

Chapter 697 Ruthless

In Miguel's mind, only one conclusion could explain Elliana's knowledge of the AI chips he'd planted in people—Elliana was River, the legendary figure in AI. This launched him into wild excitement.

The liquid AI chip had revolutionized everything, demolishing old ideas about chipmaking with groundbreaking innovation that mesmerized the entire world. River had masterminded this breakthrough from the shadows.

Such monumental discoveries were never meant for sharing. Miguel had sent wave after wave of agents to penetrate River's inner circle, pleading for meetings and craving partnership, but River had vanished like smoke whenever he reached out.

Eventually, Miguel had seized the technology through betrayal. Gabe, one of River's trusted protégés, had betrayed his mentor's trust for financial gains, stealing technical secrets and demanding an astronomical price from Miguel.

Miguel's answer had been swift and merciless. He'd claimed the data and fed Gabe to the sea depths without paying a single dollar.

Right now, Miguel's eyes burned as he studied Elliana's face on the screen. He couldn't bring himself to kill her now. Milena and River, wrapped into one brilliant package—she transcended mere talent. She embodied once-in-a-lifetime genius. Winning such a prodigy to his cause would make his wildest ambitions a reality overnight.

Elliana, unaware of Miguel's churning thoughts, scowled at his extended silence. "Michael, why aren't you saying anything?" she demanded.

"Ha-ha..." Miguel released a deep, rolling laugh. His expression transformed from hatred to burning fascination. "Being Milena and River. You exceed every expectation I ever held."

Elliana felt her blood freeze. During their brief conversation, she had extracted nothing useful from him, yet he had stripped away two of her



hidden identities. Since he already figured it out, denial seemed pointless. "You murdered Gabe and stole my research, didn't you?" she asked bluntly.

"Yep," Miguel confessed without hesitation. "And as you've guessed, I maintain deep connections to the Griffiths family. Beyond that, I know exactly where your mother has disappeared to after leaving Ublento. Does that interest you?"

He knew her mother's location? Elliana's face hardened. "Who are you?"

"Learning my identity—and your mother's whereabouts—requires a bargain." Miguel's voice shed its earlier darkness, adopting an almost cheerful note. "I want the Medical Codex. And I want you. Will you trade the Medical Codex and yourself for news about your mother?"

Cole's fury exploded again. "You think you deserve Elliana? Michael, I swear if I ever find you, I'll skin you alive!"

Miguel had been so fixated on Elliana that he'd almost forgotten Cole was still there. Cole's rage-filled voice jolted him back to reality. Right—his original mission tonight was to kill Cole on this very cliff.

"Cole Evans, son of Sophie," Miguel mused, his voice carrying strange appreciation. "You're a genius, I'll give you that. Unfortunately, it won't save your life. You're still going to die tonight."

Michael actually knew Cole's mother's name. Elliana and Cole exchanged a look, the mystery of Michael's identity deepening with every word.

Miguel redirected his focus to Elliana. "I'm ending your husband's life," he stated without emotion. "But I'll ensure your children arrive safely. You don't have to grieve too much."

"You've lost your mind!" Elliana sneered, releasing a cold, bitter laugh. "Who do you think you are? You think you can just decide our fates? Did you ask my permission before you decided to touch my husband?"

Miguel, still blind to Elliana's true identity as the infamous Death Thorn, completely missed the steel threading through her words. He heard only desperation, a wife pleading for her husband's survival. He chuckled, "Elliana, our bargain covers information about your mother. Cole's death

isn't negotiable. Even without Taylor as leverage, Cole is not leaving this cliff alive."

Following his words, the scar-faced man and black-clothed figures coiled like springs, their threatening gazes fixing on Cole, prepared to attack instantly.

Miguel was confident that his men could easily overpower Cole and launch him from the cliff. Taylor's role as a hostage had become unnecessary. To provoke Cole further, he issued a devastating command. "Taylor, jump."

The order struck so unexpectedly that both Elliana and Cole froze for one precious heartbeat. The next instant, they were racing toward Taylor, but time had already abandoned them. Thirty meters stretched between them and Taylor. The moment Miguel's command escaped his lips, Taylor plunged into the dark abyss. Even at superhuman speed, they couldn't bridge the distance.

Cole devoured the ground in three seconds, sliding to a stop where Taylor had stood moments before. But emptiness greeted him, Taylor already consumed by the hungry darkness below.

"Taylor!" Cole bellowed, his voice bouncing off canyon walls. Only echoes replied.

Elliana, her pregnancy costing her crucial seconds, reached the edge just after Cole. She stood beside Cole, peering into the endless void, her heart twisting with unbearable pain.

She had never imagined Michael could embrace such complete ruthlessness. His offer to exchange Cole's life for Taylor's had been nothing but savage theater. He had always planned for all of them to perish on this cliff tonight.