

Chapter 11

The screen of the iPad burned into Connor's retinas. He scrambled up from the floor, snatching the device from the wealth manager's hand as if it were a venomous snake. Harding. Anissa. A kiss.

The image was a glitch in the universe, a piece of code that didn't belong. His brain refused to process it. The wealth manager and the two lawyers stood over him, their shadows long and suffocating in the dim light of the penthouse.

"This is a joke," Connor whispered, the words scraping his raw throat.

He looked up at the wealth manager, a desperate, wild look in his eyes. "This is one of my grandfather's tests, right? A sick fucking joke to teach me a lesson."

The wealth manager flinched, his face pale with pity. "Connor, this is very real."

"No," Connor snarled. He scrambled to his feet, his fingers tightening around the cool metal and glass of the iPad. "It's a goddamn PR stunt. A fake. To protect the stock price."

He was shouting now, the sound echoing in the cavernous, silent apartment.

With a guttural roar of pure rage, he hurled the iPad against the far wall. It exploded in a shower of black glass and plastic, the screen shattering into a spiderweb of dead pixels. The violent crack was the only sound that felt real.

The lawyers didn't even blink. The lead attorney simply adjusted his tie, glancing at the shattered debris on the floor.

"Destruction of Trust property. Noted," the lawyer said coldly. "We were prepared to give you twenty-four hours, Mr. Snow. But given your volatile state, we will be expediting the process. Good day."

The legal team and the wealth manager turned and walked out of the apartment, the heavy front door clicking shut behind them, leaving Connor alone in his crumbling empire.

Connor's chest heaved. He spun around, his eyes darting through the apartment. "She wouldn't dare. She wouldn't."

His logic twisted, contorting itself to find an explanation that didn't involve his own obsolescence. The empty closet, the disconnected number—it wasn't about leaving him. This was about money. It had to be.

She was trying to extort him with Harding's help.

He pulled out his phone, his fingers flying across the screen as he dialed his assistant.

"Felicity," he barked when she answered. There was a hesitant pause on the other end, the silence thick with the fear she always had when he was in a rage. "Track Anissa Roy's credit card. I want to know every purchase she's made in the last twenty-four hours. Now."

"Um, Mr. Snow... I can't do that."

"What do you mean you can't?" Connor roared. "I own you, and I own her. Do it!"

Felicity's voice was small and trembling. "Sir... her personal cards linked to your account are all inactive. The card she's using... I can't pull up any information on it. My access is completely denied. The system just says the account holder is Mr. Harding Snow, and the notation is... 'Highest Priority'."

The words Highest Priority hit him like a punch to the gut.

"That's a prop," he spat, though the words tasted like ash. "Harding gave it to her for show. It's all for show."

He hung up before she could reply. He had to talk to Anissa. He had to end this game.

He pulled up her contact, his thumb hovering over the message icon. His pride warred with his rising panic. He typed out a message, his tone dripping with the condescending magnanimity he had always used to control her.

This little drama is over. Come home. I'll even buy you that apartment on Fifth Avenue you wanted.

He hit send. The message sat there, a single gray arrow next to it. Delivered. Not read. She had cut his line, but he still foolishly believed he was the one holding the scissors.

Minutes stretched into an eternity. The silence in the apartment was deafening. He paced the living room like a caged animal, the shattered pieces of the iPad crunching under his expensive shoes.

Just then, the doorbell chimed. A sharp, clinical sound that cut through the haze of his rage.

Relief washed over him. It was her. She saw the text. She couldn't stay away.

He strode to the door and pulled it open, a triumphant smirk already forming on his lips.

The smirk died instantly.

Two uniformed law enforcement officers stood in the hallway. They weren't smiling.

"Connor Snow?" the taller officer asked, his voice flat.

"I am," Connor said, his tone instantly shifting to one of annoyance and authority. "What is this about?"

The officer held up a document. "We're here to serve an eviction notice. This property is under the sole control of the Snow Family Trust. Your legal counsel informed us of a hostile situation and revoked your twenty-four-hour grace period. We've been instructed by Mr. Harding Snow to ensure you vacate the premises immediately."

Connor laughed, a harsh, ugly sound. "You've got to be kidding me. Do you know who I am? I am the Snow family."

"Our orders are from Harding Snow, sir," the officer said, his expression unchanging. "We only recognize his authority in this matter. We'll give you ten minutes to collect your personal effects before we begin sealing the property."

The world tilted on its axis. They didn't recognize him.

He watched, paralyzed, as one of the officers walked past him and began placing official-looking stickers on the furniture. His furniture.

The feeling of being erased, of being a ghost in his own life, was suffocating.

He snapped.

He turned, grabbed his Aston Martin keys from the bowl by the door, and stormed out of the apartment, shoving past the officers without another word.

He had to find her. He had to find Harding. He had to make them stop.

He tore through the city streets, the car's engines screaming in protest. He would go to Harding's office. He would confront them both. He still believed, with every fiber of his deluded being that all he had to do was show up. That the moment Anissa saw him, she would crumble, just like she always did.

He screeched to a halt in front of the monolithic glass tower of Snow Industries. He threw the car into park and jumped out, leaving the door hanging open.

As he reached the revolving doors, a wall of black suits moved to block his path.

Alex Stone, Harding's head of security, stepped forward. His face was a mask of cold professionalism.

"Mr. Snow," Alex said, his voice like ice. "I'm afraid you're not welcome here."

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 +120 Points at most

"Get out of my way, Alex," Connorsnarled, trying to push past him.

Alex didn't move. Four other guards closed in, forming an impenetrable barrier.

"Mr. Harding Snow and Mrs. Snow have given explicit instructions," Alex continued, his eyes devoid of any emotion. "They are not to be disturbed. Especially not by you."

Mrs. Snow.

The name echoed in the vast, empty space of Connor's skull. It was the final nail in the coffin of his denial.



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