

Billionaire's Accidental Wife

Chapter 26 When eight o'clock came, fully dressed in jeans and a simple blouse, she was now fully awake, feeling a little crappy and restless.

Catherine was so apprehensive about seeing Shawn today. She planned to go to work as usual in order to try and gather information about what the company was doing amid the lockdown. Obviously, the meeting would be online, and yet, here she was not even sure how to start her day. But what does that mean for the vigorous issues between Shawn and her?

She has no clue.

By the time she dragged herself out of bed, she heard Eddie call out her name from the door.

"Miss Catherine, Mr. Richmond is waiting."

"Thank you, Eddie," she shouted back.

She hastily got herself together, hand-combed her hair, threw on some makeup, tied her hair in a loose ponytail, and raced down the stairs. "More coffee, Catherine?" "Yes, thanks, Eddie."

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When she landed at the bottom of the stairs and passed the dining room, "I see you're in a rush, Miss Catherine. Your coffee has been brewed as we speak," Eddie added before she could answer.

"Oh, thank you so much, Eddie," she mumbled with a small smile, then walked out.

"Running late this morning, Miss Catherine?" The chef chuckled, opened the oven, and took a handful of fresh cookies.

"Yes, Lendy. I'm afraid I am." "But the boss wants to see you. He told me to send you in as soon as you got here," added Lendy.

Her heart begins to race. She was expecting to be summoned to his office soon, but the moment she stepped through the kitchen, her ankle throbbed. "Ankle's OK? Miss Brown?"

"Yap! It's just a little pain. But I can walk. So no worries."

"Aww, good, no need to be concerned. The boss won't kill you. You'll get to the library as soon as possible with the help of Mighty Eddie."

“Thank you, Lendy. Thanks for the coffee and the cookies, and by the way, Eddie, can you take care of Girly? She needs milk and vitamins, I promise you, that cat hates me,” she turned her head to the butler and smiled.

“She didn’t hate you, Miss Brown. Don’t worry. I’ll take care of her.”

“You are my knight in shining armor, Eddie.” She added, as she took the coffee from Lendy’s

hands and giggled, “you too, Lady Lendy, you are the best, and remember this: if someday I marry a prince, I’ll steal you from Mr. Richmond,” she added a wink that made them chuckle with her. Eddie just smiled back, thinking about how the mansion had changed from a quiet, boring, calm household to one full of laughter and sunshine.

However, Catherine was not excited about going to work, especially while still walking with a painful ankle. But she also does not want to make things obvious by being tardy. For now, she just wanted everything to be normal. At least, until she has gathered all the important papers, accounts, and schedules from her boss. She made a mental note to call Ashton and ask for his assistance with her frozen Outlook email. She didn’t even know what happened to her email.

She slowly raced to the office and waited for the man to open the door. When the door cleared, she entered and grumbled under her breath, “Ashton? ... Yes, you’re here? Thank god.”

“Good morning, Miss Brown. I came here to make sure your network was safe. Anyway, the printer is connected, wifi is on, everything is done.” “Thank God. By the way, I have a problem with my outlook. Can you have a look?”

“Oh, it is done. Mr. Richmond told me to fix it for you earlier.” “You are an angel. Thanks, Ash.” She added and looked around. The boss was not here yet. Thank the gods. She was relieved to be alone with her thoughts again. “Are you going now?” “Yes, Miss Brown. My job here is done.” “Aw! Fancy some coffee?” She gestured at the coffee in her hand and smiled. “No!” Mr. Richmond’s voice roared from the door in his comfort room, “Ashton, you can go home now. We will be busy here. I’ll call you when I need you.”

Catherine raised her brows and glanced at the wall panel where he came out of the hidden door. She looked at Shawn and sighed as she put the coffee on her table situated near the door and nodded her head to Ashton, who seemed embarrassed. “Bye Catherine...” He bobbed his head at the boss, then closed the door behind him.

Now, Catherine wondered what Shawn’s behavior would be towards her? The last time they spoke was in a verbal brawl. But something told her that he might play it cool, especially at work; after all, she did not want to appear overwhelmed in front of his “oh-so-respected” boss.

When the office doors finally opened, she was greeted by another typical workday scene as the man mentioned her need to bring her notebook, so typical of him. She found him ignoring her again, he was perfectly adorned in his pristine suit as he grumbled, "Miss Brown, did you arrange my meeting online?" "Yes, sir. 9 o'clock."

"Good, get me all the papers that need signing, and the Korean contract and the Japanese, I need to see their offer." "Yes, sir,"

"I need coffee!" "Yes, sir." She added and went back to her table. Alright, they were back to their boss and

secretary relationship, and yes, it was better this way, but why does it feel too awkward now? And was she disappointed? The man didn't even look at her like he didn't even want her here? Hmp! She didn't care, she was here to work and nothing else.

A lie.

However, her biggest fear was another heated argument and that things would get out of hand between them. Maybe after their sexual encounter in the cottage, the man had managed to get her out of his system. After all, he was back to his old self. Yet, Catherine desperately wanted to know more about what he and Elizabeth were doing. But that conversation could not take place here. She heard him arguing with her the other day, and from what she gathered, Mr. Richmond was not happy about it. She paused when she reached her table. Her palms sweated as she gripped the phone's handle tightly and ordered a cup of coffee from the kitchen staff.

Upon finishing, she settled into her chair and heard Shawn mumbling while seated at his desk. He was hunched over some documents while he talked on his mobile phone.

He lifted his head, locked eyes with her, and signaled for her to check his laptop. She went to his table, opened the laptop, went to the apps, and logged in.

As she waited for him to finish the call, his elegance sucked her in. His slender fingers were scribbling something down on a piece of paper, and his hair was combed back neatly. She focused on his full lips as he continued to speak.

No wonder her mind was amuck. The man was indeed beautiful to look at, those lips, who tasted her down there, those tongues who...

S**t! She needs to stop thinking about it. The man was certainly over with her.

But she went from being furious to l****g for him in a matter of seconds.

Then she shook her head to quell such thoughts and straightened. "Thanks, be seated in front, note something necessary. I believe you can hear our conversation clearly?" he finally said, hanging up the phone and turning to look at the laptop. He never looked at

her as he talked, and it did somehow enrage Catherine. He surely knows how to ignore her. The man had been doing this to her for two years and yet it didn't bother her, but now, it irritated her. She doesn't want to be ignored and yes he was doing it.

Nevertheless, Shawn's demeanor was calm and relaxed, much more comfortable considering what took place last night. "No problem," she said with indifference. The same professional voice she had been using for two long years made Shawn look at her and raise a brow eyebrow, but she was looking at her tablet, so she didn't notice it. Shaw rose from his chair and walked over to the door, locking it before he headed back to his desk and sat down.

The action makes her nervous.

He cleared his throat and studied her.

"Catherine..." he exhaled deeply. "I want to talk to you about what happened, about what

you've heard."

"Mr. Richmond, the meeting will start any moment now. This isn't the time to discuss this." When she was nervous it was because what she was doing mattered and she felt the need to get it right. Yet that was also the courage she needed to overcome it and move onwards at a good pace. Hearing him and his grandfather talking about her on the veranda last night was something she never expected. They were planning a wedding that involved her. Jesus! Does she look like a property? .

"You're right, this isn't the time or the place, but it can't wait. I need you to know that it's not what you think. My grandfather and I are decent businessmen, and we would never exploit anyone, especially you." Oh really? What did he even mean by that, anyway?
"I'm sorry? I didn't get you there. Is this about-"

"Yes, Miss Brown!"

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Hmp, so she was right then, "Mr. Richmond, OK, so did I just misheard everything that you two were saying?" She could feel her anger boiling up again. "No, it's just that there's a lot more to it than that. Just know that whatever we're doing is legitimate. It was his last wish to see me settle down with someone he thought was good for me and to keep Elizabeth away from the picture. I'm rooting for two birds with one stone here. You should know that everything will be under a contract and you will be compensated accordingly!"

I don't care about the money Shawn! I care about what you feel about me! Hell! She wanted to scream but didn't dare to voice it out loud. "Are you serious? We are already married."

"I know, Miss Brown, we just have to make them official and to let the world know... My grandfather would be happy. He adores you so much..."

"And you two planned this without even asking me beforehand?" She inquired and tried to breathe in without murdering the man, who seemed so relaxed and was not even affected by their discussion. Yes, she heard them talking about a grand wedding, and they didn't even tell her about it. She didn't even know that the old man knew about her and Shawn's marriage before, and yet here they were talking about announcing their marriage in public. How unfair was it? They have been cats and dogs, and now the public will know about her? How about her feeling? How about her freedom?

"Come on Catherine, any woman would be glad to be married to me..."

"And I'm not that kind of woman."

"I know, that's why I chose you." He added, maybe it was too foolish for him to even plan this and confided to his grandfather about it but he was indeed killing two birds with one stone. Right? He thought to himself.

Just as Catherine was about to question him further, the phone rings, and he lets out another deep sigh. He was irritated by the interruption.

"Catherine, please, I don't want there to be any tension between us." Tension? F**k you, Shawn! I couldn't even take away those massive bulges in my mind and you want us not to have a f*****g tension? "Just trust me; we aren't doing anything ruthless and unfair on your side." He added with haste as the phone continued to ring. He picked it up and started talking, leaving her with so much more to say How could he be soooo annoying? She remembered every plan they had, and nothing about them sounded good.

Being accidentally married to him was crazy enough because of her stupidity, and now he planned to make out in public?

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Billionaire's Accidental Wife

Chapter 27 As Catherine rose from her seat and made her way to the door, she felt Shawn's eyes on her. A part of her wanted to believe and trust him, while another part thought he just wanted to convince her otherwise so she could keep quiet about the scandal that Elizabeth had been telling the media about him. Those scandals obviously weren't even half the truth, and their multi-billion dollar conglomerates were not on the

verge of bankruptcy amid the pandemic. And yes, she was expecting him to tell her the truth about Elizabeth's blackmailing him, not just because his grandfather wanted him to settle soon.

She was just waiting for him to open up to her. Not that she was expecting too much, but anyway, she was already married to him, so why not just go with the flow until she could give him a divorce, right? So Catherine, stop scowling, be a dear and s**k it up, she thought to herself. Oh, and then there is the third part that wants to just kiss him... Feel the warmth of his embrace... feel him buried deep within her again. 'Stop! Jesus, I have to stop thinking!'

But for now, she was going to put the conversation behind her and get her work done. The next few hours go slowly. She was finalizing all of her tasks, but her mind was astray, absorbed with the thoughts of Shawn. Though the man had been ignoring her again and had asked her for coffee again, he was more than absurd with his meeting, never leaving his eyes away from the laptop, and in some ways, it had made her day easier.

Catherine realized that, despite her intense confidence in his company, she still has worries, especially about this pandemic. Her emotional feelings for Shawn made it more confusing, and she wished this whole situation would just end up optimistic so they could resume their lives. But could they? Everything was awkward now, and her heart was shattering into a million pieces as she sat at her desk, eating a warm pasta, a packet of crisps, a small bowl of fruit, and tea for lunch, and watching the garden, birds, and butterflies flying, and saying hello to the beautiful blossoms from her window view when Shawn appeared out of nowhere. Maybe he went for his lunch. Earlier, he told Eddie that she would have her lunch here in the office. Her phone rang, and it was Jane. "Hey girl," she said as she answered her phone, "how are the kids?" "Hmp! Catherine, good, good, they are fine, but what is this news I've heard from Chelsea?" "What news?"

"Your boss is on the front page again, this time with the b***h... Tell me he isn't going to marry the w***e? Yes, Elizabeth is the name." Oh, about that, well... about that, it's just rumored... complicated rumors."

"Yeah, sure?"

"Yes," she said, swallowing a mouthful of food.

"Okay, great. Because the b***h is horrible. She had too many scandals under her name, and Mr. Hottie must stay away from her."

"I know Jane. But anyway, how's your lockdown there?"

ne But anyway, how's your lockdown there?" "Catherine asked, trying to turn the topic to her friend.

“Kids are bored, but yoga was canceled... And what about your date with Hugh? Was it canceled

too?”

“Yes, I told Hugh that I had to cancel our date.” “The man was amazing though-” She halted while the door opened and Shawn appeared with a coffee on his hands and furrowed brows, looking at her. “Miss Brown, I was paying you to work, not to gossip!” He grumbled and went to his desk

“Oh, the boss is still an a*s, right?” Jane on the other line must have heard it too. “Yap! By now, Jane. I’ll call you later.” She finished her tea, then opened her email account on the computer. She completely ignored Shawn, knowing full well that the man was staring at her. His gaze burned her, yet she chose to resist it. Within minutes, she received notification of the accounting department’s email.

Their days ended up the same, ignoring each other until Shawn’s grandfather appeared after two months and announced that their wedding preparations were done and dusted.

Catherine’s life went from ordinary and boring to extremely vigorous, though she didn’t do anything aside from saying yes and agreeing to Shawn’s grandfather and their wedding coordinator, and even with the lockdown protocol, Richmond had managed to deal with all the necessary things to be done. After all, it was not a grand wedding, just a few people attending and some media coverage. She told Jane and Chelsea that the two had been bugging her since the news spread like wildfire.

A day before the wedding day, it was past midnight and Catherine, Jane, and Chelsea were in the back of the limo, roaming around the empty street like a freaking zombie apocalypse city. With champagne in their hands, they laugh and giggle. Catherine still believed tomorrow’s big day was going to be just a small affair, involving only a few elite friends of Richmond, a few jealous exes who would wear a luxurious face mask and the media.

For the past thirty minutes, she had been complaining that they were “wasting money” getting a limousine, which she viewed as a “luxury” for three people. Eventually, Chelsea had to shove a glass of champagne in her hand and say, “Seriously, Cath? You are going to marry a f*****g billionaire and you worry about us in the limo? Oh my God, chill, we didn’t even pay for it. Shawn asked Eddie and the sweet, sweet butler to arrange it.” Catherine thought it was time to tell them about her being married to Shawn Richmond two years ago? She shook her head and forgot about telling them, Jane stared at her. “You just asked Mr. Richmond for a limo and he gave you one?” Chelsea snorted. “Yes, we are his future wife’s best friends, so of course, he couldn’t say no.”

She jerked a thumb at Catherine. "That would be Mrs. Catherine Richmond, try competing for that."

They started to laugh. "Right. I forgot," Jane said, laughing too. "So, Chelsea, are you finally going to tell me where we're going or what? I'm assuming some sort of male strip club, but... it's a lockdown, so no hopes there." "Even better," Chelsea promised. Like the bosses they are, they sipped champagne and lounged in the back of the limo while the city whizzed past them. They're empty streets of boredom, and Catherine imagines invisible onlookers seeing them drive by and wondering who's inside. It was a ghost town, so elite girls and gentlemen alike would possibly lose their minds if they knew the future Mrs. Richmond and her friends were behind these tinted windows. Not that she was famous, but nowadays, their wedding was the talk of the town, especially with people complaining about the virus, toilet paper being hoarded, and yet here they were, the rich getting married amid the pandemic, breaking protocols, and the authorities couldn't do anything about it. "Jane, top me off," Catherine mumbled, holding out her glass. Jane leaned over and poured some more bubbly into it. "We should be there soon," Chelsea told them. She looked like she was trying not to grin. Catherine was also battling her excitement. This surprise was next-level incredible, especially coming from Chelsea. It took a lot of coordination and string-pulling, but miraculously, they were able to make it happen."

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"Oh, okay. Then, before we get there," Chelsea began, shifting in her seat so she was facing them, "I need to talk to you about something else."

Catherine wrinkled her forehead. "Please don't tell us we are in trouble?"

"Of course not," Chelsea affirmed as if her mind were floating with the idea of making Elizabeth jealous at the wedding tomorrow.

Jane intruded, "Hell... the b***h is invited?" "Catherine sighed and sipped her drink, "Yes, unfortunately." "Why?"

"It's Shawn's idea."

"Wow, he really wanted to get rid of the girl, huh? Is it true that she was his childhood girlfriend?" I don't know. Nowadays, Shawn and I talk about nothing aside from the wedding and some issues in the company."

Chelsea and Jane looked at each other and both sighed, "I'm sorry girl. I know, being conveniently married to a man you don't love is hard." Jane added. "I know...I'm just too confused these days." Catherine replied. Was it really that hard? Yes, even harder because she loves the man, but of course, she doesn't have the heart to tell her friends about it.

The two gawked at her.

Jane blinked in surprise. "Oh my goodness, you love him, don't you!?" "Of course not. No way! Maybe... I- I don't know..." She brought her glass to her lips, watching them over the rim as she took a sip. She doesn't see any bullshit whatsoever in their eyes. "It's complicated."

"Oh, no!" Chelsea went to her side and hugged her... "You love him, girl, don't you?" The two shared a knowing look, then hugged Catherine again. "I don't know!" She exclaimed, feeling devastated. He settled her glass in the drink holder beside her, then rested both forearms on her knees and leaned forward, her expression serious. "I think I did... D**n it!"

"Since when?"

"I don't know, I woke up one day and... s**t!" Her mouth was set in a hard line as she pressed her lips together, trying not to cry. "Wait, really?" Chelsea inquired, and caressed her hair, "I thought you hated the man?" "Why not?" Jane said, "The man is rich and hot and those bulges were to die for." Seriously, Jane? Not right now, OK?" "Come on, Chelsea... I'm just trying to lighten the situation here."

"Don't mind her Cath, but think about this. You won't worry about being homeless anymore. Your job is still yours, right? And after the contract, you'll get a hefty amount of compensation, right?" Chelsea asked.

"Yes."

"Then how about this: start owning these situations. Maybe being in love with him wasn't a bad idea. After all, he doesn't know this, right? Or have you been stupid enough to tell him what you feel?"

"No!"

"Good now. Own this, Catherine, be a strong woman you ought to be."

"But it's hard," she began sobbing. The pain, the worry, came rushing through like a tidal wave of emotions that made her want to just cry there and be done with it.

The two looked at each other and held Catherine's hand.

Jane mumbled. "Don't worry, girl, we will always be there for you. If you need some escape, we would love to share our time and our home with you. I thought you had a choice, but if you've

already signed the contract, then own it. Besides, it opens so many other doors, you know? Think about it. All of your incredible accomplishments could be shared with us if

you and Shawn get married. We'll be right there with the announcement of our third child. And when you share your own pregnancy, we'll be there announcing our fourth."

"...wait! Are you pregnant again, Jane?" Chelsea asked, and that halted them all.

"Oh, well... it was supposed to be a secret..."

"Why the hell did you drink the champagne? Jesus!" "I did not... Mine is just sparkling f*****g water. See... it's not even bubbly enough." Jane choked on her supposed champagne mid-sip as Chelsea narrowed her eyes. "Good, and vea point taken there." "No, wait, it gets even better," Jane muttered enthusiastically. "When you, Catherine, give birth to your first kid, guess who'll be there? Again, Chelsea will be there on her own to introduce you to her new dog and newly acquired goldfish, who she'll name after your baby to honor you. And when your kid grows up, graduates college gets engaged and has a wedding of their own, we'll be sitting there in the front row. Faking a heart attack. Deal?" They burst out laughing. Chelsea shook her head and muttered in awe. "You had this in your life plan, didn't you?" "Yes, of course," Jane answered and pretended to sip her fake champagne elegantly. "See, Catherine? Didn't I always tell you that she is the crazy one among us?" They break out into hysterical laughter again. "All right, thank you for being there with me, guys. I truly appreciate it," She mumbled under a few tears. Ten minutes later, the limo slows down as they near their destination. When Catherine attempted to peer out the window, Chelsea slugged him in the arm and chided, "Hey! Not allowed."

"Girls, are we killing someone and dumping their bodies in the river? I heard nothing... Just a f*****g river... or a pond." Catherine's forehead was knitted with interest and curiosity. "Don't you worry about that, girl," Jane mumbled mysteriously. "Don't worry?" She snorted, "I'm always worried when you two plan something."

Chelsea reached into her jeans' pockets for the scarf she shoved in there earlier. "See... this is it... You'd be surprised, and yes, this is to blindfold you."

Her eyebrows shoot up. "Hell no! Wait... No f*****g way."

"So suspicious," Jane grumbled and raised an eyebrow. Chelsea grinned. "Come on, girl, we promise this won't end with you being thrown in a pool of naked men or anything."

"Fine..." Catherine shook her head. She decided that maybe she could trust them because she bobbed and dutifully allowed Chelsea to secure the blindfold, as she tied it extra tight as vengeance for her keeping her secret. That's a little bit tight." Catherine grumbled under her breath.

"I know because you dare to keep a secret of falling in love without us knowing."

"Jesus, I thought we were over that."

After they hopped out of the limo, Jane took Catherine's arm to guide her so she wouldn't fall flat on her face. As they stepped toward the entrance of Chelsea's chateau garden, with all the yoga girls giggling and waiting, Chelsea was bouncing up and down like a child on a sugar

high. Tonight wasn't just for Catherine. It's for all of them. Voices bounce off the open garden walls as they head down the burrow toward Chelsea's locker s*****s. They were in the passage of the visitors' area, which was the best that Chelsea could swing, decorated with candles and flowers, followed by the others, who seemed to be giggling again, but Catherine was sure as s**t not complaining. She recognized some of their voices. The yoga girls went above and beyond to grant Chelsea's request. Clearly, being famous and rich in their group has its advantages.

A moment later, they reach the underground studio's well-decorated room door. When Jane rapped her knuckles in a complicated knock, the voices beyond the door immediately went silent.

A blindfolded Catherine warily walked her head back and forth. "Oh my god, please tell me there are no spiders here. What the heck is going on..."

Chuckling, Chelsea opened the door, and Jane guided her inside. Jane almost squealed like a teenage girl at the sea of familiar faces that greeted them. It took all their willpower to stay quiet, and she saw her excitement reflected in everyone's eyes. Chelsea held her finger to her lips, signaling to the group to keep their mouths shut. "Psst! You ready, girl?" Chelsea asked Catherine. "Oh, goodness me... I was born ready," she drawled. Someone chuckled. –

The moment Catherine pushed the scarf down, leaving it draped around her neck, her breath hitched dashingly. Gaping like a dead fish, she stared at the almost naked twenty-odd girls filling the studio room. Then she broke out in the largest, giddiest smile they had ever seen. "OMG! Chelsea? Are you kidding me!? Everyone is here... And they are almost naked!?" She slapped her knee and held her hip like an old lady trying to hold herself upright, glee rolling off her in tides. "How did you do this?" she demanded as her astonishing stare spread over their yoga classmates. "And why are you all wearing summer swimming suits in winter?" They all laugh.

"I have four massive Jacuzzis here, girl, and the guest of honor is... HUGH!" Chelsea finished her words by turning on the music from the remote in her hand. Catcalling and wails echoed through the area, and many more giggled as their yoga instructor appeared from behind the massive red heart covered in condoms and started dancing, which made the ladies scream

again.

"Oh my god." Catherine could help but laugh wholeheartedly while Hugh winked at her as if telling him to keep their secret to herself. Oh, Jesus, if only they knew that he was

gay. "I can't believe you're all here." A dazed Catherine begins to greet her friends, some of whom we haven't seen in days. "This is..." Catherine swears her eyes appear a bit watery now. "This is the greatest gift, you guys. I didn't expect to see y'all here and," She abruptly tightens, guilt crossing her face.

"Aw, s**t. Are you all staying for the reception tomorrow? You were all invited, but not everyone RSVP'd. I'm going to have to contact the wedding planner, Shawn, and... There was a

pause in her words, and her mind was clearly working hard to figure out how to deal with this new guest for tomorrow.

A few girls snickered and giggled at her visible anxiety. "Shooss Catherine, It's all taken care of," Jane assured her. "We didn't want you to know who was surprising you at this party, but don't worry, the wedding planner and Shawn have all the RSVPs." "He knew all about it," Chelsea added, "so the planner knows we didn't just dump twenty extra guests at your wedding.

"You two are my angels," Catherine added as she hugged her best friends.

Rate this Chapter

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Chapter 28

At ten o'clock in the morning, Catherine was awakened and ushered by Eddie to the living room, where she asked for a small breakfast. Arriving in the grand living room, Catherine Brown, soon to be Catherine Richmond, was one of those obnoxiously attractive women who turned every head when she walked into a room. She had curly, glossy blonde hair, bottomless, deep cobalt eyes, and a perfect body that showed no signs of stress as she sauntered down the stairs. If they didn't know her, they probably hated her. Or, at the very least, die of jealousy. And not only was she remarkable, but she was about to get married to one of the richest men in London.

Jane thought that some people were just born lucky. "Oh, Cathy, what the hell happened to your eyes? You look dead... Where is the makeup artist? Cover that eye-bag girl." "They are on the way. I'm too tired and hungry to wait. I could use a f*****g sandwich now." She replied as she yawned and looked around. "Here, girly, take this cookie," Jane replied, seized the Peppa Pig little bag her daughter had from the side table and took cookies from the ziplock. "Thank God, you're an angel, Jane. I wasn't able to wake up for breakfast, but I already notified Eddie."

“Well, thank goodness I wasn’t drunk...” Jane retorted with a smile. “By the way, this mansion is amazing. Our room is massive and the kids love it,” Jane mumbled, as she watched her friend, still yawning. Still, it was very hard to dislike Catherine once one got to know her. She was a ride-or-die kind of friend, devoted to the core and crazier than her aloof exterior implied. When she entered the private living room, a brilliant smile lit up her face. As if it was an immediate exhilaration to find all of them here. However, Chelsea, who seemed still exhausted and was complaining of a headache, was ignoring them even though she’d helped plan this. “I can’t believe you’re all here. Where are the others?” An uncharacteristic remark of excitement quivered in Catherine’s voice. She was usually calm as an apple. Self-assured. She doesn’t get emotional. But Jane was pretty sure tears were clinging to her impossibly long lashes as she clutched little Sarah in her arms as she bit her cookie. “I could use some coffee with this to wake me up. My headache is killing me too.” “You too?” Chelsea grumbled and took half-eaten cookies from Catherine and finished them with a very unladylike mouthful that made little Sarah giggle. The four-year-old, meanwhile, was clamoring to get down from Catherine and not get squeezed to death by her mom’s best friend’s arms.

At Catherine’s request, the guest list was kept small, so their little group barely made a dent in the large, elegant living room of the Richmond mansion; after all, Catherine has never been a social butterfly, though. She worked her way through college, supporting her brother Dave, which didn’t leave her much time for socializing. Their little group today consisted of Jane, Chelsea, Dave, and their two roommates, and five of the yoga girls who volunteered as additional makeup warriors. But it was Sarah, Jane’s little amazing daughter, who captured

everyone’s attention. The toddlers have Jane’s brown and dark red hair and her husband’s big chocolate-brown eyes.

The two were the perfect combination of the two of them, and Catherine sighed if she would ever experience some sort of family-like Jane.

She did not doubt that her own child would be just as beautiful. But knowing that this marriage was just for the papers, there was no hope for her dream. Besides, as Shawn mentioned last night on the patio, after their party, she had a long conversation with Hugh on the phone. And her accidental husband was not expecting her to treat him like a real husband when they were not in front of everybody. In fact, he insisted that she could still have her room, and he had given her enough freedom to do whatever she wanted to do as long as she was discreet about it, and told her that she could keep her private life confidential and away from prying eyes.

How dare he? Catherine was, of course, furious, but she didn’t voice it. She could do whatever she wanted? Jesus, what the hell was it supposed to mean? It was not like she would have an extramarital relationship with someone else; she was not like that, for heaven’s sake. Shawn, on the other hand, insisted, the nerve... Was it just his way of telling her that he could do whatever he wanted with his private life as well? That he

could still f**k someone else? In his personal life? D**n it! She was now so stressed because of it.

D**n if it didn't hurt. Her already shattered heart had broken into a million tiny pieces again. However, as Chelsea said last night, she had to own this, head high and chin up. Her reverie was interrupted by Sarah's shrieking before flinging a pair of chubby arms around her knees. "Aunt Cathy,... Why do you look sad?"

"Me? Of course not, little princess."

"You're not fine, aren't you, Auntie?" This morning, the little girl was wearing a pink dress with a tutu skirt, her hair arranged in two pigtails.

Catherine bent down so she could hug her properly. "I am happy, sweetheart, I'm about to wear a little princess dress like you today, what makes you think I'm sad?" she asked, while Chelsea and Jane looked at each other.

"Because your eyes are sad," Sarah replied with a pout that made Catherine heave her left brow. "Oh my goodness, is that a tiara?" She mumbled instead, trying to keep the little one away from her eyes. She pretended to admire the sparkling golden crown atop her ginger head. Maybe her eyes never knew how to lie. Even Sarah noticed it.

"Ya! Uncle Dave got it for me!" Proudly, Sarah shows the tiara off to the whole group, as they all ooh and aah consequently. Then the rest of the girls gossip about each other until a well-dressed butler comes and says that tea and Catherine's breakfast will be served soon.

"Are you excited, little one?" Jane asked her daughter. "We're about to have tea, and Aunt Cathy here will have her make-up later. Like Elsa and Anna."

"Like Frozen!?" Sarah shouted, "I'm excited," "All right, so behave yourself and play with uncle Dave while Mommy and the many aunts put on make-up, okay?"

"OK, mommy." They all settled around the beautiful table in their assigned seats. The little girl was between Jane and Catherine, with Chelsea and Dave, who was playing on his phone directly across from them. "Where is the little boy?" Chelsea asked. "Still asleep with his father. Thank the gods for that. We don't want him talking about Paw Patrol the whole time." Jane added with a foolish smile. The moment Sarah settled into her little seat, she tried to snag a teacup off the crisp, white flowery tablecloth on the beautifully set table. Jane negotiated like a pro in a flash, blocking Sarah's hand as competently as a goalie making a clutch keep. "No, no, t-this cup is Aunt Catherine's," she mumbled, moving the marvelous china toward the grinning butler with a wonderful smile. "This one's for you, little girl."

Catherine hid a smile. Sarah's cup was clearly made of plastic.

“Don’t laugh Catherine, trust me, this is way better. We’re going through a butcher stage,” Jane explained, catching her knowing smile. “No expensive china for this little one. Trust me, it’ll cost a fortune to replace all the cups she dropped. Her father will kill me.” As the two servers appeared to pour our tea, Jane noticed Catherine was looking a bit pale. She nudged her gently. “Gurl, you look pale... My daughter isn’t kidding; you look awful. You okay?” She murmured “I’m fine, just a bit queasy,” she mumbled. “Not sure though,” she added as she wolfed down an entirely loaded bacon and omelet right before their very eyes. “Maybe I’m just hungry. I’m a bit nauseous though.” “Ow! You should have this mint tea... or, I believe, one of these black teas. That’ll help with the queasiness.” Jane glanced at the free female server who was addressing them. “You said something about black? Can we try that one, please?” “Of course, milady.” “It smells so good,” Chelsea muttered as she brought the teacup to her mouth. She took a dainty little sip. “Love this, This is perfect. Just what I need to get rid of this headache.” Across the table, Sarah adorably mimics her. “Mmmm!” The little girl announced, slurping her tea. “Perfect, just what I need.” Everyone’s trying not to laugh. “She likes tea?” Catherine mumbled from Jane’s other side, sounding surprised. “It’s not too bitter for her?”

“It’s sweet black jello juice, Aunt Cathy,” Sarah grumbled, grinning.

Jane said, “There’s no way I’m pumping this child full of caffeine. Are you out of your mind?”

“Come on, Jane, there’s decaf, right? Well, just add more sugar for her to stop grinning,” Catherine pointed out and wolfed ham and eggs.” “Girl, I’m not taking the chance. Believe me, she accidentally devoured one. Not after last month’s mini coffee brownies. She was so wired, I almost took her to the clinic.”

The servers brought the first round of biscuits and sandwiches on extraordinary two-tiered trays. And for the next hour and a half, the trays kept coming, and the makeup artist and hairdresser arrived and started their little torture. “Catherine? You look, OK girl?” Now it’s Chelsea who inquires, “You are so pale...” “I’m fine, just a little giddy. I feel like I’m about to vomit... I’m a bit dizzy as well.”

“Sure?”

“Yes, maybe it’s the champagne last night. Do you happen to have iron multivitamins? I forgot to take mine.”

“I have one here,” uttered one of the yoga girls as she went to rampage through her handbag and gave one to Catherine. “I’m also anemic. I carry this all the time, especially when I was pregnant.”

“Are you pregnant, Aunt Cathy?” Sarah asked, pausing next to her chair. She was shocked by the question. Catherine was taken aback. How? Was it possible? And knowing that, and now she remembered, her period hasn’t come yet. It was supposed

to come by this week, or was it simply the result of her recent stress? Oh God! no! Please be stressed ... she silently prayed. Dave, however, was fighting to ask her, knowing that she was already married to Shawn and that something happened between them a month ago on the mountain. Catherine answered the little girl, "I'm not... of course... I'm just a little sick, princess. Thank you for asking." "You're welcome." With a big, beaming smile, Sarah moved to the next seat, which happened to belong to Dave. "Are you okay, uncle Dave?" she inquired. Dave's lips twitched. "I'm doing great, little pet." "If Aunt Cathy is pregnant, I'm no longer your little pet and I'll be sad." Chelsea and Jane paused and looked at each other while everyone else was busy drinking tea for makeup. "Don't worry, you are still my little pet," Dave replied, and he kissed the little girl on the cheeks and lifted his brow at Catherine.

Their servers returned to top off everyone's teacups, and the conversation shifted from Sarah to tonight's wedding reception. The ceremony itself was taking place about an hour before that, but it was a private event. Just Shawn and Catherine, and Shawn's grandfather.

This was a fact that Chelsea was pouting over. "I can't believe we won't get to see her recite her vows."

Jane snorted. "Seriously, Chelsea?" Jane whispered, "It's not like real, real. So s**k it up and stop making Catherine hope for something else. She is already hurting."

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Billionaire's Accidental Wife

Chapter 29 At five o'clock, Catherine was pacing her room. She had her wedding dress on; Chelsea and Jane were still in the living room with their hair and make-up, repeating the episode of so many complaints. She kept on pacing, except for the veil that would go on at the last minute. She was so committed to her pacing that she didn't notice Dave come into the room. Finally, he spoke.

"You OK?"

She ignored him.

"Come on, Cathy, calm down. You're scouring a hole in the carpet. Relax, you are so tense."

"Dave! Oh, thank God you're here. I'm so nervous. I-I... I did what you asked. I took a pregnancy test and it's positive. Oh, God." She stepped as fast as she could in the restrictive dress and wrapped her arms around her brother, hugging him tightly. "I don't know what to do now... are you mad at me?"

"Of course not! But did you tell him?" Dave asked and let her sit at the edge of the bed.

"No! Not yet!" "When are you going to tell him?" "I don't know. I don't even know if he wanted this baby. What should I do? Are you not mad at

me?"

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"Why should I? That's a blessing. Listen... Catherine ... I love you so much. And whatever happens, we will have that baby, OK? For now, fix yourself. You look ready to run away." Dave added, "I was just over at Jane's room, helping little Simon, ...helping him get ready. Calm down. You look like you're going to hyperventilate." "I can't calm down! I know, I'm trying. God, Dave, I just... I'm so lost! I can't believe it's happening... This baby-" "Look, I certainly never thought this would happen as well. I mean, I know we talked about having a big family someday, but... Jesus, I'm also panicking Catherine. We will think about this tomorrow alright? but for now, don't let him know yet. Let's weigh his side on this matter, but we are keeping the baby, OK? Promise me, Catherine, promise me." mumbled Dave with a serious face. "Of course, I'm keeping this. I can't tell you how many times I hoped and prayed that I'd get to marry someone someday, have children... but to someone who..." she halted and sighed before she continued, "this is a risk I'm taking on, you know this right? Besides, I am already married to him."

"I know, but for now, it's all about you and Shawn, and besides, the media is on set. They are waiting to feast on you and the billionaire empire of Richmond, so s**k it up and be the warrior you ought to be. Chin up!"

She nodded her head and took a deep breath. After all, she told him everything about the contract and Shawn's problem with the shareholders, his grandfather's issues, and especially

about his ex's many death threats. Unexpectedly, Catherine had a disastrous thought. "Oh my God, Dave. Do I have time to back out?"

"NO! Are you out of your mind? The baby needs a home Catherine, and it's a pandemic, for heaven's sake. Think about how difficult it is nowadays to raise a child... Jesus! Don't you dare, I don't have enough earnings yet to support the three of us." Dave grabbed his sister by the shoulders and looked her right in the eye, willing her to calm down. Don't worry. Deep breath, in, then out."

"But he doesn't love me, Dave! This marriage is just a disaster."

"Cathy, listen to me! Listen! I know this marriage is just for show and as phony as Elizabeth's b**s, but trust me on this. Love will come when it's ready, maybe not now, but soon. OK?" Catherine did her best to calm down, taking long, deep breaths and trying to look her brother in the eyes. She was confused, upset that her brother would hate her, scared that her friends would blame her, just scared of everything. "I'm scared

for the baby's life." "Stop! Cathy, look at me!" Dave could feel his sister's whole body shaking, and her breathing was still erratic. "We can do this together, OK? You and me and that child. So what if Shawn doesn't want it? I'll work myself to death to support you and the baby. Catherine, you are the only one I have, and I will do everything in my power to keep you safe and that baby safe. Calm down and listen to me and tell me you understand that."

"I... I do... I just... I love you so much, Dave, and I don't ever want anything to come between us. And I was talking about how badly I wanted to help you with your art, but I'm too useless. It just occurred to me that you might think... and I didn't give you enough... Then, you'll freak out. I'm sorry."

"Oh, God! Stop doing that. You did everything. You became a mother and father to me, Catherine. It was more than enough."

"Sure?"

"Of course, don't be sorry. Just tell me, you are keeping the baby. I could get used to having a baby boy, you know, someone I could talk to about boy stuff and not makeup and stupid eyeliner." Catherine chuckled, "I will... I promise, I will." She began to slowly smile, knowing that her brother was just making her feel better. Her breathing finally came under control, and she somehow escaped the horror of her drama without damage to her makeup.

"Cathy, you know I love you. I will always love you. When mom and dad died, you were there for me whenever I needed you, or even if you thought I needed you. I don't think I could have made it without you." Dave added.

Cathy hugged her brother again. "You're my very best friend, Dave, my brother, and my family. Now, we have another one in our family. It's one of the things that makes this so special. We're family no matter what."

"Yes, we are family."

Meanwhile, in the groom's room, Shawn doesn't normally drink hard liquor, but this has been a hell of a day, and as far as he could see, it wasn't going to pick up soon. So he got himself in his room, sent the media away from him after an interview, ignored Elizabeth the whole time and told the latter to stay away from him and from Catherine, took his bags of fuss up to his room and went straight to his minibar. The room was a mess as he worked his way through it. It was obvious to him that Catherine didn't want this marriage and didn't want the limelight either, and he wasn't the only one stranded in this marriage tonight. He heard her talking to someone on the phone on their shared balcony. And she was not happy about this arrangement, but couldn't do anything about it. Could he blame her? He didn't even know what made him enter this mess... Maybe

he cared too much about her? Or was he so possessive that he didn't want to share her with anyone else? He hated the idea of her with another man, and when he heard her call Hugh and cancel their dinner date, it made him so mad and outrageous.

"D**n it!" He was never like this. He didn't care about her, nor was it his goddamn business if she dated someone, and yes he knew it was a lie.

The bar of his insanity was getting too high now and, looking at it from a much bigger perspective, maybe he was crazy. Being married to some stranger in Las Vegas was crazy enough, but now, making it official that the whole world would know was even crazier... He didn't know why. He had no experience of this kind of a mess, but to his grandfather, it would be the best thing that would ever happen to him. The old man was happy enough to know that Catherine would be his granddaughter soon. Shawn wasn't expecting much but he wanted her to like him. Not just because he asked her too in front of everybody else.

For some strange reason, a little pain hit him in the gut thinking about divorcing her after two years. It was an irritation he did not expect; it was much more intimate than an ache or anything he had ever encountered. He took his drink and scanned the room. He thought Catherine was out of his system, that after their mind-blowing s*x in the cottage, he'd be back to himself, but no, he wanted her even more and, to make matters worse, instead of telling her about his feelings for her, he ignored her. Yes, being stupid as he was, he avoided her and she did the same. It was a win-win situation, right?

"B****y hell!" He grumbled under his breath.

His room was now surrounded by broken, shredded glass and empty, smashed bottles of valuable wine. The mini bar was practically empty now, but he immediately envisioned a crowded dance floor and rocking music later at the reception. After all, he made sure that the caterer would bring expensive wine later. He decided that to avoid being over-crowded, everything from the little private ceremony and the reception would be held here in the mansion. Though he wanted an extravagant wedding, Catherine insisted on making it simple, small, and private.

Then her silent reverie was intruded by a knock at the door.

"Come in," beckoned Shawn, who was now pacing with the same intensity his bride-to-be had been doing from the next room.

The door opened and Dave stepped inside. Concerned with the pacing and seeming lack of happiness on Shawn's face, Dave walked over to him. "Hey mate, are you all right?" As he

glanced at the broken glass, "You needed to ask the cleaner to take care of the glass. Jesus! It's all messy here. You're not planning on canceling this wedding, right? It wouldn't do any good because you are already married, FYI." "No! I just hate the

media.” Shawn looked up at him but was still clearly distracted and unfocused. He glanced over at the photo of his and his grandfather’s birthday that he had brought with him. He had been so happy that day, and they thought they had the next 20-30 years to spend together, but with his stage four cancer, he would be lucky if the old man was alive until next year. “Grandfather wanted to let the world know that I will no longer be available. D**n if I won’t miss the old man.”

“Where is he, by the way?” “Talking to his doctor. He wasn’t feeling very well.” Dave had caught a glimpse of the picture. He had wondered why Shawn had it here in the room in the first place and had assumed it was so he could be a part of the process. He realized now it was to give him strength. He knew this wedding was the old man’s idea and Shawn was just happy to give the old man everything he wished for before he died.

“Shawn, hey, listen to me, okay? Catherine would be okay with this... Or whatever you two had managed to talk about.”

This caused Shawn to look directly into Dave’s eyes. Maybe he was wrong about this man; he seemed more mature and seemed serious than the last time he had a man-to-man talk with him.

“My sister wanted nothing but to work this out. After all, she needs employment, needs a home, needs someone who will take care of her when I’m not around and to find someone. It’s her time to be taken care of now. All our lives, she was the one who cared about me. At a young age, she became a mother and a father to me. I wanted her to be taken care of, to have someone to care for her almost as much as she did for everyone else and lucky you, you’ve got her, she will take care of you. That I know.”

“You really think she’s okay with this?”

“Yes, I have no doubt. None whatsoever.”

“Thanks, I think I needed to hear that. Sorry about being an a*s towards her for two years.” Shawn apologized. “I guess I’m just anxious, a little nervous.”

“Apologies to her, not to me. You owe me nothing,” said Dave. “Last time I saw Catherine, she wasn’t doing any better.”

“What?”

“Yap! “She was freaking out,” offered Dave. “She was a little nervous too,” but only because she wanted everything to be perfect, of course. It’s not about you or this wedding, maybe something else.”

“Ha! You f*****g liar!” Shawn grumbled and smiled, “I know she told you about our little agreement!” Shawn smirked.

“Yap she did, but her anxiety isn’t about you. Something else is bothering her... you might want to ask her soon. But you know, Shawn,” said Dave as he kicked one broken glass of wine.” I’ve been thinking back to when you guys started seeing each other. I spent a lot of time back then thinking up ever more imaginative ways to kill you.” This brought a small bit of laughter from Shawn as Dave continued. “I mean, I know that my sister is still not over with Jason, yet she has never had anyone since the a*****e... the b*****d. But I don’t want her to get hurt again, and when you told me that you guys have been married for two years now, I lost it. I just couldn’t wrap my head around it.”

“Because she didn’t tell you?”

“Yes! That too.”

“Yeah, I could tell you weren’t too happy about it,” Shawn said with a smile.

“Cathy and I got into it a few times. If it had been up to me, I would have forbidden her from dating Jason, but he was okay at first, and she was an adult and could make her own choices. Even back then, I made a point of telling her how unhappy and disappointed I was with her lover choices; but she loved the b*****d, f**k! I want to kill him. If ever I see him again, I sure beat the c**p out of him.”

“She loved him?”

“Yes, she did, unfortunately, but he hurt her, big time. So it was a ticket for me to kill him someday.” Dave added. “She told me about the jerk who stole her money,” Shawn mumbled. “Yap! The a*****e cheated on her and, since she was still living at home, I and the girls started brainstorming ideas about what to do to Jason if he ever decided to come back.” “But he never did?” asked Shawn.

“Yes! Good thing! And I recall ever considering that Cathy was pretty upset, hurt and angry, but she never pressed charges nor went to the police. I assumed she was hoping that Jason might come back.” “Hmp!” Shawn nodded his head as Dave continued, “then she said to me one day, she just stopped giving her c**p about him and moved on with her life, but she never dated anyone.”

Shawn smiled wryly and adjusted his position in his chair, leaning forward toward the broken glass for emphasis. Dave looked back at him intently as he continued, “You know, one day I was at the coffee shop. I saw her with someone. I was having my second coffee. I can’t even tell you what it is. I saw a man standing near the door, with my sister at the man’s side. He was well-dressed and well-groomed, in an expensive suit. He was wearing a shirt and tie, nice slacks, and what looked like fairly expensive shoes. I found myself thinking that this was the kind of man Cathy needed to meet. He was sophisticated and seemed to be a successful professional. He looked perfect to me.” “So, what happened to change your mind?” asked Shawn.

“Oh, I did not change my mind. I saw them sitting, and ordered some coffee. She opened her tablet and did her job, but they... I mean, Cathy didn't see me so I watched them. The man

Chapter 29

seemed wealthy, and yes, what I found out was that this man kept on secretly looking at my sister when she was not looking, but from my vantage point, Cathy was too busy to even notice it. I saw some longing, even love in the man's eyes, like he wanted to tell her something but couldn't... or he was just too scared to tell her what he felt. And yes, that man was you, two months after you hired her as your secretary.”

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