

## Chapter 5 No.

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Eulalie walked in. She wasn't wearing the pastel floral dresses Caden insisted on. She wore a sharp black blazer, tailored trousers, and stilettos that clicked like gunshots on the terrazzo floor.

The receptionist, a girl named Sarah who usually pitied Eulalie, dropped her pen. "Mrs... Mrs. Holloway?"

"Good morning Sarah," Eulalie didn't smile.

She walked past the turnstiles, flashing an old access card. It still worked. For the last time.

She didn't go to the penthouse elevator. She went to the 4th floor. HR.

The HR Director, Mr. Henderson, looked up from his coffee, startled. "Mrs. Holloway! Is everything okay? Is Caden-"

"I'm here for me," Eulalie said, sliding a single sheet of paper across his desk.

It was a resignation letter.

"I am resigning from my position as 'Administrative Consultant'," she said. It was a fake job Caden had given her for tax purposes. She did nothing but organize his charity galas.

Henderson laughed nervously. "Mrs. Holloway, I can't... I need Caden's signature for this. And surely there's a notice period? We can't just-"

"Read the bylaws, Mr. Henderson," Eulalie said, her voice ice-cold. "Clause 14, Section C. 'At-will employment for non-executive consultants can be terminated immediately by either party without cause.' Unless you want to put it in writing that my employment was purely nepotism and I had no actual duties? The IRS might find that interesting."

Henderson paled. He picked up the red stamp. He stamped the paper. "TERMINATED. EFFECTIVE IMMEDIATELY."

Eulalie took her copy. "Thank you. Please deactivate my access card. I won't be needing it."

She walked out and collided with Jared, Caden's chief of staff, in the hallway. Jared was carrying a stack of binders.

"Mrs. Holloway?" Jared blinked. "The boss is in a strategy meeting."

Eulalie shoved the resignation copy into Jared's stack. "I'm not Mrs. Holloway. I'm Ms. Bradford. Give this to him. Tell him I don't work for him anymore. And tell him to hire a real assistant."

Jared watched her walk away, his mouth open. She moved differently. Like she owned the air around her.

Outside, a red Ferrari pulled up to the curb. Adalynn.

The window rolled down. Adalynn lowered her Gucci sunglasses, looking Eulalie up and down.

"Well, well," Adalynn smirked. "Here to beg for forgiveness? I heard you ran away. Caden is so annoyed."

Eulalie stopped. She leaned down, resting her hands on the car door, invading Adalynn's space.

"No, Adalynn. I came to take out the trash."

Adalynn's smile faltered. "What is that supposed to mean?"

"You'll figure it out. You're the smart one, right?"

Eulalie pushed off the car and walked toward the subway entrance. She didn't look back.

At 3:00 PM, Elara's private school let out.

Usually, Eulalie was there at 2:30, waiting by the gate with a snack. Today, only the Holloway driver stood there.

Elara climbed into the back of the car, looking out the window. She

scanned the crowd of mothers.

"Where is she?" Elara mumbled.

She pulled up her sleeve and tapped her pink smartwatch. She wanted to call Mommy to brag about her drawing. But then she remembered the restaurant. "Mommy is mean."

She crossed her arms and pouted. "I don't care. Adalynn is taking me to Disney."

Eulalie sat on the subway, the car rattling. Her phone buzzed.

Mrs. Gable (Teacher): "Mrs. Holloway, Elara kept looking for you today. Is everything okay?"

Eulalie stared at the message. Her thumb hovered. Every instinct screamed to reply, to explain, to rush to the school.

She closed her eyes. If she went back now, nothing would change. She would just be the doormat again.

She typed: "Please direct all future correspondence regarding Elara to her father or Adalynn Pennington I am no longer the contact person."

Send.

Block Number.

High above the city, Jared finally found a break in the meeting. He approached Caden.

"Sir? Ms. Bradford was here. She... she resigned"

Caden was scrolling through Adalynn's Instagram, liking a selfie. He didn't look up. "Let her. It's a power play. She wants attention. File it and ignore it."

"But sir, she seemed serious. HR already deactivated her badge."

"Jared," Caden snapped, "if you bring up my wife one more time, you're fired. She'll be back when the credit card bill comes due."

Jared swallowed and slid the resignation letter to the bottom of his pile.

Back in the loft, Eulalie stripped off the blazer. She threw it into the laundry hamper. She pulled on an oversized hoodie. She looked at the server rack, green lights blinking in the dark.

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