

Chapter 97 No.

The next morning the doorbell rang at 7:00 AM. It was a long, insistent ring.

Caden stumbled to the door, wearing sweatpants. He hadn't slept. Grandmother Holloway was already in the diningroom, sipping tea and reading the Wall Street Journal, which featured a scathing article on the collapse of Holloway Capital.

The butler opened the door. Two lawyers in sharp suits walked in, carrying briefcases.

"Mr. Holloway," the lead lawyer said, his voice devoid of sympathy. "We are here to discuss the terms of the divorce settlement. Ms. Bradford's counsel has sent over her initial proposal."

Caden stood at the entrance to the vast living room, a wreck in his own home. He looked past the lawyers, half-expecting to see Eulalie, but the doorway was empty.

Grandmother folded her newspaper. "Bring them into the study. Caden, get dressed. Try to look like you haven't lost everything even though you have."

An hour later, they were seated around the mahogany desk. The proposal was brutal. Eulalie wanted the pre-nup enforced to the letter. She wanted full ownership of Nexus AI stock, her intellectual property, and sole custody of Elara. In return, she would not pursue further civil damages for his fraudulent use of company funds.

"This is... this is everything," Caden stammered, looking at the papers.

"It is less than she deserves," Grandmother said coolly. "She built an empire under your nose while you were distracted by a cheap bauble. Sign it."

"I want to see her," Caden said, his voice cracking. "I want to talk to her."

"That is not happening" Eulalie's lawyer said firmly. "All communication will go through us. Furthermore, Ms. Bradford has filed for an emergency hearing regarding your violation of the TRO at the resort yesterday."

Grandmother's teacup rattled in its saucer. She shot Caden a look of pure fury.

"You did what?" she hissed.

"I just wanted to talk to her!" Caden defended, his voice rising. "She was with Sterling, and—"

"You are a fool," Grandmother said, her voice dropping to a dangerous whisper. "You had one chance to be penitent, and you chose to be a jealous thug. You will sign these papers, and you will give her whatever she wants. Perhaps then she won't have you put in jail."

The weight of it all crushed him. He wasn't just losing his wife. He was losing his freedom. He picked up the pen, his hand shaking.