

Chapter 38

It was midnight in Manhattan.

The Elysian Club was a temple of modern decadence. The walls were lined with black marble and crushed velvet. The sound system pumped a heavy, hypnotic bassline that vibrated through the floorboards.

The Apex racing team had completely taken over the venue. Hundreds of people were packed onto the dance floor. Waitresses in black corsets carried sparkler-lit bottles of Ace of Spades champagne through the crowd like glowing torches.

Anissa sat in the supreme VIP booth, a massive, circular leather banquette suspended on a glass balcony overlooking the dance floor. She had taken off her leather jacket, revealing the tight black tank top. She held a crystal glass of sparkling water, watching the chaos below with detached amusement.

Forrest was completely drunk. He was standing on a table in the corner of the booth, wearing his silver trophy on his head like a hat, singing loudly with his mechanics.

Suddenly, a violent commotion broke out at the velvet rope guarding the entrance to the VIP balcony.

Anissa narrowed her eyes.

Two massive bouncers in black suits were physically restraining a man who was trying to force his way up the stairs. His suit was wrinkled, his tie was loose, and his face was red with alcohol and rage.

It was Brendan.

He had somehow managed to get past the main door by tailgating a group of oblivious sponsors, then bluffed his way up the grand staircase until he was finally stopped at the velvet rope guarding the VIP balcony, screaming at the staff and causing a massive scene, driven by a masochistic need to see the wealth he had been denied.

"Let me go!" Brendan shouted, struggling against the bouncers. "I am her brother! I am Brendan Roy! Let me in there!"

The bouncers didn't even blink. They prepared to throw him down the

stairs.

Anissa raised her hand, extending a single finger.

The bouncers saw the gesture. They immediately released Brendan and stepped aside.

Brendan stumbled onto the glass balcony. He looked around at the staggering display of wealth—the towers of champagne, the imported caviar, the sheer exclusivity of the space. His eyes burned with a toxic mixture of greed and intense jealousy.

He marched over to Anissa's table, trying to pull his ruined dignity around him like a cloak.

"This is disgusting," Brendan spat, pointing his finger at the champagne bottles. "You are out of your mind, Anissa. Do you have any idea what this place costs? You're playing with fire."

Forrest heard the shouting. He jumped down from the table, his face flushing with anger. "Brendan, get the hell out of here. I told you to stay away from her."

"Shut up, Forrest!" Brendan snapped. He turned back to Anissa, his eyes wide and frantic. "You think you're so powerful because you have that black card? You're a fool! Harding Snow is a ruthless businessman. When he finds out you're blowing millions of his money on a trashy party for mechanics, he will throw you out on the street! You'll have nothing!"

Brendan was desperate for it to be true. He needed Anissa to fall so he could feel tall again.

Anissa didn't say a word. She just looked at him with profound pity.

Just then, the general manager of Elysian approached the table. He was wearing a flawless tuxedo. He carried a silver tray lined with red velvet. He completely ignored Brendan, bowing deeply to Anissa.

"Madam," the manager said softly. "The preliminary tab for the evening. Whenever you are ready."

Anissa didn't even look at the piece of paper. "Run the card."

Brendan, however, couldn't help himself. He leaned forward, his eyes locking onto the printed receipt resting on the silver tray.

His breath caught in his throat. His face turned the color of chalk.

Total : \$1,250,000.00

One point two million dollars. For a few hours of drinking it was more

than the entire liquid cash reserve of the Roy family's failing company.

"You're dead," Brendan whispered, staring at the number in absolute horror. "He's going to kill you. A million dollars..."

Anissa let out a soft, bored sigh. She reached into her pocket, pulled out the heavy titanium Black Centurion card, and tossed it onto the silver tray. It landed with a heavy, metallic clack.

"You think a million dollars matters to him?" Anissa asked, her voice dripping with cold condescension. "Brendan, this isn't even the interest his accounts generated while we were standing here."

The manager picked up the card. He pulled a wireless POS terminal from his jacket. He inserted the heavy metal card.

Brendan held his breath. He waited for the machine to flash red. He waited for the decline. He waited for the fraud alert that would prove Anissa was just a fraud.

Beep.

The screen flashed a bright solid green. APPROVED.

The receipt printer buzzed to life, spitting out a tiny piece of paper that confirmed the transfer of 1.2 million dollars without a single security flag or limit warning.

The sound of that beep shattered the very foundation of Brendan's reality.

It proved that Harding Snow didn't just give Anissa a card; he had given her the keys to the empire. Her power was absolute. Her wealth was infinite.

Brendan's legs gave out. He collapsed onto the edge of a leather ottoman, staring blankly at the floor. The mechanics around the booth were pointing at him and laughing, mocking the man who had tried to lecture the Queen.

Anissa picked up her glass of water. She looked down at Brendan's crushed, pathetic form.

"Poverty has severely limited your imagination, Brendan," Anissa said, her voice devoid of any emotion. "The exit is behind you. Don't let the door hit you on the way out."

Brendan didn't argue. He couldn't. He slowly stood up, his shoulders slumped, and walked off the balcony, completely destroyed by the weight of a world he would never belong to.

