

Claimed By My Fiancé's Ruthless Uncle

novel Chapter 2 No.2 - -

The blue dot stopped.

Elisa stared at the screen until her eyes burned. West 27th Street. It wasn't an office building. It wasn't a late-night diner. It was The Vault. A members-only club where the buy-in was higher than most people's annual salary and discretion was part of the architecture.

She gripped the phone so hard her knuckles turned the color of bone.

Elisa moved. The paralysis broke, replaced by a frantic, kinetic energy. She went into the walk-in closet, stripping off the silk dress that suddenly felt like a costume. She threw it on the floor. She pulled on black trousers, a silk camisole, and a long, tailored trench coat. She shoved her feet into heels-sharp, dangerous things.

She grabbed her car keys from the bowl in the foyer. No driver tonight. She needed to be alone.

The elevator ride down to the garage took forty seconds. Elisa counted every one of them, her breath shallow. When the doors opened, she marched to her silver Aston Martin, the heels clicking a staccato rhythm on the concrete.

She tore out of the garage, the tires squealing against the polished floor. The city was wet. Rain had started to fall, smearing the lights of Manhattan into long, blurry streaks on her windshield.

Elisa drove aggressively. She cut off a taxi on Park Avenue, ignoring the blare of the horn. Her hands gripped the leather steering wheel, her mind replaying the slam of the door, the look of revulsion in Chris's eyes.

I need space.

The lie tasted bitter in her mouth.

She tried calling him. One ring. Two rings. "The person you are trying to reach is unavailable."

She dialed again. Straight to voicemail. He had turned his phone off. Or blocked her.

Elisa pressed the accelerator. The engine roared, a guttural sound that matched the scream trapped in her throat.

She reached Chelsea in fifteen minutes. The rain was coming down harder now, drumming against the roof of the car. She pulled up to the curb in front of The Vault. The valet, a young man in a soaked vest, recognized the car immediately. He rushed over to open her door.

"Ms. Hamilton," he said, breathless. "We weren't expecting you."

Elisa stepped out, ignoring his umbrella. The rain hit her face, cold and shocking. She tossed him the keys. "Keep it close."

She walked to the entrance. The bouncer, a mountain of a man with an earpiece, stepped in her path. He crossed his arms.

"Private event tonight, miss. Guest list only."

Elisa didn't stop. She didn't even slow down. She lowered her sunglasses, staring up at him with eyes that were colder than the rain.

"Hamilton," she said. It wasn't a name; it was a weapon.

The bouncer hesitated. He looked at her face, then down at the massive diamond engagement ring on her left hand. He recognized it. He recognized her. The Osborne fiancée. The Hamilton heiress. In this city, that combination was a key that opened any door.

He stepped back, touching his earpiece. "Clear."

Elisa pushed through the heavy, soundproof doors.

The noise hit her instantly. The bass thrummed in her chest, vibrating through her ribcage. The air was thick, humid with sweat, expensive perfume, and the sweet, cloying scent of marijuana.

Strobe lights cut through the darkness, flashing purple and blue. Elisa felt disoriented for a second, a wave of nausea rolling over her. Bodies were everywhere, grinding, shouting, drinking.

She pushed through the crowd. A drunk man in a suit stumbled into her, spilling his drink on her sleeve.

"Watch it, sweetheart," he slurred.

Elisa shoved him away, hard. She didn't look back. She kept her eyes on the upper level. The VIP mezzanine.

She climbed the stairs, her heart hammering against her ribs like a trapped bird. The VIP area was separated by glass walls, frosted at the bottom but clear at the top.

She saw the light grey suit first.

Chris was sitting on a velvet banquette. He wasn't alone. He was flanked by three women. Models, by the look of them-impossibly tall, legs that went on forever, wearing scraps of fabric that passed for dresses.

One of them, a blonde with hair like spun sugar, was leaning into him, whispering something in his ear. Chris threw his head back and laughed. It was a genuine laugh. A laugh Elisa hadn't heard in two years.

Elisa stopped. She felt the blood drain from her face, leaving her lightheaded.

She stepped behind a large, marble pillar, pressing her back against the cold stone. She was shaking. Her entire body was vibrating with a mixture of rage and humiliation so potent it felt like poison.

She reached into her pocket and pulled out her phone. Her thumb hovered over the screen.

Record.

Contents