

Jilted heiress: marrying the untouchable tycoon

Chapter 33:

She walked into the grand ballroom. The air was thick with the scent of expensive perfume and the low hum of billion-dollar conversations. She grabbed a flute of champagne from a passing waiter and scanned the room.

She expertly navigated around a cluster of old-guard Montgomery board members, heading straight for the dimly lit side lounge where the tech money congregated.

Before she could reach her target, a man in a tailored burgundy velvet suit stepped directly into her path.

He held a glass of bourbon, a lazy, arrogant smirk playing on his lips, one she'd recognize anywhere. "We meet again, Allison," Kip Downs said, his tone casual but laced with unspoken acknowledgment of their prior dealings. "Figured I'd save you the trouble of tracking me down. Still playing the independent venture capitalist for the room."

Allison's grip on her champagne flute tightened almost imperceptibly. Her eyes narrowed slightly, not with confusion, but with wariness, before she forced a polite, flawless smile that didn't reach her eyes. She clinked her glass against his, the sound sharp and brief.

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“You look like you’re ready to give the old men on Wall Street a collective heart attack,” Kip said, his eyes scanning her dress with blatant approval, though his gaze lingered a beat too long on her necklace, a silent reminder of Adam’s influence.

“I didn’t come here to be decorative,” Allison replied smoothly, cutting to the chase. She wasted no time, immediately dropping the core metrics of her AI logistics subsidiary into the conversation, the same numbers she’d referenced in their phone call days earlier.

Kip’s smirk faded. His eyes sharpened with genuine business interest. He nodded slowly, clearly impressed by the brutal efficiency of her model, a reaction she’d anticipated, given their prior discussion of her goals.

They drifted toward the edge of the outdoor terrace, away from the loud music. The cold wind bit into Allison’s bare back, and she fought the urge to shiver, a sign of weakness she couldn’t afford.

Kip took a sip of his bourbon. He leaned against the stone railing and sighed heavily. “Honestly, if I wasn’t here scouting for my own portfolio, and keeping an eye on you, per Adam’s request, I’d be at a Knicks game right now. I almost didn’t recognize you in that gown, but Adam showed me your file when you became his latest ‘merger project.’ I have to say, your balance sheet looks absolutely flawless.”

Allison’s lungs seized, not with shock at Adam’s involvement, but at the confirmation that Kip was here explicitly to monitor her. The air trapped in her chest, and her brain locked onto the phrase “per Adam’s request,” a stark reminder that she was never truly free of his control, even in a room full of strangers.

She kept her face perfectly blank. She took a slow sip of champagne to buy time, her tone cool and feigned curiosity. “Adam? You don’t mean the Kensington with the... unfortunate medical rumors?” It was a calculated act. She knew exactly who Adam was, but playing dumb was safer, a way to glean more information without revealing her hand.

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