

HOW A DYING WOMAN REWROTE HER EPILOGUE

Chapter 8

If she'd stayed on her ideal academic path, she would've ended up in aerospace engineering.

Drones had become one of the most significant technological advancements of the era, with uses spanning everything from the military to civilian life and agriculture.

Back then, her professor only agreed to write her a recommendation to the research institute because she'd designed and provided technical guidance for the integrated reconnaissance and combat drone, model U.N. It combined long- range capability, heavy payload, high speed, and automated controls-a breakthrough in the field that had already seen real military deployment.

Inside the industry, her work had set the gold standard.

Yet after her marriage derailed her career, she found herself physically and emotionally battered. Cancer at such a young age cast a shadow over her future -she had no idea how much time she had left.

But that painful journey taught her something:

In the end, you have to put yourself first. Live for yourself.

Even if she couldn't be cured, she wasn't going to let regret define her remaining days.

She wanted...

To return to her field. To dig back into the dreams she'd once nurtured.

Esmeralda knew nothing about engineering herself, but she had deep pockets- and VistaLink Technologies had some of the brightest minds in the business.

Esmeralda provided the funding; the other side brought the expertise. In just a few years, VistaLink Technologies had become a rising star in Eldermere's tech scene, a dark horse with a sterling reputation.

But still-

"You know, when I chose to get married, he cut all contact with me. He runs VistaLink Technologies now. I doubt he'd want me there."

The man who wrote Elodie's recommendation had been his father. Both father and son had believed in her, invested so much hope and effort, convinced she'd go on to achieve something remarkable-maybe even bring pride to their country.

But after she got married, she let them down.

Esmeralda scratched her head. "Alexander acts tough, but he's soft underneath- you know that. Let me set something up for you two to talk it out. Honestly, I think he misses you."

Elodie managed a bitter smile.

If Malcom hadn't schemed to boost his status-if he hadn't set her up and then threatened her into giving up everything she loved her life might have turned out dazzlingly different.

Her phone buzzed. Octavia was calling.

Elodie frowned and declined the call.

With the divorce looming, she had no patience left for Octavia's antics.

But Octavia wouldn't give up her calls kept coming, insistent and entitled.

On the fifth ring, Elodie pressed her lips together and answered.

"You're so annoying! Can't you see it's me calling?"

"What do you want?"

"There's a parent-teacher meeting at ten. You need to go for my brother. If anyone asks, just say you're our housekeeper, got it?"

Her brother had just gone public with Sylvie, and Octavia didn't want anyone getting the wrong idea about Sylvie.

Elodie's tone was calm and measured. "I'm not your mother. I'm not your sister-in-law anymore. You can ask your legal guardian. And another thing-"

"You're old enough to understand what manners are supposed to mean."

Elodie ended the call.

She felt drained.

Octavia had never liked her. Kids always picked up on the attitudes of the adults around them. Octavia

thought she'd forced Jarrod into net'

marriage, and for three years, every vacation, Octavia would show up just to make her life

difficult-demanding meals, laundry, finding new ways to cause trouble.

When things first started heating up between Jarrod and Sylvie, Octavia would come over just to keep Elodie from interfering in their budding romance.

Seventeen years old-she should know better by now.

Elodie owed her nothing. She didn't need to indulge her anymore.

When Esmeralda saw that Elodie was finally standing up for herself, she realized Elodie was truly set on divorce. She hurried back to VistaLink Technologies, ready to talk Alexander Sterling into meeting with Elodie.

Elodie waited for her IV drip to finish.

Close to five o'clock, the phone rang again—this time, Jarrod's mother.

Elodie hesitated before answering.

"Where's Octavia? She said you'd go to the parent-teacher meeting. The teacher said you never showed, Octavia called in sick, and now no one can find her!" Lucinda's voice was sharp and impatient.

Elodie frowned.

She hadn't seen this coming.

Lucinda had never been satisfied with her—in fact, she'd always been borderline hostile. If Elodie hadn't "trapped" her son, Lucinda would have made sure Jarrod married someone from the right social circle.

"I don't know," Elodie replied.

"You're the one who bailed! Trying to dodge responsibility again?"

"No wonder you haven't given us a child in three years you can't even manage the basics of caring for a kid!"

A frail, older woman's voice interrupted from the other end. "Let's not get upset. You know what Elodie's like." Several soft coughs followed. "Octavia's not a child anymore. She's not Elodie's responsibility."

Jarrold's grandmother was the only one in the Silverstein family who'd ever truly cared for her. For three years, she'd protected Elodie. Jarrod had only agreed to marry her because his grandmother's health was fragile-she couldn't handle stress. Plus, Jarrod's grandfather and Elodie's own grandfather had been comrades-in-arms, so the old woman had taken a genuine liking to Elodie and smoothed the way for the marriage.

Now, with the old woman's health at risk, Elodie reconsidered. "I'll try to reach Octavia."

Maybe she'd indulged Octavia too

much in the past, and her blunt words today had stung. At that age rebellion was normal, but it wasn't safe for a teenage girl to be out on her own. Elodie's harshness had probably played a part.

She pulled out the IV needle, head spinning, barely able to stay on her feet. She

dialed Octavia's number again and again.

No answer.

Each call was rejected immediately.

Like Octavia was purposefully toying with her.

Elodie's years in PR hadn't been for nothing she was a master at reading

between the lines. She combed through Octavia's social media, playlists, and status updates.

Finally, she pinpointed the location of a billiards club.

When she arrived, she recognized plenty of familiar faces in the VIP room.

At the very center of it all were Jarrod and Sylvie.

Right then, Octavia was hanging off Sylvie, peppering her with questions about Verdant University.

When she spotted Elodie out of the corner of her eye, Octavia immediately clung

to Sylvie and piped up, "Since my brother likes Sylvie so much, I guess I won't call you 'Miss Sylvie' anymore."

"How about calling you 'sister-in-law' instead?"