

# Chapter 3

Chapter 3 opens with a sensory contrast as Jane steps into Thornfield Estates, her fingers curled loosely around Bear's leash. Chapter 3 instantly impresses upon her just how different this world is—the grand arching door, the manicured perfection of the exterior, and the clean marble that greets the muddy paws of the dog she's walking. Eddie, tall and casual despite the polished setting, welcomes them in without a hint of irritation, his easy smile and warm voice cutting through the formality she expected. It throws Jane off balance, but in a good way—this man isn't like the others she's met in homes like these.

Inside, Jane finds herself surprised. The house, unlike the hollow designer interiors she's become used to, feels genuinely lived-in. Chapter 3 lays the foundation for contrast—floral pillows arranged on a bold red couch, a stack of well-thumbed paperbacks by the fireplace, sunlight pooling across deep rugs that look comfortable rather than curated. It's a space that speaks of someone who reads, someone who remembers comfort alongside aesthetics. She picks up on the subtle clues—photos have been removed from mantels, walls bear traces of things once hung, as if a memory has been peeled off the surface but not quite forgotten.

The kitchen is even more striking. Stainless steel appliances gleam beside copper pans, and the backsplash shines with tiny mosaic tiles that look hand-selected. Chapter 3 makes this space feel not only rich but functional, like people actually cook here, laugh here. When Eddie offers her a cup of coffee, she's already softened by the scent of cinnamon in the air and the faint scratch of jazz on the overhead speakers. It's the kind of kitchen where someone might talk too long over coffee because they feel like they can. Jane accepts.

As they talk, Eddie's questions catch her off guard—not because they're invasive, but because they're genuine. He doesn't ask about what school she went to or who her family is; he asks what brought her to Alabama. Jane, careful and composed, says it was just time for a change, though Chapter 3 subtly hints that the move was more of a flight than a relocation. She skips over her years in group homes, the hard years in foster care, and the handful of aliases she's worn like ill-fitting jackets.

Eddie seems content with her answer, nodding, sipping his coffee, and volunteering his own story in return. His wife—he doesn't say Bea's name at first—had loved Birmingham, and they bought the house with dreams of privacy. But that dream is now edged with absence. There's no ring on his finger, and Jane notes it without commenting. In this world, omission speaks louder than explanation.

What catches her off guard is how comfortable she feels. Chapter 3 dwells on that tension—how Jane, someone used to being invisible or overlooked, finds herself seen. Eddie doesn't talk down to her. He doesn't treat her like the help. Their conversation is light, filled with pauses that don't strain. And though she's cautious, Jane can't deny she likes the way he looks at her, not with hunger, but with curiosity—as if he's trying to learn, not consume.

Later, as Jane wanders through the living room again to leash Bear, she mentally compares Eddie's home to Tripp Ingraham's. Both houses are big, yes. Both are filled with expensive things. But where Tripp's space feels like a mausoleum, Eddie's is warm, if slightly wounded. Chapter 3 uses this to underline how wealth can't always cover grief—and how loneliness can settle into a home, no matter how expensive the flooring.

Still, Jane can't help but feel something else here too: potential. For the first time in a while, there's an opening. She might not know all the rules of this world, but she's clever, and she learns fast. She's lived enough lives to know that fitting in is mostly performance, and she's more than willing to play the role.

When she finally says goodbye, leash in hand, the air between her and Eddie still hums with something unspoken. The door closes softly behind her, but Chapter 3 leaves it clear—Jane’s already begun to slip into this world. Not just as the dog-walker. As something more.

