

Jilted heiress: marrying the untouchable tycoon

Chapter 1:

Allison Montgomery sat in the driver's seat of her Audi, the engine idling quietly in the JFK Airport parking lot.

She had been waiting for over two hours. Even though a long time had passed since her fiancé Finn Kensington's scheduled flight had landed, he still had not appeared, and he hadn't sent a single message.

A gnawing unease twisted in her chest.

Suddenly, her phone screen, resting in the cup holder, lit up. An in-cabin audio detection alert flashed across the display. It was the synced dashcam app connected to her Range Rover, the one she had left parked in the VIP section of her favorite restaurant in Manhattan.

Allison frowned. Her fingers hovered over the screen. A garage break-in? The VIP lot was supposed to be secure, but Manhattan was unpredictable.

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Her heart rate elevated slightly, a dull thud against her ribs, as she tapped the notification.

The live video feed buffered for a second, then the screen resolved into the dark, leather-lined interior of her Range Rover.

She squinted. Streetlights outside cast harsh yellow shadows across the dashboard. A familiar designer handbag sat carelessly tossed over the air vents.

She stared at the bag. Her stomach dropped. It was a limited-edition Birkin, emerald leather. She had bought that exact bag for her younger cousin, Cheyanne Montgomery, just last month.

Before her brain could process why Cheyanne's bag was in her car, the audio kicked in. The unmistakable sound of heavy, wet breathing filled the quiet cabin of the Audi. Fabric rustled violently.

Then a sharp, breathless moan.

Allison froze. The blood drained from her face so fast she felt lightheaded. Her fingers gripped the leather steering wheel so hard her knuckles turned bone-white.

The camera angle caught the dim, chaotic reflection in the rearview mirror. Streetlights illuminated a face.

Finn Kensington. Her fiancé. The man who had looked her in the eyes that morning and said, “I love you, Allie. See you tonight.”

His face was twisted in raw, unrestrained passion, an expression she had never seen on him. His shirt was unbuttoned, his belt undone.

Then Cheyanne’s face came into view, her cousin’s hands tangled in Finn’s perfectly styled hair.

Cheyanne leaned up, her lips brushing Finn’s jaw, her mouth open, breathless. “Tell me I’m better than her,” she whispered, loud and clear on the microphone. “Tell me I’m better than Allison.”

Finn gasped, his voice cracking. “You are. God, you are. She’s never— she’s so cold compared to you. You’re everything she isn’t.”

Cheyanne laughed, a low, triumphant sound. “Then why are you still engaged to her?”

“Because of the families,” Finn said, his hands gripping her hips. “But it’s you I want. It’s always been you.”

A wave of intense nausea hit Allison. The acid in her stomach surged up her throat.

She had given this man three years of her life. She had turned down job offers in Europe for him. She had defended him to her friends, to her family, to everyone who said he was too slick, too ambitious.

And this was how he repaid her. In her car. With her cousin.

The initial shock lasted exactly ten seconds. Then the cold, burning rage took over. It spread through her veins like ice water, freezing her tears before they could even form.

Allison hit the record button on the app. A red dot blinked on the screen, ensuring the footage was saved directly to her secure cloud storage. She would not lose this evidence.

She did not cry. She did not scream. She pulled up her contacts list and found the number for the restaurant's head of security. She pressed call.

"This is Allison Montgomery," she said, her voice flat, metallic, unrecognizable even to herself. "My Range Rover is in your VIP lot. I need you to tow it immediately."

"Ms. Montgomery?" The security chief's voice was laced with confusion. "Is there a problem with the vehicle?"

“There is a severe biohazard inside,” Allison instructed calmly, her gaze fixed on the empty tarmac. “Have it towed directly to a scrapyard and crushed. I don’t want a single piece of it back. I’ll wire a triple bonus to your personal account for your absolute discretion.”

She hung up before he could respond. Her hands shook slightly, adrenaline flooding her system, demanding physical action.

She reached down and turned off the Audi’s engine. She needed to walk. If she sat in this car for one more minute, she was going to tear the steering wheel off the dashboard.

She grabbed her beige trench coat from the passenger seat, shoved her arms into the sleeves, and stepped out into the biting wind.

The cold air slapped her face, grounding her. Her heart hammered a suffocating rhythm against her ribs, but her outward posture remained flawlessly rigid.

Her phone buzzed in her pocket. She pulled it out. A fresh text from Finn.

“Dear, the company had something urgent, and I couldn’t help but reschedule a later flight. I originally planned to tell you earlier, but I forgot in the chaos. I will make it up to you tonight, I swear. I’m missing you terribly. I can’t wait to see you.”

The sheer audacity of the lie blinded her. She stared at the text, her vision tunneling entirely onto the glowing screen. He was still lying to her face.

She kept walking, completely unaware of her surroundings. Her mind was a storm of rage, betrayal, and cold calculation.

She rounded a corner near the exclusive VIP lounge, her vision tunneling so intensely that the world became a blur of cold marble.

Suddenly, she slammed hard into a solid, unyielding chest. The impact felt like walking directly into a concrete pillar, instantly knocking the remaining breath from her lungs.

The sheer force sent her phone skidding across the polished floor, her ankles wobbling precariously on her heels.

As gravity seized her, she closed her eyes, bracing for a humiliating, painful crash. But she never hit the floor.

A massive, impossibly warm hand shot out from the shadows. Long, powerful fingers gripped her waist with a bruising, controlling force, arresting her descent in a fraction of a second. In one fluid, effortless motion, a man pulled her upward, dragging her flush against his chest.

Allison gasped, her palms instinctively pressing flat against the ultra-soft fabric of a bespoke charcoal suit. Beneath the layers, she felt the rigid, coiled muscle of a man who commanded absolute authority.

A suffocating scent instantly enveloped her: expensive tobacco, cedarwood, and a distinct, icy chill that made her skin tingle.

She looked up, her breath hitching in her throat, and met a pair of dark, predatory eyes.

The man staring down at her was devastatingly handsome, with a sharp jaw, high cheekbones, and lips pressed into a thin, unreadable line. His face was a perfect mask of wealthy indifference, but his eyes... his eyes were burning.

A few feet behind him, another man holding two cups of coffee stopped dead in his tracks, his eyes widening in sheer disbelief as he stared at the physical contact.

“Adam, are you alright?” the man asked, rushing forward.

Adam. The name stuck in her mind.

The stranger, Adam, did not answer. His gaze remained locked on Allison. His thumb, resting heavily against her waist, subtly stroked the fabric of her trench coat. The heat of his touch seeped through the layers of her clothing, burning against her skin.

Allison's heart hammered. She should pull away. She should thank him and leave. But she couldn't move.

The other man stared at Adam's hand on Allison's waist, his eyes widening. He had never seen Adam initiate physical contact with a woman. Ever.

Allison finally found her voice. She stepped back, breaking the connection. The sudden loss of his body heat made the terminal air feel freezing.

"Excuse me," she said, her voice dropping into a cold, defensive register. "You should watch where you are standing."

She smoothed the front of her coat, refusing to acknowledge the flush creeping up her neck. She walked over, retrieved her phone from the floor, and continued down the concourse without looking back.

But she could feel his gaze on her. Heavy. Unrelenting.

Adam Kensington stood perfectly still in the center of the terminal. He watched her retreating figure, his dark eyes tracking the defiant sway of her trench coat.

His eyes narrowed slightly. Recognition flickered in their dark depths. He had seen this woman before, in countless financial reports, in society pages, in the background of photographs of his nephew, Finn.

Allison Montgomery. Finn's fiancée. The woman his nephew was cheating on.

A slow, calculated smirk formed on his lips as his mind locked onto her identity. He adjusted his platinum cufflink with lethal precision and turned to his assistant.

"Find out where she is going," Adam commanded, his voice a low, gravelly threat. "I want to know everything."

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Chapter 2:

Adam watched Allison vanish into the crowd. His palm still tingled where he'd held her waist—her coat cold beneath his fingers, but underneath, warm, alive.

He turned to his assistant, Kip Downs, who stood gaping after her.

"Close your mouth," Adam said flatly. "You look like a gasping fish."

Kip snapped his jaw shut. "That's Allison Montgomery. Your nephew's fiancée, the woman you've been—"

"I know exactly who she is." Adam's voice turned to ice.

He'd watched her for years, long before Finn set eyes on her: tracked her career, every victory. He'd also watched his spoiled, entitled nephew win her over with empty charm and lies.

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Not anymore.

“Keep a close eye on her,” Adam ordered. “I want every detail—where she goes, who she speaks to, everything.”

Kip hesitated. “Adam, she’s still technically engaged to Finn.”

“That won’t last.” Adam pulled out his phone and fired off a text to his security team, then strode for the exit, his long legs eating up the floor.

Kip hurried after him. “What about the Japanese investor meeting?”

“Reschedule it.”

Kip sighed. Eight years working for Adam had taught him the man bought companies, crushed rivals, and intimidated entire boardrooms—but he’d never looked at a woman the way he’d just looked at Allison.

This was unfamiliar, and dangerous.

Allison pushed through the terminal’s sliding doors. New York’s frigid air bit her cheeks, grounding her.

She hailed a yellow cab and sank into the worn leather backseat. She was in no condition to drive at that moment—she needed to focus entirely on what to do next.

The taxi merged onto the Van Wyck Expressway.

Her phone sat open on her lap, the damning video saved to cloud storage. She skipped the audio, only watching the silent proof of her shattered engagement: Finn's hands on Cheyanne's hips, their easy, practiced closeness.

Her boiling anger froze solid, hardening into an unbreakable shield around her heart. She slowed her breathing and straightened her spine.

She'd ruin them both.

Twenty minutes later, the cab pulled up before a mansion's towering iron gates. Allison paid the fare and climbed the sweeping limestone steps.

The cold, opulent house reeked of old money. She shoved open the heavy oak front doors. Lilies and expensive floor wax filled the air.

Allison's heels clicked across marble as she rounded into the arched doorway.

Baker, her uncle, slouched in a leather armchair with the Wall Street Journal. His wife, Katharine, sipped tea from fine porcelain. Cheyanne and Finn huddled together on the velvet sofa, comfortable.

Finn spotted her first. His face blanched; his whiskey glass rattled in his trembling grip.

Cheyanne jumped to her feet, plastering on the overbright fake smile she always wore when lying.

“Allie!” She rushed forward with open arms.

Allison stepped neatly aside, dodging the hug.

Cheyanne stumbled, grabbing at empty air, and fixed her with wide, feigned innocent eyes. “What’s wrong?”

Baker slammed his newspaper onto the mahogany coffee table, the crack echoing through the room. “How dare you treat your sister with such disrespect?”

Allison pulled out her phone without a word. She tapped the screen, selected the video, and AirDropped it to the huge fireplace TV. Maxed-out speakers flooded the room with footage of Finn and Cheyanne’s affair.

“Tell me I’m better than her.”

“You are. God, you are.”

Their breathless whispers and moans bounced off the vaulted ceilings.

Katharine gasped, her teacup slipping from her fingers to shatter across a priceless Persian rug, hot tea bleeding into the wool.

Finn lurched forward, scrambling for the remote, his hands shaking violently. “Allison, wait—this isn’t what it looks like, turn it off!”

Cheyenne dropped to her knees, breaking into loud, rehearsed sobs, her face buried in her hands. “He forced me, Allie. He threatened to hurt himself if I didn’t give in.”

Allison folded her arms, staring at the chaos with empty eyes, her heartbeat slow and steady. She’d expected Baker—her mother’s brother, the man who’d sworn to her dying parents he’d protect her—to cast the cheaters out.

Instead, shock melted into purple rage on his face. He pointed a thick finger straight at her.

“You air our family’s private mess on a screen like a cheap reality show?” he roared, spit spraying the table. “You have no decency, no respect! How dare you bring this filth into my home?”

Katharine hurried to cradle the weeping Cheyanne, glaring venom at Allison. “This is your fault. Your cold, arrogant distance pushed him to her. You treated him like an employee, not a fiancé.”

Finn abandoned his search for the remote, adjusting his tie and leaning into the blame. “Katharine’s right. You were always walled off. I craved real connection, and Cheyanne gave it to me. She understands me.”

Cheyanne peeked through her fingers, fake tears streaking her cheeks. “I never meant to fall for him, Allie. Please forgive me.”

Baker cleared his throat, smoothing his waistcoat, and addressed the room coldly. “To avoid a public scandal, the Montgomery-Kensington alliance will remain intact.”

Allison let out a sharp, hollow laugh. “You expect me to marry him still?”

Baker stared at her like she’d lost her mind. “The engagement transfers to Cheyanne. They’re clearly a better match. The board relies on the Kensington partnership—we can’t risk tanking the stock price.”

Katharine stroked Cheyanne's hair in agreement. "Step aside for your sister's happiness. Think of the company, think of the family."

Finn crossed to Cheyanne and laced their fingers together, glancing at Allison with something resembling pity. "I'm sorry it ended this way, but we were never right. You'll find someone equally cold someday."

Allison swept her gaze over the four of them: uncle, aunt, sister, fiancé. Four people united to rewrite the truth and paint her as the villain. The absurdity snapped her last emotional tie to this family.

The years of overworking, fighting to prove herself, swallowing every slight and heartache vanished in an instant, replaced by a hollow, terrifying lightness.

She did not scream. She did not cry. She nodded slowly, a calm, frigid smile tugging at her lips—one that never touched her eyes.

"Fine. But make no mistake, I am the one who walks away from this engagement. Finn is unprincipled, disloyal, and utterly worthless—and I want nothing to do with him. Since my sister has such peculiar taste and favors this kind of man, I will be generous enough to hand him over to her."

Silence crashed over the room. Cheyanne stared at her, stunned and speechless.

Allison turned without another word and walked toward her bedroom.

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Chapter 3:

Allison walked up the grand staircase. Each step felt heavier than the last, but she forced herself to keep moving.

She entered her bedroom—a room that had never felt like hers. Soft cream walls, antique French oak furniture, drapes that cost more than most people’s monthly rent.

It was beautiful. It was cold. It was a museum exhibit she no longer belonged in.

She didn't allow herself to look back. She walked straight to the closet and pulled a heavy Louis Vuitton duffel bag from the top shelf. The leather was worn, the brass zipper tarnished.

She had bought this bag eight years ago, on her first trip to Paris with her father, before he died. It was one of the few things she truly valued.

She began to pack.

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Mechanical.

Efficient.

No hesitation.

She grabbed only the essentials: her laptop, two encrypted hard drives containing her personal company data, her father's old notebook—the one where he had handwritten his strategies for Montgomery Group—and three tailored power suits.

She didn't fold anything. She just shoved.

Her eyes fell on the vanity mirror. Several framed family photos sat on the glass surface.

Her and her father, laughing at a company picnic. Her and Finn, at their engagement party.

Allison didn't pause. She swept her arm across the vanity, knocking the silver frames face down into the trash can. The glass cracked against the metal bin. The sound was satisfying.

Her phone buzzed.

An incoming call from Emilee Costa—her best friend, the only person in the world she trusted completely.

Allison answered, putting it on speaker as she tossed a pair of heels into the duffel bag.

"Hey," Emilee's voice boomed through the speaker, loud and energetic. "Are you ready for our dinner reservation at Le Bernardin? I am starving. I've been dreaming about their lobster thermidor for three days."

“The dinner is canceled,” Allison stated flatly, zipping a side pocket.

Silence. Then: “Why? What happened?”

“I caught Finn and Cheyanne screwing in my Range Rover.”

A beat of dead silence hung on the line. Then Emilee unleashed a string of creative, high-decibel curses that would have made a sailor blush.

“That worthless, spineless, Wall Street parasite! I am going to castrate him with a butter knife! I’ll send his balls to his mother in a gift box!”

Allison almost smiled. Almost.

“Baker and Katharine just gave my engagement ring to Cheyanne,” Allison continued, her voice devoid of inflection.

Emilee screamed. Not words. Just a pure, raw scream of disbelief and fury. The audio peaked on the phone speaker.

“Are you kidding me?” Emilee finally managed. “They did WHAT? Where are you right now? Get out of that toxic house this instant!”

Allison grabbed the heavy brass zipper of the duffel bag and pulled it shut. “I’m leaving right now. Can I crash at your place in Soho?”

“Yes! Obviously!” Emilee yelled. “I’ll have tequila and a baseball bat waiting for you. We’re going to destroy them, Allison. Every last one of them. Hurry up.”

Allison ended the call. She slung the heavy bag over her shoulder. The leather strap dug painfully into her collarbone, but the physical discomfort kept her grounded. It reminded her she was still alive, still moving, still fighting.

She walked out of her bedroom and headed down the narrow back staircase used by the staff. She would not walk through the main foyer. She would not give them the satisfaction of seeing her leave with her head down.

She slipped out through the massive industrial kitchen.

The private chef looked up from chopping vegetables, his eyes wide with confusion. “Miss Montgomery? Is everything—”

Allison ignored him and pushed through the service doors, walking out into the crisp New York night. The cold air hit her face, clearing her head. She walked two blocks down the

avenue before hailing another cab. She threw her bag into the trunk and slid into the backseat.

“Soho,” she told the driver.

As the cab sped downtown, Allison’s mind raced. The adrenaline was fading, replaced by cold, hard logic. She mentally reviewed the Montgomery Group’s shareholder structure. Her father had left her twenty-five percent of the voting shares. Baker controlled another twenty percent. The rest were scattered among minor shareholders and institutional investors.

Without the Kensington marriage alliance backing her, Baker would immediately call an emergency board meeting. He would try to strip her of her voting rights. He would argue that she was “unstable,” “emotionally compromised,” “unfit to lead.” And the board—most of whom owed their positions to Baker—would likely agree.

She needed a backer. Someone with enough capital to terrify Baker. Someone whose name alone would make the board think twice before crossing her. Someone whose power outranked Finn’s branch of the Kensington family.

The cab dropped her off on a cobblestone street in Soho. She took the freight elevator up to Emilee’s loft—a sprawling space with exposed brick walls, a massive skylight, and a kitchen island that had seen more therapy sessions than actual cooking. The metal doors slid open, and Emilee instantly tackled her in a fierce, bone-crushing hug.

Allison breathed in the smell of Emilee’s expensive perfume—Chanel No. 5, the same kind her mother used to wear before everything went wrong. For the first time all night, she felt her shoulders drop an inch.

Emilee pulled back, grabbed two shot glasses from the kitchen island, and poured a full shot of Patrón tequila into each. She handed one to Allison.

“Drink,” Emilee ordered.

Allison took the glass and downed it without flinching. The liquor burned a fiery trail down her throat, settling warmly in her empty stomach.

They moved to the plush velvet sofa in the center of the loft. Allison sat down, resting her elbows on her knees, staring at the floorboards.

“I’m about to be ousted from the board,” Allison said. “Baker is going to use this to take everything my grandfather built. Everything my father died for.”

Emilee paced the floor, her heels clicking aggressively. “We leak the dashcam video to Page Six. We ruin Finn’s reputation. We burn them to the ground socially. Finn’s mother, Eulalie, cares more about appearances than anything—if that video goes public, she’ll disown him.”

Allison shook her head. “No. A scandal like that would tank Montgomery stock. That hurts my own inheritance. I need a surgical strike. Not a bomb.”

She looked up at Emilee. Her eyes were cold, focused. “I need a marriage of convenience. Someone with enough capital to make Baker back down, powerful enough to make the entire Kensington family bow.”

Emilee stared at her, stunned, before letting out an incredulous huff. “Wait—you’re not talking about the Kensington patriarch, are you? Adam Kensington? That old fox who devours his own brothers for profit? You think he’d ever lift a finger to help you?”

Allison said nothing. But her quiet, unwavering silence was answer enough.

Her mind flashed back to the airport terminal. She remembered the impact. The bespoke charcoal suit. The terrifying, suffocating aura of power. The heat of his hand on her waist. And the name the man behind him had called out. Adam.

She closed her eyes for a split second, seeing those dark, piercing eyes again—the ones that had seen straight through her calm facade at the airport. Eyes that had silently spoken: “I know everything you are. I know everything you need.”

Allison’s eyes gleamed with sudden, dangerous resolve. “What do you know about Adam Kensington?”

Emilee dropped her shot glass onto the glass coffee table with a loud clatter, spilling tequila everywhere. Her jaw unhinged.

“Allison, are you sure?”

“I am,” Allison said smoothly. “Becoming Finn’s untouchable aunt is the perfect opening move in my war.”

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Chapter 4:

Emilee stared at Allison’s determined face, the blood draining from her own as she realized her best friend was about to dance with the devil—one of New York’s most ruthless billionaires.

The heavy silence in the Soho loft hung like a noose, until Emilee let out a shaky breath that felt like it had been trapped in her chest for hours.

“You’re insane,” she whispered, but the words landed weakly against Allison’s unflinching stare.

Morning arrived in a wash of pale gold, sunlight cutting through the loft’s industrial windows and striping the hardwood floor with sharp contrasts of brightness and shadow.

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Allison sat perched on a marble stool, cradling a mug of steaming black coffee, her laptop screen casting a cool glow across her sharp features.

Her jaw was clenched, eyes scanning with razor focus, though the faint quiver in her fingers betrayed the composure she wore like armor.

Emilee slid a plate of avocado toast across the counter, her messy bun unraveling, dark crescents beneath her eyes so pronounced they resembled bruises.

She’d spent the night burrowed in her PR firm’s restricted databases, and exhaustion clung to her like a second layer of skin.

“I found what I could,” she rasped, voice frayed. “But Adam Kensington is more phantom than flesh.”

Allison nodded, her eyes fixed on the laptop—sparse public profiles, no social media, only a handful of grainy press photos taken from a distance, his face always partially obscured.

“No trail, no leverage,” she muttered, tapping her nail against the trackpad hard enough to leave a faint mark. “Perfect for someone hiding something.”

“More than hiding,” Emilee said, leaning in, her voice dropping to a conspiratorial hush even though they were alone.

She pulled out her tablet, pulling up a redacted blind item from a top-secret financial gossip blog. “Wall Street’s whispering. Severe mysophobia—refuses to be touched by women. Fires assistants for accidental brushes. And...” She swiped, her expression grim. “The Kensington trust is forcing him to marry. Investors are spooked by a ‘hidden ailment.’”

“Define ‘ailment,’” Allison said, sipping her coffee, the bitterness doing nothing to faze her.

Her mind flashed to the airport—his warm, firm grip on her waist, his thumb pressing into her coat, the heat of his skin through the fabric.

The rumor clashed with her memory, a tiny crack in the facade she’d been building.

Emilee didn't hesitate. "They say he's asexual. Or worse, impotent. The trading floor joke is he can't even stand physical intimacy."

A beat passed, then she grabbed Allison's wrist. "This isn't a game, Ally. He destroys people for fun. Marrying him is walking into a lion's den."

But instead of fear, a surge of adrenaline raced through Allison's veins. A slow, sharp smile tugged at her lips. "Exactly. An impotent, touch-averse billionaire is the perfect sham husband. No messy expectations, no strings, just a business deal. He gets a PR shield for his investors; I get the capital to take down my family."

Emilee sighed, defeated. She pulled a printed itinerary from her folder, slamming it on the counter. "Kip Downs, his right-hand man. They're having coffee at a members-only cafe in the Financial District, late morning. My source got us in, but if we're caught—"

Allison cut her off, snapping her laptop shut. "We won't be."

Twenty minutes later, she emerged from the guest room—slate-grey Dior pantsuit, tailored to perfection, hair pulled back in a sleek chignon, every inch the corporate warrior.

"Battle armor," Emilee whistled, equal parts impressed and terrified.

The Uber Black dropped them at the unmarked cafe, its brass doors a silent promise of discretion.

Emilee used a PR favor to bypass the hostile hostess, and they slid into a back booth, hidden behind tall wooden partitions that blocked them from prying eyes.

The air smelled of expensive cologne and freshly roasted beans, thick with tension.

Allison ordered sparkling water, her posture rigid, hands folded neatly on the table as she rehearsed her pitch: mutual benefit, PR stability, no strings attached.

Emilee checked her phone, her hand shaking.

“Kip’s here,” she whispered. “Adam will be next.”

Allison took a steady breath, her heart racing but her face impassive.

She leaned across the table, whispering the final contract terms to Emilee, her voice low and determined.

She didn’t notice the faint shift on the other side of the partition, and she also didn’t hear that familiar, deep voice breaking through the silence, whispering softly.

“Fake marriage? Interesting.”

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Chapter 5:

In the adjacent booth, separated by nothing more than a thin carved-wood panel with ornate ventilation slits, Adam sat back against the dark leather upholstery. He held a small black espresso cup, the porcelain appearing fragile against his large hands.

Kip sat across from Adam. He was mid-sentence, aggressively gesturing while explaining a tech merger, when Adam suddenly raised a single index finger.

It was a silent, absolute demand for silence.

Kip's brow furrowed in confusion, but he immediately shut his mouth.

He followed Adam's dark, intense gaze toward the wooden partition separating their booth from the next.

Through the ornate grilles in the partition, Allison's crisp, professional voice filtered through perfectly.

"I will offer him a two-year, NDA-bound marriage," Allison's voice stated, the tone clinical and detached. "Complete separation of personal assets. I just need his name on paper."

Emilee's anxious voice followed. "But Allie, what if the impotence rumor is a lie? What if the ice king actually expects physical intimacy?"

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Kip's eyes widened to the size of dinner plates. He clamped both hands over his mouth to muffle a violent, barking laugh, his shoulders shaking uncontrollably as he stared at his terrifying boss.

Adam's expression remained terrifyingly impassive. Not a single muscle in his face twitched. But his jaw clenched tight. A dangerous, predatory glint flashed in his dark eyes at the mention of his "impotence." His thumb slowly rubbed the rim of his espresso cup.

"If he attempts to cross the boundary, I will legally castrate him in court," Allison's voice continued, brimming with arrogant confidence. "But I am certain he's just a machine. Zero physical expectations. It's a flawless setup."

Allison listed the benefits she brought to the table. "I have a respectable old-money name. Flawless social etiquette. And zero emotional baggage. I am the perfect asset for his European board."

Kip leaned over the table, whispering so quietly his breath barely moved the air. "The girl at the next table has massive guts to treat you like a distressed asset, Adam."

Adam ignored Kip entirely. His focus was entirely on the cadence of Allison's voice. He recognized the slight rasp, the underlying tension. It was the exact voice of the woman he had caught falling at the airport yesterday. The woman he had already decided was his.

"How do you plan to actually approach a man who travels with ex-military security?" Emilee asked.

"I plan to ambush him right here," Allison replied confidently. "As soon as he finishes his meeting with Kip Downs."

Adam set his espresso cup down on the saucer. He didn't slam it. He placed it down with a soft, deliberate clink. The sharp sound cut cleanly through the ambient noise of the cafe.

On the other side of the partition, Allison paused mid-breath. She heard the clink. A sudden, icy spike of paranoia hit the base of her neck. The hairs on her arms stood up.

Before Allison could investigate, a tall shadow fell over their table, blocking the warm ambient light from the crystal chandelier above.

Allison looked up slowly. Her breath caught violently in her throat. She recognized the broad shoulders instantly. She recognized the bespoke charcoal suit.

Adam stood beside their booth. His hands rested casually in his trouser pockets. He looked down at her, projecting an aura of absolute, suffocating dominance.

The air pressure in the booth seemed to drop, making it hard to breathe.

Emilee shrank back into the leather upholstery, physically intimidated by the sheer size and presence of the Wall Street phantom.

Adam stared directly into Allison's eyes. He bypassed any polite pleasantries or introductions.

“Is your term negotiable?” Adam asked. His voice was a low, gravelly rumble that sent a physical shiver straight down Allison’s spine.

Allison’s heart hammered frantically against her ribs. The blood rushed to her ears. She realized with sheer, paralyzing horror that he had heard every single word of her arrogant, calculating plan.

Despite her internal panic, twenty years of elite social training kicked in. Her spine snapped straight. She forced her facial muscles into a mask of calm professionalism, refusing to break eye contact.

“The term is fixed,” Allison replied, her voice remarkably steady despite her racing pulse. “But the asset division is open to discussion.”

Kip popped his head around the corner of the partition. He was grinning like a kid in a candy store, waving cheerfully at a completely stunned Emilee.

Adam’s eyes flicked over Allison’s grey Dior power suit. He took in her forced composure, the slight tremor in her hands that she was trying to hide. A flicker of genuine, dark amusement hid deep in his irises. He leaned down slightly, invading her personal space. The scent of cedarwood and cold air overwhelmed her senses, exactly like at the airport.

“I accept your proposal,” Adam stated bluntly, skipping the negotiation entirely.

Allison blinked, her brain misfiring. “You... accept?”

“Meet me at City Hall tomorrow at 9 AM sharp,” Adam ordered.

Before Allison could formulate a single word in response, Adam turned on his heel and walked out of the cafe, Kip trailing behind him.

Allison sat in the booth, her mouth slightly open, utterly speechless.

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Jilted heiress: marrying the untouchable tycoon

Chapter 6:

Adam's broad back vanished behind the cafe's heavy brass doors, the sound of the latch clicking shut like a final nail in a coffin.

Allison stared at the empty spot where he'd stood, her mind reeling. Too fast. Everything had happened too fast.

Emilee exhaled a gust of air she'd been holding so long her lungs burned, slumping forward and snatching a paper menu to fan her sweat-flushed cheeks.

Her voice trembled, barely above a whisper, as she met Allison's gaze.

"Holy shit," she breathed. "Adam Kensington is even more terrifying up close. Allison, are you sure? Marrying him feels like making a deal with the devil himself."

Allison reached for her glass of sparkling water, her hand shaking so badly the ice clinked wildly against the crystal.

She took a slow, deliberate sip; the frigid liquid burned down her throat, barely taming the fire racing in her veins.

Instinctively, she brushed her waist, the ghost of his searing grip from the airport yesterday still lingering, a brand she couldn't shake.

She forced her hand away, shoving the memory aside. This was business, nothing more.

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“The devil’s exactly who I need to take down Baker and Finn,” she said, her voice sharpening into a blade, free of the earlier tremor. “His quick yes? It proves he’s begging for a PR lifeline. He needs this marriage as badly as I do.”

Outside, Adam slid into the back of his waiting black Maybach, the door closing with a muted thud that felt like a threat.

He settled into the plush leather seat, adjusting his cuffs with a precision that was almost violent, practiced, lethal, unforgiving.

Kip slid in beside him, snorting with laughter as the car pulled away from the curb. “How’s it feel, boss? Proposed to by a heartbroken woman who thinks you’re... well, impotent?”

He wiped a tear of amusement from his eye, not noticing the temperature in the car plummet.

Adam’s glare cut through him like ice, and Kip’s laughter died mid-breath, a nervous swallow bobbing his Adam’s apple, though his eyes still glinted with poorly contained humor.

Without a word, Adam pulled out his phone and dialed Preston Vance, his lead attorney.

“Draft an ironclad prenup and NDA,” he ordered the second Preston picked up. “Finalize them by midnight. No exceptions.”

Preston’s voice crackled over the speaker: “Understood, Mr. Kensington. Shall I use the standard corporate asset protection parameters?”

“This isn’t corporate,” Adam interrupted, his tone dark and velvet-smooth, dangerous. “It’s for my personal marriage.”

Kip watched as Adam dictated the terms, his jaw dropping open. He couldn’t believe his eyes. Adam was leaving his entire personal fortune vulnerable to Allison. For a man who guarded his billions like a lion guards its den, it was reckless, unthinkable, suicidal.

“Adam, you’re signing your life away,” Kip said cautiously, leaning forward. “She could clean you out.”

Adam stared out the tinted window, the city streets blurring past. “What’s mine will be hers anyway,” he said coldly, a flicker of obsession in his eyes that made Kip’s blood run cold. “Take me to MK Holdings’ New York office.”

His mind was already racing, locked on the next step of his plan, one Allison knew nothing about.

Back in the cafe, Allison slammed her laptop open, fingers flying as she pulled up New York's marriage license requirements.

Emilee watched, shaking her head in awe. "I'll never get over how you turn trauma into a to-do list," she said.

"We need to skip the 24-hour waiting period," Allison muttered, scanning the screen. "Adam must have the pull to get a judicial waiver."

She typed a crisp, formal email to his assistant, Leo Sullivan, confirming their agreement and listing her ID documents, then hit send.

Three minutes exactly. Her phone pinged. Leo's reply was short. "All judicial waivers are secured. See you 9 AM."

Allison frowned, staring at the timestamp. A chill slithered down her spine. Something was off. It was as if the waivers had been ready before she'd even agreed.

She shook it off, chalking it up to MK Holdings' legendary efficiency. But the seed of suspicion had been planted.

“What about your stuff?” Emilee asked, yanking her back to reality. “It’s still at Montgomery Estate.”

Allison’s face hardened, her stomach twisting into a knot.

She’d been trapped under Baker’s and Finn’s tight surveillance for months, every move monitored, leaving her zero chance to smuggle out or relocate her critical belongings.

The wall safe hidden in her childhood bedroom was the only undiscovered, completely private corner in the entire Montgomery Estate, unknown to anyone but herself.

With the power balance shifting abruptly these days, she’d run out of time to make alternate arrangements.

Her mother’s vintage jewelry box and the trust fund documents that could sink Baker and Finn were all hidden in that wall safe.

If Baker found them first, she was done.

“I have to go back,” she said, slamming her laptop shut. “One last time. I need to get my leverage before Baker locks me out for good.”

“I’m coming with you,” Emilee said, grabbing her purse. “You shouldn’t face them alone.”

“No,” Allison said firmly, her voice steady. “I have to do this alone. I need to break their hold on me, for good.”

The strategic planner was gone, replaced by a woman ready for war, her eyes sharp with resolve.

They paid the bill and stepped onto Manhattan’s bustling sidewalk, the afternoon sun casting harsh, elongated shadows that seemed to reach for them.

Allison hugged Emilee tight, whispering thanks, before hailing a cab and sliding inside.

As the cab pulled away, Allison stared out the window, muscles coiled tight, bracing for the fight ahead.

What she didn’t know was that Adam’s “plan” had nothing to do with PR, or even Baker and Finn.

The judicial waivers weren’t just a sign of efficiency; they were proof he’d been tracking her every move, waiting for this exact moment.

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Jilted heiress: marrying the untouchable tycoon

Chapter 7:

Allison stared out the cab window, her knuckles white as she gripped the edge of her tote bag. The city streets blurred into a streak of gray, but her focus was sharp, honed on the inevitable showdown with Baker and Finn that waited at the Montgomery Estate.

Her muscles coiled like a spring, jaw set so tight it ached, every nerve screaming warning, yet she refused to falter.

The cab screeched to a halt at the imposing wrought-iron gates, their spikes glinting in the overcast light.

Allison paid the fare, her fingers trembling not with fear, but with cold fury, and stepped out.

The wind cut through her trench coat, lashing it around her legs as she bypassed the grand driveway—too exposed, too easy to spot—and ducked onto the narrow stone path that snaked around the side of the mansion.

She reached the heavy wooden service door, her thumb hovering over the biometric scanner for a heartbeat before pressing down.

The lock clicked green, a faint, mocking chime, and she pushed the door open, slipping inside as quietly as a shadow, her boots barely grazing the floor.

Upstairs, her belongings waited, and so did the storm.

The dim service hallway reeked of lemon polish and tension. From the formal dining room down the hall, the sharp clatter of silverware against china echoed, sharp and deliberate, Baker's way of asserting control even over a late lunch.

The family was there, all of them, and Allison's breath hitched as she tiptoed past the double doors, her eyes glued to the grand staircase at the end, her only escape route.

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Then it happened. A maid, her arms loaded with a silver tray of crystal water glasses, rounded the corner and froze at the sight of Allison.

The girl gasped, a high, shrill sound, and the tray slipped from her fingers. It crashed to the marble floor, silver clanging, glass shattering into a thousand sharp shards, the noise exploding through the house like a gunshot.

Baker's voice erupted from the dining room, sharp as a whip, no trace of patience. "Who dares sneak through my house like a common thief?"

Allison's body went rigid, but she didn't flinch. She straightened her spine, every inch of her radiating defiance, and turned slowly. Her heels clicked against the marble, a deliberate, taunting rhythm, as she faced the dining room doors, now thrown open, revealing the faces of her worst nightmares.

"Look who decided to slither back," Katharine sneered, her face twisting into a mask of ugly elitism. "Did you realize you are absolutely nothing without the Montgomery credit limit?"

Finn stood, adjusting his silk tie with a lazy, patronizing smirk, as if Allison's presence was nothing more than a minor inconvenience. "Allison, let's be reasonable. We need to talk in private. You're making yourself look pathetic."

Cheyanne sat beside him, her fingers draped over the table, the massive diamond engagement ring, stolen from Allison's finger just twenty-four hours earlier, glinting under the chandelier.

She met Allison's gaze, her smile sickly sweet, victory oozing from every pore. "You look terrible, Allie. Rough night?"

Allison's gaze sliced past them, locking onto Baker, her voice cold enough to freeze the air.

"I'm here for my things. Ten minutes. That's all."

Baker slamming his fist on the table made the crystal wine glasses jump, their contents sloshing over the rim. "Everything in this house is mine, Montgomery Group property! You ungrateful brat!"

Allison's eyes narrowed, a fire flickering in her chest, hot and unyielding. "My trust fund was my grandfather's. Not yours. You don't own me. You don't own his legacy."

Katharine shot to her feet, her perfectly manicured finger jabbing at Allison's face, her voice rising to a shrill shriek.

"Ungrateful wretch! You're just bitter Finn chose me over you, so you want to ruin Cheyanne's happiness too! Finn strayed because you're cold, because you're unlovable!" Katharine spat, taking another step, her eyes wild. "You pushed him away, you never let him near you! This is all your fault!"

The words hit Allison like a fist to the gut, a sharp, searing pain of betrayal that made her breath catch.

The last fragile thread of affection for her aunt, the woman who'd once pretended to care, snapped, crumbling to ash. And Katharine was saying this in front of the staff, humiliating her on purpose.

Finn stepped forward, his voice dropping to a faux-concerned, persuasive murmur, wearing the mask of a generous former lover.

“Allison, there’s no need for us to destroy each other. Sign the NDA to bury all past disputes and keep what happened quiet, and I’ll gift you a fully-paid, luxury Manhattan penthouse outright. On top of that, I’ll personally guarantee your senior executive position within Montgomery Group. You can have stability, status, and a lavish life without struggling anymore.”

Allison stared at him, revulsion curling in her stomach, so intense she almost gagged.

He was trying to buy her silence, using luxury assets and empty status promises to sugarcoat a desperate cover-up, fully aware of how dangerous her evidence was to their family power.

Cheyenne giggled, her voice dripping with fake sweetness. “Take it, Allie. Where else are you gonna go? You’re nothing without us.”

A laugh burst from Allison's lips, sharp, cold, and empty of any humor. It echoed through the hallway, sending a shiver through everyone in the room.

Finn stumbled back, his smirk fading. Katharine's face paled.

Allison turned back to Baker, her voice steady, deadly calm. "You're a coward. You couldn't build a legacy of your own, so you stole my grandfather's. You're nothing but a thief."

Baker's face turned purple, veins bulging in his neck. He lunged forward, his hand raised high, ready to strike her across the face, no pretense, no hesitation.

Allison didn't move. She didn't flinch. She took a step closer, tilting her chin up, her eyes blazing with defiance.

"Hit me," she whispered, her voice so quiet it cut through the silence. "Hit me, right in front of the cameras I installed in this hallway last month. Let everyone see what a coward you really are."

Baker froze, his hand hovering in mid-air, trembling with rage and panic. His eyes darted to the corner of the ceiling, where the tiny black dome of the camera stared back at him. Horror washed over his face; he'd been outplayed, and he knew it.

Allison turned her back on them, her steps slow and deliberate as she climbed the grand staircase, leaving them seething, powerless, and furious below.

Her bedroom door locked behind her with a heavy click, a temporary reprieve. She strode to her walk-in closet, shoving aside her designer coats to press her palm against a false panel; it popped open, revealing a hidden safe.

Her fingers flew over the keypad, punching in the six-digit code. The safe door swung open.

She grabbed her mother's vintage jewelry box, heavy and warm in her hands, and beneath it lay the manila envelope with the unredacted trust fund charters, the proof she needed to take back what was hers.

She stuffed them into her tote bag, her heart racing.

She cast one last glance around the room before she unlocked the door, gripping the handle so tight her knuckles turned white.

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Jilted heiress: marrying the untouchable tycoon

Chapter 8:

Allison's fingers tightened around the cold brass doorknob, the metal biting into her palm as she unlocked the bedroom door. She drew a sharp breath, steeling herself for the final showdown. No more hesitation, no more mercy.

With a heave, she swung the heavy door open.

Finn loomed in the hallway, his hand frozen mid-air, knuckles white as if he'd been about to knock but hesitated.

The second the door creaked, he stepped forward, shoulders squared, trying to bar her path with his frame.

Romance and passion on galnovels.com

His face was a grotesque mix of feigned guilt and entitled arrogance, like he deserved her forgiveness.

He knew the luxury penthouse and executive position offers had failed to sway her, and desperate times called for desperate measures.

Now he resorted to feigned remorse and old affection, aiming to soften her stance, stall her departure, and buy Baker time to secure reinforcements and seize the damning trust fund documents in her bag.

“Allison, you have to listen to me,” he urged, reaching out to grab her forearm, fast, like he thought he could trap her before she escaped. “What happened with Cheyanne? It was just a stupid physical slip-up. I still respect you, more than you know. We can fix this, go back to how things were.”

Revulsion coiled in Allison’s gut the second his fingers brushed her coat. She didn’t think, she reacted, slapping his hand away so hard the crack echoed through the empty hallway, sharp enough to make Finn flinch. Her eyes were shards of ice, cold enough to freeze.

“Your touch disgusts me,” she said, her voice low and lethal. “Don’t you dare ever put your hands on me again.”

Finn’s fleeting guilt vanished in an instant, replaced by wounded male pride that turned his face red. He sneered, his upper lip curling in disgust. “Frigid bitch. You drove me to Cheyanne, you never knew how to be a real woman, how to keep a man. This is your fault.”

Allison didn't shout, didn't argue. She just pulled her phone from her pocket, her thumb hovering over the screen like an executioner's blade.

She opened her email, the subject line, "Confidential: Montgomery Trust Violation," glinting up at her.

"This goes to the Kensington Trust Board," she said, calm as a storm before it breaks. "Attached? The dashcam video of you and Cheyanne, screwing in the back of my car in the country club parking lot. You have three seconds to move. One... two..."

Finn paled, the blood draining from his face so quickly he looked like he might collapse. His inheritance, his standing in the family, all gone in a single click.

He stumbled back, pressing himself against the wall, eyes wide with terror, as if she'd pulled a gun on him.

Allison walked past him without a glance, adjusting the tote bag on her shoulder, her lifeline, holding the trust documents that could bring the Montgomerys to their knees.

She descended the grand staircase, her boots clicking against the marble, and froze at the bottom.

Baker and Katharine blocked the foyer, arms crossed, faces like stone, prison guards determined to lock her in forever.

“Hand over the bag,” Baker snapped, his voice booming in the empty space. “I’m inspecting it for stolen corporate property. Refuse, and I’ll call security.”

Allison stood on the bottom step, using the slight elevation to look down at him, her voice cutting through the silence.

“Digital copies of every trust document are already on a secure offshore server,” she announced, loud enough for anyone listening to hear. “Try to take this bag, and a dead-man’s switch triggers. In five minutes, the SEC gets every last file, and your little embezzlement scheme goes public.”

Baker’s eyes bulged, panic seizing his face. He opened his mouth, then closed it, jaw slack. He knew she wasn’t bluffing. A federal investigation meant ruin, for him and the entire family.

Cheyenne slunk out of the living room, tears streaming down her face, playing the victim like it was her job. “Allie, please, why are you doing this? It’s just a misunderstanding! You’re tearing our family apart!”

Allison turned slowly, her gaze cold enough to make Cheyanne flinch. “Keep him,” she said, a bitter laugh escaping her. “He’s your garbage now. I’m upgrading.”

Katharine scoffed, a harsh, mocking sound that bounced off the walls. “Upgrading? Who in New York would touch a disgraced Montgomery? You’re nothing without this family, no money, no name, no future.”

Allison smiled, a slow, chilling smile that made Katharine’s laughter die in her throat. “You have no idea who’s in my corner. By this time tomorrow, you’ll be begging me to spare you.”

She pushed past Baker, who didn’t dare reach for her, and grabbed the oak front doors, slamming them shut behind her, a final, definitive goodbye.

The crisp evening air hit her lungs, clearing the toxic stench of the estate, and she hailed a cab, giving the driver an address he didn’t recognize: a sleek boutique hotel near City Hall.

Across the city, in a glass high-rise in the financial district, Adam stood at floor-to-ceiling windows, staring down at the skyline. A hidden earpiece pressed to his ear, he listened as his operative, Juan Dotson, spoke in a low, encrypted voice.

“Target’s clear of the estate, unharmed. En route to the hotel.”

Adam’s shoulders relaxed, just slightly, as he exhaled. “Upgrade her to the presidential suite, complimentary, no mention of me. And Juan?” He paused, his voice hardening. “Keep an eye on her. The Montgomerys won’t let this go. And if anything happens to her...”

The line went silent. Adam turned away from the window, his jaw set.

Allison stumbled into the hotel, exhaustion weighing on her bones but adrenaline coursing through her veins.

She approached the front desk, ready to collapse, and the receptionist smiled, handing her a black keycard.

“Ms. Montgomery, our loyalty program glitched, you’ve been upgraded to the presidential suite, complimentary.”

Allison’s brow furrowed. She’d never stayed here before, had no loyalty status. But she took the keycard anyway, collapsing onto the plush carpet of the suite the second the door closed.

Silence wrapped around her, the first peace she’d known in weeks. She poured a glass of sparkling water, pulled out her laptop, and opened the email from Preston, Adam’s lawyer.

The NDA draft stared back at her, dense legal jargon that boiled down to one thing: sign it, and she’d be tied to Adam forever.

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Jilted heiress: marrying the untouchable tycoon

Chapter 9:

Allison perched rigidly on the edge of the oversized king bed, a sharp, burning sting pricking the backs of her eyes as she pored over the dense, cold legal wording of the NDA draft.

The whole presidential suite was drowned in thick, heavy darkness, with nothing but the icy glow of her laptop screen cutting through the gloom.

She scrutinized every clause twice over, each line a heavier shackle, fully bracing herself to sign away her freedom, her choices, every inch of her dignity to the ruthless devil of a man when dawn broke.

Bone-deep exhaustion crashed over her without warning soon after, dragging her into a hollow, restless sleep void of all dreams and respite.

The next morning, Allison jolted awake precisely at seven o'clock, no trace of drowsiness left in her veins.

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Pale, frigid morning light flooded unsparingly through the floor-to-ceiling glass windows, coldly sobering her to the cruel reality ahead.

She showered in haste, letting scalding hot water scour away the lingering, bone-chilling cold that clung to her from the desolate Montgomery Estate.

Then she slipped into a crisp, immaculately tailored white Alexander McQueen power suit, the clean, sharp lines carving out a cold, unyielding aura.

The faint undertone of bridal white was no accident. It was her layered disguise, her solid emotional armor, shielding her from the soulless transaction she was about to seal with her own hand.

She stepped out of the luxury hotel straight into the biting, crisp New York morning air, the city's hustle sharp and unforgiving around her.

A brief, quiet cab ride later, she arrived at the downtown Manhattan Marriage Bureau, the heart of countless fleeting romantic vows.

The clock struck eight fifty when she pushed through the main doors.

The lobby buzzed with giddy chatter, couples clutching delicate bouquets, families laughing and embracing, every corner steeped in warm romantic bliss.

Allison moved through the crowd like a detached ghost, completely severed from the joy around her.

Her insides twisted into tight, gnawing knots, cold anxiety coiling relentlessly in her stomach, every nerve stretched thin to breaking point.

Then she spotted him. Adam, standing tall and motionless beside the towering, cold marble pillars.

Clad in a flawless bespoke navy suit that bespoke power and cruelty, he looked less like a groom waiting to exchange vows and more like a cold, calculating tycoon poised to launch a brutal corporate hostile takeover, every line of his frame radiating menace.

Right at his side stood Preston Vance, his sharp-eyed, unsmiling personal lawyer, clutching a sleek leather briefcase tight to his chest like a sealed weapon, no flicker of emotion on his rigid face.

The second Allison drew near, Adam's dark, piercing eyes locked onto her without a shred of hesitation.

His gaze raked slowly over her crisp white suit, cold and assessing.

A fleeting, blazing spark of possessive hunger flared deep in his pupils for a split second, raw and dangerous, before he smothered it entirely behind an impenetrable wall of icy indifference, leaving no trace of the heat behind it.

Allison responded with nothing but a stiff, rigid nod, her expression blank and guarded. She kept a strict three-foot distance between them at all times, every muscle tensed, behaving as if she were stepping into a high-stakes corporate board negotiation, not a marriage appointment bound by law.

Adam did not curve his lips into a greeting, did not utter a single word of civility. He merely lifted one hand in a cold, dismissive gesture toward a secluded private alcove hidden from the public eye, silently ordering Preston to initiate the proceedings without delay.

They settled around a small, cold marble table, the stone surface biting through the thin fabric of their sleeves.

Preston unlatched the briefcase, the brass clasps clicking sharply, loud and jarring in the quiet air. He drew out two thick, heavy stacks of formal legal documents: the ironclad Non-Disclosure Agreement and the binding Prenuptial Contract, both stacked high with unforgiving fine print.

Preston slid the documents across the frosty marble toward Allison, then offered her a heavy platinum Montblanc pen, its surface glinting coldly under the faint overhead light.

Allison ignored the pen for a long moment, her fingers brushing the edge of the NDA as she flipped through the pages, rechecking every strict confidentiality clause she had memorized through sleepless hours the night before.

Her movement froze abruptly at Clause Four. The terms were clear, unyielding, non-negotiable: their marriage would remain strictly confidential from the general public and all media outlets indefinitely, until Adam Kensington personally chose to lift the secrecy ban.

Allison's brows slammed down into a sharp frown, her head lifting sharply to pin Adam with a questioning stare. "I need your influential name to crush Baker and save my family's legacy. If this marriage stays hidden from the world, what real use is it to me at all?"

Her voice was tight, edged with suppressed frustration and urgency.

Adam leaned forward slowly, his broad chest hovering close over the table edge, his imposing presence pressing in on her relentlessly.

His voice dropped to a low, resonant rumble, vibrating with quiet authority and hidden danger. “A sudden public marriage to my nephew’s former fiancée would trigger an immediate, catastrophic plunge in MK Holdings’ stock. My entire European board abhors unpredictable chaos, and they will not tolerate it.”

He held her gaze captive, his dark eyes unfathomable, no emotion readable in their depths. “Within two years, I will supply you with unlimited capital and all the corporate leverage you need to seize full control of the Montgomery Group through a hostile takeover. But until that deal is fully done, this marriage stays off every public record. No exceptions.”

Allison weighed the brutal risk in silence, her fingers tapping restlessly against the cold marble surface.

Secret backing would never serve as an immediate weapon against her enemies, but MK Holdings’ overwhelming financial power was the only lifeline she had left.

It was a ruthless long game, and she had no other choice but to play along.

She flipped without hesitation to the prenuptial agreement, scanning quickly through the asset division terms until her eyes landed on the divorce compensation section.

Her breath caught in her throat, pure shock freezing her in place.

If their marriage ever ended in divorce, she would receive a staggering nine-figure settlement in full, plus complete retention of every asset in her personal family trust, no deductions, no loopholes.

Allison narrowed her eyes sharply, staring straight at Preston in clear disbelief. “Is this a clerical error? These lopsided terms are wildly unfavorable to Mr. Kensington. There is no logical reason for this clause to exist.”

Adam glanced casually at his luxury Patek Philippe watch, adjusting his tailored cufflink with lazy, unconcerned movements, his expression utterly blank and unreadable. “I have zero intention of ever filing for divorce. That compensation clause is nothing but meaningless fine print to me.”

Allison misread his unshakable calm as cold arrogance, nothing more. She completely failed to detect the dark, obsessive, permanent vow hidden beneath his plain words, blind to the possessive bond he was already forging between them. She merely thought he was guarding his powerful ego, nothing deeper.

Satisfied that her family’s ancestral trust was fully protected from all risk, Allison finally reached for the Montblanc pen.

The cold metal bit against her fingertips, a stark reminder of the binding choice she was about to make.

In quick, decisive, unwavering strokes, she signed her legal name on every dotted line of both contracts.

The sharp scratch of the nib against thick, heavy paper echoed loudly in the silent alcove, each stroke sealing her fate tighter.

Adam watched every movement closely, his jaw tightening almost imperceptibly.

A dark, predatory, satisfied aura rolled off him in waves as the black ink dried permanently on the official pages, marking her as his.

Adam reached across the table to take the pen back from her grasp. As he pulled it away, his fingers brushed deliberately, slowly against hers on purpose. A sharp, electric jolt shot straight up Allison's arm, stealing her breath in an instant.

The scorching heat of his skin collided violently with her cold, trembling fingertips, leaving her reeling.

Adam signed his own name with bold, forceful, sweeping strokes, legally binding the two of them together in an unbreakable marital contract with one single motion.

Preston moved swiftly to notarize every page, stamping the official seals into place without a single wasted second.

He snapped the briefcase shut with a sharp sound, then offered cold, formal congratulations on their cold business marriage arrangement.

Adam rose to his full imposing height, turning to face Allison and holding out his arm for her to take. “We go before the priest now to make this marriage fully legal and irreversible.”

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Jilted heiress: marrying the untouchable tycoon

Chapter 10:

Allison stared at Adam’s outstretched arm, her pulse roaring in her ears so loud she could barely hear the hum of the simple church.

But she took a shaky breath, smoothed the crease in her tailored blazer, and slipped her hand through his arm, stepping over the threshold as if walking into a lion's den.

A clerk herded them into a cramped, wood-paneled office, the air thick with the smell of old paper and coffee.

Behind a massive mahogany desk sat a priest, his face lined with years of tedious cases, stacks of files teetering beside him like a tower of secrets.

He glanced up, his eyes sharp as a blade, and scanned their paperwork, then flicked his gaze between them, as if sizing up two opposing forces.

Adam exuded a dark, coiled intensity, his jaw set, his posture rigid, as if he'd rather be anywhere but here.

Allison, by contrast, wore a mask of icy calm, her spine straight, her expression blank, but her fingers, hidden in the crook of his arm, curled into a tight fist.

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The priest cleared his throat, his voice gravelly, as he asked the ritual questions, confirming they entered the marriage of their own free will.

“Yes,” Allison said, her voice crisp and unwavering, as if she were negotiating a business deal, not vowing to spend her life with a stranger.

“Yes,” Adam rumbled, his voice low enough to send a shiver down her spine.

He didn’t spare the priest a glance; his eyes were fixed on her profile, burning into her skin like a brand, as if he could see the doubt simmering beneath her composure.

No rings. Their contract’s strict “no romantic pretense” clause forbade it, a stark reminder this was nothing but a transaction.

The priest continued, “By the power vested in me by the State of New York, I now pronounce you husband and wife.”

No kiss. No smile.

Adam gave the priest a sharp, dismissive nod, while Allison felt a cold, suffocating weight crash onto her shoulders, legally bound to a man who terrified her, for a deal that could destroy her if she slipped up.

Preston Vance stepped forward to handle the fees, leaving them alone in the bustling hallway, the door clicking shut behind them like a lock.

The second they were alone, Allison wrenched her hand from his arm, stepping back as if his touch burned.

She pulled out her phone, fingers flying over the screen, already plotting her next move for the Montgomery Group's board meeting, desperate to regain some control.

"For logistics, and to keep the NDA intact," she said, not looking up, "I'll stay at my hotel. Less chance of being seen together."

Adam froze. He turned to face her, his broad shoulders blocking the hallway, forcing passersby to squeeze around them. His eyes darkened, a storm brewing in their depths.

"No," he said, his tone sharp enough to cut glass, no room for argument, no room for negotiation. "Living separately breaks the PR shield I need. The marriage has to look real."

Allison frowned, her grip on her phone tightening until her knuckles whitened. "It's a secret marriage, no one will know we're apart. This is ridiculous."

He took a step closer, invading her personal space, his scent, leather, cedar, and something dangerous, wrapping around her.

She was forced to tilt her head back to meet his gaze, and in that moment, she saw the trap he'd been laying all along.

"I need you to move in," he said, his voice dropping to a low, deliberate murmur, "to take care of my daughter."

Allison's composure shattered. Her eyes widened, her mouth falling open in genuine shock, so visceral she could feel her blood run cold.

The ruthless, untouchable Adam Kensington, a father?

It short-circuited her brain, the question tumbling out before she could stop it.

"Excuse me?" she stammered, blindsided. "I, I thought you were impotent. How do you have a child?"

The word "impotent" sparked a fire in Adam's eyes. A muscle in his jaw twitched as he suppressed a dark, menacing laugh, his fingers flexing at his sides, as if he was fighting the urge to grab her.

He leaned down, his face so close she could feel his breath on her neck, his lips brushing her ear as he whispered, "Wall Street rumors are lies, Allison. But Flora needs a mother figure. And you signed up to play the part."

A violent shiver wracked her body. Flora. A little girl, and she knew nothing about children, nothing about nurturing, nothing about the vulnerability that came with caring for someone so small.

Her mind spun, panic creeping in, but Adam straightened up, his cold authority slamming back into place.

“Pack your bags,” he ordered. “My Tribeca penthouse, 6 PM sharp. No exceptions.”

Allison hesitated, her independence warring with the desperation that had led her here, desperation for his capital to take down Baker.

“I didn’t sign up to be a nanny,” she snapped, her jaw tight with frustration.

Adam’s gaze turned icy, hard as steel. “Clause seven. Fulfill reasonable domestic duties to maintain the household facade. You signed it. Now obey.”

Allison did not back down an inch, her jaw tight with unyielding resolve, meeting his domineering tone head-on. “Clause seven requires domestic cooperation for our mutual deal. It does not require me to blindly serve your family for free while you withhold all core resources I was promised. You want my compliance? Prove your partnership first. Forty-eight hours. No files, no full cooperation.”

Trapped, but no longer passive, no longer powerless, Allison stood her ground, turning his coercive contract terms back against him.

Adam's lips twitched into a cold, satisfied smirk, a flicker of dark admiration flashing in his stormy eyes. He signaled his security, who materialized instantly to escort her to her hotel.

As she walked away, he pulled out his phone, texting his head of security, "Prep the penthouse. My wife's moving in. Deliver Baker's full case files to her within 48 hours."

Allison sat in the back of the black SUV, staring out the tinted window. She had no idea what awaited her in that Tribeca penthouse, no idea what Flora was like, no idea how to play the role of mother to a child she'd never met, no idea how Adam would watch her every move to ensure she kept up the facade.

The clock ticked closer to 6 PM, and with each passing minute, the fear grew: she was walking blind into a new life, but she was no longer walking in complete surrender.

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