

# Chapter 28

Chapter 28 begins with a question I barely realize I'm asking, my words looser than they should be after three glasses of sauvignon blanc. As the car winds down from the country club, everything feels quiet—too quiet—but Eddie's sigh fills the stillness. I ask if he's worried, and while his answer isn't entirely clear, the tension in his voice speaks volumes. His hand finds my knee briefly before returning to the wheel, his face shadowed in the dim dashboard light. There's a tiredness around his eyes I hadn't noticed before. I tell him it's going to be alright now that Tripp is in custody, but Eddie doesn't seem convinced.

He reminds me that arrests don't end stories—they begin public ones. There will be press coverage, legal proceedings, accusations, and more rumors. The wine buzz makes it harder for me to focus, but something in his voice feels like a warning. I think of what Campbell mentioned—the incident with the caterer, the sharp edge in Eddie's temper. But I push the thought aside. Eddie told me to trust him. I said I would. So I press his leg gently, reassuring him that we have each other. His lips brush my cheek and I try to hold onto that moment, even though the faint scent of bourbon beneath his cologne rattles something inside me.

As we pull into the driveway, the lights of the house greet us like a promise. The sheer beauty of it still hasn't worn off. The grandeur, the quiet perfection—sometimes it feels like a dream I'm afraid to wake from. It's hard to believe this life is mine now. I watch Eddie from across the room as he checks his emails, his face serious in the glow of his laptop. I pour myself another glass of wine and decide to slip away. That bathtub has become my private sanctuary, the one place where I can pretend the world isn't unraveling outside our walls.

The water is already steaming when I sink in, and for a few minutes, I just let my mind float. The pressure of the evening, the shadow of Tripp's arrest, the guilt and uncertainty—it all drifts further away under the warmth. I wonder how long it will take for things to feel truly stable, for that ache of doubt to disappear entirely. Sometimes I convince myself that what I have now is real because I need it to be. Eddie can be intense, yes, but he's offered me something I never thought I'd have: security. A beautiful house, a future, a place in his world. And I want to believe it's built on something solid.



But there are cracks. **Small ones.** Tripp's warnings linger in my mind, even now. He'd said Eddie and Bea were **poison**. I'd laughed it off then, but now I can't help noticing how Eddie avoids talking about Bea in detail. And I don't ask, not directly. Because asking might shatter this version of life we've created, and I'm not ready for that. In the quiet moments, I sometimes feel like I'm playing a role I haven't fully earned. Like I've stepped into someone else's life and everyone is waiting for me to slip up.

The wine leaves me drowsy, but not enough to fully relax. I towel off and move slowly through the bedroom, glancing at my phone for any updates, texts, missed calls. Nothing from Emily, nothing new from the news alerts I've set. I check Tripp's name just in case, but the headlines are quiet for now. Maybe the storm is settling. Or maybe it's just the eye of it.

I find Eddie in his study, still working, and lean in the doorway for a minute watching him. There's something magnetic about his focus, his stillness. I want to step inside, wrap my arms around him, but I hesitate. He looks up and smiles faintly. I smile back, but something flickers in me—like the warmth I'd been soaking in has begun to cool. Tomorrow, we'll go on pretending. But tonight, doubt curls up quietly beside me, and I let it stay.