

# Claimed By My Fiancé's Ruthless Uncle

## novel Chapter 4 No.4 - -

Elisa pushed through the revolving doors of the Four Seasons, a drowned rat entering a palace.

The lobby was quiet, smelling of fresh lilies and old money. The marble floors reflected the crystal chandeliers overhead. Elisa stood there, dripping water onto the pristine stone. Her coat was heavy with rain, her hair matted against her skull, her feet bare and bleeding slightly.

The night manager behind the desk looked up, his eyes widening. He started to come around the counter, a look of polite alarm on his face. "Miss? Are you alright? You can't be in here without-

Elisa took a step forward and swayed. The room spun. The adrenaline that had carried her from the club evaporated, leaving only a black void of exhaustion.

Her knees buckled.

She didn't hit the floor.

Strong arms caught her. They were solid, unyielding. One arm hooked around her waist, the other gripped her shoulder, stopping her fall.

Elisa gasped, her head falling back. Through the haze of wet hair and dizziness, she looked up.

The man was tall. Very tall. He had a face made of sharp angles and shadows, a jawline that could cut glass. His eyes were dark, almost black, and they were staring down at her with an intensity that made her breath hitch.

He smelled of rain, cedarwood, and something expensive and masculine.

Gallagher Osborne looked down at the woman in his arms. He recognized her instantly. The Hamilton girl. Chris's fiancée.

He felt a muscle in his jaw tick. He should hand her over to the manager. He should call a car. He should call his nephew.

"Let me go," Elisa whispered, but her hands clutched the lapels of his suit jacket. She didn't want him to let go.

"You're bleeding," Gallagher said. His voice was deep, a low rumble that vibrated against her chest.

Elisa looked down at her feet. "I don't care." She looked back up at him. Her eyes were wild, desperate. "Take me away. Please."

Gallagher narrowed his eyes. "Do you know who I am?"

Elisa shook her head. "I don't care who you are. I just don't want to be me tonight."

She pulled on his lapels, rising on her tiptoes, bringing her face inches from his. "Do you want to take me upstairs?"

It was a challenge. A plea.

Gallagher looked at the manager, who had stopped a few feet away, uncertain. Gallagher gave a single, sharp shake of his head. The manager retreated immediately.

Gallagher looked back at Elisa. He saw the ring on her finger. He saw the pain in her eyes. It mirrored a hunger he had kept buried for a long time.

"You'll regret this," he said quietly.

"I regret everything else," Elisa replied. "Let me have this."

Gallagher didn't say another word. He bent down and scooped her up into his arms, lifting her as if she weighed nothing.

Elisa buried her face in his neck, inhaling his scent. It masked the smell of the rain, the smell of Chris's betrayal.

He carried her to the private elevators. He pulled a black card from his pocket and swiped it. The doors slid open.

Inside, the mirrored walls reflected them: a man in an impeccable suit holding a woman who looked like she had crawled out of a storm.

Gallagher shifted his grip, turning her slightly so her face was pressed into his shoulder, hidden from the security camera in the corner. His hand came up to shield the back of her head. A protective gesture. Or a possessive one.

The elevator rose, the pressure building in Elisa's ears.

When the doors opened to the penthouse suite, the room was dark. Lightning flashed outside the floor-to-ceiling windows, illuminating the vast, modern space for a split second.

Gallagher set her down on the console table in the entryway. He didn't turn on the lights.

Elisa reached for him. Her hands were cold on his face. She kissed him.

It tasted of salt and desperation.

Gallagher went rigid for a second, fighting a war within himself. Then, he lost. He groaned, a guttural sound, and kissed her back. His hands tangled in her wet hair, pulling her head back, deepening the kiss until there was no air left in the room.

He was rougher than Chris. Demanding. He kissed her like he wanted to consume her, to erase her.

And that was exactly what she wanted. To be erased.