

## Chapter 10 No.

No.10

Liam dropped the teacup. It hit the floor and shattered, the porcelain sound echoing the vase from the gala.

"What?" Liam whispered. His blood ran cold.

"Don't play games, Kensington," the voice growled. "You have 24 hours. We know you have the assets."

"Don't hurt her," Liam said, his voice trembling. "I'm listening. Just... let me hear her voice."

Seraphina looked up from the sofa. "Who is it, Liam? Is it work?"

Liam shushed her violently. "Shut up!"

Seraphina flinched, shocked by his aggression.

Meanwhile, in the Maybach, Alistair's phone beeped. A red dot on his dashboard screen was moving fast. Away from the Manor. Toward the industrial district.

He had planted a tracker inside the lining of her clutch. Just in case.

Alistair's eyes went black. 🚫

He grabbed his radio. "Felix. Silas took her. Get the team. Meet me at the Old Chemical Factory."

He spun the steering wheel. The Maybach drifted across two lanes, tires hydroplaning heavily against the wet asphalt, kicking up a massive spray of dirty water, and sped off in the opposite direction.

Skye woke up tied to a metal chair. Her head was pounding.

She was in a warehouse. It smelled of sulfur and rot.

Alistair's eyes went black.

He grabbed his radio. "Felix, Silas took her. Get the team. Meet me at the Old Chemical Factory."

He spun the steering wheel. The Maybach drifted across two lanes, tires hydroplaning heavily against the wet asphalt, kicking up a massive spray of dirty water, and sped off in the opposite direction.

Skye woke up tied to a metal chair. Her head was pounding.

She was in a warehouse. It smelled of sulfur and rot.

She looked down. A bomb was strapped to the pillar behind her. A digital clock counted down in red LED lights.

30:00.

Silas was pacing in front of her. He was bleeding where she had scratched him.

"You're awake," Silas sneered. "Your husband is stalling. He cares more about his money than your life."

Skye stayed calm. Panic would kill her faster than the bomb.

"He won't pay," Skye said, her voice raspy. "He doesn't love me. You bet on the wrong horse, Silas."

Silas laughed. "Then you die. Simple."

Outside, the heavy splash of tires skidding on the flooded pavement echoed through the walls.

Liam had arrived. He had tracked Skye's phone—ironically, using the family tracking app he had installed months ago at Seraphina's insistence, hoping to catch Skye spending money or embarrassing the family name.

He ran into the warehouse, reckless, shouting "Skye! Skye!"

Seraphina was waiting in the car, refusing to come in.

Liam burst through the doors. He saw Skye tied up. He saw the bomb.

"Let her go!" Liam shouted.

Silas pointed a gun at Skye's head. "Money transfer first! 50 million!"

"I... I can't move that much cash instantly!" Liam pleaded. "I need time!"

"Time is up," Silas cocked the gun.

Suddenly, a shadow detached itself from the ceiling rafters.

Alistair Thorne dropped down behind Silas. He moved with terrifying speed.

He kicked Silas's knee, shattering it. Silas screamed and fired the gun blindly.

BANG.

The bullet hit the bomb timer.

The numbers started scrolling fast. 10... 9... 8...

"Run!" Skye screamed.

Liam froze. He looked at the bomb. He looked at the door. Fear paralyzed him.

Alistair didn't run. He shot Silas in the shoulder to neutralize him, then rushed to Skye. He pulled a knife and slashed the ropes binding her wrists.

"Go!" Alistair roared at Liam. "Get out!"

Liam turned and ran. He ran out the door, leaving his wife behind.

Skye was free, but the timer was at 3... 2...

There wasn't time to make it to the door.

"The drain!" Alistair gritted out. He grabbed Skye and threw himself toward the corner of the room where a heavy iron grate covered a storm drain. He kicked the grate aside with a strength born of desperation. It clattered against the concrete.

"Down! Now!"

He shoved Skye into the dark, wet pit. It was deep, smelling of sewage. He jumped in after her, pulling the heavy iron grate back over them just as the timer hit 1.

He tackled her to the muddy floor of the drain, covering her body with his own. He wrapped his arms around her head, pressing her face into his chest.

The world turned white.

The explosion ripped through the warehouse. The heat was intense, even down in the pit. Debris rained down on the grate above them, clanging like church bells from hell. The shockwave rattled Skye's teeth, but the earth around them absorbed the worst of it.

Skye felt Alistair's body jerk as something heavy hit the grate above, showering them with dust and concrete chips. But he didn't let go. He

held her tighter.

When the noise stopped, ringing filled her ears.

She coughed, choking on dust. She pushed up.

Alistair was lying on top of her, unconscious. Blood was trickling from a cut on his forehead where he had hit the wall of the drain.

"Alistair?" Skye shook him. "Alistair!"

Outside, in the safety of the rain, Liam stood by his car, panting. Seraphina was hugging him.

"You're safe," Seraphina cried. "Thank God."

Liam looked at the burning warehouse. He looked at the flames consuming the building where his wife was.

He fell to his knees. He had made his choice. And it wasn't hers.

Inside the drain, Alistair groaned. His eyes fluttered open, dark and dazed in the gloom.

"Skye?" he rasped, his voice rough with dust.

"I'm here," she whispered, her hands trembling as she checked his head wound. "We're alive."

Alistair pushed himself up, wincing. He looked up at the grate. It was buried under rubble, but a sliver of gray light shone through. He reached up, straining against the weight of the debris. With a guttural roar, he heaved the iron grate aside, clearing a path through the smoking ruins.

"Come on," he said, pulling her up. They climbed out of the pit, covered in mud and ash.

The warehouse was gone. It was just a skeleton of twisted metal and fire. Through the smoke, Skye saw the flashing lights of a car speeding away. Liam's car.

He hadn't waited. He hadn't checked. He had run.

Alistair followed her gaze. His jaw tightened. He didn't say a word about

Liam. He simply pressed a button on his watch.

Within seconds, black SUVs swarmed the lot. Felix jumped out of the lead car, face pale.

"Boss!" Felix shouted, running toward them.

"Get us out of here," Alistair ordered, wrapping a protective arm around Skye's shoulders to shield her from the smoke. "And Felix? Call the hotel. I want a secure medical team waiting. No hospitals. We stay off the grid."