

## Chapter 67 No.

The Caribou Club was dim, exclusive, and smelled of old leather and older money.

Eulalie walked in. She had changed into a simple black turtleneck and tailored trousers. Her hair was pulled back in a severe bun. She wore no makeup.

She looked like a shadow.

Jory walked beside her.

"His private room is in the back," he whispered.

They moved through the room. Eulalie kept her head down, avoiding eye contact with the tech billionaires and socialites scattered around.

In the back corner, in a secluded booth, not alone but with a book and a glass of red wine, was Professor Liu.

He looked exactly the same as she remembered from the gala. Stern. Imposing. A man who suffered no fools.

Eulalie stopped a few feet away. Her heart hammered against her ribs. This was not about failure, but about delivering on a promise.

"Professor?" she said softly.

Liu didn't look up immediately. He finished the paragraph he was reading. Then, slowly, he raised his eyes.

He squinted through his wire-rimmed glasses.

"Bradford," he said. His voice was gravelly. "I was beginning to wonder if you were going to show."

Eulalie bowed her head slightly. "Hello, Professor."

Liu closed his book. He looked her up and down, his expression

unreadable.

"You made quite a splash at the Nexus event," he said bluntly. "And now you're here. The 'Ghost' in the mountains."

Eulalie flinched, but she didn't look away.

"I needed to get away from the noise," she admitted.

"And now?"

"Now I'm ready to make some of my own."

Liu snorted. He gestured to the empty chair opposite him.

"Sit."

Eulalie sat. Jory remained standing, guarding the perimeter.

"I hear things," Liu said, swirling his wine. "I hear Holloway is planning a hostile takeover. I hear he thinks he can sue the Ghost into submission"

"He can try," Eulalie said.

Liu raised an eyebrow. "Bold. But words are wind, Bradford. You showed me the architecture for 1.0. Impressive. But he controls it now. You chose... that peacock."

He gestured vaguely in the direction of the Holloway chalet.

"I made a mistake," Eulalie said quietly. "I thought I could have both. Love and work. I was wrong."

"And now you want my help?" Liu asked. "An academic endorsement for your little war?"

"No," Eulalie said. She reached into her bag and pulled out a flash drive.

"I want you to look at this."

She slid the drive across the table.

"What is it?"

"It's the kernel for CUAP 2.0," Eulalie said. "I rewrote the latency protocols using the quantum-resistant algorithm we discussed in your seminar. The one you said was impossible."

Liu stared at the drive. His eyes widened slightly.

"You solved the decoherence problem?"

"I bypassed it," Eulalie said. "Using a recursive loop."

Liu picked up the drive. He turned it over in his fingers.

"If this is true..." he murmured. "Then you have rendered the current industry standard obsolete."

"Including Holloway's standard," Eulalie added.

Liu looked at her. A slow, terrifying smile spread across his face.

"You are trying to kill him," he realized. "Professionally."

Eulalie met his gaze.

"I'm just taking out the trash, Professor."

Liu laughed. A loud, barking sound that made heads turn.

"Good," he said. "I never liked him. Too much hair gel. Not enough brain."

He pocketed the drive.

"I will look at it. If it works... come find me at the Summit. I will be in the front row."

"Thank you," Eulalie breathed.

"Don't thank me yet," Liu warned. "If the code is garbage, I will destroy you publicly."

"I wouldn't expect anything less."

Eulalie stood up. She felt lighter.

As she turned to leave, the door to the club opened.

Caden walked in.

He was with Adalynn.

Adalynn was laughing hanging on his arm. Caden looked bored, scanning the room.

His eyes swept over the tables.

They landed on Eulalie.

He froze.

Eulalie didn't run. She didn't hide.

She looked him dead in the eye. She gave him a small, polite nod.

Then she turned and walked out the back exit, vanishing into the night before he could even take a step.

Caden stood there, blinking

It wasn't a ghost. It was a confirmation. She was here. And she was meeting with his target.

"Babe?" Adalynn tugged his arm. "What's wrong?"

Caden shook his head. "Nothing. I just... I need a drink."