

Chapter 10

Chapter 10 begins with a small but unexpected luxury—soft-scented sheets, the kind Jane never imagined she'd experience. Each morning in Eddie's bed feels unreal, wrapped in linen that smells like safety and success. After two weeks of sinking into plush cushions, sipping cinnamon-laced coffee, and lounging in comfort, Jane finds herself clinging tightly to a lifestyle that once seemed unreachable.

The master bedroom has become her sanctuary, styled in rich textures and quiet masculinity that contrast sharply with the loud, colorful imprint Bea left on the rest of the house. This room, it seems, is where Eddie has reclaimed space just for himself—and now, by extension, for Jane. As she tiptoes through the house barefoot, warm mug in hand, it feels like she's stepping into permanence.

Downstairs, Eddie greets her with coffee crafted exactly to her taste—a ritual that started awkwardly and evolved into habit. She jokes about only being with him for the morning brew, and he plays along, making her laugh in a way that eases the walls she's spent years building. For the first time, Jane feels not just wanted, but appreciated for who she really is, not just who she's pretending to be.

But beneath the morning banter is a tension Jane doesn't fully admit, not even to herself. She still walks dogs for cash. She still buys her own clothes, pays for her own gas. The money Eddie offers—his casual mention of credit cards and shared accounts—feels like a gift and a test.

She smiles when he offers to add her to his checking account, though her mind spins at how easily he gives her access to his wealth. For Jane, who has always scraped by, who's known too many men who offered nothing and expected everything, this gesture is jarring. Still, she plays her role perfectly—grateful, charmed, compliant—knowing it gets her closer to the life she wants.

Then Eddie asks her to move in officially, suggesting she pick up her things from her old place. Jane teases him, plays coy, but inside, she knows she's already made up her mind. She's done with her old life—the moldy apartment, the depressing bathroom, and especially John.

The contrast between her former home and Eddie's pristine mansion hits hard when she arrives at the old apartment. Everything looks smaller, grimmer, sadder than she remembered. Inside, John is sprawled on the couch, watching television, still clinging to a routine Jane is desperate to escape.

Their conversation is exactly what she expects—passive-aggressive jabs, veiled insults, possessive digs. John demands notice, complains about rent, and tries to belittle her one last time. But Jane, for once, doesn't flinch.

She walks out without taking a single item. Not her clothes, not the keepsakes, not even the sentimental tokens she'd pocketed from Thornfield homes. That part of her life is over, and leaving it all behind is the most powerful choice she's ever made.

Back outside, she's met with another surprise—Eddie, waiting by his car. Seeing him there, amid the cracked pavement and rust-stained stairwells, shakes her. He doesn't belong here, and by extension, neither does she anymore.

When she asks if he followed her, Eddie admits it with a sheepish smile. It's romantic on the surface, but something about it unsettles Jane. The charm is still there, but so is a note of control, of possession—one she's not sure how to interpret.

Before she can decide how she feels, John inserts himself again. His presence, greasy and bitter, only sharpens the divide between Eddie and the life Jane is leaving. When he claims she owes him notice, Eddie doesn't argue—he just watches, waiting.

There's a shift in Eddie's posture, a quiet tension that simmers beneath his easy smile. Jane feels it too, a tightening of energy between the men. She sees the way Eddie's fist curls slightly, a flash of something unspoken but unmistakable.