

Chapter 100 No.

Eulalie drove back to the city in a state of controlled fury. She didn't cry. Tears were useless. She needed ammunition.

When she walked into her Seaport District loft at 8:00 PM, her legal team was already assembled in a video conference on her main screen. Jory was there, coordinating with a team of private investigators.

Caden arrived at the Bradford Manor for dinner. He felt like a prisoner on parole, allowed onto enemy territory for a single, supervised visit. He looked at the construction across the street, a knot forming in his stomach. He understood immediately what was happening. This was an attack on Eulalie's family.

His phone buzzed. He ignored it, knowing it was Adalynn, a problem from a life that already felt like it belonged to someone else. Instead, he saw his grandmother marching toward him from the porch.

"Did you see that filth across the street?" she hissed, her voice low. "This is not just an attack on the Bradfords. This is an attack on Elara's safety. That woman will not live within sight of my great-granddaughter. Do you understand me, Caden? You will fix this."

It wasn't a request. It was an order. It was also, he realized with a sickening lurch, a chance. A way to do one thing, one single thing that wasn't selfish or destructive.

"The Penningtons bought the Wickham estate," Eulalie's voice said, sharp and clear. She was on a video call with Horton, who held the phone out so Caden could see her. Her face was a mask of cold fury. "They fast-tracked the permits through city hall."

Caden stared at her. He saw the genuine fire in her eyes. He realized this wasn't about her pride. It was about protecting her broken family. A familiar, protective instinct stirred in his gut.

"Harrison's lawyers are filing injunctions," she continued, speaking to her uncle but looking at Caden, "but we need to cut the head off the snake."

We need the name of the official they bribed."

Caden set down the untouched glass of whiskey Horton had given him. He looked at his ex-wife-the woman who had built a billion-dollar protocol, the woman who had dismantled him, the woman who was now outlining a problem he was uniquely qualified to solve with his dirty, rotten knowledge.

He didn't wait to be asked. He walked past them into the dusty hallway and picked up the old landline receiver.

"Who are you calling?" Eulalie's voice called from the phone.

"My father's old fixer," Caden said, dialing a number from memory. "And then I'm going to make a withdrawal from a bank of favors I never wanted to open."

"Why?"

"Because," Caden said, looking her dead in the eye through the screen. "Nobody messes with my family. Except me."

He spoke into the phone. "Bill? It's Caden Holloway. Remember that file on the Deputy Commissioner's zoning variances? The one from 2017? It's time to open the vault. I need the Wickham property permits revoked. By morning. And I want the official responsible to resign for 'health reasons.'"

He hung up.

Eulalie watched him from the screen, her expression unreadable. "Thank you."

"Don't thank me," Caden said, walking back to the porch. "I just realized something."

"What?"

"If they live across the street from your father," Caden said darkly, "that means they live across the street from where Elara visits. And I don't want that woman anywhere near my daughter."

It wasn't a declaration of love. It was a declaration of territory. But for tonight, it was a start.

Eulalie ended the call without another word. Caden stood in the decaying manor, the phone still in his hand. For the first time in months, he wasn't just breaking something. He was trying to fix it. And the silence of the house felt a little less heavy than before.



Our ads aim to provide better support for authors.

