

HOW A DYING WOMAN REWROTE HER EPILOGUE

Chapter 9

Sylvie acted as though she hadn't even noticed Elodie. Smiling gently at Octavia, she said, "Call me whatever you like if it makes you happy, Octavia."

Jarrold looked up, a hint of impatience in his eyes. "What are you doing here?"

Elodie met his cold, indifferent gaze and understood immediately.

He'd gotten the wrong idea-again.

Sure enough, Maurice Nilsson, standing off to the side, shot Elodie a frosty glare. "Ms. Thorne, you really don't know when to quit, do you? Following Jarrold all the way to one of our private gatherings-don't you think that's a bit much? We're all adults here. It's embarrassing, don't you think?"

Why else would Elodie show up?

To catch her husband cheating, obviously.

Maurice scoffed, certain he saw right through her. "It's pathetic, honestly. You know Jarrod doesn't even like you."

He'd never forgiven her for what happened that night-how she'd arranged for a reporter to take photos after sleeping with Jarrod. If Jarrod hadn't acted quickly to suppress the story, the Silverstein family's reputation would have been in shreds.

A woman who'd risk her own reputation just to climb the social ladder-none of Jarrod's friends respected her for it.

Elodie was used to this kind of biting sarcasm. As far as Jarrod's circle was concerned, she was the shameless woman who didn't know her place.

Sylvie sat poised at Jarrod's side, graceful and self-possessed, pouring juice for Octavia without even glancing at Elodie. Confidence and elegance radiated from her-she had nothing to fear from any confrontation.

Elodie understood perfectly. This was what it meant to be the favored one: to act with impunity.

"Are you upset?" Octavia asked Sylvie nervously, glancing between her and Elodie. She worried that Sylvie might be bothered by the woman who was about to take her brother away.

Sylvie just smiled softly, offering no comment.

Jarrold, perhaps worried Sylvie would misunderstand, grew even colder. "If you have something to say, let's talk outside."

Elodie dropped her gaze and didn't look back at the tearoom.

Out in the hallway, Jarrod regarded her coolly. "How did you know I was here?"

His tone was calm, but he clearly thought she'd been following him.

Elodie met his eyes, feeling a tightness in her chest. "You're overthinking it. I'm not here to see you, and I don't care who you spend time with."

They were getting divorced-she had no reason to interfere.

"If you really don't care," Jarrod replied icily, "then why call in sick from work to avoid doing PR for Sylvie? Isn't that a bit emotional?"

He knew she had a sick uncle; why would she give up a high-paying job so easily? She wasn't like Sylvie, a genuine high-achiever.

Jarrod studied her with detached scrutiny.

Elodie no longer felt any urge to explain herself.

She took a step back. "Let's just get the divorce paperwork moving, please."

She didn't want any more entanglements. She'd only come because Octavia had gone missing, but now even that seemed irrelevant.

Octavia hadn't been surprised to see her-clearly, the girl had orchestrated the whole thing to mess with her.

There was no point trying to explain; Octavia would never admit it.

All Elodie wanted was to finalize the divorce as soon as possible.

But Jarrod paused, his dark eyes locking onto her, almost as if he were surprised.

Elodie couldn't understand his reaction. She'd already sent him the divorce agreement, hadn't she?

She turned to leave, but just as she

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did, a server rushed by, bumping hard into her shoulder. Elodie lost her balance, stumbling backward-straight into a broad, solid chest.

A familiar, cool scent filled her senses.

After three years of sharing a bed, she'd memorized that scent.

She looked up. "Sorry, I didn't mean to—"

Jarrold caught a whiff of something medicinal and frowned. "Are you feeling okay?"

Elodie's heart clenched. If Jarrod

ever found out she had cancer, with his cold, unforgiving nature, he wouldn't hesitate to expose her if her grandmother asked about the divorce, he'd probably tell her Elodie didn't have long to live and didn't want to drag him down.

"If you're sick, what's the point of coming to see me instead of going to a doctor?"

His calm words caught her off guard.

No matter how much she told herself she didn't care anymore, his words still stung.

Before she could answer, he suddenly gave a cold, mocking smile. "Nice act—first you storm out, then you threaten divorce, and now you pull this?"

Elodie froze, realizing he'd misunderstood her. Again.

She wanted to explain.

But Jarrod had already released her and turned away, his expression tight with irritation.

Elodie felt her breath catch, her lipstick bitten off to reveal pale lips, and a dull ache building in her stomach.

She refused to show any weakness, determined to leave.

But at that moment, she brushed past a tall man coming the opposite way.

He glanced at her with a half-smile, tossing out, "If you're that clueless, maybe try reading a book."

Elodie frowned, but he didn't give her a chance to respond-he'd already disappeared into the private room.

Another one of Jarrod's friends: Joseph Delacroix. Clearly, he'd seen the whole scene and assumed she'd just thrown herself at Jarrod only to be coldly pushed away.