

Chapter 93 No.

The invitation had been handwritten on heavy, cream-colored cardstock. Lunch. The Terrace. Noon. - H.S.

Eulalie hesitated, but Jory had already grabbed his coat. "It's Harrison Sterling," Jory said. "He's our new majority partner. You don't say no to the man who just helped us conquer an empire. Plus, free food."

The Terrace restaurant was a glass-enclosed jewel box overlooking the snowy peaks. It was usually crowded, but today, the entire south section was roped off.

Harrison sat at a round table, reading a newspaper. Daisy was next to him, coloring in a book with intense concentration. When she saw Eulalie, her face lit up.

"Mermaid lady!" Daisy chirped.

Harrison stood immediately. He pulled out a chair for Eulalie. "Thank you for coming. Daisy insisted she couldn't leave without saying thank you properly."

"She's a brave girl," Eulalie said, sitting down. Jory took the seat next to her, eyeing Harrison with the protective suspicion of a co-founder assessing a powerful new variable.

"Mr. Sterling," Jory began, "while we appreciate the gesture, I hope this isn't a prelude to a discussion about Nexus's valuation."

Harrison smiled. It transformed his face from severe to devastatingly charming. "I'm not here for business Mr. Stark. I'm here to feed the woman who saved my niece. But since you brought it up, I heard Caden's last hostile act was to try and sabotage your supply chain contracts."

Eulalie stiffened. "That's internal information."

"I make it my business to know everything about the things I acquire," Harrison said. "And the people."

Before Eulalie could respond, a commotion at the entrance drew their attention. Through the glass doors, she saw Caden arguing with the maitre d'. Adalynn was behind him, looking impatient. He was being denied entry to the main diningroom, his reservation apparently "lost."

Caden spotted them. His eyes narrowed when he saw Eulalie sitting with Harrison. He pushed past the maitre d' and marched to the velvet rope separating the public area from their private section.

"Eulalie," Caden said, stopping at the boundary. He didn't look at Harrison. "Grandmother is looking for you."

Eulalie didn't put down her fork. "Grandmother is in a seaweed wrap session until two. I checked her schedule."

Caden's jaw tightened. He had been caught in a lie.

"Well, look at this," Adalynn said, sauntering up. "Cozy little lunch. Moving on fast, aren't we, sister? I didn't know you had a thing for corporate raiders."

Harrison slowly folded his newspaper. He didn't look at Adalynn. He looked at Caden.

"Holloway," Harrison said, his voice conversational but deadly. "You're causing a scene."

"I'm talking to my wife," Caden snapped. "About the fact that her new... 'partner'... just gutted my company. You're celebrating on my grave, Sterling."

"I bought your company because you were running it into the ground," Harrison said calmly. "And I'm buying her lunch because she has more integrity in her little finger than you have in your entire lineage."

"And you," Caden pointed a finger at Jory. "You brought Nexus into this? You're using my family's crisis to poach my wife?"

Harrison raised an eyebrow. "Is that right? Then why did your final audit reveal you liquidated the retail division's pension fund the morning before the acquisition was finalized, to cover the margin call on Ms. Pennington's 'fashion tech' startup?"

The silence at the table was absolute. Eulalie looked at Caden. He looked like he had been punched in the gut.

"You did what?" Eulalie whispered. "Caden, that pension fund... those are people's lives."

"It's a bridge loan!" Caden defended, his voice rising. "It was temporary!"

"It's illegal," Harrison corrected. "And my legal team is compiling the file for the SEC as we speak. It should be ready by morning."

Adalynn grabbed Caden's arm. "Caden, let's go. They're just trying to upset you."

Harrison finally looked at Adalynn. His gaze was like a physical dismissal. "I wasn't speaking to the help."

Adalynn gasped, her face turning a blotchy red. "I am not—"

"You are a liability," Harrison said. "And you are boring me. Quiet down."

Jory choked on his water to hide a laugh.

Eulalie stood up. She felt a cold, hard anger settling in her chest. "Caden, take your mistress and leave. You are embarrassing yourself. And you are embarrassing Elara."

"Elara isn't here," Caden muttered.

"She sees everything," Eulalie said. "Go."

Caden looked at her, then at Harrison, who was watching him with the bored expression of a lion looking at a limping gazelle. Caden turned on his heel and walked out, Adalynn trailing behind him, shooting daggers at Eulalie's back.

Harrison picked up his wine glass. "He doesn't deserve you."

Eulalie sat back down, her appetite gone. "I know. But I have my reasons for how I handle him."

"I'm sure you do," Harrison said softly. "But if you ever need a sharper knife... I have a collection."