

The Ruined Bride of Velvet Nights by Brick Moving Ant

Chapter 116

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“Mom did have something she wanted to tell you before she died,” I said, gently adjusting the cashmere blanket around his shoulders.

Grand–père’s eyes fluttered open, a flicker of hope crossing his weathered face. “She thought of us at the end? What were her words, chérie?”

I gazed at him–this powerful man now so fragile against the Egyptian cotton pillows–and smiled softly.

“I think I’ll keep that between Mom and me.”

His expression transformed from confusion to understanding. Tears welled in his eyes, but then, remarkably, he began to laugh–a gentle, knowing laugh.

“Oh, Valentina,” he whispered, reaching for my hand. “You are so much like her. The same quiet strength. The same beautiful defiance.”

His breathing slowed as he drifted deeper. “Élise, my little ballerina… Papa’s waiting for you in the garden… your pirouettes were always… perfect…”

Grand–père’s hand gradually relaxed in mine as he slipped away, peacefully reuniting with the daughter he had lost twice.

The truth? Mom had indeed left a message. She had told me, on that final night in our Manhattan apartment, that she had forgiven her parents. That understanding comes with time. That resentment is too heavy a suitcase to carry through life.

But that forgiveness was hers to give, not mine to deliver.

Some debts remain unpayable, some words better left unspoken.

At thirty, as the sole heir to the Rousseau empire, my life bears no resemblance to the broken girl who once pleaded for her father’s love. The corporate headquarters in Paris, the vineyard in Bordeaux, the jet, the yacht moored in Monaco’s harbor–all mine to command.

Yet the possessions mean little compared to the freedom they provide.

Some mornings I wake at dawn to swim in the Mediterranean before breakfast on the terrace. Some

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evenings I fly to Milan just for dinner. Sometimes I disappear for months to photograph wildlife in places where no one knows my name or fortune.

My physical scars have faded to barely visible silver lines, revealed only in certain light.

The emotional wounds have been slower to heal, but even they have lost their sharp edges.

I take my time with everything now. Recovery. Decisions. Trust.

What I no longer do is seek approval or validation. I don’t measure my worth through others’ eyes.

I’ve learned–perhaps the hardest way possible–to love myself completely and without condition.

And just as Mom whispered to me in those final moments, I live each day brilliantly, fiercely, and entirely on my own terms.

Not as Valentina Dagonet. Not even as Valentina Rousseau. Simply as myself.

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