

Chapter 47 No.

The Museum of Modern Art had been transformed. A red carpet snaked up the steps, flanked by velvet ropes and a wall of paparazzi.

A stretch limousine pulled up. The door opened.

First, a mass of blue fabric spilled out. Then a leg. Then Adalynn.

She emerged like a butterfly struggling out of a cocoon, if the cocoon was made of glass shards. The "Tear of the Night" dress was enormous. The skirt took up the entire sidewalk.

Caden stepped out after her, tripping on the hem. He looked annoyed. He adjusted his tuxedo, muttering, "Jesus, Adalynn, watch where you're walking."

"Smile!" Adalynn hissed, grabbing his arm. She posed, turning side to side. The flashbulbs popped.

"Who is she wearing?" a photographer shouted.

"It's a custom piece!" Adalynn yelled back.

"It looks like a lampshade!" someone whispered in the crowd. A ripple of laughter followed.

Adalynn's smile faltered. She dragged Caden toward the entrance, her dress sweeping up cigarette butts and dust from the carpet.

Then, a hush fell over the crowd.

A matte black Audi R8 pulled up. Jory Stark stepped out, looking dashing. He walked around and opened the passenger door.

Eulalie stepped out.

She didn't stumble. She didn't struggle. She rose from the car like smoke. The midnight blue velvet dress absorbed the light, making her skin look like porcelain. Her hair was swept up in a severe, elegant chignon. No necklace. Just diamond studs.

For five years, she had dressed to disappear. She had worn pastels and soft fabrics to blend into Caden's wallpaper, to be the perfect,

unobtrusive accessory. Tonight, she dressed to cut.

The silence broke.

"Who is that?"

"That's Jory Stark's date? She's incredible."

The cameras swiveled away from Adalynn, drawn by the magnetic pull of mystery and elegance. They focused entirely on Eulalie. She didn't pose. She just walked, her hand lightly on Jory's arm, her back straight, the deep plunge of her dress revealing the sharp, sexy lines of her shoulder blades. A hushed whisper went through the press line as a veteran gossip columnist recognized her. "Wait... isn't that Caden Holloway's ex?"

Adalynn saw the cameras turn. She saw Caden stop walking.

Caden was staring at Eulalie. His mouth was slightly open. He had never seen her like this. He had seen her in aprons. He had seen her in sensible wool coats. He had never seen her as a siren.

"Caden!" Adalynn snapped, yanking his arm.

But Caden didn't move. Eulalie and Jory were approaching them.

"Evening" Jory said coolly.

"Sister," Adalynn said, her voice shrill. "I see you found a sugar daddy to get you in."

Jory laughed. "Actually, Ms. Pennington, Eulalie is the guest of honor. I'm just the arm candy."

Eulalie looked at Adalynn. She looked at the blue dress, which was already gathering lint at the hem.

"You have a little something..." Eulalie gestured vaguely to the floor. "Everywhere."

Adalynn looked down. A discarded cocktail napkin was stuck to her train. She kicked it away, her face burning red.

"You think you're so special," Adalynn hissed.

"No," Eulalie said, stepping past her. "I think I'm on time. And you're blocking the entrance."

She walked into the museum. Caden watched her go. He watched the sway of her hips in the velvet. He felt a strange, hollow ache in his chest.

"She looks..." Caden started.

"She looks old!" Adalynn shrieked. "Come on!"

But as they entered the hall, Adalynn turned too quickly. Her massive skirt swung out like a wrecking ball. It hit a waiter carrying a tray of champagne.

Crash.

Glass shattered. Golden liquid soaked into the blue tulle.

Adalynn screamed. The room went silent. Everyone looked.

Eulalie, standing at the top of the stairs, didn't even turn around. She just took a sip of her soda water and smiled.



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