

Chapter 96 No.

The drive back to the city was a silent torment. Caden drove. Grandmother Holloway sat in the passenger seat, a statue of disapproval. Adalynn had been sent back in a separate car, her protests dissolving into whimpers under the force of the old woman's glare.

They pulled into the underground garage of the Fifth Avenue penthouse at 1:00 AM. The apartment was dark, but more than that, it was empty. The life had been sucked out of it, packed into boxes and moved to a loft downtown.

"She's not here," Caden said, the words hollow in the cavernous garage. "She took everything."

"Of course she's not here, you imbecile," his grandmother snapped. "There is a restraining order. This is your cage now. You will stay here and reflect on your failures."

Caden walked into the apartment. He rode the private elevator up, his footsteps echoing in the silence. He pushed open the door to the master bedroom.

It was a tomb. The mattress was stripped bare. The closets stood open and empty. The vanity was clear of every cream and perfume. The only thing left was the faint scent of her shampoo-lavender and vanilla-a ghost in the air. 

He walked over and sat on the edge of the bare mattress. The springs groaned under his weight.

"Eulalie?" he whispered to the empty room. "I'm home."

The silence that answered was absolute. He was alone. Utterly and completely alone.

His phone buzzed. It was Adalynn. Where am I supposed to go? My accounts are frozen! You promised to take care of me!



Caden stared at the message. The promise felt like something a different man had made, in a different lifetime. He was so tired. His bones ached.

He dropped the phone on the floor and lay back on the bare mattress, staring at the ceiling of the empire he had burned to the ground. Downstairs, his grandmother was on the phone with her lawyers, discussing damage control. The war was over. This was the occupation.