

Chapter 92 No.

The outdoor pool at the resort was a marvel of engineering. Steam rose from the turquoise water, meeting the biting mountain air in a thick, swirling mist. Snow piled high on the surrounding pine trees, creating a wall of white silence around the heated oasis.

It was Saturday afternoon, and the "summit" had devolved into a pool party. Waiters in tuxedos navigated the slippery deck with trays of champagne. The new Sterling executives were huddled in groups, pretending to discuss strategy while eyeing the open bar.

Adalynn was the center of attention, or at least, she was trying to be. She wore a white bikini that was little more than string and intention. A photographer—a cheap freelancer she had likely hired herself—circled her as she posed on the edge of the pool, arching her back and laughing at nothing. She was projecting an image of carefree success, a desperate performance for an audience of potential investors she hoped were watching online, ignoring the federal investigation hanging over her family like a guillotine.

"Caden, look at me!" she called out. "Does the light hit the diamonds right?"

Caden sat on a secluded terrace overlooking the pool, deliberately positioning himself as far away as possible to maintain a semblance of compliance with the restraining order, though he was likely still violating the distance in spirit. He was an outcast at his own funeral, a ghost watching the feast. He had a tablet on his lap, but the screen was dark. He was wearing dark sunglasses, but his head wasn't turned toward Adalynn. He was watching the far corner of the pool deck.

Under a large heater, Eulalie sat with Harrison Sterling. She was fully dressed in a thick robe over a modest black swimsuit. Her laptop was open. She was monitoring the final, delicate transfer of data from Holloway Capital's corrupted servers to her own secure network, her fingers moving in a blur. She looked like a statue of focus amidst the frivolity.

Jory walked up to her, holding two steaming mugs of cider. "You know,

the water is ninety degrees. It's actually nice."

"I'm not here to marinate with the board of directors," Eulalie said without looking up. "I'm making sure the last of Caden's digital poison is neutralized before it can infect the new system."

"You're no fun," Jory sighed, sitting on the edge of her lounge.

Near the shallow end, a little girl was playing. She looked about five, wearing a bright pink floatie ring. Her nanny was standing by the towel rack, frantically typing on her phone, her back turned to the water.

Eulalie's eyes flicked up from her screen. It was a habit born of years of monitoring systems—scanning for anomalies. She saw the little girl reach for a colorful beach ball that had drifted toward the deep end. The girl leaned too far.

The floatie flipped.

It happened in silence. There was no splash, no scream. The heavy plastic ring inverted, trapping the girl upside down underwater. Her small legs kicked frantically in the air, but the music and the chatter swallowed the sound.

From his distant perch, Caden saw a flicker of movement, but couldn't process what it was. Adalynn was still posing. The nanny was still texting. The executives were laughing.

Eulalie moved before she even processed the decision.

She shoved her laptop into Jory's chest and sprinted. She shed the heavy robe in stride, hitting the cold deck in her black swimsuit. She didn't dive; she vaulted. She hit the water with a precision that barely made a ripple, slicing through the steam.

Caden stood up, confused. "What the—"

Eulalie was underwater. The heat of the pool was shocking but her mind was cold. She opened her eyes against the sting of the chlorine. She saw the girl, her hair floating like a halo, her struggles slowing down.

Eulalie grabbed the girl's waist and kicked hard off the bottom.

They broke the surface with a gasp. The girl immediately started

coughing a wet, hacking sound that cut through the music. Eulalie treaded water, holding the child high against her shoulder, patting her back firmly.

"It's okay," Eulalie whispered, brushing wet hair from the girl's face. "I've got you. Breathe."

The pool deck went silent. The music stopped.

"Oh my God!" The nanny screamed, dropping her phone and running to the edge.

Adalynn looked annoyed. "Who is making all that noise? We're trying to shoot content here."

Eulalie swam to the stairs and carried the girl out. She was shivering not from cold, but from adrenaline. As she set the child down on a towel, a shadow fell over them.

Harrison Sterling pushed through the crowd. He was tall, with broad shoulders and eyes the color of steel. He wore a charcoal cashmere suit tailored with lethal precision and he moved with the terrifying grace of a predator.

"Daisy!" he roared.

The little girl looked up and burst into tears. "Uncle Harrison!"

Harrison dropped to his knees on the wet concrete, ignoring the ruin of his Italian wool trousers. He pulled the girl into a crushing hug, checking her face, her breathing. Then, he looked up.

His eyes met Eulalie's. She was dripping wet, her hair plastered to her skull, shivering in the mountain air. She looked fierce and exhausted.

Harrison stood up. He didn't speak. He took off his suit jacket—a heavy, charcoal cashmere—and wrapped it around Eulalie's shoulders. The warmth was instant and overwhelming.

"You," Harrison said, his voice rough with emotion. "Of course it was you. You see everything."

"She flipped," Eulalie said, her teeth chattering slightly. "Silent drowning. It happens fast."

Caden watched from the terrace, a cold fury rising in his chest. He saw Sterling—the billionaire rival who had just bought his company out from under him—wrapping his coat around Eulalie with a familiar protectiveness. He felt a primal urge to rush down there, to reclaim what was his, but the invisible wall of the restraining order held him back. He was a king trapped outside the walls of his own castle.

Harrison turned his head, his gaze sweeping the crowd until it landed on Caden's distant figure. His expression was cold enough to freeze the pool. "Security," he said quietly to a man in a dark suit. "Ensure Mr. Holloway remains in his designated area. And his... associate's photographer was blocking the view of a drowning child. Get them out of here."

Caden paled, even from a distance. He looked at Adalynn, then at Eulalie, who was pulling Harrison's coat tighter around herself. The smell of the coat—expensive tobacco and cedar-filled—her nose. It was a scent of power.

"Thank you," Harrison said to Eulalie, ignoring Caden completely. "You saved the only thing in this world I actually give a damn about."