

Chapter 36

Chapter 36 begins with the protagonist experiencing a deep sense of disappointment and unease. What was intended to be a romantic evening, reminiscent of a cherished memory with Andrew, quickly turns into a solitary affair as Andrew is detained by work commitments, leaving her to dine alone. This unexpected solitude quickly deepens into a narrative of isolation, as the protagonist feels the weight of being alone in a space that, despite its physical comforts, is haunted by the presence of Nina, Andrew's ex-girlfriend. Her sense of security is slowly eroded as Nina's lingering influence seems to permeate every corner of the house, making it increasingly difficult for the protagonist to feel at peace.

The intrusion of Nina's presence is not limited to lingering scents, despite the protagonist's meticulous cleaning efforts; it escalates when the protagonist discovers a tracking app hidden on her phone. The realization that she is being watched intensifies her feelings of vulnerability and betrayal, as the once private aspects of her life are no longer hers to control. This breach of privacy is further compounded by an ominous warning from Enzo, who implies that Nina's influence and reach extend far beyond the psychological toll she has already inflicted. This revelation serves to heighten the protagonist's fear and anxiety, indicating that Nina may pose a real, tangible threat that goes beyond her emotional manipulation.

The night takes an even darker turn when the protagonist receives an anonymous phone call from a distorted, mechanical voice threatening her to stay away from Andrew. The call is unsettling not just for its hostility but for its anonymity, leaving the protagonist shaken by the realization that the threat may be more serious than a mere emotional tactic. This encounter jolts the protagonist into a state of resolve; she decides that she will no longer allow Nina's ghostly influence to control her life. Taking decisive action, she plans to change the locks in the house, a symbolic and physical

act of reclaiming her space and asserting her autonomy. The locks represent a barrier against the unseen forces that have been invading her sense of safety, marking a turning point where she chooses empowerment over fear.

Chapter 36 weaves a complex tapestry of psychological unrest and the battle for autonomy in the face of past trauma. The protagonist's journey through these unsettling events—feeling watched, manipulated, and threatened—sets the stage for a confrontation with the lingering forces of Nina's influence. Her decision to take control of her environment by changing the locks signifies a powerful moment of reclaiming agency, symbolizing the reclaiming of her own life and boundaries. The suspense that builds throughout the chapter leads the reader to anticipate not just the physical confrontation with Nina but also the emotional journey that will allow the protagonist to free herself from the shadows of the past. The tension between psychological manipulation and personal empowerment is a central theme in this chapter, drawing attention to how past relationships can continue to haunt the present and the lengths one must go to in order to break free from their lingering effects.

This chapter also underscores the importance of recognizing and confronting the often subtle ways in which emotional and psychological abuse can manifest in relationships. The protagonist's realization that Nina's influence is more pervasive than she initially thought highlights the often unseen but powerful forces at play in toxic relationships. Taking control of one's environment and setting boundaries, as symbolized by changing the locks, is a crucial step in regaining control and finding peace. The chapter also serves as a reminder that emotional security and autonomy are essential for well-being and that, at times, reclaiming one's space requires not just physical but emotional action. It is a powerful narrative about recognizing one's worth, standing up to past shadows, and taking the necessary steps to protect oneself from further harm.