moves.”

Sebastian agreed. “Once he arrives, we’ll reach out. It’ll give us cover.”

Their number was called. Caitlin stayed at Sebastian’s side as doctors removed the bullet, disinfected the wound, and stitched it up.

Once treated, they refused the IV drip. Instead, they collected the prescribed medication and left quickly.

Returning to the Regalis Grand Hotel was no longer safe. After their earlier encounter with Liliana at the entrance, their cover was too thin. They had to move immediately.

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

### **Chapter 661**

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Caitlin told Zinnia, Vaughn, King, and the others to head back to the hotel first and check out. They would be moving to a different hotel.

With their identities changed once again, and using fake papers bought on the black market, they successfully checked into a new place. Once everything was settled, Sebastian rested in the room while Caitlin stayed by his side, giving him an IV drip and keeping watch.

For now, they couldn't make any sudden moves. Everything would depend on how the situation unfolded.

The Seventh Door.

After the attack, Dustin's back wound was severe. Thanks to Sable and Xian, he was rushed to the hospital for emergency treatment.

While he was still in surgery, Ignatius had already been informed and was on his way back to the Jonathan

estate.

Dinner had passed at the Jonathan family residence. Hector's children and grandchildren had dispersed after the meal. Nicoletta and Liliana stayed behind to accompany the old man back to his quarters.

"Father, today's fragrance competition was a huge success. The media coverage and praise will give TGV a tremendous boost."

Liliana recounted the day's events. Hector's face lit with pride. "That's my daughter. Smart and capable, just like your mother. With you running the company, I have no worries at all."

"Thank you, Father. This is what I should be doing."

Nicoletta's heart swelled at the praise given to her daughter. "In time, Liliana will be able to stand on her own. Then your father and I can finally enjoy a peaceful old age."

Their conversation was interrupted when Butler Lee hurried in. "Master, Madam, Ignatius has returned. He says it's urgent." Updates are released by [find—novel.net](http://find-novel.net)

“Send him in.”

Hector waved his hand. Moments later, Ignatius entered in a rush, shutting the door behind him before stepping forward.

“What happened?” Lilia asked.

They were all family, so Ignatius didn’t hold back. “Brother-in-law, Caitlin and Sebastian stormed into the Seventh Door today and left Dustin badly injured.”

“What? They dared such arrogance?” Hector’s expression darkened, his eyes darting to Nicoletta with unease.

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Nicoletta frowned. “How many men did they bring? How could they cause trouble in the Seventh Door? Where were Dustin’s people?”

“Nicoletta, they were disguised. Dustin underestimated them and paid for it.”

“How is Dustin now?”

“He’s in surgery, still fighting.”

The room fell silent for a moment until Liliana broke it. “Father, Mother... could Caitlin be coming after our family directly?”

She only knew Caitlin as Odessa, the competitor in the fragrance contest. She hadn’t expected her to clash with the Seventh Door.

“That’s exactly it,” Nicoletta said coldly. “They showed up at our gates earlier today and were turned away.”

Her eyes sharpened, her tone cutting. “I want to see this Caitlin for myself, to know what she’s capable of.”

“Mother, you already have. Yesterday, at the Regalis Hotel, the woman who greeted me—that was Caitlin.”

“Oh? That was her?”

Nicoletta was caught off guard. “So her real purpose in approaching you was to gain access to the Jonathan family?”

“Exactly. That’s why I ignored her. Even Carson nearly got taken in by her.”

“Then we’ll need to be careful. Are they still at the Regalis Hotel?”

“No, Mother. My people checked. They’ve already left.”

“Most likely hiding from the Seventh Door. But whatever the case, we cannot allow them anywhere near the Jonathan family.”

Ignatius spoke up. “Nicoletta, what’s our next move? Should we launch a citywide search and drag them in?”

He didn’t think they should be allowed to remain in Regalis—it was too dangerous.

“Quietly,” Nicoletta said firmly. “The Aurelian royals are arriving soon, and Regalis is under heavy control. The Seventh Door must not draw attention. No public clashes. On the contrary, I want to use this opportunity to get Liliana into the prince’s circle. If our Liliana were to become princess, the future of the Jonathan family would be unshakable.”

Her vision stretched far ahead. With her ties to the First Lady, arranging for Liliaana to attend the banquet and meet Prince Magnus was entirely possible.

Liliana's heart pounded with excitement. As the Jonathan family's heiress and a celebrated socialite, marrying into royalty was the perfect goal.

If the head of state had a son, she would already be married into that family. But he had only a daughter, still

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underage. Instead, the First Lady had taken Liliaana as her goddaughter. If Liliaana were to wed into Aurelian royalty, it would strengthen ties between the two nations—a legacy to be remembered in history.

“When is the prince arriving?” Hector asked.

“Tomorrow, most likely. After the summit, we can use the First Lady's name to invite him here.”

Nicoletta had already planned everything. With her maneuvering, the Jonathan family would only rise higher.

When Hector retired for the night, Nicoletta and Liliana left his quarters. As they returned to their own rooms, Liliana clung to her mother's arm, her composure cracking once the door shut. "Mother, what should I do now? Caitlin is here in Regalis..."

"Do as I say."

"But she's so clever, I worry-

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Nicoletta's face hardened. "Remember who you are. You are the Jonathan family's heiress, the number one socialite in this country. Why would you fear a woman like Caitlin?"

To calm her daughter, Nicoletta added, "As long as we keep your father shielded, Caitlin won't have a chance. The foundation of the Jonathan family won't be shaken. Your only task now is to focus on Prince Magnus. Do everything you can to enchant him."

"I will. I won't let you down."

Liliana nodded, her confidence returning. She refused to be intimidated by Caitlin.

That night, the Seventh Door's men scoured the city for Caitlin and Sebastian. At a hospital, they discovered traces of them and learned Sebastian had been injured.

Reasoning that he couldn't have gone far, they began checking hotels one by one.

By midnight, the Seventh Door's forces had finally tracked down the hotel where Caitlin and Sebastian were staying—and they came in force.

**AD**

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