

## Chapter 50

The private diningroom was filled with the echoingsilence of Ashlee's forced removal. Lorraine was frantically grippingthe edge of the table, muttering curses under her breath. Connor and Beatrice sat frozen in their chairs, lookinglike two corpses whose souls had just been violently extracted.

Anissa ignoredall of them.

She sat back down in her chair. She picked up her heavy silver knife and fork. With slow, methodical precision she cut a piece of her five-hundred-dollar Wagyu steak, placed it in her mouth, and chewed.

She ate in absolute silence, forcing them to watch her enjoy her meal while their worlds burned to the ground.

Lorraine couldn't take the psychological torture anymore. She threw the wet napkinsonto the table.

"Anissa, please!" Lorraine shrieked, her voice cracking with genuinepanic. "You have your revenge! You humiliated us! But you can't let the foundation die! If we don't get the capital from that trust fund by tomorrow, the bank is goingto liquidate the company! We will be on the street!"

Anissa swallowed her steak. She placed her knife and fork down on the porcelain plate. She picked up her linen napkinand dabbed the corners of her mouth.

She looked at Lorraine. There was no anger left in her eyes. There was only the cold, clinical detachment of a surgeonremoving a tumor.

"The charity foundation is bankruptbecause Harold embezzled the funds," Anissa said flatly. "And as for his damage control? I had Caleb pull the records from the board of directors this morning."

Lorraine's breath hitched.

"He didn't step down to save the kids," Anissa stated, exposingthe final lie. "He was forcibly ousted because he is hidingfrom federal creditors. He's a coward."

Lorraine's mouth opened and closed like a dying fish. The lie was dead.

Her last weapon was gone.

Anissa turned her cold gaze to Beatrice and Connor.

"And you two," Anissa said, her voice cutting through the air like a whip. "Stop dreaming about the trust fund. The moment I signed the marriage certificate with Harding, Connor's share was legally absorbed into my accounts."

Connor let out a low, wounded whimper.

"I own every single penny of it," Anissa declared, claiming her absolute power. "And I would rather burn the cash in a dumpster than give you a single cent."

Beatrice slammed her fist on the table. "You arrogant bitch! Aurthur Snow will never allow you to steal our money! He will destroy you!"

Anissa let out a short, dark laugh. She reached over and picked up her Hermes bag.

Anissa's phone buzzed silently on the table. She glanced at the screen, a cold smile touching her lips. "Your timing is impeccable," she murmured, before looking up. "Aurthur Snow just signed the final, absolute execution of your exile order ten minutes ago," Anissa said, delivering the final death blow. "Your temporary grace period is over. The offshore accounts Beatrice used to sneak you back into New York are now frozen. Your properties are seized. Tomorrow morning Snow security is going to drag you out of your cheap hotel, escort you to JFK, and put you on economy class flights to Europe. You are banished. Permanently."

Beatrice's eyes rolled back in her head. She slumped sideways in her chair, fainting from the shock. Connor didn't even try to catch her. He just stared at the table, completely broken.

Anissa stood up. She looked down at the four people who had tormented her in her past life. They were nothing but pathetic, powerless insects now. The heavy chains of her past shattered and fell away. She was finally, completely free.

She opened her purse, pulled out a crisp one-hundred-dollar bill, and dropped it onto the table.

"Here is the tip for the waiter," Anissa said. "Enjoy your last meal in New York. Never contact me again."

She turned on her heel, walked to the heavy oak door, and pulled it open. She stepped out into the hallway and let the door click shut, permanently sealing them in their misery.

Anissa walked through the restaurant and pushed through the front doors.

The bright blinding sunlight of Manhattan hit her face. She took a deep breath of the city air. It tasted like victory.

Parked directly in front of the restaurant, illegally blocking the valet lane, was a massive, gleaming black Maybach.

The rear door swung open.

Harding stepped out onto the pavement. He was wearing his dark suit, his broad shoulders blocking the sun. He looked incredibly dangerous and impossibly handsome. He ignored the stares of the pedestrians. His dark eyes locked onto Anissa.

He walked right up to her. He didn't ask how it went. He wrapped his massive arm around her waist and pulled her flush against his chest.

"Is it done?" Harding asked, his voice a low rumble.

Anissa rested her hands on his chest, feeling the steady, powerful beat of his heart. She looked up at him and smiled—a real, brilliant smile.

"It's done," Anissa whispered. "They're gone."

Harding's eyes darkened with intense pride. Right there, in the middle of the crowded Manhattan sidewalk, he lowered his head and kissed her. It was a deep, possessive, earth-shattering kiss that claimed her completely.

Inside the restaurant, standing by the window of the private room, Connor watched them. He saw the kiss. He saw the Maybach. The absolute reality of what he had thrown away finally crushed him. His knees buckled, and he collapsed onto the floor, sobbing into his hands.

Harding broke the kiss. He opened the door of the Maybach and guided Anissa into the plush leather interior. He slid in next to her, the heavy door thudding shut, locking the world out.