

Chapter 115 No.

Caden came home at 6:00 PM. He was carrying a blue folder. He looked like a man who had solved a puzzle.

He found Eulalie in the living room, reading a technical manual.

"Eulalie," he said, breathless. "I have something for you."

Eulalie didn't look up. "If it's another apology, file it with the others."

"It's not an apology," Caden said. He placed the folder on her lap. "It's a solution."

Eulalie opened it.

Inside was a deed. A property transfer.

103 Oak Street. The Old Wickham Place.

The house across the street. The house the Penningtons had been renovating. The house Adalynn had been bragging about on Instagram as her future "party palace."

"I bought the debt," Caden said, watching her face. "Grady leveraged the property to cover his margin calls last week. I bought the note from the bank this morning and called it in immediately. They couldn't pay. I foreclosed and took the title an hour ago."

He smiled, waiting for the gratitude. Waiting for her to see that he was protecting her, that he was removing the thorns from her side. He hadn't just outbid them; he had financially gutted them.

"You can turn it into a garden," Caden suggested. "Or a guest house. Or just leave it empty so it's quiet."

Eulalie stared at the paper.

"You spent four million dollars to buy me a buffer zone?"

"I spent four million dollars to buy you peace," Caden corrected.

Eulalie closed the folder. She stood up. She walked to the window and looked at the house across the street. It was a beautiful Victorian

"Thank you," she said.

Caden let out a breath he didn't know he was holding. "You're welcome. I just wanted to."

"I'm going to gut it," Eulalie said.

Caden blinked. "What?"

Eulalie pulled out her phone. She dialed a number.

"Jory? It's me. I have a site for the new data center. Yes. 103 Oak Street. I want the cooling units installed tonight. Listen to me carefully. I want the interior soundproofed to Level 5 recording studio standards. My father cannot hear a whisper of this. But the external vents? Point them directly at the Pennington driveway."

She looked at Caden.

"I don't need a garden, Caden. I need server space. Nexus is expanding. That house has a reinforced basement and a direct line to the power grid."

"But..." Caden stammered. "It's a historic home. You're going to turn it into a server farm?"

"I'm going to turn it into a fortress," Eulalie said. "I want the windows boarded up with black steel panels. For security. I want the perimeter lined with high voltage fencing. And I want the visual profile to be a black monolith. Ugly. Silent to us, but an absolute eyesore for them."

Caden stared at her.

He had bought her a romantic gesture. She was turning it into an industrial weapon.

"Adalynn wanted a view," Eulalie said, her voice devoid of emotion. "Now she gets to look at a black wall of steel. And the low-frequency vibration? It won't be audible to human ears, but it will wreak havoc on their cheap bluetooth speakers. Delmar won't hear a thing. But Adalynn will feel it in her teeth."

"The neighbors will hate us," Caden whispered.

"The neighbors are the Penningtons," Eulalie reminded him. "Let them hate us. Let them try to sleep while my algorithms process terabytes of data ten yards from their bedroom window."

She walked past him.

"You wanted to help, Caden? You provided the hardware. I'm providing the software. That's how this works now."

An hour later, the trucks arrived.

They weren't moving vans. They were construction flatbeds.

Caden stood on the porch and watched as crews began to dismantle the beautiful bay windows of the Wickham house. They bolted sheets of matte black steel over the openings. They installed massive, gray HVAC units on the lawn, ruining the landscaping.

It was ugly. It was brutal. It was industrial scarring in a neighborhood of manicured lawns.

Across the street, he saw a curtain twitch in the Pennington house. He saw Adalynn's face, pale and horrified, watching her dream neighborhood turn into a cyberpunk nightmare.

Caden looked at the black steel. It was cold. It was impenetrable.

Just like his wife.

He realized then that he hadn't bought her peace. He had bought her ammunition. And she was going to fire it until the barrel melted.



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