

HOW A DYING WOMAN REWROTE HER EPILOGUE

Chapter 7

The next morning, the housekeeper arrived with Jarrod's younger sister, Octavia.

The girl had just turned seventeen, all long limbs and bright eyes. As soon as she walked in, she tossed her purse onto the couch without a care.

"Where's Elodie Thorne?" Octavia blinked at Jarrod, feigning innocence.

Jarrod finished knotting his tie and glanced her way. "Is that how you address people?"

Octavia pouted. "You don't even like her, so why should I call her my sister-in-law?"

Their mother had said it often enough-Elodie had married up, clinging to the Silverstein family, and ought to devote herself entirely to them. There was a word for that, wasn't there?

A glorified housekeeper?

Jarrood shot her a cold, knowing look. "Alright, out with it. What's your scheme this time?"

Octavia's eyes sparkled. "Aren't you busy today, big brother?"

"And if I am?"

"Mom's at a fashion show, Dad's out of the country, and Grandma's not well enough to come to my parent-teacher meeting." Octavia swung her legs, putting on her best pleading voice. "So let Elodie go. She eats your food, spends your money, and does nothing all day. She's got all the time in the world."

Jarrood hesitated. "You can ask her yourself."

Octavia huffed, but grinned. "She's desperate to win your approval, so she's always extra nice to me. She's the type people warn you about online-calculating, always putting on a show. Just let her know, she won't dare refuse." Lately, Octavia had become obsessed with watching Sylvie's lectures on aerospace engineering from abroad, and her grades had slipped. She had no intention of letting her mother or brother hear about it from her teachers. Elodie, on the other hand, didn't matter; a scolding or two from the teachers wouldn't hurt her-and she'd never complain to Jarrod or their mother.

Jarrod seemed to mull it over, then shrugged on his coat and headed for the door. "Fine. I'll clear it with her."

Elodie woke up with a pounding headache and a low fever. These days, her body seemed to rebel at the slightest provocation; her immune system just didn't work the way it used to.

She'd already called in sick the day before, and today she meant to go to the hospital to consult her doctor about a new treatment plan.

By the time she reached the hospital lobby, her legs felt like jelly. She barely made

it a few steps before her vision blurred and the floor rushed up to meet her.

"Elodie!"

A woman's voice shouted her name.

And then everything went black.

When Elodie woke up, the first thing she saw was her best friend, Esmeralda Mercer, sitting at her bedside.

Esmeralda's face was a mix of worry and irritation. "What the hell has Jarrod been putting you through? The doctor says you collapsed from exhaustion-your fever just broke."

Elodie's heart skipped. She tensed, afraid her secret might have been discovered.

"What's wrong? Did the fever fry your brain?" Esmeralda called out, half-panicked. "Doctor! She "

"I'm okay, really." Elodie winced at the noise, quickly stopping her. The last thing she needed was Esmeralda broadcasting her illness all over Eldermere—the woman couldn't keep a secret to save her life. If her grandmother or uncle found out, it'd be over.

"How did you end up here?" Elodie asked, changing the subject.

Esmeralda shrugged. "My idiot brother went on a bender and landed himself in the ER with alcohol poisoning. I came to check whether he was dead yet."

She gave Elodie a hard look. "But you look awful. Is this because of Jarrod and that mistress of his?"

Esmeralda had seen the livestream, too. Very few people knew Jarrod was married, and yet the internet was obsessed with his so-called fairytale romance with the "other woman."

Disgusting. Both of them.

Elodie felt numb, the anger long since burned out. "I'm divorcing him," she said quietly. "Once the waiting period's over, these three ridiculous years will be behind me."

Esmeralda stared at her, stunned, then her eyes narrowed in outrage. "He's going to make that tramp his wife?!"

When Elodie married Jarrod, she'd given up everything-her dreams, her career, even the rare chance to join the prestigious Sterling Institute of Aeronautics. She'd tried to be the perfect wife, doting on Jarrod, managing his home, loving him with everything she had.

Anyone could see it wasn't Elodie who wanted out; it had to be Jarrod kicking her

to the curb.

Elodie shook her head. "It was my idea."

Esmeralda took a full two minutes to

process that, then clapped her hands, grinning like a kid on Christmas morning. "That's what like to hear! A brilliant woman like you should be running the world, not wasting your life on the Silversteins. Come join VistaLink

Technologies-how about an equity partnership?"

VistaLink Technologies was a cutting-edge drone company, and Esmeralda was one of its major shareholders. She didn't have a clue about the technical side- she'd been a hopeless student all her life-but she knew the most important thing:

Money.

And she knew how to spend it.

At the mention of VistaLink, a flicker of excitement lit up Elodie's pale face.