BookGist Summary

Vows Of Vengence

by Eliza Valbrook

Key Takeaways

• Betrayal can become a catalyst for agency: after Julian and Sarah humiliate Emilia at the altar, she turns grief into a determined campaign to reclaim her company and future.

• The novel's central alliance begins as a transaction. Emilia and Adrian marry to satisfy a condition in Adrian's grandfather's will and combine their leverage against Julian.

• Julian's pursuit of power is both personal and corporate: he exploits relationships, concealed debts, family history, and legal maneuvers to strengthen his position.

• Emilia and Adrian's contrasting temperaments—her urgency and directness, his patience and strategy—create friction but also make them an effective team.

• Their partnership gradually shifts from shared revenge to genuine intimacy as they reveal their wounds, listen to one another, and offer practical as well as emotional support.

• Recovery is not instant. Emilia's nightmares, Adrian's guardedness, and her doubts about love show how betrayal can persist even after its immediate crisis has passed.

• Ghost, the rescued white German Shepherd, becomes a source of comfort and a symbol of the couple's shared history of abandonment and their possibility of building a home.

• The protagonists' most effective victories come from exposing evidence and building legitimate claims, not merely from public confrontation or retaliation.

• The ending reframes their original vows: a marriage arranged for revenge becomes a freely chosen commitment grounded in trust, love, family, and shared purpose.

Who Should Read This Book

This story is for readers who enjoy high-drama contemporary romance built around betrayal, strategic marriage, corporate rivalry, and a slow shift from guarded partnership to chosen love. Readers drawn to formidable heroines, wounded but capable romantic leads, public confrontations, inheritance secrets, and satisfying reversals will find plenty to follow. The rescued dog, Ghost, and Emilia's gradual reconciliation with her father also give the corporate revenge plot a domestic and emotional dimension. Readers looking for a realistic business thriller or restrained, subtle romance may find the novel's plot heightened and melodramatic: public scandals, legal battles, family secrets, and romantic turning points arrive in quick succession. Its appeal is closer to dramatic marriage-of-convenience and revenge-romance stories than to detailed corporate fiction. The central payoff is emotional transformation: Emilia and Adrian begin by using marriage as leverage, then learn to trust one another and build a future that is no longer organized around their enemies.

Chapter Summaries

The Chapal Catastrophe

Emilia Beaumont arrives at a Domino City chapel expecting to marry Julian Thorne, the man she believes is her great love. Instead, she discovers Julian at the altar with her childhood best friend, Sarah Matthews. The betrayal is staged in public: the guests watch, Julian and Sarah exchange vows, and Julian meets Emilia's gaze with apparent triumph. Overwhelmed by the humiliation, Emilia collapses, while her father shields her and gets her out of the chapel. In the limousine, her father explains the financial motive behind the betrayal. Julian's company is failing, and he believed marriage to Emilia would give him access to the resources tied to her family's company and inheritance. Her heartbreak hardens into resolve. Her father points her toward Adrian Thorne, Julian's estranged half-brother and a possible rival claimant to the Thorne legacy. Emilia decides to enlist Adrian and turn Julian's family history against him.

The Half-Brother's Shadow

Emilia trades her wedding dress for a black suit and tracks Adrian to a neglected brownstone on the city's east side. Adrian is guarded and bitter, but Julian's name immediately exposes their shared grievance. Emilia tells him about the wedding-day betrayal and her belief that Julian married Sarah to secure power and business resources. Adrian reveals that his father left a hidden codicil that may give him a claim to Thorne Industries. The inheritance has an

obstacle: Adrian's traditionalist grandfather required the heir to be publicly and legitimately married before being recognized as head of the family. Emilia proposes a strategic marriage that could satisfy the clause, help Adrian challenge Julian, and give her a route to reclaim her company. Adrian initially doubts that Julian will accept the marriage as genuine, but Emilia argues that they can make their alliance public and effective. They agree to join forces, defining the arrangement as a war against their common enemy.

The Arrangement Begins

Emilia and Adrian marry in a brief courthouse ceremony, with no celebration or display of affection. She moves into Adrian's brownstone with one suitcase, treating the change as the start of a new life organized around her mission. Over dinner, they discuss Julian's vulnerabilities: his dependence on public image, his failing finances, and his assumption that Emilia and Adrian are too defeated to fight back. As they review records and plan their first moves, Emilia discovers an antique brass key in a box of Adrian's family keepsakes. It may unlock the hidden inheritance his father left behind. Adrian is stunned by the find and moved by the possibility that his family's legacy is recoverable. Their toast to the key marks a shift: they remain strategic partners, but they begin to recognize the trust and hope each can offer the other.

The First Strike

Emilia and Adrian send evidence of Julian's concealed debts and questionable financial statements to an investigative journalist. The resulting story shakes investors and sends Thorne Industries' stock tumbling, directly challenging Julian's carefully cultivated image of success. Emilia then gives a television interview, recasting herself not as a discarded bride but as a businesswoman determined to defend her family's legacy. She publicly introduces Adrian as her husband and ally. Adrian follows with his own account of being excluded from the Thorne family and his intention to reclaim his place. Their coordinated appearances shift the public narrative in their favor, while their legal and financial teams begin preparing the formal challenge. Later, Emilia sees Adrian playing piano and recognizes a more tender, vulnerable side of the man she had approached as a weapon against Julian.

Cracks in the Armor

As Emilia and Adrian settle into a routine, Adrian shares photographs that reveal a childhood marked by cruelty. He explains that Julian's mother tried to force his own mother to surrender an inheritance and struck him when she refused; Julian witnessed the violence without intervening. The memory gives Emilia a clearer understanding of the old wound beneath Adrian's reserved manner. Their different approaches to revenge bring them into conflict. Emilia wants to strike quickly and expose Julian publicly; Adrian favors a slower campaign designed to strip Julian of everything over time. Their argument becomes personal, but Emilia recognizes that she has dismissed the depth of Adrian's pain. She apologizes and embraces

him. Later, Adrian tells her more about the day his family was pushed out, and Emilia listens without trying to fix the past. Their shared vulnerability begins to turn the alliance into friendship.

The Aftermath

The day after their emotional conversation, both retreat behind professional boundaries. They agree to keep personal feelings separate from their strategy, partly because each has been hurt by trusting someone. Emilia channels her energy into launching a luxury accessories brand she has been developing, built around ethical sourcing and transparent production—values that contrast with Julian's deceptive business practices. Adrian helps her secure investors through his business network, supporting her success without demanding a share. At the Thorne Industries gala, they appear together as a confident public front, unsettling Julian and Sarah. Alone on a balcony, Adrian praises Emilia and nearly kisses her; she pulls away when memories of the chapel return. The moment makes clear that their growing closeness is real, even as both are afraid to acknowledge it.

The War of Hearts

Julian tries to relaunch his reputation through Aegis, a smart-home security system, but Emilia and Adrian disrupt the event by showing footage of Julian and Sarah celebrating Emilia's humiliation. The clip goes viral, turning the product launch into a public-relations disaster. At the same time, Adrian's investigator uncovers properties Julian moved into a shell company despite their connection to a family trust. Adrian and Emilia use the hidden inheritance and legal records to challenge the transfers, and the court returns the properties to the Thorne trust under their management. Their victories bring them closer, and Emilia realizes she feels at peace with Adrian in a way she never expected. When Sarah reaches out, Emilia blocks her rather than reopen the relationship. Adrian's former mentor, Ivan Petrov, then offers a database of evidence against Thorne Industries, giving the couple a stronger position ahead of an upcoming business gala.

The Gala

Emilia and Adrian arrive at the Businessmen of the Year Gala dressed to project confidence and unity. Their presence draws attention, and Julian challenges the legitimacy of their marriage. Adrian answers by kissing Emilia in public. Though the kiss begins as a strategic statement, it becomes unexpectedly passionate and reveals feelings neither has admitted to themselves. They leave the gala together, unsettled by what happened. In the limousine, both try to dismiss the kiss as a moment of poor judgment, but their denial feels unconvincing. The chapter marks a turning point: the alliance is no longer only a business arrangement, and their public performance has exposed a private possibility they are not ready to discuss.

The Nightmare

Emilia dreams that she is trapped in an endless fall through memories of betrayal. Julian and Sarah mock her, her father says he could not protect her, and familiar places become scenes of loss. She wakes frightened and disoriented, then tries to soothe herself by reading alone. The nightmare shows that public confidence has not erased the emotional impact of what happened at the chapel. Adrian hears her distress but initially stays outside her room, afraid to break through the emotional barriers he has built. The next morning, he gently tells her he heard her and offers to listen. Emilia avoids a full account, calling it a dream about black holes, but his concern makes her feel less alone. Their exchange shows how care can begin without forcing someone to disclose more than they are ready to share.

A New Ally

Concerned by Emilia's nightmares and by the distance between them, Adrian proposes adopting a dog—both as a source of comfort and as a way to make their marriage seem more settled to outsiders. At the shelter, Emilia responds warmly to many dogs but feels an immediate connection with a quiet white German Shepherd who has been abandoned. Adrian sees the bond and agrees that the dog is the right choice. Emilia names her Ghost, a name that reflects their haunted pasts and the possibility of living with, rather than being ruled by, what they have lost. The dog quickly becomes a calming presence in the house, sleeping near Emilia and following her from room to room. Ghost also draws Adrian and Emilia into a more domestic rhythm, making their shared home—and their marriage—feel less like a temporary arrangement.

The Second Confession

Emilia sees the scars on Adrian's body while he trains and asks about them. Adrian explains that after his mother left the Thorne family, men connected to Julian came after him to ensure he would not challenge Julian's position. One scar came from an enforcer's warning. Adrian's account makes concrete the physical danger and exclusion behind his years in hiding, and he admits that Emilia is the first person he has trusted with the story. That night, unable to sleep, Emilia goes to Adrian's room and accepts his invitation to stay. Their first kiss in private is tender and grounded in their shared vulnerability, but it quickly grows more passionate. Emilia stops when she feels the intimacy moving faster than she can manage. They retreat to the familiar language of boundaries, calling the moment a lapse in judgment, even though their feelings have become harder to deny.

A Father's Regret

Emilia's father visits and apologizes for being manipulated by Julian. He says he believed Julian was protecting Emilia and her inheritance, but now understands that he was deceived. Emilia's hurt has not disappeared, yet she listens to his remorse and begins to consider repairing their relationship. Julian arrives and threatens Emilia, insisting that she is trying to take what belongs to him. This time she does not collapse or plead; she calmly tells him the

company was never his and that she intends to win. Ghost growls at Julian, reinforcing the scene's shift in power. After he leaves, Emilia reassures her father that they will recover what was taken, signaling that forgiveness and renewed family support may become part of her future.

A New Kind of Freedom

Emilia sees a tabloid announcement that Julian and Sarah are expecting a child. She expects anger or renewed heartbreak, but instead feels detached. The news confirms that their lives are now separate from hers; the betrayal remains part of her history, but it no longer controls her emotions. At a park, Emilia plays with Ghost while Adrian watches. Her laughter and ease show him a side of her that has been hidden beneath the business war. The ordinary, joyful moment becomes evidence of a different kind of recovery: Emilia is no longer defined only by what Julian did or by the revenge she pursued. She is beginning to imagine a life that belongs to her.

Just Blame It All on the Wine

Emilia and Adrian share dinner and wine in a peaceful domestic moment. Their attraction, previously contained by agreed boundaries, finally becomes physical. The encounter feels deliberate and intimate rather than like the public kiss at the gala, but a phone notification interrupts them and brings their anxiety back to the surface. Adrian blames the wine, and Emilia accepts the excuse despite knowing that it does not explain what they feel. They return to separate rooms, leaving Emilia distressed and uncertain about the future she wants. Ghost stays beside her as she cries, offering the reassurance Adrian has not yet been able to give openly. The chapter shows the cost of their denial: closeness brings comfort, but fear of vulnerability makes them retreat just when they might begin to build a genuine relationship.

The Public & The Private

Emilia seeks a taste of ordinary life by shopping for groceries and cooking coq au vin at the estate. The simple routines offer a contrast to the publicity and corporate maneuvering that have taken over her days. Adrian appreciates the meal, and although they do not discuss the previous night, they share a quiet truce and walk Ghost together. Their calm ends when they discover a malicious gossip article attacking their marriage. It includes private details that suggest someone close to them has been supplying information. By tracing the blog's connections and examining the writing, they conclude that Sarah is behind the smear campaign. The threat is no longer only financial or legal: their private life has become another target.

Breaking Point

Julian escalates the conflict by filing baseless lawsuits against Emilia's father's long-established company. The legal actions are designed to exhaust the business through

delays, paperwork, and expense. Emilia is shaken because Julian has moved beyond attacking her career and is now threatening the family and home that once gave her security. Adrian sees her distress and promises to stand with her. He holds her while she cries, then tells her they will fight back by exposing Julian's fraud and protecting her father's company. Emilia regains her resolve, but their exchange also reveals how much their bond has changed: Adrian is no longer simply a strategic partner. He is becoming the person she trusts when she feels most vulnerable.

A Fire of Their Own Making

Adrian proposes a measured legal defense against Julian's attacks on Emilia's father. Emilia rejects the cautious approach, furious that Julian has targeted her family and determined to make him pay. She believes Adrian's protectiveness risks sidelining her, while he fears that revenge could consume her. Their argument exposes a tension between her need to take control and his instinct to shield her. The conflict gives way to a mutual, passionate choice, and their relationship becomes more intimate. The next day, they move together against Julian, combining legal action with carefully sourced reporting on his business practices and his efforts to harm a family-owned company. They also expose private communications between Julian and Sarah, damaging Sarah's public standing. The public backlash accelerates Julian's collapse and completes a major phase of the revenge campaign.

The Final Moves

With Julian's position weakened, Emilia and Adrian decide to merge their companies into a new organization. Their teams shape a company that combines Emilia's innovation with Adrian's legacy and resources. At a press conference, they announce the Vanguard Group and emphasize integrity and purpose rather than revenge, presenting a future-facing vision to the public. After the announcement, Emilia recognizes that her feelings for Adrian have become love. She tells him, and he responds with a passionate declaration of their connection. Their relationship is no longer held together by a contract or common enemy; it rests on a conscious emotional commitment. The couple's victory over Julian becomes the beginning of a shared life rather than the final goal.

The New Vows

Vanguard's launch succeeds, and Emilia and Adrian become celebrated figures, but Emilia privately struggles to trust the happiness they have found. She worries that their love may be only an extension of the shared trauma and revenge that brought them together. Adrian notices her uncertainty and asks her father for advice on how to make a proposal that honors her journey and helps her feel secure. Adrian secretly plans a proposal, but his secrecy triggers Emilia's old fear that she is being deceived or abandoned again. He finally takes her to the apartment where her former life began, now transformed with white roses, music, and a meal she loves. He gives her a ring and makes clear that his proposal is not a strategy but a

promise. Emilia accepts, feeling able to trust the love and future they are choosing.

The Real Wedding Begins

After accepting Adrian's proposal, Emilia experiences their intimacy as an expression of love rather than an impulsive escape from grief. The couple begins preparing for a new wedding, approaching it with excitement and a sense of genuine partnership. Adrian chooses a classic tuxedo, while Emilia shops for a simple, elegant gown with her father, whose renewed presence reflects their repaired relationship. Emilia asks her father to walk her down the aisle, and he gladly agrees. She and Adrian also train Ghost to carry the rings, making the dog a meaningful part of the family they are creating. The preparations underline the difference between Emilia's first wedding, which became a public betrayal, and this ceremony, which will be private, intentional, and grounded in mutual love.

The Real Wedding

Emilia and Adrian marry in an intimate garden ceremony surrounded by close friends and family, without reporters or cameras. Emilia's father walks her down the aisle, and Ghost carries the rings. Their vows promise friendship, protection, respect, and lasting companionship—replacing the earlier marriage vows they made for revenge with commitments they freely choose. The wedding celebrates the family and home they have built after betrayal and isolation. Once the guests leave, Emilia and Adrian share a private moment beneath the stars, continuing their celebration as a couple. The chapter closes the emotional arc of the arrangement: the marriage that began as a tactic has become a genuine partnership and a shared future.

The Crown & The Heart

Two years later, the Vanguard Group has grown into a global company guided by the integrity and innovation Emilia and Adrian set out to combine. Adrian has become a respected CEO, and Emilia is admired as a powerful leader. Their success is presented not only as a corporate achievement but as the result of a partnership built on shared purpose and trust. Emilia tells Adrian she is pregnant, and he welcomes the news as the beginning of their family's next chapter. Julian, now isolated and stripped of his former power, watches the announcement with envy, forced to confront the consequences of choosing control over love. On a private island, Emilia and Adrian reflect on their original vows of vengeance and recognize that their promises are now real. They end the story at peace, with a family and future they have chosen together.

Notable Quotes

> *""“A marriage for revenge and power. I've heard worse proposals.”""*

""“The bigger the triumph, the harder the fall.”""

""“It's okay to be scared, Emilia. It's okay to be vulnerable.”""

Full Summary

Emilia Beaumont arrived at the historic Domino City chapel believing she was about to marry Julian Thorne, the man she loved. Instead, she opened the doors to find Julian at the altar with Sarah Matthews, her best friend since childhood, exchanging vows in Emilia’s place. Sarah wore a wedding dress; Julian wore the expression of a man who had planned the humiliation. When he looked at Emilia over Sarah’s shoulder, there was no apology in his eyes, only triumphant pity. Emilia collapsed onto the marble floor as the guests stared and whispered, while her father shielded her and led her away.

In the limousine, her father explained that the betrayal was more than personal. Julian’s company was failing, and he had approached the Beaumonts for investment, hoping to gain access to the capital and resources behind a new technology company destined to become Emilia’s inheritance. When her father made clear that the company would belong to her, Julian turned to Sarah’s family instead. Their marriage would make a merger easier and help him secure control. Emilia’s grief hardened into anger: Julian had not only deceived her, but tried to steal her future.

Her father pointed her toward Julian’s estranged half-brother, Adrian Thorne. Rumors suggested that Adrian’s late father had left a hidden codicil that might give him a claim to Thorne Industries. Emilia tracked him to a neglected brownstone and found a wary, disheveled man who shared Julian’s piercing blue eyes but none of his polished confidence. She told Adrian that Julian had married Sarah on the day meant to be her wedding, and that the marriage was part of a corporate power grab. Adrian confirmed that his father had left a hidden inheritance, but claiming it required more than finding the document. Their grandfather’s will stipulated that the heir must be married to be recognized as head of the Thorne family.

Emilia saw an opportunity. She proposed that she and Adrian marry, satisfying the clause while combining their leverage against Julian. The arrangement would be public and legally real, but transactional: Adrian could pursue his inheritance, and Emilia could reclaim her company. Adrian questioned whether Julian would dismiss the match as a sham. Emilia insisted that their alliance would be genuine, even if it was built on power rather than love. After considering what he stood to regain, Adrian accepted. They sealed the bargain with a handshake and a shared toast to war.

Two days after the chapel catastrophe, they married in a municipal office, without family, ceremony, or even a kiss. Emilia wore a simple silver band in place of the ring Julian had

given her, then moved into Adrian's brownstone with a single suitcase. Their new life began in rooms filled with dust, books, and old papers. Over a quiet dinner, they agreed that Julian would expect them to be defeated. Emilia wanted to strike first, using his obsession with public image against him. She had files from her father's office showing that Julian's finances were in trouble; Adrian could contact Mark Jenkins, a former Thorne Industries CFO, for further evidence of debt and misuse of company money.

While they planned their campaign, Emilia searched Adrian's house and found an unmarked box containing family photographs and an antique brass key. She suspected it was the key to the hidden inheritance. Adrian was overwhelmed when she brought it to him: for years, Julian had searched for the evidence, while the key had remained among the family possessions his father had treasured. Adrian's gratitude shifted the mood between them. They were still partners in revenge, but now their shared purpose had given each of them something they had lacked: hope.

Their first move was to send Julian's financial records to an investigative journalist. The resulting story exposed hidden debts and the desperate state of his company, and its stock plunged. Emilia then went on television, refusing the role of victim. Julian had betrayed her family and legacy, she said, but she was not a pawn; she was reclaiming what was hers. She introduced Adrian as her husband and described their partnership as a commitment to challenge Julian's fraud. Adrian spoke of his father and the years he had been treated as though he did not exist. The public narrative shifted: Julian was under suspicion, while Emilia and Adrian appeared united and formidable. They began building the legal framework to combine their resources and challenge his control.

As they worked, Emilia discovered an old photograph of young Adrian with a bruise on his face. He explained that after his father's death, Julian's mother had tried to force Adrian's mother to surrender her claim. When she refused, she struck Adrian while Julian watched without intervening. The memory sharpened the stakes of their campaign. Yet Emilia and Adrian clashed over how to fight it. Emilia wanted to expose Julian quickly and force a decisive victory; Adrian preferred a patient campaign that would strip away his money, company, and reputation piece by piece. She accused him of delaying justice, while he argued that Julian deserved a complete, public downfall rather than an easy defeat.

Emilia recognized that she had dismissed the older wounds Adrian carried. She apologized and embraced him. He initially stiffened, unused to comfort, but eventually held her. Later, he told her more about the day his father died and how Julian's indifference had helped destroy his childhood. Emilia listened without trying to fix his pain, holding his hand as he spoke. The closeness brought them relief, but it also frightened them. The next morning, Adrian retreated behind his old reserve. Emilia suggested strict boundaries: their marriage would remain a professional arrangement, and personal intimacy would not interfere with the plan.

They turned to business. Emilia launched a luxury brand of ethically sourced, eco-friendly leather goods, a direct competitor to Julian's company and a statement of the values his business lacked. Adrian helped her secure investors, championing her vision without asking for a share. At the Thorne Industries gala, they presented themselves as a united front. Julian and Sarah watched them from across the ballroom. Alone on a balcony, Adrian praised Emilia's command of the room and touched her face. They nearly kissed, but memories of Julian and Sarah's betrayal pulled Emilia back. They both understood that their alliance was changing, even as they tried to keep it contained.

Julian's attempted comeback came with Aegis, a smart-home security system he hoped would restore confidence in Thorne Industries. During its launch, the screen behind him abruptly displayed security footage of Julian and Sarah celebrating Emilia's humiliation and the takeover they had planned. The clip, captioned "Vows of Vengeance," spread rapidly, turning the launch into a public-relations disaster. Adrian's investigators then uncovered that Julian had moved historic family properties into a shell corporation, though the will required them to remain in the Thorne family. With their lawyers, Emilia and Adrian secured an injunction and returned the properties to the family trust.

Their victories brought them closer, and Emilia deleted a message from Sarah asking to explain, unwilling to reopen the betrayal. Then Adrian's former mentor, Ivan Petrov, arrived with an offer of help—and a private database of Thorne Industries' illegal activity and financial misconduct. With Julian nominated for a prominent business award, Emilia and Adrian saw the gala as a chance to use the evidence and confront him publicly.

At the Domino City Businessmen of the Year gala, Emilia arrived in a shimmering silver gown, wearing a necklace that had belonged to Adrian's mother. Together, she and Adrian entered as a confident, united pair, drawing the attention of the city's elite. Julian and Sarah greeted them with thin smiles. Julian sneered that their marriage was a sham, but Adrian stood close to Emilia, and she answered coolly that they knew what their partnership meant. When Adrian kissed her for the cameras, the performance turned unexpectedly real. The kiss held a tenderness and urgency neither had planned to reveal. They left the gala together, shaken by what they had felt, only for Adrian to insist on the drive home that it had been a lapse in judgment and would not happen again. Emilia knew the denial was as fragile as her own.

That night, she dreamed she was falling through a darkness filled with Julian and Sarah's mocking faces. In the dream, she stood again at the altar, only for the floor to split beneath her; her father apologized that he could not protect her, and she plunged into another endless fall. Adrian heard her distressed cries from his study. He went to her door, hand on the knob, wanting to comfort her, but his fear of vulnerability won out, and he returned to his work. When Emilia woke, shaken and sweating, she tried to steady herself by reading until morning. At breakfast Adrian admitted he had heard her. She dismissed it as a silly dream, but he gently

told her she did not have to pretend she was fine and that he was there if she wanted to talk. She let herself accept the concern, if only briefly.

The next day, Adrian proposed bringing a dog into their home: a companion to help Emilia feel grounded at night, and a convincing sign of their shared domestic life in public. At the adoption center, Emilia's guardedness faded as she visited the kennels. In the back she found a white German Shepherd, thin and sorrowful, who had been discovered abandoned in a field. The dog approached quietly and nudged Emilia's hand. Adrian saw how naturally they connected and agreed she was the one. Emilia named her Ghost, recognizing in the abandoned animal a reflection of their own histories of loss and rejection. At the estate, Ghost became more than a prop for their marriage. She followed Emilia from room to room, slept beside her, and brought warmth into the house. Her presence gave them a small, shared sense of home.

Ghost's arrival softened the distance between Emilia and Adrian, but it was another kind of exposure that brought them closer. In Adrian's gym, Emilia noticed the scars across his back and side. He initially met her concern with a defensive remark, but then told her how his grandfather had trained him to protect himself, anticipating Julian's treachery. After Adrian's mother left, Julian's men had attacked him to ensure he would never threaten Julian's position. One of the scars came from an enforcer's knife, delivered as a warning. Adrian had lost his family, home, and inheritance; Emilia was the first person he had trusted enough to tell. She sat beside him and offered her quiet presence rather than questions.

Unable to sleep that night, Emilia went to Adrian's room with Ghost behind her. He made space for her without demanding an explanation. They lay together, at first leaving distance between them, until she reached for his hand and thanked him. Their kiss began gently, a moment of comfort that deepened into desire. But when it grew too intimate, Emilia pulled back, frightened by how quickly the line between alliance and love seemed to be disappearing. Adrian apologized, and they both retreated to the safety of pretending it had meant nothing.

A call from her father soon forced Emilia to confront another unfinished wound. She had not spoken to him since the wedding, resenting his failure to recognize how Julian had used her. When he arrived at the estate, he looked exhausted and remorseful. He confessed that Julian had persuaded him the inheritance would be a burden to Emilia and claimed he was protecting it for her. Her father had believed him and now understood he had been manipulated. Emilia's pain remained, but she could see the regret in him. Their fragile reconciliation was interrupted when Julian arrived and mocked their reunion, warning Emilia that she was playing a dangerous game and would regret challenging him. She stood her ground, insisting the company was never his to claim. Ghost's low growl reinforced her defiance. After Julian left, Emilia told her father she forgave him and promised they would fight

to recover what had been taken.

When news broke that Julian and Sarah were expecting a child, Emilia was surprised by her own stillness. The announcement, once certain to reopen her deepest wounds, left her with no anger or grief. She realized that the betrayal had become part of her past rather than the force defining her future. At the park, she watched Ghost chase a ball while Adrian looked on with a quiet smile. Emilia's laughter came easily; she felt, perhaps for the first time, free of Julian and Sarah's hold on her.

That evening, over a shared meal and glasses of wine, Emilia and Adrian let themselves enjoy the peaceful life taking shape around them. Their next kiss was neither a public gesture nor an accident in the dark. It was a choice. Desire quickly overwhelmed their caution, until Adrian's phone sounded and broke the moment. He pulled away and blamed the wine, calling their closeness carelessness. Emilia echoed the excuse, hurt by his retreat, and went to her room, where Ghost comforted her as she cried.

The following morning, Emilia sought out ordinary pleasures, taking Ghost to the supermarket and then preparing coq au vin in the estate's usually quiet kitchen. Adrian joined her, and though neither mentioned the night before, the meal became a wordless offering and a tentative truce. Their walk with Ghost across the grounds felt easy, until Adrian's phone brought a new threat: a vicious gossip article claimed their marriage was fraudulent. Worse, it included intimate details that could only have come from someone close to them. Emilia and Adrian traced the blog's apparent trail through a shell company and examined its language and specifics. The evidence pointed not to Julian, but to Sarah, who had begun using her own connections to attack them. Their conflict had shifted from corporate maneuvering into a more invasive, personal war.

Sarah's attack was followed by a more direct blow from Julian. His lawyers filed a string of baseless lawsuits against Emilia's father's company, a small business he had built over a lifetime and a cherished part of the family's legacy. The claims were designed to drain him with legal costs and endless proceedings, and Julian's team compounded the pressure with deliberate scheduling conflicts and mountains of paperwork. Emilia recognized the assault for what it was: Julian using her father as a pawn because he could not control her. The news shook her more deeply than any attack on her own reputation or business. When Adrian found her pacing his office, frightened and furious, he promised he would not let Julian destroy her family. He held her while she cried, then reminded her that they could fight back together.

Adrian's first proposal was a careful legal defense, but Emilia wanted no more patience or restraint. Julian had crossed a line, she argued; she wanted his empire ruined. Adrian warned that vengeance could consume her, and that he wanted to protect her rather than watch her be swallowed by the fight. She heard his concern as an attempt to sideline her, and the

argument flared. Yet the anger gave way to a different intensity. Their attraction, long denied and repeatedly dismissed as a mistake, became impossible to ignore. They chose one another, sharing an intimacy that made their bond feel more profound than any legal pact. In the quiet afterward, Adrian called it a fire of their own making. Emilia answered that, for once, she was not afraid of it.

The next morning they acted together, no longer divided between Emilia's urgency and Adrian's caution. They launched countersuits and investigations, and Adrian used his contacts to help expose Julian's questionable business practices. A reporter published a detailed account of his shady deals and his effort to crush a family-owned company. Investors and business partners fled, and Thorne Industries' stock fell sharply as public anger grew. Emilia and Adrian then exposed Julian and Sarah's private correspondence, revealing the schemes and malicious gossip behind their partnership. Sarah's role in Emilia's betrayal became public, and the woman who had once stood beside her as a best friend was left isolated and discredited. Julian's empire began to collapse under investigations and the threat of bankruptcy; the couple's revenge had become a shared campaign to protect what mattered to them.

With Julian's power breaking apart, Emilia and Adrian turned from destruction to creation. They agreed to merge their companies, bringing together Emilia's drive for innovation and Adrian's inherited legacy and financial strength. Their inner circle—including Emilia's father, Adrian's mentor Ivan, and their advisers—helped shape the new enterprise. At a press conference, they announced its name: the Vanguard Group. They spoke not about revenge but about building a company rooted in integrity as well as profit. The announcement marked a change in their partnership. Their alliance had begun as a transaction, but now they were choosing to join their futures.

That evening, standing together above the city, Emilia understood that her feelings for Adrian had outgrown their shared fight. She loved him for the way he stood beside her without trying to stand in front of her, for his faith in her judgment, and for the tenderness with which he had supported her through her worst moments. She told him so, and he answered with a passionate kiss. Yet love did not erase the damage betrayal had left behind. As the Vanguard Group grew, Emilia sometimes wondered whether their relationship was real in itself or merely a bond forged by shared trauma. She feared being deceived again, even though Adrian's love was plain to see.

Adrian noticed her doubts and confided in Emilia's father, whom he had come to respect. He wanted to propose in a way that honored Emilia's past while making their future unmistakable. His preparations were meant to be a surprise, but his sudden secrecy and unexplained absences only stirred Emilia's fears. A passcode on his phone and mysterious errands brought back the old suspicion that someone she trusted was keeping the truth from her.

Adrian finally took her to the apartment where she had lived before Julian’s betrayal. He had filled it with white roses and her favorite music and arranged a meal for them. Then he gave her an elegant ring and made clear that this was no strategy or business arrangement. He loved her for who she was, he said, and wanted to spend his life with her. When he asked her to marry him, her doubts fell away. She said yes, certain at last that their love was real.

Their preparations were joyful and personal. Adrian chose a classic black tuxedo, while Emilia searched for a simple, elegant dress that felt true to the life they had built rather than the fairytale she once imagined. She asked her father to walk her down the aisle. He agreed without hesitation, and the moment brought them closer after the hurt and regret that had once stood between them. Ghost, now a beloved member of their household, was trained to carry the rings on a satin pillow. The rescued white German Shepherd had once been abandoned and afraid; now she was a trusting companion, woven into the family they were creating.

The wedding took place in the garden of their estate, among close friends and family, without reporters or cameras. Emilia walked toward Adrian with her father beside her. Ghost trotted down the aisle with the rings, her tail wagging, and Adrian took them from her before turning to Emilia. They exchanged vows that bore little resemblance to their first marriage. Their earlier promises had served revenge and inheritance; these were promises of love, partnership, protection, and home. As evening settled over the garden, they celebrated with the people who mattered to them, sharing a quiet happiness far removed from the public humiliation that had once defined Emilia’s wedding day.

Two years later, the Vanguard Group had become a global company built on innovation and integrity. Adrian, once a solitary strategist, had become a respected leader; Emilia, once shattered by betrayal, was admired for her strength and brilliance. They were still partners in business, but their life together was no longer organized around defeating Julian. When Emilia told Adrian she was pregnant, he held her with the same steady devotion that had helped her recover from the past. Julian, watching the announcement from the remains of his former empire, could only see the life and love he had sacrificed for power. Emilia and Adrian, meanwhile, looked ahead to the family they were beginning. They remembered the first vows they had made in the name of vengeance, and knew that the vows they shared now were real.

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