

Billionaire's Regret: Finding Her

Chapter 677

Caitlin and her group stopped and turned. Liliana strode toward them with her chin lifted, her expression proud and full of hostility.

“Oh? So it’s you.”

Caitlin let out a light chuckle, a faint smile on her face.

Liliana stopped in front of her, glaring sharply.

“Well? What do you want with me?”

“Yesterday you disguised yourself as Prince Magnus’s aide and slipped into the Jonathan estate. You got what you wanted—you’re living here now. I want to know, what’s your relationship with His Highness Magnus? Does he know you were pretending to be his aide?”

Liliana needed to know exactly where Caitlin stood with the prince. Otherwise Caitlin could keep meddling.

“I doubt he knows. As for what relationship I have with Magnus, that’s none of your business.”

“He doesn’t know? Then you impersonated his aide. Do you realize the crime you’ve committed? Can you bear it?” Liliana pressed aggressively.

“That’s my problem. What does it have to do with you?”

Caitlin brushed her words aside with ease.

“Aren’t you afraid I’ll report you to His Highness?”

“Afraid? If you could see him, you’d already be at lunch with him instead of standing here bickering with me. Which means you didn’t see him, did you? He stood you up, didn’t he?”

The corner of Caitlin’s lips curled into a mocking smile. Liliana’s rage burned hotter.

“This is all your fault! You ruined everything! If not for you, I’d already be close with His Highness.”

Her eyes flashed with malice, her fists clenched. If not for maintaining her lady-like façade, she would have lunged at Caitlin and clawed her hateful face.

“You can’t win the prince over, and somehow that’s my fault? What a joke.”

Caitlin sneered and turned to go, but Liliana blocked her path.

“What now?”

“This won’t end here! If you don’t want me to expose you, then do me a favor.”

“What favor?”

16:03 Fri, Oct 3

“Help me get an appointment with the prince. You managed to get near him once, so you must have a way to

arrange it.

Liliana wanted to exploit Caitlin’s cleverness. She knew Caitlin could make it happen if she wanted to

“Sorry, why would I help you? I came all the way here for the fragrance competition, and you wouldn’t even let me through the door. And now you want my help?*

Caitlin wasn't someone who forgot grudges. Liliana had sabotaged her before—now she expected Caitlin to open doors for her? Impossible.

“Yes, you registered late last time. I couldn't open a back door for you. But if you help me now, I can make an exception and give you a slot in the final round with the top ten perfumers. Isn't that tempting?”

Liliana thought she was offering enough. A fast track into the finals was no small prize.

But Caitlin scoffed. “Oh, I've lost interest in special treatment. Strange, I've suddenly lost interest in the whole competition, actually.”

Not wanting to waste more words, she stepped forward, but Liliana grabbed her sleeve angrily. “Caitlin, don't refuse a toast only to drink a forfeit!”

Caitlin turned her head, eyes locking on Liliana's. She yanked her hand free and said evenly, “I remember meeting you in Paris at a perfume competition. Back then, you weren't like this. You treated me kindly. Why has your attitude toward me changed so drastically in such a short time? Why are you like a different person now?”

Liliana froze. Her heart skipped a beat, her face pale. She sucked in a sharp breath, speechless.

Caitlin gave a cold smile. “With your reputation as Liliana of the Jonathan family, are you really afraid of not finding a good man? Your mother is resourceful enough on her own. Why come to me, a distant relative who barely knows anyone here? I can't help you.”

With that, Caitlin walked into Moonstone Court.

Liliana snapped back, seething. Caitlin's sharp tongue cut deeper than a knife, leaving no blood behind.

Murder with words.

Back in her room, Caitlin replayed the video she had just taken.

Zinnia leaned in curiously. "Who do you think that woman was? Why kill her and dump her in the pond?"

"In a mansion like this, all kinds of dirty little secrets happen. I can't say what his motive was, but pushing her into the water was just to cover up the murder. To make it look like she drowned."

"Mm."

Zinnia nodded thoughtfully. "So what do we do next?"

16:03 Fri, Oct 3

“Wait and watch. Paper can’t cover fire. This has nothing to do with us. We just need to conserve our strength and wait for the right moment.”

Caitlin was sure it wouldn’t be her losing sleep tonight—it would be Fletcher.

After finishing his “business,” Fletcher returned to Hector’s chambers, where the old man was awake and Nicoletta sat by his side.

“Fletcher, it’s done?” Nicoletta’s words carried a hidden meaning that only he understood.

“All taken care of. I’ve got a meeting at the capital hall this afternoon.” Fletcher’s face was calm, as though nothing had happened.

“Good. It’s about time for dinner. Let’s head to the dining room.”

Hector suddenly asked, “Where’s Uzma? Where did that girl run off to?”

“Who knows, probably off lazing around again. Don’t wait for her. I’ll help you up.”

Nicoletta quickly got to her feet and supported him out.

At the dining room, Nicoletta spotted her daughter approaching, her face stormy. Nicoletta frowned. "Liliana, why are you back so soon?" The link to the origin of this information rests in Find*Novel.net

"Mom!"

Liliana stormed up, cheeks puffed in anger, tugging at her mother's sleeve.

Nicoletta let Fletcher escort Hector inside, while she stayed to ask, "What happened? What's wrong?"

"Mom, it's Caitlin again! She sabotaged me, ruined everything with the prince. I didn't even get to see him!"

Nicoletta's brow furrowed. "Unbelievable. She's already thrown this family into chaos, and now she thinks she can control everything? I don't think so."

After a moment of thought, Nicoletta softened her tone. "Don't be upset. You're the Jonathan family's princess, high above her. Don't stoop to her level. I'll find the right chance to teach her a lesson."

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No sooner had Nicoletta finished speaking than she spotted Caitlin walking over with her two companions.

Nicoletta shot her a cold glance and quickly pulled her daughter inside.

Caitlin and her group entered the dining hall. The long table was already full, every seat taken. Two of the spots were occupied by young children, no more than a few years old.

Seeing her, Hector said to Devin, "Caitlin is here. Arrange a seat for her."

Devin hurried to place a chair at the end of the table, inviting Caitlin to sit. But Caitlin shook her head. "There are three of us. One chair isn't enough."

Liliana rolled her eyes. Nicoletta suggested to Devin, "Why don't we set another table later?"

That meant starting another round of cooking, and Caitlin's group would have to wait, likely dining with the

servants.

"That's too much trouble. There's already one seat. Just free up two more."

Caitlin walked over and sat down. Her words made several faces turn sour. Who did she think she was, demanding they give up their places for her entourage?

No one moved until Hector spoke again. "Have the two little ones sit at the side table. Give up their seats."

The old man had spoken. Devin quickly carried the children to a smaller table, and after a few shifts, two more seats opened beside Caitlin. She motioned for Zinnia and Tyler to sit.

With Caitlin at the table, the atmosphere grew heavy. Lilitiana's displeasure at her was plain across her face.

When the meal finally ended, many people excused themselves and slipped away. Lilitiana and Fletcher both claimed other obligations and left.

Caitlin rose last. She looked toward Hector. "Do you have a moment, Hector? I'd like to speak with you."

The shrewd old man instantly guessed she wanted to press him about the codex. He pressed a hand to his head, feigning pain.

“Oh... my head... it hurts again.”

Nicoletta picked up the act. “Are you alright? Maybe you didn’t rest enough. I’ll help you back to your room.”

She waved Devin over. Together they escorted Hector out, Nicoletta pausing only to tell Caitlin, “You’ll have to wait. When he’s feeling better, you can speak to him.”

Caitlin said nothing, only watching them disappear out the doors.

So Hector planned to drag this out, pretending illness to avoid her. Fine. There would come a time when he could no longer fake it.

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Back in his quarters, Devin shut the door. Nicoletta leaned close to Hector. “Master, next time she **asks** for you, do this again. Stall for as long as possible. Once we secure the missing half of the codex, we’ll throw her out. Who cares about her supposed family ties?”

Hector frowned. “But what if my symptoms flare up again?”

“Don’t worry, I’ll make sure we get the antidote.” The rightful source is findnovel.net

To Nicoletta, Hector’s life mattered far less than securing the codex.

After settling him in bed, she finally stepped out. As she turned down the corridor, she stopped short in fright.

“Caitlin? What are you doing here?”

Caitlin turned slowly, a faint smile playing on her lips. “What’s wrong? Do I scare you more than a ghost? Or is it your conscience that’s haunting you?”

“What’s that supposed to mean? You startled me, that’s all.” Nicoletta huffed and eyed her warily. “Why are you here?”

“Hector isn’t well enough to talk, so I thought I’d find you instead. You’re the one running this house. Talking to you is more effective than talking to him, isn’t it?”

Nicoletta stiffened. She could guess Caitlin’s real purpose—it had to be about Yun’s Aromatic Codex. But she would never admit a thing.

“You give me too much credit. I’m not in charge here. Hector’s first wife Delilah is the real head of this family. I just help manage things.”

“You mean Delilah, Hector’s first wife. Whether she’s in charge or not, I don’t know. I’ve never seen her. All I know is, you’re the one whose word carries weight in this house. So I’ll speak to you.”

Nicoletta’s scalp prickled. Was Caitlin going to hound her now?

“Fine, what do you want to talk about?”

“The same topic as before. Ignatius is your elder brother. And his other identity is Carlos.”

Nicoletta’s face hardened, arms folding across her chest. “I’ve said this already. Ignatius is my brother, yes, but I don’t know any Carlos. If you want to see my brother, wait a few days. When he returns, I’ll have him meet you face-to-face.”

“Of course. Everything depends on you. By the way, the missing half of the Yuncey family’s Aromatic Codex -do you have it? Can you return it to me?” Caitlin opened her hand expectantly.

“What Aromatic Codex? I’ve never heard of it.”

“This house is under your care. If Hector has a treasure hidden away, wouldn’t you be the one who knows where it is?”

Caitlin was certain Nicoletta knew. It might even be in her possession.

“I don’t know. Truly, I don’t. Believe it or not.”

Nicoletta feigned ignorance, daring Caitlin to do something about it.

“I’ll tell you this. Holding onto half a codex is useless. Better to return it to its rightful owner. Do that, and I’ll remember the favor. But if you hide it from me, and I find out... that’s a consequence you won’t want to face.”

Her tone was cold, a warning edged in steel.

Nicoletta only laughed. “Caitlin, I’ve lived longer than you. I’ve weathered more storms than you can imagine. Don’t try to scare me. Remember your place. Don’t end up worse off than when you started.”

She threw down the words and brushed past Caitlin.

Caitlin arched a brow at her retreating back. “End up worse off, you say. I wonder what happens to someone who gets caught cheating?”

Nicoletta froze at those words. She whipped around, but Caitlin was already turning away.

Cheating.

Her heart thudded painfully. What did Caitlin mean by that? Could she know something?

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“Caitlin, wait!”

Nicoletta stopped her and demanded, “What did you mean by what you just said?”

“Nothing at all. What do you think I meant?”

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Her reply left Nicoletta speechless. She had to admit, Caitlin's tongue was sharp. With just a few casual words, she could strike the deadliest blow, leaving no room for rebuttal.

"Forget it. You're the younger one. I won't argue with you."

Nicoletta put on the air of an elder and warned, "I just want to tell you, don't meddle. Especially in my daughter Liliana's relationship with His Highness. I will not allow you to ruin her future."

"What future? The only future is the one you made up in your own head. You want to marry your daughter into the royal family of A Country, but have you figured out whether His Highness even likes her?"

Nicoletta's ambition had been laid bare. Her face darkened as she snapped, "That's none of your business. Mind your own."

"Exactly the words I wanted to say to you."

Caitlin gave a faint smile and strolled away, leaving Nicoletta standing alone, seething.

The more she looked at Caitlin, the more she despised her. One way or another, she'd drive her out of the Jonathan estate.

Nicoletta went to her daughter's quarters. Seeing her mother's unsettled face, Liliana asked worriedly, "Mom, what's wrong? Are you alright?"

“I’m fine. I just ran into Caitlin and exchanged a few words. That woman is no easy one to deal with.”

Nicoletta sat down, her mind already spinning.

Liliana suddenly remembered something, her voice uneasy. “Mom, earlier when I ran into her, she said I used to treat her well and now my attitude has completely changed. Do you think she’s suspicious? Could she have noticed something?”

Nicoletta’s brows drew tight. “She said you used to treat her well? When?”

“She mentioned the perfume competition in Paris.”

Nicoletta nodded slowly and instructed, “If she’s already picked up on something, then from now on you’d best avoid too much direct contact with her. Say less, or you might give yourself away.”

“I understand, Mom.”

But Liliana couldn’t help fretting. “Still, I can’t even see His Highness. What should I do?” THIS CHAPTER IS UPDATE BY findnovel.net

10:00 Sun, Oct 5

“Wait a little longer. I’ll go speak with the First Lady, see what arrangements they can make. I’ll let you know after.”

“Alright.”

The Jonathan family members busied themselves with their own affairs. Hector, claiming illness, refused to meet Caitlin in private.

With nothing urgent on her hands, Caitlin wandered through the estate gardens. Passing a courtyard called Evergreen Pavilion, she paused. The scenery there was particularly beautiful. She also noticed Fallon, Hector’s third daughter, walking inside.

From what Caitlin knew, the estate was divided into several courtyards. The storage wing housed the servants, but the rest belonged to the different branches of the family. From the staff, she had learned Evergreen Pavilion was the residence of Delilah, Hector’s first wife. Seeing Fallon enter, Caitlin guessed she was visiting her mother.

Caitlin told Zinnia and Tyler to wait at the gate and stepped inside.

The pavilion’s design was elegant, every detail carefully crafted. The gardens were meticulously pruned, flowers and shrubs perfectly ordered.

She approached the porch, stepping onto the wooden floorboards that creaked softly beneath her.

“Who’s there?” came a woman’s voice from inside.

“I’ll check.”

Fallon appeared in the doorway and spotted Caitlin admiring the garden. “Oh, Caitlin. What are you doing here?”

“I passed by and saw how beautiful it was, so I thought I’d take a look. What is this place?” Caitlin asked casually, feigning ignorance.

“It’s my mother’s residence. Would you like to come in?”

“Of course.”

Caitlin followed Fallon into the inner room. On the bed, propped against pillows, lay an elderly woman.

“Mom, this is Caitlin, the relative I told you about.”

“Oh? So she’s Caitlin?”

Delilah studied the young woman and nodded. “Such presence.”

“Madam, how do you do?”

Caitlin stepped forward, greeting her warmly and taking her hand.

“Good, good. I’m glad to see you. I only wish I could keep you company, but my body won’t allow it.”

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Delilah had long been bedridden by illness. At times she could move about in a wheelchair, but mostly she remained in bed.

“It doesn’t matter. Your health comes first. And isn’t Nicoletta helping with the family affairs?”

Delilah sighed. “Yes. With Nicoletta managing things, I can rest easy.”

Caitlin sat by the bed and asked Fallon, “What illness does she have? Has she not received hospital treatment?”

Fallon explained, “She was fine twenty years ago. Then suddenly she developed a form of cartilage degeneration. Slowly she lost the ability to move. Now she relies on medication and supplements *to* maintain her body.”

Caitlin’s eyes drifted to the bedside table where a cup held a brown liquid. “Is this what she drinks every day?”

“Yes. The servants just brought it after mixing it. She hasn’t drunk it yet.”

“May I smell it?”

“Of course. It’s very bitter. My mom hates it. And honestly, after all this time, it hasn’t improved her condition.”

Caitlin lifted the cup and inhaled gently. “What exactly is in this? Do you have the prescription?”

“Why? Is there a problem?” Fallon asked.

Caitlin explained simply, “I’ve studied some pharmacology and nutrition. I want to see if this formula suits your mother’s condition. If she keeps drinking it without relief, perhaps it’s the wrong treatment.”

Fallon trusted her. She quickly fetched the doctor’s prescription. Caitlin read through it carefully, her brows knitting.

“Well? Is this formula unsuitable for my mother?” Fallon asked anxiously.

Caitlin looked up and spoke honestly. “The ingredients listed are fine. But when I smelled the supplement just now, I noticed not only the scent of nutrients but also the odor of medicine. Yet the prescription contains no such medicine. Doesn’t that strike you as strange?”

Fallon’s eyes widened. She glanced at her mother. Delilah looked baffled. “What do you mean?”

“I mean this formula may have been tampered with.”

Her words startled both mother and daughter.

“How could that be? Who would dare tamper with my mother’s medicine?”

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“Don’t panic. I’d like to examine your mother myself. I carry a medical kit with me.”

“Yes, yes, please check her quickly.”

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Caitlin gave Delilah a thorough examination and soon realized her condition was not cartilage disease at all.

“This isn’t chondropathy. In adults, soft bone disease usually comes from vitamin D deficiency or gastrointestinal problems that interfere with calcium and phosphorus metabolism. Symptoms include back and leg pain, deformities, or fractures in severe cases. But your mother’s condition doesn’t match that diagnosis.”

“My mother doesn’t have cartilage disease? But for years our family doctor has insisted she does! Every regular check-up gave the same result. Could it be a misdiagnosis?”

For Fallon, that possibility was a glimmer of hope.

And the fact that it was the Jonathan family’s own doctor who gave the diagnosis only made Caitlin more suspicious.

“Don’t worry. I’ll need to draw a blood sample for analysis. And I’ll also take some of this medicine and supplement to test.”

“Yes, please. If you can re-diagnose her, maybe my mom still has a chance to stand again.”

“I’ll do my best. But you mustn’t spread this around yet. If the family doctor hears of it, it could get complicated.”

“I understand. We won’t say a word.”

For reasons she couldn’t explain, Fallon instinctively trusted Caitlin and wanted to follow her lead.

Caitlin picked up the cup and poured its contents into a nearby flowerpot. “From now on, don’t let her drink this. Wait until I’ve confirmed the ingredients. Assign a loyal servant to handle this task. Whoever used to deliver the medicine, reassign them somewhere else under another excuse.”

“I’ll take care of it.”

Until now Fallon had never considered her mother might be deliberately harmed. Caitlin’s words shook her deeply.

After chatting with the mother and daughter a little longer, Caitlin left. Outside, she handed the blood and medicine samples to Tyler, instructing him to run tests.

That evening, family members trickled back to the estate. Fletcher brought the doctor's report.

Nicoletta skimmed it and frowned. "This says nothing abnormal was found? Even the bloodwork shows no signs of poison?"

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"Correct. Nothing detectable."

"Then why does Hector suddenly collapse, convulse, and scream in pain like he's possessed?"

Her words made Fletcher's eyes gleam. "Maybe that's it. Maybe he's been cursed. That girl Caitlin must have cast some kind of sorcery on him."

"Cursed?"

The thought made Nicoletta's scalp prickle. It was true Hector's condition looked like witchcraft. "Then waste no time. Get someone to contact South America and hire the most famous shaman. We need to find out if this is Caitlin's doing."

“Understood.”

At dinner, Caitlin entered the hall with Zinnia. Hector was absent; only the others were present.

Nicoletta barely ate, then left with her daughter. The rest also dispersed quickly.

Tyler returned around nine. He told Caitlin the samples had been sent out and results would come back the next day.

“Good. Rest up. Tomorrow we’ll have a good show to watch.”

Zinnia and Tyler knew exactly what she meant.

Late that night, a shadow slipped into Moonstone Court. Moving silently, the intruder crouched beside the air conditioner outside Caitlin’s room, releasing smoke into the intake vent. The fumes drifted through the ducts.

Half an hour later, he unlocked the door with a key and slid inside without a sound.

A flashlight beam swept over two women on the bed, seemingly unconscious. Satisfied, the intruder began searching through the room.

He rifled through all their luggage, but the codex was nowhere to be found. Finally, he crept to Caitlin's side, lifting her pillow to check beneath it. Still nothing. Could it be she hadn't brought the codex at all?

Frustrated at coming up empty, his eyes lingered on Caitlin's sleeping form. Desire flared. He reached under the blanket.

Suddenly Caitlin's eyes snapped open. Her hand clamped around his wrist, and her leg shot out, kicking him hard.

The man flew back, crashing into a wooden shelf. Objects clattered to the floor in a noisy heap.

He scrambled to flee, but Caitlin lunged again. Zinnia leapt up *too*, blocking the exit. Together they closed in, striking from both sides. This chapter is updated by Fmd-Novel.net

The intruder stumbled under their assault, fell hard near the door, then yanked it open to escape.

But outside, Tyler's fist came down like thunder, smashing into his face.

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The man collapsed unconscious in a single blow.

“Are you two alright?” Tyler asked, stepping inside. He had heard the noise and rushed over just in time.

“We’re fine, thanks to you.” Caitlin switched on the light. Tyler entered, **sniffing** the air. “There’s a strange smell in here.”

“Don’t inhale it!” Caitlin warned.

“What-” He didn’t finish. Tyler’s body swayed, then he fainted.

“I told you not to breathe it,” Zinnia sighed.

Luckily, Caitlin had been cautious enough to take an antidote capsule before bed. She had given one to Zinnia too. The smoke hadn’t affected them at all.

“Let’s see who this is.”

Zinnia crouched, pulling off the black mask. The man’s face was revealed.

“It’s Fletcher’s aide!”

They had seen him before.

“So he was sent to find the codex. Tie him up.”

“Right.”

Zinnia bound him tightly with rope. Then she carried Tyler back to his room. The drug wouldn't last long- he would wake after a few hours' sleep.

They opened the windows to air the room, then finally lay back down to rest.

The next morning, Fletcher met Nicoletta in the main hall. Nicoletta asked quietly, “Well? Did he succeed?”

Before Fletcher could answer, Devin rushed in from outside. “Madam, bad news. You need to come see this right away!”

“What happened?”

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“It’s Moonstone Court. Something happened there.”

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Hearing Devin’s report, Nicoletta and Fletcher exchanged a quick glance, then hurried out of the main hall.

By the time they arrived, a crowd had already gathered outside Moonstone Court. Some of the servants had come to gawk, and several family members had shown up after hearing the commotion.

Fletcher’s wife Blythe came with their two children. Matthew and his wife were there, as well as Fallon.

All of them saw the sight in front of them: a man tied to a tree trunk, stripped down to nothing but black shorts, a black mask covering his head, his face bowed in shame.

How had he ended up bound and half-naked like this?

Carson blinked in confusion. "Caitlin, what's going on?"

Fallon's brows knitted. "Caitlin, why is there a man tied to a tree?"

"He's the thief we caught last night," Caitlin said plainly. She kept her eyes on Nicoletta and Fletcher as they approached with Devin, waiting for them to arrive before saying more.

When people heard the word thief, they erupted into chatter.

"Our Jonathan estate is so heavily guarded, and still a thief got in?"

"Who has the guts to sneak in here of all places?"

"We can't just let him off. He must be handed to the police."

Nicoletta and Fletcher finally reached the scene, seeing the man tied to the tree.

“What’s going on here? Why is everyone gathered?” Nicoletta demanded. Content originally comes from [@ovelFind.net](#)

“Caitlin’s quarters in Moonstone Court were broken into last night. They caught the thief, and that’s him,” Carson explained.

“Oh? So we have thieves in the Jonathan estate now?” Nicoletta’s gaze lingered on the bound man before turning to Caitlin. “Did you lose anything valuable?”

Caitlin replied evenly, “No valuables. But our personal belongings were rummaged through. Luckily, I was sharing a room with Zinnia. When we discovered the intruder, we managed to capture him.”

“Who would dare such a thing?” Fletcher asked sharply, but his heart tightened with unease. Could it be his assistant had failed?

“Caitlin, pull off his mask,” Fallon urged. “Let’s see who this thief is.”

“Alright. Let everyone see.”

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Caitlin signaled, and Zinnia yanked away the mask. Tyler splashed a bucket of cold water over the man's head.

The sudden shock roused him. He gasped and lifted his head, revealing his face.

"Isn't that Ivo?"

"Yes, that's Dad's assistant Ivo! Why would he be a thief?"

"Ivo... what was he doing at Moonstone Court in the middle of the night?"

The crowd buzzed louder, recognizing Fletcher's aide.

Nicoletta realized their plan had failed. But admitting their involvement was impossible.

She hardened her voice. "Ivo, did you break into Moonstone Court last night?"

Fletcher followed her lead, trying to cut ties. "Ivo, what's the meaning of this? Did you really try to steal?"

Ivo's mind reeled. Bound half-naked, surrounded by accusing eyes, he felt both humiliated and panicked. He knew there was no way out. The only option was to take the blame alone.

"I'm innocent... Madam, I swear I didn't steal anything!"

"If you didn't steal, how did you get caught?" Fallon snapped.

"I wasn't stealing. I dropped something during the day and came back to find it. That's all!"

Desperate, he tried to explain, but Caitlin cut him off with a cold laugh. "You can deny it, but our belongings were clearly rifled through. If the police come, they'll find your fingerprints everywhere. Still want to argue?"

"I didn't steal. I've been framed!"

"You know what you did. If you weren't stealing, then why sneak into Moonstone Court in the middle of the night? Do you live there?" Caitlin pressed.

Ivo had no answer.

"And more than theft—you released knockout smoke in our room. We were ready for it, so we didn't fall for your trick. You even tried to lay your filthy hands on me, but I caught you in the act. Do you deny that too? Zinnia saw everything."

Gasps rippled through the crowd.

“Ivo tried to assault Caitlin?”

“Who would have thought he was that kind of man!”

“He’s disgraced the entire Jonathan family.”

Accusations flew from every direction. Ivo hung his head, silent.

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Fletcher’s stomach twisted with fury. He had sent Ivo for a purpose, and instead the fool had tried to satisfy his lust.

“Ivo, how could you? To think you looked honest, and this is what you were hiding. You were going to assault. Caitlin!”

Nicoletta chimed in, “Exactly. The Jonathan family has treated you well, yet you do something so shameful?”

Carson spoke up loudly, “Dad, a man like this doesn’t deserve to stay. We should call the police.”

“Yes, report him! Let the authorities deal with him.”

Fletcher, afraid Ivo might spill more than he should, quickly agreed. “Yes. Call the police.”

“I already have,” Caitlin said. “They should arrive any moment.”

Nicoletta stepped forward, putting on a mask of concern. “Caitlin, I’m so sorry. This happened because of our poor oversight. I know you must have been shaken.”

“Yes, Caitlin,” Fletcher added. “Rest assured, Ivo will be punished severely according to the law.”

“Very well. I’ll leave it to you.”

Caitlin’s gaze stayed cool as she looked at the two of them performing their act. She knew Ivo had been sent by them to search for the codex. But since they had covered themselves so smoothly, there was no reason to push further.

The police arrived soon after, announced at the gate.

“Bring them in quickly,” Devin ordered.

A few minutes later, officers entered the estate. After hearing the account from Caitlin and the others, they examined the scene, then hauled Ivo away in handcuffs.

The matter was closed, at least on the surface. Fletcher and Nicoletta both exhaled silently in relief. Thank goodness Ivo hadn’t revealed anything.

The family gathered back in the main hall to discuss the incident. Caitlin, however, went to Hector’s quarters.

When she entered, Hector, half-asleep, caught sight of a shadow and muttered, “Uzma, where have you been all this time? Get over here and tend to me.”

“Hector, it’s me.”

Caitlin stepped forward. The old man recognized her face—and his heart skipped in shock.

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“From the sound of your voice, Hector, you don’t seem to be in pain at all. Your color looks good too. I’d say your body is recovering, isn’t it?”

Caitlin sat down on the carved stool across from him.

Realizing he couldn’t dodge her, Hector forced himself to reply, “I feel a bit better today. Why are you here?”

“I came especially to check on you. Where’s Uzma? Didn’t she come to look after you?” Caitlin asked.

“Don’t know where that girl’s run off to. Haven’t seen a trace of her.”

“Don’t worry, Hector. You’ll see her soon enough.”

After a casual reassurance, Caitlin steered the subject elsewhere. “By the way, Hector, can you hand me the missing half of Yun’s Aromatic Codex now?”

“Didn’t I tell you? It’s not in my possession.”

The old man still refused to admit it, but Caitlin pressed firmly, “That story might fool others, but I know for certain the codex is in your hands. Don’t bother hiding it from me.”

Hector fell into silence.

Caitlin continued, “Half a book in your drawer is nothing but scrap paper. But if you give it to me, I might be able to locate the map of Atlantis, and from there the Shard of Life. I’m sure you’ve heard of it, haven’t you? Eat it and you gain longer life. You want longevity,

on’t you? When the time comes, I’ll share it with you. We can work together. How does that sound?”

“You’d really share it with me?”

Hector was tempted, but still unsure if he could trust her.

“Of course. You’re my grandfather’s only brother, my blood relative. Naturally I want to look out for you.”

Her cool eyes shone with sincerity. “And besides, all I want is the codex so I can restore the Fragrance & Dye Studio. As for that Shard of Life, I don’t need it. If we find the map, we can go to Atlantis together, dig it up ourselves. Most of what we find will be yours. All I ask is a small portion to use as medicine for my brother.”

She leaned forward, her tone sharper. “Think carefully, Hector. You’re already over seventy. How much time do you have left to waste? Every passing second is your life slipping away. If you want that miraculous treasure, I’m your only way to it.”

Every angle was laid bare. No one with sense could resist.

“You’re right. I can’t afford to wait. But the codex isn’t with me,” Hector admitted.

“If it’s not with you, then it must be with Nicoletta, correct?”

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Hector nodded slightly. "I can have her return it to you. If what you say is true, I'll cooperate. But words alone aren't enough. Why should I believe you so easily?"

"I can sign a contract in front of you right now."

To reassure him, Caitlin added, "I'll use all of my US assets as collateral. If I break my word, everything under my name will belong to the Jonathan family."

Her determination was unmistakable. Hector finally relaxed.

"Good. This deal can be made. Write it."

He fetched a sheet of white paper from the desk and placed it before her. Caitlin uncapped her black pen, ready to write.

Just before starting, she added, "One condition. This agreement only stands if the Shard of Life truly exists. If we go to Atlantis and find nothing, then the contract is void."

Hector thought it over. Even if the Shard didn't exist, Atlantis surely held other treasures. It wouldn't be a wasted trip.

"Fine. I agree."

With both sides aligned, Caitlin drafted the cooperation contract, two identical copies, signing and pressing her fingerprint.

“Your turn, Hector.”

He read it carefully. The terms were clear, the promises enticing. Taking the pen, he signed his own name and pressed his fingerprint. Read full story at [Find_Novel\(.\)net](#)

The deal was sealed. One copy for Hector, one for Caitlin.

Thinking of the pain gnawing inside him, Hector asked, “Now, shouldn’t you cure me? We have a contract. You don’t need to hold my life hostage anymore.”

“Correct.”

Caitlin handed him a pill. “Swallow this and you’ll be safe.”

Without hesitation, Hector gulped it down.

Two minutes later, agony surged through his veins like fire. He clutched the table, collapsing into a chair, gasping for air. “Why... why does it hurt so much? Is this really the antidote? Cough... cough...”

The old man doubled over in violent coughing, until *at last* he spat out a mouthful of black blood.

“Urgh-”

After that, his chest loosened. The wracking pain faded, his breathing grew steady. He touched his chest, amazed.

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“I’m better... I really am. I’m fine now!”

On the floor, the dark stain of his blood made his scalp crawl. That unbearable feeling of being devoured alive—he never wanted to suffer it again.

“You’re alright now, Hector. Let’s get you outside for a walk.”

Caitlin supported him as they left the bedchamber.

In the garden, the two strolled slowly. From the direction of the pond came distant shouts. Caitlin caught the sound and recognized it.

It seemed Uzma's body had been discovered.

"Come on, Hector. I'll take you to the main hall."

She guided him inside. The family was still gathered, murmuring among themselves.

Nicoletta's eyes narrowed when she saw Caitlin helping the old man in. That girl had gone to see him. directly?

"Master, are you alright? Why did you bring him out?" Nicoletta asked quickly, rushing over to take Hector. She shot Caitlin a sidelong glance.

"The weather's good. I thought it would do him well to get some fresh air," Caitlin said evenly.

Hector's face broke into a relieved smile. "I'm fine. Caitlin cured me. The poison's gone."

"Really?" Nicoletta's disbelief was sharp. She didn't buy that Caitlin would be so generous.

Before she could press further, Devin burst in, pale and flustered. “Master, Madam, something terrible has happened!”

“What now, all in a panic?” Nicoletta snapped.

“Uzma... Uzma... she’s dead!”

“What?”

Hector jolted upright. “What did you say? Say it again!”

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Just a moment ago Hector had been grumbling about Uzma shirking her duties. Now, hearing she was dead, he was utterly stunned.

“Master, Uzma is gone. The servants found her body in the pond. It was so bloated,” Devin said, his expression tinged with sorrow.

Hector collapsed into his seat, his face stricken with shock and confusion. “How could this be? What was that girl doing in the pond?”

Nicoletta feigned surprise. “How could she have fallen in?” She darted a quick glance at Fletcher, but he showed no guilt, only a stern frown. “We assumed she had asked for leave.”

“Exactly.”

“We believe she drowned by accident. I’ve already had her body pulled from the water. It will be brought here shortly,” Devin explained before hurrying out again.

The family began murmuring among themselves.

“How could Uzma have fallen into the pond?”

“The water there is deep. If you fall in, it’s hard to get out.”

“But why would Uzma go to the back garden pond in the first place?”

Nicoletta noticed Caitlin staying quiet. She seized the chance to redirect attention. “Why so silent, Caitlin? Since you came to the Jonathan estate, strange things have been happening one after another.”

Her words were aimed like barbs, linking Caitlin to Hector’s unexplained affliction, Ivo’s capture that morning, and now Uzma’s mysterious death.

“Nicoletta, are you suggesting Uzma’s death has something to do with me?”

Caitlin exposed her intentions directly. Nicoletta gave only a cold laugh. “I never said that. I only meant that so many odd things have happened recently. They feel unnatural, like someone’s cast a spell. Have you heard of black magic that can control a person’s mind and actions?”

At that, several members of the Jonathan family nodded. They had indeed heard of such witchcraft.

“So I think we should bring in a shaman to cleanse the house of evil,” Nicoletta said pointedly, her tone branding Caitlin as the very evil in question..

Caitlin nodded smoothly. “Yes. Evil should certainly be cleansed, or it brings great harm.”

Not long after, Uzma’s body was carried into the front courtyard. Everyone gathered to see.

Her corpse lay under a white sheet. No one dared lift it, the women especially shying away in fear.

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How could Uzma, lively just days ago, be dead now?

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Nicoletta supported Hector to the front. The old man ordered, “Uncover her. I want *to see*.”

Devin obeyed, pulling back the sheet. The swollen, pale corpse of Uzma was revealed.

“Oh, how ghastly,” Nicoletta muttered, turning her head, too “frightened” to look.

Fletcher studied her face. His own expression was rigid, betraying nothing, though inside he was taut as a drawn wire.

The men of the family stared grimly. The women shrank back, unable to look long.

Caitlin stood off to the side, watching coldly. Hector, after a long sigh, nodded. “Enough. Cover her again. Contact her family, give her a proper burial, and provide them due compensation.”

Devin replaced the sheet and signaled for servants to carry the body away.

Seeing her about to be taken, Fletcher exhaled, relief flooding him. Once the body was cremated, no one would ever know the cause of death.

But just then Caitlin's voice rang out. "Wait. Stop right there."

Everyone turned to her in confusion. Fallon asked, "What is it, Caitlin?"

Caitlin stepped forward. "I don't believe Uzma drowned accidentally."

"What do you mean? She was found in the pond, bloated beyond recognition," Nicoletta said, pressing a handkerchief to her face as though to block the stench, though it looked more like a mask for her unease.

"Yes, she must have drowned."

"What do you mean not a normal drowning? Is there such a thing as special drowning?"

Skepticism rose quickly. Fletcher hurried to cut it short. "She drowned. That's obvious. Enough of this. Deal with the body at once."

Devin nodded, but Caitlin held up a hand to stop them. “I haven’t finished. Uzma didn’t die from drowning. She may have been murdered.”

At that word, a hush fell, then erupted again.

“Murdered? How could that be?”

“Who would kill Uzma? She was well liked in the family.”

“Exactly, who would want her dead?”

Questions swirled. Fletcher’s taut nerves snapped tighter still. His breath quickened, the pounding in his chest loud in his ears.

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“Caitlin, you’re no coroner. Saying murder out of thin air is absurd,” Nicoletta sneered.

“Yes, Caitlin, don’t stir up trouble,” others echoed.

But Hector’s face was troubled. Uzma had served him for two years. He had grown reliant on her. He wanted to know the truth.

“Caitlin, what evidence do you have?” he asked.

“Put the body down again. Check her neck, and you’ll see,” Caitlin said firmly. Read complete version only at [Find_Novel\(.\)net](#)

At his order, the servants lowered the corpse and Devin drew back the sheet. They leaned in, but Uzma’s swollen body and her position made her throat impossible to view.

“What are we supposed to be seeing? There’s nothing.” Nicoletta snapped impatiently.

“She’s so bloated. You can’t see a thing.”

“Caitlin, what exactly are you asking us to look for?”

Caitlin reached for Hector’s cane. “Let me borrow this.”

She used it to tilt Uzma’s chin upward. With her jaw lifted, the neck came into view.

“See for yourselves.”

She stepped back, and the family crowded forward to look.

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The corpse had been swollen pale from the water, but on her neck a deep bruise was clearly visible.

“Look at that! There’s a mark on her neck.”

“What does that mean? Was she strangled?”

“If it were just drowning, her neck wouldn’t look like that.”

“Caitlin was right! Uzma didn’t drown. She was murdered.”

“Then who killed her?”

The family erupted in whispers. Nicoletta’s face darkened, while Fletcher fought to keep calm.

Nicoletta turned sharply toward Caitlin. “Caitlin, none of us noticed that mark. How is it that only you did? Could it be that Uzma’s death, you...”

Her words trailed off, suggestive.

Caitlin gave a cold laugh. “So now you suspect me? If I were the killer, why would I draw everyone’s attention to the fact her death was suspicious?”

Indeed, a murderer would normally *try* to destroy evidence, not expose it. Chapters first released on findnovel.net

Nicoletta pressed harder. “Who’s to say Uzma wasn’t being used as someone’s scapegoat? And killing doesn’t always mean doing it with your own hands. Maybe you didn’t kill her, but what if your people did? Someone here clearly wants to sow chaos in the Jonathan family.”

She had reason to fear. Ignatius had told her what Caitlin had done in the Yuncey family—how she’d turned them upside down, broken them apart in no time at all. Dead bodies, prison sentences, destruction. That woman was ruthless. A smile and the knife went in clean.

Now she was here, trying to play the same game with the Jonathans. Nicoletta could not let her succeed.

The target of her suspicion was obvious: Caitlin, and by extension, Zinnia and Tyler.

But Caitlin stayed composed. “Nicoletta, don’t rush to conclusions. Uzma’s cause of death can be determined by the police. Whether she drowned, whether she was murdered, and who the killer was, they’ll uncover it. I’m only pointing out that this is homicide. If you bury her without investigation, Uzma will have died in vain, and her killer will never pay.”

Her words were sharp, ringing with justice. Nicoletta’s face grew uglier, and she had no comeback.

Fletcher, however, felt cold sweat under his collar. How could they smooth this over quickly?

At last Hector, who had been silent, spoke. “Enough. Caitlin is right. Call the police. Find out the truth of Uzma’s death. At the very least, the girl deserves that.”

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Nicoletta tried again. “Master, if word of this gets out, it could tarnish our family’s reputation. If we handle **it** as a drowning, give Uzma’s family generous compensation, they won’t trouble us. But if it turns into a murder case, her family may not let it go. The Jonathan family will never know peace. We must be careful not **to fall** into someone’s trap.”

Hector heard her meaning. She was warning him. Uzma’s sudden death was odd, and Caitlin’s insistence on involving the police might be a ploy to dig into their family.

He hesitated. “Yes... perhaps we should think this over carefully.”

“I don’t think so,” Caitlin cut in, shattering their plan. “Since ancient times, debts must be repaid, and murder must be answered with life. That is the law of heaven and earth. With a killing, how can there be no investigation? Don’t worry—I already notified the police. They’ll be here soon.”

“You...” Nicoletta wanted to lash out, but her words were drowned out by the sound of cars pulling up outside.

The same police officers who had come that morning stepped inside. “We’re with the Regalis police. We received a report of a homicide. Where’s the body?”

“Here,” Devin said, leading them to it.

With the police present, Nicoletta and Fletcher had no choice but to fall silent. Fletcher was uneasy, but he told himself not to fear. Uzma was dead. The dead tell no tales.

The investigation began. Forensics conducted a preliminary examination while the police questioned the servant Lao Xia, who had found the body. He gave his statement.

Then they began questioning the family, asking about Uzma’s relationships, whether she’d had conflicts or quarrels.

The coroner gave an initial estimate: Uzma had died the previous day. The police asked, “Who saw Uzma last?”

A maid spoke up. "I saw her yesterday. She said she was bringing freshly laundered clothes to the master's room."

The officers turned to Hector. He shook his head. "She never came. I waited yesterday and today, but she never showed."

Nicoletta chimed in. "Yes. I was with the master the whole time. Uzma never came."

No one else could recall anything useful. Finally, the police ordered Uzma's body taken for further examination.

As they prepared to leave, Caitlin stepped forward. "Officer, I'd like to accompany you. I may have information that could help."

"Why didn't you say so earlier?"

"Because crucial evidence must be given at the crucial moment. If I spoke too soon, no one would have believed me. Now it may be taken seriously."

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As she said this, she looked straight at Nicoletta.

The reasoning was sound. The police could tell she had things she didn't want to reveal in front of everyone. They agreed to take her along.

The patrol car drove off, leaving the family buzzing with speculation. Nicoletta and Fletcher exchanged a look. Neither of them had any idea what Caitlin was planning.

Liliana returned just then, catching sight of Caitlin in the back of the police car. For a moment she thought she was seeing things, but no—it was her. She was being taken away.

Liliana had already heard the news: Uzma was dead, and it looked like murder.

Putting it together, she smirked to herself. So the killer was Caitlin?

Perfect. Let her be convicted, let her rot in a Regalis prison cell.

She entered the hall, passing Fletcher as he rushed out with a grim face, too preoccupied to even notice her greeting.

Inside, the family was still murmuring about Uzma's death.

Liliana burst out, "Father, Mother—was it Caitlin who killed Uzma?"

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“No, Caitlin only went with the police to assist their investigation,” Nicoletta replied.

Hearing this, Liliana was a little disappointed. So Caitlin wasn't the culprit after all.

Back at the Jonathan estate. Liliana pieced together two shocking bits of news: Ivo had been caught, and Uzma was dead. She didn't understand exactly what had happened, but one thing was clear—ever since Caitlin had stepped into their house, peace had fled. Maybe all of it was Caitlin's doing, stirring chaos behind

the scenes.

Regalis Police Department.

Caitlin arrived with the patrol car. The officer in charge of Uzma's case sat her down for a formal statement.

“Caitlin, earlier you mentioned crucial evidence. Were you a direct witness to the crime?”

“Yes.”

“Can you describe exactly what you saw?”

“Of course.”

Caitlin detailed what she had witnessed in the Jonathan gardens. As she spoke, the officer’s expression grew skeptical.

“You say you saw the crime with your own eyes, even recognized the killer. Then why didn’t you call us immediately? Why wait until now?”

“I’m only a distant relative visiting the Jonathan family. I was afraid speaking out would bring me trouble, maybe even retaliation. But when I saw they wanted to rush Uzma’s cremation, my conscience wouldn’t let me stay silent. So I spoke up.”

Her explanation was reasonable. The officer believed her, but pressed further. “Thank you for your honesty, Miss Lin. But you’re claiming that the person who killed Uzma was Fletcher Jonathan, the family’s eldest son. Are you absolutely certain?”

“I saw him clearly.”

The officers exchanged shocked glances. “Fletcher is a sitting member of Parliament. Why would he do such a thing?”

“That’s a question for him to answer.”

“We’ll investigate immediately.”

Caitlin nodded. “My word alone may not convince anyone. Fortunately, I also have video evidence.”

She handed over her phone. The officers watched the footage and were stunned.

The video showed everything: Uzma being overpowered in the grove, her body shoved into the pond, and the killer walking away. Fletcher’s face was unmistakable.

The officer exhaled sharply. “This is conclusive. With this, we can move for an arrest warrant right away. You’ve just saved us days of work. Thank you.”

“I’m glad I could help.”

Her statement complete, Caitlin left the station.

Outside, a black car waited. She checked the license plate, then slid into the back seat. Immediately she was wrapped in Sebastian’s arms.

“Drive,” he told the chauffeur.

As the car pulled into traffic, Sebastian studied her intently. “Tyler already told me what happened at the Jonathan estate. I’m worried. Shouldn’t you pull out before things get worse?”

He’d heard about the midnight intrusion at Moonstone Court. Just imagining what could have happened to her kept him on edge.

“No. The net is almost ready to close. I can’t back out now.”

She wasn’t about to leave without the codex. Besides, once she pulled out, it would be nearly impossible to infiltrate again.

Sebastian held her tighter, pressing his forehead to hers. “Then promise me you’ll check in every day.”

“I promise.”

Neither said more. From the front seat, the driver caught sight of the couple in the rearview mirror, quickly looked away, and kept his eyes on the road.

Later they shared a quiet meal together, then returned to the residence Magnus had arranged. The prince himself returned from his official visits just as they arrived.

“Caitlin, how are things on your end?” Magnus asked.

“Everything’s on track. And you?”

“My visit here is basically finished. I’ll be flying home tonight.”

“Oh, I see.”

“You can continue using this residence. I’ll leave staff here to look after you until you’re ready to return home safely.”

“Thank you,” Caitlin said sincerely,

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They lunched together. Afterward Caitlin spent the afternoon with Sebastian, only returning to the Jonathan estate by dusk once she had received the hospital’s lab results on Delilah’s medicine.

By then, the family had gathered in the great hall, waiting for dinner. Fletcher was present, looking calm, as though nothing were amiss. Clearly the police hadn't yet moved on him.

"Caitlin's back," someone announced.

All eyes turned. Fletcher's face hardened. He knew she had been with the police. That was direct opposition. But his people had already checked—there was no word at the station about him. Caitlin must have been bluffing.

Nicoletta cut in sharply. "Caitlin, what took you so long at the station? What are you trying to do? Haven't you stirred up enough trouble in this family?"

Caitlin's voice was calm. "What I'm doing, Nicoletta, you know better than anyone."

Nicoletta bristled. She had already heard from Hector about the agreement Caitlin had forced him into. To her, it was a trap. Once they handed over the codex, Caitlin would surely turn on them.

Liliana's eyes narrowed in disdain. "Caitlin, just say it. Was Uzma's death your doing? Are you trying to frame someone again?"

Caitlin exhaled lightly, a faint smile on her lips. "Funny. Do I really look like someone who spends her days plotting? Uzma and I had no enmity. Why would I harm her?"

“You know why,” Liliana snapped.

Caitlin ignored her. Before more could be said, Hector arrived. Devin called everyone to dinner.

But just as they began to move toward the dining hall, the police arrived at the estate. Find the newest release on [find{novel.net}](#)

Hector greeted them, recognizing the same officer from before. “Captain, did you determine Uzma’s cause of death?”

The officer stood in the hall and spoke clearly. “Mr. Jonathan, our forensic team completed a full autopsy and analysis. Uzma died of asphyxiation. The bruising on her neck is consistent with strangulation. While her body was in the pond, the amount of water in her lungs and stomach was under 100 milliliters. This proves she was already dead when she entered the water.”

Hector’s brow furrowed. “Then have you identified the killer?”

Fletcher’s heart pounded in his chest. Around them, the family waited in tense silence for the answer.

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“We have,” the officer declared. “Our investigation points to Fletcher Jonathan as the prime suspect. Here is the arrest warrant issued by the court. Congressman, you will come with us for questioning.”

Two officers stepped forward and snapped handcuffs onto Fletcher’s wrists.

“This is a mistake!” Fletcher protested, struggling. “You’ve got the wrong man. Me, a murderer? Ridiculous!”

Hector’s face drained of color. “Captain, my son cannot possibly be a killer. Have you really investigated this thoroughly?”

Nicoletta’s voice cut in sharply. “Yes, what proof do you have to name him? Is this based on someone’s testimony alone?” Her glance darted at Caitlin, implying it was her word that poisoned the well.

Around them, the hall buzzed with disbelief.

“My brother can’t be a murderer.”

“My father? Kill Uzma? That’s absurd!”

“Officers, you must be mistaken!”

Fletcher’s wife, Blythe, burst forward and clawed at her husband’s cuffs. “Let him go! He would never kill anyone. You’re wrong! Please, let him go!”

Their children cried out as well. Even Liliana chimed in, “He’s not a murderer. You must be chasing rumors.” In her heart, she blamed Caitlin for misleading the police.

The officers didn’t flinch. “We have irrefutable evidence. Take him.”

“I’m innocent! Innocent!” Fletcher shouted as they dragged him away.

No matter the outcry, the police left with their prisoner.

As soon as they were gone, Nicoletta wheeled on Caitlin, her voice a whip of fury. “Still claim you had no hand in this? You went to the police waving ‘evidence,’ didn’t you? You’re destroying our family! Fletcher is our pillar, and you want to bring him down. You venomous woman!”

Blythe, worked into a frenzy, lunged at Caitlin and seized her collar, sobbing. “Why are you targeting my husband? What did we ever do to you? We’ve treated you well since you came here, fed you, sheltered you, and this is how you repay us? You’re nothing but a viper!”

Carson's voice cracked with desperation. "Caitlin, this must be a misunderstanding. Please, talk to the police. My father could never do this!"

Caitlin shook Blythe off, looking at her with pity. Poor woman, still blind to what her husband really was. When the truth reached her, the blow would be devastating.

She didn't bother defending herself. "The police act on evidence. This has nothing to do with me. Blame me

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all you like it won't change that."

The uproar swelled until Nicoletta raised her voice above it. "All this noise—it's about the codex, isn't it? That's why you came here! Fletcher's arrest, all of this—it's your scheme to get your hands on it. Isn't that right?"

Caitlin smiled faintly. "You're half right. But no, I didn't frame him."

"Then tell me this," Nicoletta spat. "If I hand you the codex, can you make this charge against Fletcher disappear?"

“I can’t. The police enforce the law. I’m just a private citizen, and a foreigner at that. I don’t meddle with D- country’s justice.”

Nicoletta’s eyes blazed. “So ruthless! Aren’t you afraid I’ll destroy the codex? Leave you with nothing forever?”

“Try it, and we all burn together.” Caitlin’s words were quiet, but the threat beneath them was iron.

Most of the family stared blankly, not even knowing what this mysterious codex was.

“Enough!” Hector slammed the table, silencing them all. Only Blythe’s sobs remained. “Stop your wailing! The police said he’s a suspect, not the killer. If he’s innocent, he’ll be cleared. Do you think screaming will change anything? Everyone else—go. Caitlin, you come with me. Nicoletta, you too.”

Hector shuffled out. Nicoletta steadied him, Caitlin followed.

Back in his chambers, with only the three of them present, Hector turned to Nicoletta. “Hand over the codex to Caitlin.”

“Give it to her? Don’t be fooled!” Nicoletta snapped.

“She signed an agreement with me. With that contract, she must keep her word.”

He gestured at her pocket. Nicoletta pulled out the folded paper, opened it, and let out a sharp laugh. "Keep her word? Watch this."

She took a bottle of floral spray, spritzed the page several times. The ink began to blur, running like spilled paint until the words dissolved into smears..

"Caitlin, your little parlor tricks might fool an old man, but not me." She slapped the ruined sheet on the table.

Hector's face fell. "You even tricked me? Caitlin, how could you?"

Nicoletta had outplayed her. Caitlin's eyes narrowed, but a smile tugged at her lips. "Impressive. Nicoletta, you're sharper than I gave you credit for." This content belongs to findnovel.net

"Did you really think you could outwit me?" Nicoletta sneered.

"I only want what belongs to my grandfather's family. Hand me the codex, and I'll let you walk away with your dignity intact." Caitlin's tone was calm, but her words carried the weight of threat.

GAD

Nicoletta laughed bitterly. “Such arrogance! Unless you clear Fletcher’s name, don’t even dream of touching the codex.”

With a dramatic sweep of her sleeve, she stormed out.

Hector sighed heavily. “Caitlin, you shouldn’t have played games. I was ready to keep my word. But now, Nicoletta is furious, and I can do nothing.”

“I’ll speak to her again,” Caitlin said, striding after Nicoletta.

She caught up to her in the garden. “Nicoletta, wait.”

“There’s nothing to discuss!” Nicoletta snapped, blocking her path.

“I’m not here about the codex,” Caitlin said coolly. “I want to talk about Uzma. Why was she killed? Did she say something she shouldn’t? Or see something she wasn’t supposed to see? Was that why she was silenced?”

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Nicoletta's gaze darkened as she studied Caitlin. What did this girl really know? That word-silenced-rang like a warning bell in her mind. Could Caitlin have uncovered something? Impossible. They had always been cautious, careful not to leave evidence behind.

But then again, hadn't Caitlin already managed to get Fletcher branded a murder suspect with just a few words? If she could do that, what else was she capable of?

"How do you know so much about Uzma's death? What exactly do you know?" Nicoletta's voice was taut, her eyes darting around to see if anyone was nearby.

"I don't just know," Caitlin replied calmly, folding her arms. "I saw it with my own *eyes*. Uzma was pushed into the pond. Funny coincidence, don't you think?"

Nicoletta's brow furrowed. So she had witnessed it. That explained everything—the police showing up, Fletcher's arrest. She had been the eyewitness.

Her stomach twisted. Fletcher, careless fool. How could he let such a damning piece of evidence fall into Caitlin's hands?

As Nicoletta stood frozen, Caitlin pressed on. "And I know more than that. I know Fletcher's motive for killing Uzma. I know what she saw before she died. Imagine if I shared those little details with the outside world. What do you think would happen?"

Nicoletta's hand clenched the silk hem of her cheongsam until her knuckles whitened. Hatred burned in her chest, but stronger than that was fear. It took all her willpower not to lash out.

“You’re bluffing,” she spat. “All talk, nothing solid. Who would believe you without proof?”

Caitlin’s eyes sharpened. Without another word, she reached into her pocket and slipped Nicoletta a photograph.

“Will this do for proof?”

Nicoletta glanced down, and her breath caught. Her face drained of color. “You... you...”

“Don’t panic,” Caitlin said, her voice low, almost soothing. “As long as I stay quiet, no one else will know. I only want the codex. Nothing more.” She patted Nicoletta’s shoulder lightly, the gesture both casual and chilling. “Think it over. Tomorrow morning at nine, I expect the second half of the codex in my hand. And I expect to see Ignatius. Both. Not one or the other.”

Without waiting for a reply, Caitlin turned and walked away. Nicoletta stared at the photograph in her trembling hand, cold sweat trickling down her spine. She rushed back to her room, grabbed a lighter, and set the picture aflame until nothing remained but ash.

But the damage was done. Caitlin knew too much. She was a threat to the family, to everything Nicoletta had built.

The thought came sharp and cold. Caitlin had to die.

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She clenched her fists. Yes. There was no other way.

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Uzma's death cast a shadow over the Jonathan estate. Conversation was muted, the atmosphere heavy. Few even came to dinner.

Caitlin, however, ate with Zinnia and Tyler as though nothing weighed on her at all.

Afterward, she made her way to the Evergreen Pavilion.

Inside, Fallon was carefully feeding her mother. Delilah looked up when Caitlin entered.

"Caitlin," Fallon greeted, her voice uneasy.

"Caitlin, you've come," Delilah said, raising a frail hand.

Caitlin approached them. “Yes. Nicoletta is eating dinner. I came straight here.”

“My mother just finished,” Fallon explained, setting the bowl aside and gently wiping Delilah’s mouth.

Delilah’s eyes fixed on Caitlin. “The test results you spoke of—have they come back?”

It seemed Fallon hadn’t told her about Fletcher’s arrest. Otherwise, she wouldn’t be focused only on this.

“They have. That’s why I’m here,” Caitlin replied.

“Well?” Fallon pressed.

“Here.” Caitlin handed her the report.

Fallon scanned it, her face twisting in shock. “My mother doesn’t have rickets?”

“What? I don’t...?” Delilah’s breath hitched.

“Mom, the blood analysis says you have megaloblastic anemia.”

“Anemia? That’s all? Just anemia?” Delilah looked stunned. How could something so simple have left her paralyzed?

Fallon rifled through the second report—the analysis of her mother’s medication. Her eyes went wide. “This... this shows traces of omeprazole.”

If taken long term, omeprazole depleted the body’s vitamin B12. Severe deficiency led to megaloblastic anemia—symptoms like fatigue, sluggishness, cognitive impairment, even paralysis.

“My mother never had rickets. She was poisoned, slowly, for years. Who would do this?” Fallon’s voice cracked with fury.

“What does it say?” Delilah’s hands trembled. She needed to hear it, even if the truth destroyed her.

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“Mom, it was the omeprazole. Years of it stripped your body of nutrients. That’s what caused your anemia, your weakness, your paralysis.”

Tears welled in Delilah’s eyes. “How could this be? How could they do this to me?”

Fallon looked lost, her anger blinding her. She turned to Caitlin. “What do we do? I don’t trust anyone but you. Please, tell me.”

Caitlin’s gaze sharpened. “Answer me this—if Delilah is paralyzed and unable to manage the Jonathan family, who benefits most directly?”

Fallon froze, then the realization hit her. Her eyes blazed. “Nicoletta. It’s Nicoletta. Isn’t it?”

“I don’t have ironclad proof,” Caitlin admitted. “But all signs point to her. She’s been running everything inside and out. For power, she’d do anything.”

Fallon leapt to her feet. “I’m going to confront her right now!”

“Wait!” Caitlin’s voice snapped like a whip. Fallon stopped.

“Even if you storm in there, do you think she’ll confess? No. She’ll turn it back on me, claim I’ve been sowing discord. These two reports aren’t enough. What we need is hard evidence. Something undeniable.”

Fallon's hands balled into fists. "Then tell me-how do we get it?"

She had never lived in intrigue, never played these games of deception. All she had now was anger, confusion, and Caitlin's guidance. The source of this content is FindNovel.net

Billionsaire's Regret: Finding Her

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"In my opinion, there are two ways to dig up some clues. First, the maid who delivers Nicoletta's medicine every day. Second, the doctor who diagnosed her so-called bone disease." For more chapters visit findnovel.net

"The maid is May, and the doctor is Travis, our family physician," Fallon answered.

Just saying their names made Fallon's chest feel tight. A trusted servant and a doctor who had served the family for years-how could they be capable of something so vile?

Seeing that Fallon lacked the ability to handle this herself, Caitlin stepped in. "If you trust me, let me take care of it. I'll get the testimony we need. Then you can confront them face to face."

“Alright, Caitlin, we trust you! Please, help my mother. She’s suffered enough, paralyzed all these years for nothing...” Fallon’s eyes brimmed with tears, and Delilah looked equally pained.

“That bastard,” Delilah muttered bitterly.

“Don’t be sad. From now on, stop taking the medicine they’ve been giving you. Start supplementing with vitamin B12, improve your nutrition, and exercise as much as you can. There’s a good chance your body will recover at least partially.”

Delilah nodded. Fallon added quickly, “We’ll take Mom to a different hospital tomorrow. No more going to Travis’s place. That’s the only way we’ll get the truth.”

They had just finished talking when a sobbing voice came from outside.

“What’s that sound? Who’s crying?” Delilah asked.

Before anyone could answer, Blythe appeared at the door. “Mother...”

She was about to launch into her tale of woe, but the moment she spotted Caitlin inside the room, she let out a sharp cry. “Caitlin? What are you doing here? What did you come to do this time—hurt people again?”

“Calm down!” Fallon stood up, frowning.

Blythe immediately began her tirade. “Delilah, do you know Fletcher’s been arrested by the police?”

“What? Arrested? Why?” Delilah’s eyes widened.

“Fallon didn’t tell you? The police came and took Fletcher away, all because of Caitlin. I don’t know what lies she fed them, but they arrested him right after!” Blythe’s sobbing rose to a dramatic pitch.

Delilah turned a startled look on Caitlin. “What happened? Fletcher was arrested? What does this have to do with you?”

Fallon explained firmly, “It has to do with Uzma. She was killed, and the investigation pointed toward Fletcher, so the police took him in for questioning. If he’s innocent, they’ll release him. This isn’t Caitlin’s fault.”

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“Uzma is dead...” Delilah felt as though her whole world had tilted. Maybe her family wasn’t as calm and peaceful as she had believed.

“Fallon, are you under her spell? How can you defend her like this?” Blythe demanded.

“I’m not deaf, I’m not blind, and my brain still works. I know right from wrong. I’m defending Caitlin because I’m stating the truth. If Fletcher is innocent, why should we be afraid? And why should you cry like this?” Fallon snapped back.

Blythe’s mouth opened, but she had no retort. She could only weep harder.

“Delilah, believe me, the law will deliver justice. I’ll take my leave now. We’ll talk again soon,” Caitlin said as

she rose.

She walked out without looking back, her composure like a slap in Blythe’s face. Blythe burned with resentment. She left the room quickly and chased after her.

In the garden of Evergreen Pavilion, Blythe caught up. “Caitlin! I held my tongue in front of my mother-in-law, but now you owe me an explanation! You had my husband arrested—what’s your motive?”

Caitlin stopped, turned, and said coolly, “Foolish women never think. They just cry.”

“You—how dare you mock me!” Blythe’s wet cheeks burned red with anger.

“Did I say something untrue? You cling to defending your husband, but do you even know what kind of man he really is? Has he truly been good to you?”

“My husband treats me well! I don’t need you to judge him.”

A cold laugh escaped Caitlin. “If he treats you so well, then why is he sneaking around with other women?”

“What? What did you just say?”

“I said it plainly. He’s cheating, and deep down, you’ve felt it. Stop lying to yourself.”

Caitlin left her standing there, stunned.

Blythe’s body trembled. She hated to admit it, but hadn’t she already sensed her husband’s love slipping away? He was good at sweet words, good at soothing her doubts. And she had believed him, desperate to believe he’d never betray her.

But what if Caitlin was right?

What if Fletcher really had another woman?

Moonstone Court.

Back in her quarters, Caitlin met with Zinnia and Tyler. After a quick discussion, they split up. Caitlin also contacted Sebastian's side to track down Travis. They had to secure evidence tonight.

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Zinnia and Tyler found May in the servants' wing. She looked bewildered. "Why are you looking for me?"

"You're coming with us. Our lady had stomach trouble after eating something you prepared. You'll explain yourself."

Zinnia's excuse was sharp and to the point. May blinked in shock. "I never made her anything to eat. You've got the wrong person!"

Zinnia ignored her protests and marched her toward Moonstone Court. Tyler stayed behind to search May's

room.

At Caitlin's signal, Fallon slipped behind a screen, hidden. A moment later, Zinnia brought May inside. The maid's timid eyes flicked to Caitlin, and the chill in Caitlin's presence made her tremble.

"You're May?" Caitlin asked.

"Yes," she whispered.

"Do you know why you're here?"

"I don't. I never served you food. I'm not assigned to your quarters," May stammered.

"I know. You're assigned to Delilah. Correct?"

"Yes."

"Then you must know that the medicine you prepare for her every *day* contains ingredients that cause paralysis."

May's face blanched. She quickly lowered her head. "I... I didn't know..."

"Didn't know? Your eyes tell me otherwise." Caitlin leaned closer, her stare unrelenting. May shrank, hands twisting together.

"Do you know how Uzma died?" Caitlin asked softly.

"She was... murdered."

"And that was her punishment for keeping secrets. Do you want the same fate?"

"I-I don't dare-I don't know anything! Please, spare me!" May's voice shook with terror.

Caitlin pulled out two reports and set them before her. "Look. One is the analysis of the medicine you brew. her. The other is Delilah's blood test. Together, they prove she was poisoned into paralysis by what you gave I'm giving you one chance. Tell me everything you know. Otherwise, I'll hand you over to the police on charges of attempted murder."

Billionaire's Regret: Finding Her

420

155 vouchers

May was only a servant, never strong-willed to begin with. Uzma's death had already left the household shaken, and under Caitlin's relentless pressure, her defenses crumbled fast..

"Please... please don't send me to the police! I'll talk, I'll tell everything!"

She broke down sobbing, spilling the truth: she had been instructed to slip omeprazole into Delilah's medicine and supplements from time to time.

Behind the screen, Fallon heard every word. Her fury boiled over. She stormed out, slapped May hard across the face twice, the sound sharp and vicious.

"May! Why would you do that? Why hurt my mother? What grudge could you possibly have against her?"

May clutched her burning cheek, crying harder. "It wasn't me-it was the Madam! She ordered me to do it. She said if I refused, she'd sell me off to work the mines in Africa. I was terrified..."

"You mean Nicoletta?" Fallon demanded.

“Yes...”

Fallon nearly exploded on the spot. Nicoletta—always scheming, always hungry for power. To cripple her mother just so she could seize control of the Jonathan estate?

Her fists shook. “You vile accomplice!”

She kicked May hard. The maid fell, scrambled back up, and clung desperately to Fallon’s legs. “I was wrong, I know I was wrong. Please, forgive me!”

“You crippled my mother! How could I forgive you? I ought to strangle you right here!” Fallon spat, her voice shaking with rage.

At that moment Tyler returned, holding a small white vial. “My lady, I searched May’s room. Found this powder. Smells just like omeprazole.”

Caitlin took the vial, turned her cold eyes on May. “Is this what you’ve been using?”

Through tears, May nodded.

“Listen carefully,” Caitlin continued. “If you want to redeem yourself, I can give you that chance. But you’ll need to stand up when the time comes, and testify against Nicoletta. Do you dare?”

May froze, then lifted her head. For once, there was something more than fear in her eyes. “I... I dare.”

“Good. Then it’s settled. You’ll go back now, and you won’t breathe a word of this to anyone.”

She nodded quickly, and Zinnia escorted her out.

Once they were alone again, Fallon burst out, “Caitlin, what now? Let’s drag that witch Nicoletta out right this

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minute!”

“Patience. The time isn’t ripe yet. We need one more piece of evidence

Caitlin’s mind went to Sebastian. Had his team succeeded tonight?

Warren Private Hospital.

The night staff had gone home. Only the director's office still glowed with light.

Inside, Director Warren was entangled with his secretary, their clothes scattered across the floor. Neither of them noticed the quiet click of the door.

A dark figure slipped in, raised a camera, and began filming. The shutter snapped—"click, click"—breaking the air like a whip.

Warren flinched, shoving the woman off him. "Who's there?!" he demanded, scrambling for his clothes.

Vaughn lowered his hood, his tone precise and cold. "Warren. A married man. And here you are screwing your secretary in the office. Imagine the headlines if this went public."

The secretary, pale and shaken, grabbed her skirt and fled behind the sofa. Warren yanked on his shirt, voice trembling. "Who are you? A reporter? What do you want?"

"I'm no reporter. My boss has a few questions for you."

Sebastian entered with King and the others. Vaughn pulled up a chair. Sebastian sat, calm and icy. "Send the woman out."

The secretary bolted from the office. Warren swallowed, trying for composure. "What do you want from me?"

King laid a report on the desk. “This diagnosis—you signed it, didn’t you?”

Warren glanced down. His face paled. “Yes... yes, that’s mine.”

“Funny,” Sebastian said softly, “because we’ve found Delilah was never suffering from bone disease. What crippled her was long-term omeprazole exposure. Prescribed by you. We already have the evidence. Now tell me—why the false diagnosis?”

“I didn’t misdiagnose!” Warren protested weakly. “I’ve been a doctor for decades. Delilah was clearly bone disease...”

Sebastian’s voice darkened. “Teach him a lesson.”

King pulled a black hood over Warren’s head and beat him mercilessly in the gut. No marks on the face, no visible bruises—just pain, deep and raw.

“Stop! Stop—I’ll talk!” Warren screamed.

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King yanked the hood away, grabbed his hair, and forced him upright. “Say it!”

“Yes! Delilah never had bone disease. Just anemia...”

Vaughn’s camera caught every word.

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“Then why the fake diagnosis?” King barked.

“It... it was Madam Nicoletta. She ordered me to. She wanted power. She couldn’t take over while Delilah was strong. So she had me declare her ill. Then she had someone slip omeprazole into the treatment. It left her paralyzed. And Nicoletta rose in her place.”

King slapped him hard. “Some doctor you are. Where’s your medical ethics?”

Warren hung his head, trembling.

“You’ll testify,” King said flatly. “We’ve got your confession on tape. And if you think of backing out— remember, we also have the footage of you and your secretary.” Updates are released by find•novel.net

Terrified, Warren caved. “I’ll do it. I’ll testify.”

Following his directions, they searched his computer and found the original medical file. Warren had kept it all these years as leverage against Nicoletta, afraid she might one day silence him.

By the end of the night, Caitlin’s side held two critical pieces of evidence. Tomorrow morning, everything would come to light.

But that night, the Jonathan estate was anything but peaceful.

Billionaire's Regret: Finding Her

Chapter 690

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In the dead of night, around three or four in the morning, Moonstone Court was silent. All the lights were out except for a few dim lamps glowing faintly in the garden.

A figure dressed head to toe in black slipped into the courtyard. The assassin picked the lock of Caitlin’s room with practiced case, moving like a shadow.

Inside, the faint outline of two bodies rose beneath the blankets. He raised his silenced pistol and fired several rounds straight into the lumps on the bed.

Without hesitation, he splashed gasoline across the bed and furniture, then flicked a lighter. Flames leapt greedily over the sheets. Satisfied, he slipped back into the night as if he'd never been there at all.

“Fire! Fire!”

The night watch spotted the blaze and shouted. Servants spilled out, buckets and basins in hand, rushing to fight the flames.

Moonstone Court was a connected building. Once one room caught, fire spread quickly from one to the next. The inferno roared higher, devouring everything.

Within minutes, the entire Jonathan household was awake. Servants and family members alike scrambled to help while someone called the fire brigade.

In his chambers, Hector stirred at the noise. “What’s all that shouting? What’s happening?”

Nicoletta rose, slipping on a robe. “I’ll go see.”

Stepping outside, she saw the blaze consuming Moonstone Court. A thrill of triumph surged in her chest. At last. Her hired killer had done the job. With fire to erase every trace, who could challenge her now?

She hurried toward the scene, masking her satisfaction with a look of alarm. “How could this happen? Quickly, everyone, more water!”

Forty minutes later, the fire trucks arrived, but the narrow paths meant they couldn’t drive close. Firefighters dragged long hoses and fought the blaze directly.

The battle lasted two, nearly three hours before the last flames died. By then, dawn had broken.

Much of Moonstone Court was destroyed, parts of it collapsed into rubble. Firefighters combed the ruins for survivors.

Hector, supported by attendants, came to see for himself. “They lived here. Did you find Caitlin?”

The firefighters shook their heads. No bodies, no remains.

“Burned to nothing?” Carson muttered, his face pale.

“Or buried under the rubble,” another guessed.

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“Yes, wasn’t Caitlin’s room in one of the collapsed sections?”

“Start digging!” voices clamored.

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Nicoletta stepped forward, wringing her hands with feigned worry. “Several people were inside! Please, look harder!”

Rescue efforts stretched for another two hours. They overturned beams, sifted through ash and stone—but found nothing.

“Not even bones?” Hector asked grimly.

Nicoletta answered smoothly, “The fire was too fierce. It must have consumed everything.”

Hector sighed heavily. “Caitlin came to our family, and now this... how can I face her kin?” He had counted on her to find what he sought. Now she was gone.

Nicoletta guided him back. "Let's discuss inside."

Soon the firefighters packed up and left, leaving Devin in charge of cleaning up the ruins.

In the main hall, the family gathered, buzzing with talk of the fire.

Liliana could barely contain her delight. If Caitlin was gone, so were her troubles. Nicoletta, too, was inwardly smug. No more threats, no more leverage against her.

But then- Check latest chapters at [find•novel.net](http://find-novel.net)

At the doors of the great hall, Caitlin appeared. Beside her stood Fallon, Zinnia, and Tyler, all alive and whole.

A scream split the room. Blythe stumbled back, pale as chalk. "Ghosts! Ghosts!"

"What ghosts?" someone snapped, then turned. Every eye widened in shock.

"Caitlin!" Carson blurted, leaping to his feet. "You're alive?"

Liliana's smile froze solid. "Impossible..."

Nicoletta stared, dumbstruck. How? The assassin had sworn the job was done.

Caitlin strode in, her voice sharp. "Sorry to disappoint. Hector's still alive—how could I die before him?"

Relief washed over Hector. "Thank heaven you're safe. What a fright..."

Nicoletta forced a smile. "But weren't you in Moonstone Court?"

Caitlin's lips curved faintly. "I was."

"Then how... how are you unharmed?"

Caitlin's gaze locked onto her, cold and cutting. "According to your calculations, I was supposed to be trapped

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in Moonstone Court, burning alive. Is that it?"

“I didn’t mean-” Nicoletta stammered.

“Then what did you mean?” Caitlin pressed.

Nicoletta’s tongue knotted. Rage churned in her chest. This girl—what a cursed, stubborn life she had

20

Caitlin’s tone softened just enough to address the room. “Still, I thank those who fought the fire. Your efforts. won’t be forgotten.” Then her eyes sharpened again. “Nicoletta, don’t forget our agreement. Today I want **the** second half of Yun’s Aromatic Codex. And I want to see Ignatius. Both. No excuses.”

She sat with Fallon at her side, calm and resolute.

Nicoletta held her gaze, then dropped her eyes. She couldn’t dodge any longer.

“Very well. You wish to see my brother? I’ll call him.” She lifted her phone, made a show of dialing, then smiled sweetly. “As it happens, he was already on his way. You’ll meet him soon.”

Not long after, a man in his sixties entered. Nicoletta rose to greet him warmly. “Brother, you’re back!”

“I heard someone wanted to see me. Who was it?”

“This young woman, Caitlin.” Nicoletta led him forward. “Caitlin, this is my elder brother, Ignatius. Ask him whatever you wish.”

The man offered a polite nod. Nicoletta had already warned her household to keep up the act.

Caitlin looked him over, then smiled faintly. She turned her head toward Fallon.

“Fallon, you’ve met Ignatius before. Tell me—does this man look like him to you?”

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Billionaire's Regret: Finding Her

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Nicoletta turned toward Fallon. She had spoken with her before and was sure Fallon wouldn't take Caitlin's

side.

All eyes were on Fallon now. She looked calmly at the man standing before her and said, word by word, "He's not Ignatius."

"Fallon! Don't joke about something like that! Of course he's my brother!" Nicoletta snapped, her tone anxious, her eyes flashing a warning—don't make trouble.

Their entire family was supposed to stand united against Caitlin. How could Fallon break ranks now?

"I'm not joking, Nicoletta. I'm telling the truth." Fallon's voice was steady, deliberate.

Caitlin gave a short, sharp laugh. “Nicoletta, bringing me a fake Ignatius to fool me? You really think I’d fall for that?”

“He’s not fake! He’s my brother—I should know that better than you!” Nicoletta argued, her voice rising.

Liliana quickly jumped in to back her mother. “Caitlin, this is my uncle. What nonsense are you talking about?”

“The only nonsense here is yours. A fake defending another fake—how fitting.”

Caitlin’s retort hit like a slap. Liliana’s face turned pale; her heart skipped a beat. Caitlin’s words—did she mean she knew?

The entire hall fell silent, no one daring to speak. Caitlin broke it with a cold voice. “I’ll give you one last chance, Nicoletta. Bring me the real Ignatius.”

Nicoletta’s pulse quickened. “Impossible. If you’ve got something to say, say it to me. Leave my brother out of this.”

“Fine,” Caitlin said coolly. “Then give me the codex. Right now. Otherwise...” Her tone hardened. “You know what will happen.”

This wasn't a request—it was a warning. Nicoletta knew Caitlin still held her secret, and she couldn't risk defying her.

Hector, worried the tension would spiral, intervened. “Nicoletta, just give her the codex. Once she has it, she and her people can leave.”

He didn't much care about the so-called agreement. Once Caitlin found what she was after, he planned to follow her trail. If she truly uncovered the legendary place, he would claim the treasure himself.

Trapped, Nicoletta forced out, “Fine. Wait here. I'll get it.”

She needed an excuse to leave—and a way to fight back. Caitlin had threatened her long enough. Now it was time to strike. As she stepped out, her mind was already made up: she would contact The Seventh Door and have Caitlin and her companions wiped out before dawn.

11:00 Fri, Oct 10

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Caitlin watched her go and smiled faintly. She saw through the act immediately. “Zinnia, Tyler,” she said, “go with her. She's getting on in years—might forget where she keeps things.”

“Yes, ma’am.”

With the two of them shadowing her, Nicoletta had no chance to slip away unnoticed.

When they reached her quarters, she snapped irritably, “I need to enter the family’s private vault to retrieve it. Outsiders aren’t allowed in. Wait here.”

Zinnia and Tyler exchanged a glance and stayed by the door.

Inside, Nicoletta moved to the bookshelf, pressing a hidden latch. The shelf slid open, revealing a narrow passageway. She stepped into the secret room.

Under a glass dome, resting on a pedestal, lay the lower half of Yun’s Aromatic Codex.

Before touching it, she grabbed the phone and called Ignatius, instructing him to summon The Seventh Door’s men. They were to surround the Jonathan estate, and the moment Caitlin’s group tried to leave, eliminate them all.

Only then did she carefully remove the book, wrap it in oiled parchment, and seal it inside a flat black- lacquered wooden box.

Outside, Zinnia grew impatient and reached for the door just as it swung open.

“Got it?” Zinnia asked.

“It’s here.”

“Good. Don’t play games. Our lady will know if it’s real.”

Nicoletta said nothing, her face cold as stone, and strode back toward the main hall.

When they entered, everyone saw the lacquered box in her hands, trimmed with gold.

Nicoletta stepped forward, her voice smooth. “Here it is.”

“Give it to me,” Caitlin said.

Nicoletta held on for a moment, her eyes locked on Caitlin’s. “You’ll keep your word?”

“Of course.”

Caitlin pulled the box from her grasp and returned to her seat. The hall fell silent as she unwrapped the parcel. Everyone craned their necks, curious to glimpse the legendary codex.

She opened the lid, peeled back the parchment, and there it was—the second half of Yun’s Aromatic Codex.

It had no cover, only the aged paper and dense, intricate text. Caitlin took out her portable analysis kit and began a careful examination, page by page.

11:00 Fri, Oct 10

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The onlookers watched as she worked in silence, measuring, comparing fibers, checking the ink’s **oxidation**.

Finally, after a thorough inspection, Caitlin exhaled softly. “It’s real.”

After everything—months of risk, danger, and deception—she finally had it. The missing half.

Her heart trembled with excitement, but her face stayed calm. She rewrapped the manuscript and handed the box to Tyler for safekeeping.

“Authentic,” she announced. “Verified.”

Nicoletta forced a smile. “Well then, since you’ve got what you wanted, our family won’t keep you. You’re welcome to visit again... sometime.”

It was a polite dismissal, but Caitlin heard the venom underneath.

She rose, ready to leave, but Fallon suddenly stood up. “Wait, Caitlin. As a witness to everything that’s happened, I’m asking you to stay—and testify.”

“No problem,” Caitlin said, sitting back down with an almost amused expression. She wanted to see how this would play out.

Nicoletta frowned, uncertain of Fallon’s intent. “Fallon, what are you doing?”

The woman before her wasn’t the naïve, harmless girl she used to be. Fallon’s eyes were sharp now, her voice steady. “Father, do you know why my mother has been paralyzed all these years?”

Hector sighed. “She was diagnosed with bone disease. There was nothing to be done.”

“But what if I told you she was never sick? That she was a perfectly healthy woman?”

“What?” Hector looked stunned. “What are you saying?”

Nicoletta froze. Fallon couldn’t possibly know.

“I’m saying my mother was framed—deliberately poisoned—until she couldn’t walk.”

Her words sent a shock through the room. Sebastian, Matthew, and the others all turned in disbelief. “What are you talking about? Mother was framed? By who?”

Nicoletta’s hand tightened around the fabric of her skirt, her heartbeat loud in her ears. How could this girl have found out?

Fallon’s eyes burned with hatred. She pointed straight at Nicoletta. “Her! She’s the one who crippled my mother!”

Gasps filled the hall. Nicoletta stood accused in front of everyone, yet her face didn’t flinch. “Fallon, who’s been feeding you these lies? You can’t let people twist your mind. I loved your mother like a sister—why would I harm her?”

“Then I guess you’ll have to be proven wrong the hard way,” Fallon said coldly. “You’ll see soon enough.”

11:00 Fri, Oct 10

