

Chapter 2 2

The morning sun hit the Penthouse floor-to-ceiling windows with an aggressive brightness that felt personal.

Analia stood in the center of the master bedroom. She had come back only for her passport and her laptop. She had told herself she wouldn't look. She wouldn't touch.

But the room was a museum of her loneliness.

The bed was made, crisp and military-tight, by the housekeeping staff. But thrown across the foot of it was a charcoal gray suit jacket. Clive's jacket. The one he had been wearing in the news footage last night.

Analia stared at it. He must have come home in the early hours of the morning changed his soaked clothes, and left again before the sun came up. He hadn't even checked to see if she was in bed.

She walked over, her movements slow, as if moving through water. She picked up the jacket. It was heavy, made of wool that cost more than most people's cars.

She brought it closer to her face.

Beneath the scent of Clive's sandalwood cologne, there was something else. Something sweet. Sickeningly floral. Gardenia and dishonesty. Angelena's signature scent.

A wave of nausea rolled through her stomach. She gripped the fabric, her knuckles turning white.

Something crinkled in the inner breast pocket.

Her fingers dived in, bypassing the silk lining and pulled out a thick, cream-colored envelope. It wasn't a business letter. The paper was textured, medical grade.

She opened it.

It was an ultrasound printout. A grainy black and white image of a uterus.

At the top, printed in bold, undeniable letters: Patient: Angelena Stuart.

Date: October 14th.

October 14th.

Analia's breath hitched. That was three days ago. That was the day Clive had told her he was in Boston for a merger acquisition. He had even complained about the flight delays.

He hadn't been in Boston. He had been holding Angelena's hand at a fertility clinic on the Upper East Side.

The paper slipped from her fingers and fluttered to the floor, landing face up. The tiny, blurry sac looked like a bomb crater.

Analia didn't cry. She felt like she had cried all the moisture out of her body in the hospital waiting room. Now, she just felt dry. Hollowed out.

The sound of the front door unlocking echoed through the massive apartment. The heavy thud of the oak door closing. Footsteps, confident and heavy, approaching the bedroom.

Analia didn't move. She stood by the bed, the jacket still in her hand.

Clive walked in. He looked impeccable, as always. Freshly showered from the gym, wearing a crisp white shirt, sleeves rolled up to his elbows. He stopped when he saw her.

His eyes flicked to the bandage on her forehead. For a split second, his expression faltered. A flicker of something-surprise? Guilt?

But it was gone instantly, replaced by his standard mask of annoyed superiority.

"So," he said, walking past her to the dresser to grab a watch. "You decided to come back. Liam said you didn't sleep here."

"I was at the hospital," Analia said. Her voice was quiet.

Clive scoffed, fastening his watch. "Right. The 'accident.' You know, Analia, crying wolf is getting old. If you wanted my attention, you could have just booked a dinner reservation like a normal person."

He turned to face her, leaning against the dresser, crossing his arms. "Well? Are you going to explain why you made a scene with my assistant?"

Analia looked at him. Really looked at him. She saw the handsome lines of his face, the jawline she used to trace with her fingers, the eyes that used to look at her with desire. Now, he was a stranger. A cruel, beautiful stranger.

"How is Angelena?" she asked.

Clive froze. His posture stiffened perceptibly. "What?"

"Angelena," Analia repeated. "Is she healthy? Is the baby healthy?"

Clive's face drained of color. His eyes darted to the jacket in her hand, then to the floor. He saw the ultrasound image lying on the Persian rug.

Silence stretched between them, thick and suffocating.

"You went through my pockets," he accused, his voice low and dangerous. He didn't deny it. He attacked. It was his way.

"You lied about Boston," Analia countered.

Clive took a step toward her, his jaw clenching. "It's complicated, Analia. You wouldn't understand. Angelena is going through a crisis. She needed a friend."

"A friend who goes to her prenatal appointments?" Analia let out a short, dry laugh. "Do you think I'm stupid, Clive? Or do you just not care enough to lie better?"

"She's alone!" Clive snapped, his voice rising. "The media is tearing her apart. She has nobody. I have a responsibility to her family. You know that."

"And what about your responsibility to me?" Analia whispered. "To your wife?"

Clive looked at her with genuine confusion as if the question was absurd. "You have everything Analia. You live in a ten-million-dollar penthouse. You have an unlimited credit card. You have the Wilson name. What more do you want?"

"I want a husband who doesn't keep his ex-girlfriend's ultrasound in his pocket," she said, dropping the jacket onto the floor. It landed on top of the image, covering the evidence.

"It's not my child," Clive said quickly. Too quickly. "She just... she wanted me to see it. For support."

"I don't care," Analia said. And she realized, with a jolt, that it was true. She didn't care if it was his or not. The betrayal wasn't the biology; it was the priority.

She turned and walked into the massive walk-in closet.

"Where are you going?" Clive demanded, following her.

Analia pulled her old, battered suitcase from the top shelf. It was the one she had brought with her from her college dorm, before the Wilson money replaced everything she owned.

"I'm packing" she said, opening a drawer and grabbing a handful of underwear.

"Don't be dramatic," Clive leaned against the doorframe, rolling his eyes. "You're not going anywhere. We have the charity gala next week. You have a dress fitting on Tuesday."

Analia didn't answer. She grabbed her laptop charger. She grabbed the hard drive that contained the only thing that was truly hers—her voice demos.

"Analia!" Clive's voice boomed. "Stop this. You're acting like a child."

She zipped the suitcase shut. She stood up and faced him.

"I'm not acting, Clive," she said. "I'm leaving."

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 +120 Points at most

She brushed past him. He caught her arm, his grip firm but not painful. Just controlling.

"You walk out that door," he hissed, "and you don't come back. I won't have a wife who runs away every time she gets jealous."

Analia looked down at his hand on her arm. Then she looked up into his eyes.

"I'm not jealous, Clive," she said softly. "I'm done."

She pulled her arm free.

Clive stood there, stunned, as she walked down the hallway. He didn't chase her. He was too proud. He thought she would stop at the elevator. He thought she would realize she had nowhere to go.

Analia took a picture of the ultrasound on the floor before she left the room. Just in case.



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