

Chapter 113 No.

The next morning the air in the house was brittle enough to snap.

Eulalie came downstairs dressed for war—a sharp black blazer, tailored trousers, and stilettos that looked like weapons. She carried her laptop bag like a shield.

Caden was waiting in the foyer. He looked like he hadn't slept. Again.

"I'm driving you," he said. It wasn't a question. It was a plea. "My driver called in sick. I'm taking the Maybach. I'm going into the city anyway."

Eulalie paused. Her car was in the shop for a service. An Uber would take twenty minutes to get to the estate gates.

"Fine," she said. "But don't talk to me."

They walked out to the circular driveway. The morning sun glinted off the polished obsidian finish of Caden's Maybach. It was a beautiful car. A symbol of his success.

Caden opened the passenger door for her. A gentlemanly gesture. A peace offering.

Eulalie stepped forward. She bent to slide into the creamy beige leather seat.

She froze.

"What is it?" Caden asked, moving around the hood.

Eulalie didn't speak. She pointed.

There, wedged between the seat cushion and the center console, was a lipstick.

It wasn't just a tube. The cap was off. The bright cherry-red bullet of wax was smashed against the pristine leather, leaving a violent, greasy smear that looked like an open wound.

It was Rouge Dior 999. Adalynn's signature shade.

Eulalie stared at it. It was a territorial marking. A dog peeing on a fire

hydrant. Adalynn had been in this car.

Caden saw it.

The blood drained from his face so fast he looked like a corpse.

"Eulalie," he choked out, panic rising in his chest. "Wait. That's... I haven't driven this car since the charity gala three months ago. The night I dropped her off. I swear. It's been in the garage under a cover. She must have left it then. It must have melted in the heat."

"Dropped it?" Eulalie asked. She leaned in, careful not to touch anything. "The cap is off, Caden. She didn't drop it. She smeared it. She branded your car. And look at the dust pattern on the console. It's disturbed. Someone was in here recently."

She pulled her phone out. Click. She took a photo of the stain.

"She broke into the garage," Caden realized, his voice trembling with a mix of rage and horror. "She bribed the night guard again. She planted it to start a fight." He reached for the lipstick but stopped when he saw Eulalie's glare. "I didn't let her in! I have security logs! You can check the GPS! I haven't been near her!"

Eulalie stepped back. She looked at the car with a profound, visceral revulsion. As if the seats were covered in anthrax.

"Don't bother," she said.

She dialed a number on her phone. She put it on speaker.

"Yes, hello? Is this Prestige Auto Detailing? Yes. I need an emergency biohazard clean. The Bradford Manor. Yes. There is bodily fluid and chemical contamination in the passenger seat. I want it stripped. Fumigated. If you have an ozone generator, use it twice."

Caden stood there, his hand hovering over the lipstick. Shame burned through him, hot and agonizing.

She wasn't jealous. She wasn't screaming.

She was disgusted.

She treated the evidence of his stalker ex not as a heartbreak, but as a hygiene issue.

"Eulalie, please," Caden whispered. "It's just lipstick."

"It's contamination," she said, hanging up. "I'm not sitting in her residue."

She turned toward the gate.

"Where are you going?" Caden called after her. "I'll get another car! Take the Aston!"

A low purr cut him off.

A black Bentley Continental GT rolled up the driveway, crunching softly on the gravel. The window slid down.

Harrison Sterling sat behind the wheel. He was wearing sunglasses and a smirk that could cut glass.

"Morning Mrs. Holloway," Harrison drawled. "Your Uber app seems to be glitching. Need a lift?"

Eulalie didn't hesitate. She didn't look back at Caden. She walked to the Bentley, opened the door, and slid into the clean, untainted leather seat.

"Drive," she said. "The air quality here is poor."

Harrison winked at Caden. "You might want to use some stain remover on that, Holloway. Red is a bitch to get out."

The Bentley accelerated, kicking up a small cloud of dust that settled on Caden's shoes.

Caden stood alone in the driveway.

He looked at the lipstick. The bright red smear mocked him. Adalynn had planted it to hurt Eulalie. She had wanted to cause a fight.

Instead, she had just handed Eulalie a ticket out.

Caden reached into the car. He grabbed the lipstick. He squeezed it in his fist, crushing the metal tube, mashing the wax into his palm until it looked like he was bleeding.

"Damn it!" he screamed.

He threw the ruined lipstick onto the driveway and stomped on it, grinding it into the asphalt.

He pulled out his phone. He dialed Adalynn.

"Caden?" her voice was sweet, innocent. "Did you find my-"

"If you ever touch my property again," Caden roared, his voice shaking with rage, "I will have you arrested for burglary. Do you hear me? You are done. Stay away from my house!"

He hung up before she could cry.

He looked at his hand. It was stained red. He tried to wipe it on his pants, but it just smeared. It wouldn't come off. 🚫

He was marked. And Eulalie was gone.