

HOW A DYING WOMAN REWROTE HER EPILOGUE

Chapter 2

Elodie felt as if a fist had closed hard around her heart, draining what little color remained from her cheeks.

The air conditioning kept the house at a perfect temperature year-round, yet at this moment, she could have sworn she was trapped inside a walk-in freezer.

She stayed silent. After several seconds, Jarrod finally looked away from her face. "Sylvie's mother is getting worse. Her only wish is to see her daughter taken care of, to feel she isn't alone. Just keep your head down and be a good Mrs. Silverstein. I won't touch you."

He made his infidelity sound almost noble.

Won't touch her?

Elodie stood there, stunned, for a long moment then suddenly let out a laugh, struggling to keep the ache out of her voice. "If she needs someone at her side, you shouldn't be here with me. You really shouldn't."

With that, she turned and headed upstairs, shutting the door behind her without a trace of warmth.

A few minutes later, she heard an engine start downstairs. Jarrod was gone. She didn't have to guess where he'd gone-Sylvie was waiting.

Exhausted, Elodie dragged herself to the bathroom and splashed her face with icy water. The shock of it sharpened her senses, but did nothing to steady her heart.

She set up her laptop and contacted a lawyer she'd added on LinkedIn three years ago, asking for help drafting divorce papers.

"Ms. Thorne, do you have any special requirements?" the lawyer asked. "Property, car, alimony?"

Elodie paused, then answered, voice calm. "I want nothing."

She didn't want Jarrod. Why would she want anything else?

Besides, she'd read online that when you ask for nothing, the paperwork goes through quicker. That meant she wouldn't have to drag her increasingly frail body through endless negotiations.

The lawyer sent over the completed agreement in no time.

Her hand gripped the pen so tightly it was bone-white, but she signed her name, letter by letter, without hesitation or a single tear.

Then, nursing the pain in her side, she packed her clothes in a rush.

At the front door, she looked back at the home she'd tended for three years—just one last glance.

She walked out without looking back.

The next day, Elodie called in sick, then arranged for a courier to deliver the signed divorce papers to the front desk at The Silverstein Group.

Jarrold never bothered with trivial things like mail, so she addressed the package to Keith, his assistant.

She'd started working at The Silverstein Group the day she married Jarrold.

He never wanted their marriage public, nor did he allow her near him at work. Instead, he had her tucked away in the PR department, managing the company's image.

In three years, she'd never taken a single sick day or missed a shift.

Her performance wasn't about passion or even professionalism-it was just her nature to do everything as perfectly as possible.

But now that she'd decided to leave him, there was no reason to stay at The Silverstein Group either.

Once the courier was gone, Elodie checked the time. Nearly ten.

She curled her fingers into a fist. She had something far more important to do

now.

Eldermere Maximum Security Prison.

Her hands were slick with sweat on the steering wheel. It had been three years since she'd last seen him. No matter how she tried to calm down, nerves kept twisting in her stomach.

Ivan Harcourt was finally being released today.

She'd booked a private room at a restaurant a month in advance to welcome him home.

Ivan was her father's adopted son, and they'd grown up together. In the ruthless Harcourt family, Ivan was the only one who'd ever truly been kind to her. He'd spent over a decade shielding her from the worst of it, never raising

his voice to her, never failing her. He once promised: anyone else in the world might hurt her, but he never would.

She checked her reflection in the mirror. Her face was pale and almost fragile-looking, so she dabbed on extra blush until she looked healthy enough. To avoid worrying him, she popped another painkiller, then slipped on sunglasses and a hat.

The prison gates began to open.

Her body moved on its own as she climbed out of the car, legs numb, hands shaking.

A tall man in black strode through the gates, carrying an old duffel bag. His hair was cropped short and dark; his gaze was sharp and unreadable as he scanned the area—until he seemed to spot her.

Elodie's heart stuttered under that gaze.

Her throat tightened, her eyes shimmered with unshed tears, and before she knew it, she was moving toward him. "Ivan..."

