

Chapter 75 No.

The Nexus AI office was a hive of controlled chaos. The TMZ story had hit them like a flashbang grenade-disorienting and designed to cause panic. Phones rang off the hook. Investors were calling, spooked. Journalists, smelling blood, were camped outside.

In the glass-walled conference room, the core team was assembled. Jory was pacing his face tight with anger.

"I'm going to sue her for libel," he snarled. "And her father. And the tabloid that printed it."

"That's what they want," Eulalie said calmly. She was sitting at the head of the table, her hands wrapped around her mug of tea. "They want us distracted, fighting on their turf. They want this to be about sex and betrayal because they know they can't win a fight about technology."

"So we do nothing?" the head of marketing asked, looking stressed. "We let them define you as an adulterer?"

"No," Eulalie said, setting her mug down. "We don't do nothing. We redefine the terms." She looked around the table, her gaze meeting each of their eyes. "They have attacked my character. I will respond with my work. They have attacked my partnership with Jory. We will respond by showcasing its strength."

She stood up and walked to the whiteboard. "Phase one was launching 2.0 and crippling their system. That's done. Phase two is survival and growth. Our legal team will handle the lawsuit. Our job," she said, picking up a marker, "is to make ourselves so successful, so essential to the industry, that their lies become irrelevant noise."

She drew a circle on the board. "First, we're holding a press conference. Not to deny their ridiculous story, but to announce our first major post-launch partnership."

Jory stopped pacing. "We don't have one yet."

"Professor Liu is arranging an introduction for me tomorrow," Eulalie said. "With the Department of Defense's advanced research division. They need a neural network that's immune to the kind of backdoors Caden was using. CUAP 2.0 is the only option."

A murmur of excitement went through the room. A government contract would be the ultimate validation.

"Second," she continued, drawing another line. "We go on the offensive. Not against Adalynn, but against the idea she represents. We're going to publish the security audit of CUAP 1.0. Show the world the flaws, the data-mining exploits Caden built into the system. We won't say he's a bad husband. We'll prove he's a bad actor."

Jory looked at her, his anger replaced by a fierce admiration. She wasn't just weathering the storm. She was harnessing it.

"And what about... us?" he asked quietly, gesturing between the two of them. "The story they're telling?"

Eulalie looked at him, her expression softening for a fraction of a second. "They're accusing us of having a sordid affair. Let's give them something far more powerful to look at."

She turned back to the team. "Jory is not my lover. He is my partner. He was the first person who saw my work and didn't try to own it. He invested in my mind, not my name. Our press conference won't be a denial. It will be a declaration of a professional partnership. We will show them what it looks like when a man and a woman build an empire together based on respect, not possession."

The air in the room shifted. The fear was gone, replaced by a steely resolve. They weren't a startup in crisis anymore. They were a company at war.