

Unbreakable 2001

Chapter 2001

As Mitchel watched them walk and cuddle affectionately, it felt like his heart had been stabbed, causing it to bleed heavily. He should have been the one to hold Raegan's hand, hug her, and comfort her.

Stefan had taken over his role completely.

Mitchel departed the following day.

Coming back to the Ardlens for surgery now meant Mitchel would miss Raegan giving birth.

He had desperately wanted to be there for the birth, but Raegan had not given him the chance, showing no mercy or compassion.

Raegan used facts to express her desire to live happily with someone else. Mitchel couldn't bear it, nor could he watch their displays of affection without feeling turmoil.

If this kept up, he had no idea how he might react. His actions could become reckless or even worse.

His upbringing and pride wouldn't allow him to stoop so low again.

It seemed best to return to the Ardlens and grant her the peace she wanted.

After learning that Mitchel had departed, Raegan didn't seem to care much.

She continued her routine of strolling around every other day. Stefan was always by her side.

At dinner, the dishes on the table were all prepared to suit Raegan's preferences. Yet, she merely toyed with her food, lacking enthusiasm.

Stefan came in and said, Shall we eat?

Raegan looked up, slightly confused. Stefan, why are you here?

A servant took Stefan's coat to hang it up.

Stefan responded, I came to dine with you.

Recently, Stefan has been busy with legal formalities to distance himself from his family and establish his own household. He employed the excuse of preparing to register their children abroad.

The Clifford family rule allowed members to set up their households once married, but few chose to leave Aurora.

In Aurora, the Clifford family wielded power and offered plentiful opportunities. It was easy to achieve almost anything. Those who opted to establish their own households elsewhere were truly making life difficult for themselves.

However, Stefans views were fundamentally different from theirs.

The Clifford family members were naturally sly and deceitful, with a tendency for aggression. In the early days of the Clifford familys establishment, nearly half of their belongings were stolen.

The founding members of the Clifford family were outright bandits who, over time and through many conflicts, eventually rebranded themselves as sophisticated, wealthy elites.

At its core, the Clifford family would resort to any means, including arson and murder, if it furthered their interests.

Stefan refused to partake in such corrupt acts. Leaving the Clifford family was something he had longed for, and it was also his mothers dream.

Chapter 2002

Stefans mother came from an educated family but was married off to Stefans father against her will. After Stefan was born, she wasnt favored among the other wives, and Stefans father naturally abandoned her.

Stefans mother lived in constant sorrow until she took her own life with a silk scarf when Stefan was eight years old.

The night before her death, she told Stefan, My only wish in life was to leave this family, and soon I will fulfill it. Dont hold it against me. If you find no happiness here when you grow up, be brave and leave. I will always support you.

The following day, Stefan understood that his mothers method of leaving was through her tragic suicide.

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Stefan sat next to his mothers lifeless body, while his father barely gave them a glance. At that moment, he vowed to one day escape the familys grasp.

As Stefan grew up with his male relatives, he never stood out. That was because he chose to hide his true capabilities and pursue a career in education.

In truth, Stefan wasnt just a brilliant student but also shrewd, adept at handling international trade and thriving in various domains.

His father, always a daring and decisive man, showed little interest in nurturing Stefan, who had become a mild-mannered scholar. So, he barely cared when Stefan decided to forge his own path.

In his fathers view, what could Stefan possibly achieve away from Aurora? Just teach and make a meager income? Was that enough to support a family? He assumed that once Stefan encountered difficulties, he would return to Aurora to rely on him.

His father had modest expectations for Stefan, yet he was curious about Stefans wife and her elder brother.

The Foster family was quite prominent in Swynborough, and although Landen didn't attend the wedding due to poor health, he was eager to discuss expanding the shipping business with Stefan's father.

Partly to honor the Foster family, Stefan's father turned the wedding into a lavish event, also subtly expressing his interest in his new daughter-in-law. This way, no one in Aurora would dare trouble Raegan.

At this moment, Stefan had just washed his hands and sat down at the dining table.

The servant laid out the tableware and then quietly left, giving them privacy.

Stefan picked up a vegetable, tasted it, and remarked, Not bad. You might want to try this. It's good for the babies.

Raegan tentatively tried a bite. It tasted like wax for her, but she continued eating for her babies sake.

Stefan tasted each dish first and if he liked it, he recommended it to Raegan.

Influenced by him, Raegan ended up eating more than usual.

When she was nearly finished, Stefan put down his fork and shared some news. Mr. Dixon had his surgery, and there were no complications. He's recovering now, and it looks like the outcome might be better than we expected.

Raegan didn't reply. But deep down, she felt a weight lift from her shoulders, knowing he was doing well confirmed she had made the right decision.

Stefan didn't tell Raegan to stop worrying. Instead, he looked at her and said, Raegan, the most important thing for you right now is your own well-being. When you're happy, the babies feel it too.

Raegan knew this was true. A mother's mood could affect her unborn child. Yet, happiness eluded her. The highlight of her day was video chatting with Janey. Days had gone by since they had distributed gifts to each household, yet there was still no word from her mother.

Erick had been returning home late from his searches for their mother across Aurora, finding no clues.

As time went by, Raegan and Erick began to wonder if the purchase of traditional medicine they learned about was just a coincidence.

Chapter 2003

But then, how coincidental was it that the man seen buying the medicine on the surveillance video was a man wearing glasses?

Yet, the man was extremely careful and vanished soon after leaving the street, without leaving any trace.

Moreover, as Mitchel's leg injury worsened, Raegan's appetite started to decline. She couldn't help feeling somewhat responsible for his condition.

In truth, Raegan had unknowingly fallen into a trap she had set for herself. Sometimes, being too kind-hearted could end up harming oneself. The stress kept building up, each one weighing on her until she felt suffocated.

Raegan tried to eat more, but forcing herself led to severe vomiting.

This approach was clearly not working.

She began to feel resentful, worrying that she wasn't able to properly care for her children, and questioned her ability to be a good mother.

Yet, she hadn't shared these feelings with anyone. Erick and Stefan were both preoccupied, and she, heavily pregnant, felt limited in what she could do. She believed the least she could do was not bother them.

But now, Stefan had spoken, and Raegan knew he might have noticed something. She felt compelled to speak up because if she didn't, she thought she might explode.

It was a typical self-preservation tactic. She sensed something was amiss and determined to help herself.

Stefan, I'm sad. I always feel like I'm not doing anything right, like I'm just a burden to others. I don't even know if I can be a good mother. I'm not sure if I can raise three kids properly,

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Raegan admitted, releasing a breath she'd been holding.

She even agreed with Katie's remarks. They seemingly rang true.

Unintentionally, she had become a burden.

It was only then that Stefan realized Raegan's situation might be more serious than he initially thought. He and Erick had been preoccupied with their own matters, overlooking the emotional sensitivity that accompanies pregnancy. Stuck in her room, waiting for news, it was likely for Raegan to feel completely useless.

Raegan, Stefan said, sitting across from her and gently taking her hand, and looked into her eyes.

Raegan, you're actually doing really well. Don't be so hard on yourself. You care about our feelings and keep your worries to yourself to spare us, while still doing your best to take care of yourself. Think about how well you plan everything. How could you not be a great mother? And look at Janey, how healthy and adorable she is. Doesn't that show you can be an excellent mother?

When Stefan brought up Janey, Raegan momentarily put aside her sadness, and her mood brightened. Stefan had a point. Janey was indeed thriving. The thought of Janey made the idea of raising children seem less intimidating.

Stefan reassured Raegan gently, Remember, Erick, Laden, Janey, I, and many others who care about you are all excited about the babies. You really don't need to worry.

Raegan found Stefan's words, as a psychology teacher, especially soothing and comforting. A simple chat had noticeably lifted her spirits.

Stefan, thank you. I see things more clearly now, Raegan responded, her perspective brighter. She understood that her main focus now was to look after herself and the babies, and that it was the right approach.

The following day, Stefan discussed Raegan's state with Erick and urged him to keep her updated about the investigation. He knew Erick simply refrained from burdening Raegan, yet not having any updates might increase her anxiety.

Learning about Raegan's distress made Erick anxious. He had been so engrossed in the investigation that he had overlooked Raegan's emotional well-being.

Lately, Erick felt overwhelmed, without a single lead out about the investigation. No hints of their mothers whereabouts were detected after delivering those gifts, just like everything else, leading him to doubt their decisions.

Chapter 2004

Maybe the man buying the medicine was just a random occurrence, or maybe Casey had died long ago. Both possibilities were grim.

Erick spoke with Raegan about the situation, sharing all the details as Stefan had recommended, even though they hadn't made any progress.

Raegan listened quietly and then asked, Erick, can I take a look at that surveillance video?

The only lead they had was the man with glasses captured on the video.

Erick hesitated, worried about stressing Raegan during her pregnancy, but it was obvious that she was deeply concerned.

He transferred the video to a tablet and sat next to Raegan as she watched it intently, even though he himself had reviewed it over five hundred times, examining every detail of the street corner where the man had vanished. There were no leads. It was as if the man had disappeared into thin air, baffling everyone.

Raegan set the video to repeat and watched it over and over.

She noticed something strange about the man in the screen, especially his attire. His black coat had unusually high shoulder pads.

Such padding was often used to make someone appear more substantial, but on his slim, frail frame, which barely reached 5.6 feet, the padded shoulders seemed almost ridiculous.

Other than that, as Erick had said, there were no obvious signs of suspicion.

However, Raegan wasn't ready to give up. She kept her eyes on the screen time and again. Erick left to answer a phone call, which took him about thirty minutes. Upon returning, he found Raegan still nestled into the couch, clutching a pillow and observing the screen with keen interest.

Alright, Erick began as he neared. Let's continue this tomorrow. You're going to strain your eyes.

As he reached out to shut off the tablet, Raegan interjected. Wait!

Erick halted, and Raegan quickly paused the video at a scene where the man with glasses stood in front of a store window for three seconds.

The window revealed nothing but a stark white wall, seemingly unimportant. What was his purpose during those three seconds?

She was checking her reflection! Raegan exclaimed.

Erick looked puzzled. What Raegan, are you saying you want to check your reflection?

Not me, Raegan clarified, gesturing toward the figure on the screen.

Her. She was looking at her reflection.

Erick turned his attention back to the footage, a scene he had reviewed countless times yet failed to recognize anything out of the ordinary.

Erick, youve got the investigation wrong. The person who purchased the medicine wasnt a man, but a woman! Raegan asserted.

Erick was shocked. How can this be? Thats a woman?

The disguise was convincing. The woman had shoulder pads under the large coat, shoes with lifts, and wore several layers of pants to look bulkier.

But her brief stop in front of the shop window, a pause often seen in women, stopping instinctively to glance at their reflection, gave her away.

Chapter 2005

Just as Erick was about to put away his tablet, Raegan spotted a four-leaf clover pendant around the womans neck. It was a style commonly worn by women.

Thus, Raegan suspected it was actually a woman disguised as a man.

This was a perspective Erick hadnt considered. He knew the figure in the footage was on the shorter side, but since many men in Aurora were not tall, he hadnt seen it that way. Now, with Raegans insights, Erick agreed that the figure in the footage did seem out of place, perhaps really a woman!

Erick remembered the corner where the figure had vanished, a spot he had checked countless times. There was indeed a suspicious woman in black a few minutes later there. He leaned in and embraced Raegan, saying, Raegan, youve been a tremendous help!

Raegan felt a surge of hope, as this clue seemed to be a major lead in their mothers case.

Erick quickly transferred the footage from his phone to review it again with Raegan.

This time, Raegan easily spotted that the woman dressed in black was the same person as the man who had bought the medicine.

They were almost sure now that this woman had a connection to their mother. There would be no other reason for her to disguise herself as a man just to purchase Angelica Sinensis. This als

o served as indirect proof that Casey was indeed still alive. What great news!

Without wasting a moment, Erick forwarded the video to a computer specialist to extract the womans image and enhance its quality for better identification.

Soon enough, they had a clear frontal view of the woman.

Erick then sent the photo to Stefan, asking him to use his contacts in Aurora to locate her quickly.

By evening, they had some news. The woman turned out to be Jimena, the daughter of Dr. Hinks from the north district, and she was a medical student.

Erick advised against Raegan joining the search for Jimena, given the potential dangers involved.

Understanding her limitations, Raegan agreed that it was safer for her to stay behind. She urged Erick to be cautious and not make any hasty decisions.

After Erick departed, Raegans heart raced with anticipation as she waited at home.

Meanwhile, at Daveys estate.

It was the day Casey was due for her regular acupuncture session.

Jimena stood at the entrance, waiting for the butler to let her in.

After checking Jimenas identity, the butler revealed a secret door leading to the basement.

Inside, Casey was seated by her bed, focused on her embroidery. She had convinced Davey to give her some custom-made needles for her craft after much persuasion.

These needles were quite dull, too blunt to pierce even the tip of a finger, let alone create detailed embroidery.

Despite this, the quality of Caseys work was impressive, though a bit rough, showcasing her solid foundational skills.

When Jimena saw the herbal designs Casey had stitched, she remarked, Madam, youve done well with this piece, though it looks a bit rougher than what I saw last time.

Caseys eyes lit up. Jimena, what did you see last time?

Chapter 2006

Jimena smiled as she explained, The Angelica Sinensis you had embroidered. There are also two swallows, one bigger than the other. There was a verse, too.

Caseys hands shook slightly as she asked, What verse?

Jimena answered, Birds return when the time comes.

Birds return when the time comes, Casey echoed softly to herself a few times before falling quiet.

A fragment of memories popped up in Caseys mind. At one wonderful day, a little girl snuggled up to her knee, asking gently, Mommy, what are you making?

Patiently, Casey explained, Mommy is stitching little swallows, one big and one small, like mommy and her child. Below them is an herb called Angelica Sinensis. Together, they tell a lovely story that birds return when the time comes.

In Caseys memories, her little girl, puzzled, asked, Mommy, I dont understand. What kind of story is this?

Mommy will explain it to you, okay? Now be a good girl and get ready for bed. Casey gently stroked her girls hair, her face soft with affection.

Alright. Caseys lovely daughter snuggled up against her, eyes closed while listening to the story.

The story began by the mommy swallow and baby swallow Living in a lush forest brimming with resources. There was plenty of food and water, surrounded by many neighbors. They were happy every day. Mommy swallow shared a lot of valuable knowledge with baby swallow. Right beneath their little nest, a plant grew.

Baby swallow was always curious about different plants and flowers.

Not recognizing this one, she asked her mommy about it. Mommy swallow explained that this plant was called Angelica Sinensis, a very beneficial medicinal herb that could cure many diseases. It was Like a miracle cure, just like an elixir of immortality.

Baby swallow asked innocently, Mommy, this Angelica Sinensis is growing right at our doorstep. Could it be a fairy transformed into this to protect our home?

Mommy swallow replied, Yes, my dear, remember that Angelica Sinensis is right next to our home. If you ever get lost, just find the Angelica Sinensis, and I will be there waiting for you.

Baby swallow nodded. Ill remember, mommy.

One day, while mommy swallow was out gathering food for baby swallow, disaster struck without warning. It was an unforgiving fire swept through the forest.

Every creature in the woods either perished or was harmed. When swallow mommy returned, clutching food, all that remained was a charred stump. The forest had turned to ash and broken branches, devoid of any greenery.

Mommy swallow flew round and round, crying out in despair for baby swallow, but the familiar cheerful call of Mommy was gone.

After the wildfire, mommy swallow stayed in the devastated forest.

She watched as compassionate people came and restored it. She soared across the sky, tirelessly searching for Angelica Sinensis, until at last, she found a tiny one. She waited for a rainfall, then carefully unearthed the damp soil and tenderly carried the Angelica Sinensis back to where their home once stood.

The giant tree where she had nested was no more, replaced by young saplings. Mommy swallow planted the Angelica Sinensis next to a sapling, hoping they would grow together. She stayed by that sapling, year after year, until it grew large enough to support their modest nest, though it was still not very big.

Mommy swallow collected numerous twigs and soft leaves to craft a cozy nest. In this new nest, she kept waiting, hoping for baby swallows return.

As the years passed, the sapling became a large tree and the lone Angelica Sinensis multiplied into a cluster. Mommy swallow grew old and could no longer fly. She had been in the nest for four days, too weak to leave for food or drink.

In a daze, she heard a faint chirp. Thinking she was mistaken, she opened her eyes and looked around, but found the space before her nest empty. Slowly, she closed her eyes again.

Chapter 2007

Mommy swallow was getting old, no longer able to fly far like she used to at the sound of a familiar call. These days, she found it hard even to leave the nest.

Overcome by sleepiness, mommy swallow slowly lowered her head, no longer feeling hungry. She realized her time was running out.

Just then, another familiar sound came.

Mommy swallow didnt open her eyes, thinking it was just her imagination.

The calls persisted, clear and vibrant.

This time, mommy swallow opened her eyes and saw a fluffy little head snuggling against her.

It had a familiar voice and scent. She knew it was her baby that came back.

The local people later spread this story, concluding it with Birds return when the time comes.

As the story concluded, Caseys daughter still wasnt asleep. She lay with wide, teary eyes. Mommy, mommy swallow is so incredible, so determined.

Casey gently wiped away the tears from the corner of her daughters eyes and whispered, Because mommy swallow never stopped believing that her baby swallow was alive. She waited and waited, and finally, she saw her that day.

Mommy, what if I get lost? Caseys daughter looked up at her with wide eyes. Will you keep searching for me, waiting for me like mommy swallow did?

Absolutely, Ill never stop searching for you, my love. Ill wait for you to come home, no matter what.

Caseys daughters smile returned. Mommy, Ill keep searching for you too.

Time to sleep, my darling.

Caseys daughter obediently closed her eyes, and Casey watched her peaceful face as she slept, feeling a warmth in her heart.

In truth, the story wasnt that beautiful.

Mommy swallow never saw her baby swallow again before she passed away.

That final scene was merely a vision before her death.

It was possible that baby swallow had perished in that great fire long ago.

Humans became the most intelligent beings on Earth because they were optimistic and committed to protecting the weak, embellishing the world with beauty.

At that time, Casey had no idea that she would soon lose her precious daughter. Later, she was imprisoned and lost another child, marking her with lifelong scars. She had lost all hope, but now

Her daughter had come to find her!

Casey, overwhelmed with emotion, grabbed Jimenas hand. Jimena, where did you find this? Please, tell me, its very important!

Jimena, taken aback by Caseys fervor, replied slowly, Madam, it was part of a gift. The last time I was here, I saw it on the table outside, wrapped in silk with that phrase embroidered on it.

Chapter 2008

A gift Casey paused, pondering, and then a sudden pain gripped her head.

Seeing Caseys distress, Jimena quickly became concerned. Madam, are you okay? Please, sit down.

Jimena gently helped Casey sit on the bed, watching her closely, piecing things together. It was the day I mentioned someone was getting married. Thats when I saw it on the table outside.

At Jimenas revelation, Casey pinched her palm hard, trying to manage her chaotic thoughts. She asked, Jimena, you mentioned last time that it was which family getting married, marrying a young lady from Ambrosia?

Jimena responded, Madam, it was the Clifford family from the north of the city.

Noticing Caseys confusion, Jimena elaborated, The Clifford family is well-known locally, just as prominent as the Maxwell family. They all know Davey, and their family is large and influential.

Caseys eyes widened slightly. The Clifford family knew Davey? Could Davey know something as well?

Suddenly, Jimena added, Oh yes, that gift must have come from the Clifford family. Who else could afford such an extravagant gift?

Casey asked further, You said the bride was very beautiful, didnt you? Can you remember what she looked like? Do you think

Casey paused, her voice filled with hope. Does she look like me?

Jimena looked at Casey with eyes full of sympathy and shook her head.

Madam, I didnt see the bride myself. I wasnt invited to the Cliffords wedding. It was my friends who worked there who told me she was very beautiful.

Casey was slightly disappointed, yet she was convinced it was Likely to be Raegan. After all, she was the only person in Aurora who knew this story. Interestingly, it was the same story Casey had edited when telling her daughter.

Casey had Jimena acquire the Angelica Sinensis, after which a young woman from Ambrosia married into Aurora and delivered a gift related to the swallow story. Even if this bride wasnt her daughter, she had to be someone connected to her daughter. Or perhaps it was Erick.

It had to be Erick. Erick must have found the missing Raegan, and she told him the story.

The more Casey thought about it, the more convinced she became, her heart swelling with hope. She turned to Jimena and whispered, Jimena, can you help me?

Jimena looked at Casey, puzzled, unsure of what she was asking.

Can you help me? Casey repeated.

Casey handed over a piece of rough embroidery, saying, Could you deliver this to the bride for me?

Jimenas expression shifted, and she quickly declined. Im sorry. I cant do that.

Jimena returned the embroidery to Casey, her complexion slightly pale as she whispered, I cant do it. Im sorry.

Davey had strict rules about this. If it went unnoticed, that was one thing, but if it were exposed, the consequences would be dire.

Jimena wouldnt dare take such a risk, not even with ten lives to spare.

Previously, Jimena had assisted Casey in purchasing Angelica Sinensis, and she had only done so in disguise. At that time, Casey was feeling homesick, and even if they were caught, it wasnt likely to be fatal.

Chapter 2009

This time, however, it was different. Casey asked her to deliver the embroidery to the Clifford family, specifically to the bride, and it certainly involved that bride. The task involved outsiders, something Davey would never condone. Despite her usual courage, Jimena couldnt bring herself to do it.

Suddenly, Casey rose from her bed and knelt before Jimena. Please Please, Jimena.

Jimena nervously tried to help Casey up, saying, Maam, its not that I dont want to help, but Im really scared of Davey. He

It wont happen. Casey took Jimenas hand firmly and reassured her, You dont have to go yourself. Just find someone trustworthy to deliver it.

Casey then promised, As soon as the bride gets it, I assure you shell take you and your whole family away from Aurora, to anywhere you wish, and shell also provide you with a lot of money.

Upon hearing this, Jimena hesitated. Leaving Aurora was her biggest dream.

Jimena yearned for a place with fair laws, where people werent judged by their status, a place where she could feel safe. She was tired of being seen as a mere commoner. Ambrosia seemed like the perfect escape. In Ambrosia, even those who couldnt read wouldnt go hungry, and those with skills could lead a better life. Her family wouldnt be branded as lowly commoners, scorned by others.

With such an opportunity before her, Daveys threats suddenly seemed less daunting.

Besides, Davey hadnt harmed anyone lately. Maybe he was becoming less volatile, or perhaps she just hadnt witnessed it.

In any case, this prospect deeply moved Jimena!

Jimena looked at Casey, her mind made up. Madam, Im willing to help, but how much are you offering?

Money could sometimes wield great power.

Jimena had served in Aurora for over twenty years. Despite being a qualified doctor, she was never shown any respect. She had worked in the homes of the wealthy, where people looked down on her from their lofty perches.

In Aurora, even middle-class families had their own family doctors.

Jimena had never wanted that role, nor had she wanted to join the Glyn family, but circumstances had forced her hand. Now, an opportunity to shed her commoner status had presented itself. Who wouldnt want to seize the chance to rise above?

Casey hadnt expected Jimena to ask about the money. The amount she had in mind was substantial, but she was out of touch with current prices. If she could get out, she planned to offer an amount that would match the external value.

After some thought, Casey quoted a figure that had been substantial twenty years earlier. I can offer you five million.

Five million? Jimena was shocked. She then scoffed. Madam, five million wouldnt even buy the clasp of a necklace in your collection.

Jimena knew the value of Caseys jewelry. Each piece was worth tens of millions, all exceptionally high quality.

This was a side of Jimena that Casey had never seen before. The greed that had been lurking beneath the surface finally erupted.

How much are you asking for? Casey inquired.

Jimena, realizing Casey was out of touch with current prices, replied, Eighty million.

Jimena had initially thought to ask for a hundred million, but feared asking too much might jeopardize the negotiation. She voluntarily dropped the price by twenty million, settling on eighty million, which seemed fair.

Casey was taken aback, yet found the arrangement to her liking. She wasn't fond of being in debt to anyone. The arrangement was straightforward. She provided the funds, and Jimena completed the task. She nodded in agreement. I agree.

Chapter 2010

Casey's assets outside were valued between five and six billion, all in real estate. If necessary, she could liquidate some to pay Jimena.

Once they agreed on terms, Jimena tucked the handkerchief into her undershirt and said, Madam, I need a guarantee first. I'll ensure the embroidery is delivered. My role is solely to confirm its receipt by the intended party. Whether or not your plan succeeds, you must honor our agreement.

Jimena was adamant about not being left without compensation if the plan failed. There was no benefit in such a one-sided deal, and she wasn't naive enough to offer help without securing her own interests first. This was a risky business.

Jimena's kindness toward Casey wasn't purely out of gratitude for past help. Rather, she recognized that Casey was trapped and in need of a friend. And she fit that role perfectly.

So, Jimena assisted Casey by buying Angelica Sinensis and various other items, not out of sheer generosity but to establish a beneficial relationship. She considered their interactions an

equitable trade. Everything Jimena did had an underlying motive.

For Jimena, Casey's trust in her had reaped surprising dividends.

Davey, for one, treated her a bit gentler, which set her apart from the rest.

Even more intriguing, whispers of her association with the influential Glyn family had reached the ears of several high-ranking officials. These power brokers, driven by their own desperate health scares, sought her out in secret, their hands extended with offers of hefty sums for her healing touch.

Yet, the influx of money was merely a bandage on a deeper longing.

Despite the financial gains, Jimena was tethered far from the elevated life she longed for. The constraints of her current existence mocked her. A true superior life was still beyond her reach.

International borders remained closed to her, her travels limited to brief, domestic escapes.

Jimena, calculating and ever watchful, saw in Casey a simplicity, a purity almost childlike in its naivety.

Caseys minimal contact with the outside world left her uncorrupted, seemingly unaware of the depths of human deceit.

To Jimena, this trusting and transparent Casey was the ideal target for her schemes.

But I Casey faltered, her voice laced with hesitation. If she couldnt venture beyond her golden cage, how could she possibly retrieve the money for Jimena? Furthermore, her purse was empty and to suddenly ask for money would surely raise Daveys suspicions, a risk neither of them could afford.

I understand, Jimena interjected smoothly, reading the worry etched on Caseys face. It wasnt just about the money. Casey couldnt even step outside without permission.

Jimena knew well that Davey, though affluent, tailored his generosity to suit Caseys cloistered life, providing for her needs but never handing over cash. After all, Casey lived comfortably in her luxurious confinement, where the need for money was virtually nonexistent.

Jimena had a clear goal in mind. I want that blue diamond necklace, she declared, her eyes sparkling with determination.

Casey blinked, taken aback, her mind scrambling to place the piece among the myriad of jewels Davey had gifted her. He had lavished her with countless ornaments, each of which she had carelessly removed after he adorned her with them. None of them seemed worthy of her wearing permanently, or so she felt.

Its the one with a massive blue sapphire at the center, Jimena clarified, her memory painting a vivid image of the gems breathtaking beauty. Indeed, she hadnt forgotten the necklace. She remembered the day she first laid eyes on it.

One fateful afternoon, while Casey lay still under the spell of acupuncture, Jimena had dared to lift the velvet boxes lid. The necklace inside had called to her, its large sapphire flanked by diamonds, each stone meticulously set to catch even the dimmest light.

Just one glance and she knew it was definitely worth hundreds of millions. It was unlike any she had ever seen, massive and impeccably pure.

Slipping the chain around her neck, Jimena caught a glimpse of herself in the mirror. The transformation was immediate. The ordinarily plain features of her face were bathed in an aristocratic glow, the sapphires deep blue making her eyes shine with an uncharacteristic brilliance. No need for fancy attire. The necklace alone vaulted her from her mundane existence into a vision of nobility.

Jimena had always thought that climbing the social ladder would be an arduous journey, yet here she discovered it could be as simple as possessing the right piece of jewelry.