

Chapter 4

I was discharged from the hospital a week later. Damien was there, waiting to drive me home. I ignored him completely and got into the car with Javier, who had also come along.

Javier, the strategist. The one who had "saved" me from a falling sculpture. The one who had just reprimanded Damien for almost killing me.

He tried to make small talk on the way home, telling jokes, trying to get me to smile.

I couldn't. My face felt like a frozen mask.

"Elena, are you okay?" he asked, his voice gentle. "You seem... different."

"I'm fine," I said, my voice flat.

"Look, I know things have been tense," he said. "Why don't we go to the Christie's auction tonight? Buy yourself something pretty. It always helps." He smiled. "My treat."

I looked at him, at his handsome, concerned face, and felt a surge of disgust. "With my father's money?"

He flinched, but recovered quickly. "I have my own money, Elena. I've made some very successful investments." He leaned in a little. "Seriously. Let me buy you anything you want."

A slow, cold smile spread across my face for the first time in weeks. "Alright, Javier. You're on."

If he wanted to play the generous fool, I would let him. I would take everything I could from these vipers.

The auction house was buzzing with the city's elite. The centerpiece of the evening was a stunning necklace known as the "Tears of the Ocean," a cascade of flawless blue diamonds.



The moment I saw it, I knew I had to have it.

Just as the bidding was about to start, the doors opened and two more people walked in. Damien and Eve.

My smile froze. I had a sick feeling in my stomach. I knew, with absolute certainty, that Eve would want that necklace.

The bidding started.

"One million dollars," came a soft voice from across the room. It was Eve.

She caught my eye and then looked down, a hesitant expression on her face. "Oh, Elena. Do you want it? I'm sorry, I'll stop." She made a show of lowering her bidding paddle, looking up at Damien with sad eyes. "I wouldn't want to take something you like."

She played the part of the magnanimous sister so well.

Damien's face hardened. He glared at me from across the room, his eyes full of contempt, as if I were a bully taking a toy from a small child.

He turned to Eve, his voice loud enough for the whole room to hear. "If you like it, you should have it. Don't let anyone stop you."

Then he raised his own paddle. "Five million dollars."

A hush fell over the room. Everyone knew who Damien was. He was the Barron heir apparent, my future husband. For him to publicly bid against me for another woman was a slap in the face. Whispers erupted.

"Is he trying to humiliate her?"

"Poor Elena. To be treated like that in public."

I felt the heat of a hundred pairs of eyes on me, some pitying, some mocking. My hand, holding my own paddle, trembled with rage.

I would not be humiliated. I would not back down.

I lifted my paddle, catching the auctioneer's eye, and made a sharp, decisive gesture.

"Ten million," the auctioneer announced, his voice booming.
I would not let them win.



