

Chapter 52

The following morning the city awoke to a seismic shift in the financial world, though only a select few understood its true significance. The Roy Group, once a respectable if fading name, was officially declared defunct. Its assets, liquidated and absorbed overnight, had vanished into the behemoth that was Snow Capital. The business journals reported it as a hostile but brilliant takeover. The gossip columns whispered a more dramatic story.

Anissa sat on the penthouse balcony, a cashmere throw draped over her legs and a steaming mug of coffee in her hands. The morning air was crisp, and the city spread out below her looked like a kingdom of glass and steel. She scrolled through her tablet, reading the news with a detached calm.

Her phone buzzed with an incoming call from Clara.

"Okay, you absolute monarch," Clara's voice crackled with energy. "The entire Upper East Side is in meltdown. Beatrice and Connor were physically escorted out of their hotel this morning by Snow security and put on a one-way flight to Zurich. Economy class. The pictures are already on Page Six. It's a masterpiece of public humiliation."

A small, cold smile touched Anissa's lips. "Good."

"Good? It's biblical!" Clara crowed. "And the Roys? Harold had a panic attack when the final seizure notices were served. Lorraine tried to sell her jewelry on the black market and got scammed by an undercover cop. Ashlee apparently had a breakdown and tried to storm your husband's office yesterday. It's a dumpster fire, Anissa. A glorious, five-alarm dumpster fire."

Anissa listened, but the news didn't bring the savage satisfaction she had expected. Instead, she just felt... quiet. The noise of her past was finally fading.

She ended the call and opened a new file on her tablet—the complete portfolio of what was once the Roy-Snow trust. The numbers were staggering, a fortune built on deceit and her own suffering. She looked at the long list of stocks, properties, and offshore accounts, and felt a wave of revulsion. This money was tainted. It was the price of her old

life.

Harding stepped onto the balcony, placing a hand on her shoulder. He had been watching her, sensing the shift in her mood. "You can erase it all," he said, his voice a low rumble. "Give the order, and my team will liquidate it and make it disappear."

Anissa shook her head slowly. "No," she said, her voice gaining a new, hard-edged clarity. "Disappearing isn't enough. That's letting them off easy." She looked up at him, her eyes shining with a new purpose. "This money was used to control and abuse people. It's going to be used to free them."

She tapped the screen, opening a new document. At the top, she typed a title: The Phoenix Foundation.

"I'm not just going to burn their world down, Harding," she said, a fierce, determined smile spreading across her face. "I'm going to use their ashes to build something new. Something that will last long after their names have been forgotten."

