

Billionaire's Accidental Wife by C.ELLICA

Chapter 13 The screams of the terrified folks that were carried down into the town square from the upper ground only seemed to get louder in the few minutes that passed after Dave and Sebastian had left.

Those shrieks laced with horror, many of which were tortured and final cries, caused Chelsea to shudder and her heart to break. She was shaken to the bone with fear.

"We're going to be alright," she reassured Christie and her terrified son, hoping that her own anxiety wouldn't be visible in Christie's eyes as she spoke those words. Even while she had faith that Dave was a skilled fighter and that Sebastian was as well, the fact remained that the two of them were outnumbered by Hermanos' forces by a factor that was easily three times greater.

If Dave were to suffer any kind of harm... "You love him, don't you?" The tone of Christie's voice was kind and understanding. "My love for him surpasses anything else, Christie." She moved her hand absently to the side of her neck, where she could still feel the claiming heat of Dave's kiss mark. She wanted nothing but to keep him away from danger, she thought to herself. "Oh, Chelsea," Christie said as she embraced her in a tight hug. "You have worked hard and deserve to be happy. You, above all others, are deserving of it.

Did she?

Chelsea couldn't help but reflect on the fact that Christie and Peter wouldn't have been Hermano's pawns all these months if it weren't for her own idiocy, and she couldn't help but feel guilty about it. Hermano would have been put to death by Dave in the course of his quest if it weren't for her. Dave would already be back in London with his comrades and wouldn't have been swept up in more bloodshed and death if it weren't for the fact that he tried to save her from the mansion.

The exterior of the building was once more filled with the sound of high-pitched shrieks. "Mommy!" Peter whimpered and clung to Christie while staring wide-eyed at her. She gently rocked him as she cradled him in her arms and soothed him with her words. "It's okay, baby. Mommy is here! It's ok."

Chelsea extended her hand to gently pet the young child on the head. "Why don't you both go relax in the bedroom that's located at the back of the house? There will be less noise over there."

Protected from the elements further inside the cave abode. Away from the sounds of the carnage and mayhem that can be heard outside. "You're sure?" While she was talking, Christie eyed her with a suspicious gaze. "The whole thought of going about my day and leaving you here to wait all by your lonesome does not sit well with me."

“GO,” Chelsea encouraged you in a soft voice. “I’ll be alright. And very soon, Dave and Sebastian will be on their way back.” Peter was startled by the subsequent loud howl that pierced the night. He leaned his head against his mother’s shoulder and began to sob quietly. Christie gave in at last, and after giving an embarrassed nod, she turned around and went back into the other room. Chelsea sat down in the living area and examined the firearms and ammunition that Dave had given her. On the side table next to her was where she kept both the rifle and the knife. She wants to have the knowledge and experience necessary to assist him in some manner. Her sense of helplessness made her fidgety and caused her mind to race, jumping from one unsettling notion to the next. Concerned about Dave, she stood up and began to pace nervously around the rug. The more concerned she became, the more she questioned whether or not Hermano was still alive and whether or not he knew where they were hiding.

What if Hermano was involved in some way with what happened?

And even though she feared the prospect of seeing him once more, she had no choice but to investigate whether or not she could obtain any additional information that could assist Dave and his organization in their preparations to eliminate him. She took her phone and dialed someone, yet no one answered “Dammit.” She heaved a sigh, closing her eyes and lowering her head into her palms. When she opened them again, she did see a face reflected in the mirror next to the bathroom door...

Hermano’s hideous-cloth-covered disfigured face. His unblinking eyes stared back at her, the amber glow of them furious. Insane. Murderous. He sneered at her, “Hello, Chelsea.”

How?

“No.” She shouted and spun around, shocked to see the man standing behind her. Her hand rushed out to grasp the gun, but Hermano outpaced her. He sent the weapon flying into the other room with a single sweep of his arm. She tried to get away from him, but he tugged her back with a fist full of her beautiful blonde hair. She slammed into him, her stomach churning at the terrible stench of rotting blood and death that clung to him.

“Didn’t I warn you, Chelsea, never cross me?” His arms were as strong as steel around her. His breath wormed into her ear, hot and nasty. “Didn’t I say there was nowhere you could hide and I wouldn’t find you? Your family as well.” He clucked his tongue, making a repulsive, moist sound. “Did you believe I was so careless that I wouldn’t take precautions to ensure it? Christie’s truck’s tracer brought me right to you. My guys made certain that your men and his companion had no choice but to leave you alone.”

Nausea overwhelmed her, not just from the misery of their error, but also from the repulsiveness of Hermano’s proximity. She whimpered, attempting in vain to break free.” Please let me go!”

He laughed. "You stupid girl. Didn't I warn you that there would be consequences if you lied to

me? There will be death now."

Chelsea fought and struggled, but it was futile. Hermano was inhumanly strong even after being seriously hurt by the blast that should have killed him. Gold coin. He was with drugs for sure.

He was also deadly, even though his burned, mangled skin was raw, open wounds still seeping on his forearms despite the massive amount of drugs he had likely consumed in his efforts to heal.

Chelsea's gaze fixed on the worst of the wounds that mangled the flesh of his arms. Maybe there was a tender spot on this monster after all. Her bile churned, but she pushed past it to dig her fingers as deep and as she could into the ruined muscles and tendons

He howled in agony, and she flung herself out of his hold when his grip weakened in response to the pain. She stumbled to the floor and scrambled into the living room, hope coursing through her veins. But it was just temporary. Christie bolted from the distant room."Chelsea? Oh my goodness!"

She screamed when she saw Hermano draw Peter from the bedroom behind her. What happened next happened so rapidly that Chelsea couldn't believe it. Hermano was doubled over in pain and rage for one second. The next thing he knew, he had Peter by the wrist and was holding him up like a prize. Like a piece of meat entangled on a butcher's h**k In his wrath, Hermano's amber eyes burned even brighter. His lips peeled back from his teeth and fangs as he snorted and sniffled. His changed glance revealed deep insanity. In his ferocious, blood-splattered face.

Oh, s**t.

He was truly insane. Worse than crazy, but she had no idea till now.

He'd drunk far too much drug since escaping the blow.

Hermano was taken by the drugs.

He was past saving.

"You shouldn't have done that, Chelsea. Now, you're really going to suffer."

His tongue slid out, snakelike, as he eyed the child that dangled from his grasp. Then he looked back at her as she slowly got to her feet after she stumbled into the other

room. His head cocked at a chilling, exaggerated angle. "I think we'll start by letting you watch me rip this boy's heart out and eat it in front of you both."

"I'm not sure, b*****d." Dave stood in the open doorway with a revolver in his hand, his eyes lighted up with rage, his veins pumping with the need to shred Hermano to bits.

He and Sebastian had split up after leaving town, attacking from opposite parts of the village to control the situation as best they could. Dave had just ached his third mob of the night when his heart felt like it was going to explode out of his chest in icy horror. Then he knew it was Chelsea. He hadn't expected what he saw when he entered the town's safe house and encountered the horrible, bloodlust-afflicted beast before him.

"Hermano, let the boy go."

If Chelsea hadn't been standing between him and a clear shot at the slaving man, Dave would have opened fire. Besides, Hermano was as volatile as a human on the verge of death in his current state. Taking him down cleanly would need many more shots than Dave had in his gun.

He couldn't find the gun or knife he'd handed her.

And there wasn't time to think about alternatives when Hermano held Peter by the wrist in agony while Christie sobbed and prayed for mercy on her son.

Dave was sneered at by Hermano. "Are you done chasing rabbits so quickly, Brown? I'd been looking forward to spending some quality time with these three." "B*****d! You did hear me. Put the kid down.":

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Chapter 14 Instead of complying, Hermano raised Peter higher, until the child's rib cage was level with his open maw. Saliva and drop dripped from the tips of his teeth. "Put down your weapon, Brown or I swear I'm going to end his life."

Dave didn't move. He didn't blink as much as blink. Holding his gun steady, he only hoped Hermano would believe his bluff.

"Chelsea," he said calmly. "Move out of the way, baby."

Hermano growled. "Don't you take even one f*****g step, Chelsea, or the next thing you'll hear is this brat's screams as I punch a hole through his sternum with my fist."

Christie sobbed. Chelsea looked equally miserable, but she held herself together. She stared at Dave, shaking her head as if to warn him away from doing anything rash. Well,

f**k that. He would do anything to get her out of this, but d**n if he wanted to forfeit an innocent child's life to accomplish it. He saw little choice but to try to catch Hermano off guard. In a split-second move, Dave took his shot, hitting him in the forearm. Hermano hissed as the bullet bit into his ravaged flesh.

As Dave hoped, he lost his grip on Peter. The boy dropped to the floor, unharmed.

But then, just as quickly, Hermano snatched up Chelsea and hauled her against him like a shield. She screamed. Arms trapped at her sides, she struggled in vain to break loose. The monster who held her only chuckled, seeming to delight in her terror. His glowing gaze was wild with madness. And dangerously smug triumph. Dave couldn't contain the nasty curse that exploded out of him. He'd never known this kind of fear. He'd never felt the kind of bleak horror that raked him as he watched his mate sag into a resigned slump in her captor's arms. Hermano tilted his head, those insane amber eyes studying Dave too closely. "What's this?" he taunted. "Why, you look more than worried for this b***h, warrior. Am I taking something you thought belonged to you?"

"Let her go."

He held his weapon steady on his target, but he knew damned well he would never pull the trigger. Not when he was staring at Chelsea's beautiful, fear-stricken face.

If anything happened to her-for crissake, if she died right here at Hermano's hands-he would burn the whole world down around him.

"Please," he said woodenly, too afraid of losing her to care if he had to beg. "Let her go." Hermano's eyes narrowed on him. "You've f****d her."

Dave bristled at the other male's crudeness. He wanted to flay him just for uttering the words.

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A bark of laughter erupted from between the male's cracked and blistered lips. "Holy hell. You love her. Don't you, Brown?"

Chelsea made an anguished sound in the back of her throat. She shook her head at Dave, and as their eyes connected and held, he didn't so much feel fear in their bond, but a strange and steely determination. "She's no good to me," Hermano muttered. He shrugged. "I might as well kill her now." Hermano gripped her chin in his soot-blackened, blood-stained fingers. He yanked her head back, and Chelsea's sharp cry tore into Dave. Her pain was real. But her terror had galvanized into something else. Something that told Dave to trust what he was feeling, not what he was seeing. "All right." He relaxed his stance, lowering his weapon. "All right, you son of a b***h. You

win.” Hermano stilled. Confusion swept over his feral features. His hold on Chelsea relaxed-ever so slightly. It was all the opportunity she needed. Twisting in the slackened cage of his arms, Chelsea drew the dagger she’d been concealing in her hand and drove it hard and fast and mercilessly into the center of his chest. He staggered back, a look of shock on his face. He howled, his face constricting in disbelief and agony. His body convulsed, collapsing to the

floor.

Dave was at Chelsea’s side in no time, pulling her close to him-holding her tight as the b*****d took his last breath.

He was dead, and Chelsea was safe. Christie and her son had come through the ordeal uninjured too. As Dave held Chelsea in his embrace, he glanced to the door where Sebastian had now entered. The former army strode inside his house, his black gaze taking in the signs of struggle and the pile of ash still crackling on the floor. Then he looked to Christie and Peter, the pair of them huddled together nearby, and something crossed the remote male’s face. Relief, Dave thought. And maybe something more.

Regret?

Whatever it was, the emotion was there and gone in an instant. He gave Dave a sober nod, whether in confirmation of what he’d allowed him to see just then, or in acknowledgment of their teamwork tonight, Dave wasn’t sure.

He might have tried to decipher it, but right then, with Chelsea warm and alive in his arms and

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his heart full to the brim with love for her, the only thing on his mind was the well-being of his woman.

His brave, beautiful woman.

He couldn’t contain himself from dragging her to him for his kiss. She resisted a little, drawing back on a small groan. “Dave, I’m a mess. I have his blood on me... his foulness.”

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“That won’t stop me from kissing you,” he told her gently. “Nothing is going to stop me from doing that ever again.” He pulled her closer, wrapping her in his embrace as he brushed his lips over hers in a slower claiming, a tender joining of their mouths that still had the power to inflame them both even after the ordeal they had just endured. Perhaps because of it too. But she was right. She had been through hell with Hermano.

Not only tonight, but for the past three years as well. Now that the monster was no more, Dave wanted to erase all traces of him from Chelsea's life. He swept his tongue across her soft lips on a groan that promised more. With Christie quietly tending to her son, Dave lifted his head to look at Sebastian. "If you don't mind, I'd like to go draw a bath for my lady." "Actually, I'd prefer a shower," Chelsea interjected, glancing up at him wryly. "No more baths, at least not for a while."

Dave chuckled. "Baby, whatever you want, it's yours."

"You, Dave." Her soft brown gaze turned serious as she reached up and held his face in her warm, courageous hands. "You're all I want. You are all I'm ever going to need." "You have me," he murmured quietly. "You have every part of me, sweet Chelsea. You always have."

They kissed again, his love for her soaring in his chest, in his veins. Through their bond. Her love twined with his, and the depth of their connection was so profound it nearly brought him to his knees. He didn't care that they had a small audience in the room with them. He didn't care who knew how completely he adored Chelsea.

Loved her.

He wanted the whole world to understand that she was his.

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Billionaire's Accidental Wife by C.ELLICA

Chapter 15 One year later. Chelsea's Diary.

Dear Diary, The beautiful grasslands, bright sunshine, and enormous acres of undeveloped land never cease to astonish me. Every morning, I wake up just before dawn to hear the first tweets of native birds and the delicate rustle of towering trees kissing the sky outside my window.

But it's the huge gray elephants with their gorgeous ivory tusks and lengthy, wrinkled trunks that I appreciate the most about my home. They are quite kind with the locals, especially the youngsters, who regard them as pets as well as companions. The contact between animal and man in this scene is organic and spontaneous; none is afraid of the other. Kenya's breathtaking beauty has been my home for the past one year.

However, the adjective "beautiful" is not restricted to merely the land. I have an unfathomable bond to the people here as well, and my heart hurts a little as I look down at the wild smiles of the children playing football on their lunch break.

I am alone in the classroom now with my suitcases packed at my feet. A tear streams down my face as reality sinks in. I have been dreading this day. Nothing could have prepared me for the teary goodbyes from my students and their pleas for me to stay. I am so melancholic, heartbroken and weary all at the same time. My body is frozen in place as I continue to stare at the beaming faces of my orphaned kids. They have become more than just students to me. I love them like they are my own. The tears pour out like an uncontrollable flood.

How can I leave them? It's been almost a year now, and this land has become my life since I left. Dave in Paris. I have my reason, and it is more complicated than that. I've never heard any of them, not even Jane. Catherine and especially Dave. I have my new life now. But I can tell you just yet.

But how do I say goodbye to the most beautiful, loving and happy children I have ever met? Children who, despite their unfortunate circumstances, greet me each day with exclamations of, "Hello Miss!" followed by an enthusiastic hug.

Their determination and courage are inspiring and as I prepare to leave, I vow to take a tiny piece of their little souls with me, to keep in my heart. "Chelsea...it's time," comes a soft maternal voice from behind me.

Miss Maya, the leader of the volunteer staff at Alfonso Orphanage, appears at the classroom doorway, ready to accompany me to the cab.

I take one last look around my classroom before leaving for what could be the last time. I catch a glimpse of my kids' charts, sketches, and personal things. The mural we created was originally riddled with bullet holes, and the tank of the little baby turtle we nursed back to health is on the back wall. I see a flicker of their raised, passionate hands to solve a math

question as I turn my gaze down to their desks.

I will myself to be strong and reach down to collect my luggage, exhaling a long, deep exhale. I go with Miss Maya through the orphanage, past the bunk beds, other classrooms, and cafeteria, remembering where each of my children sleeps and what their favorite lunch dish is.

Finally, my journey through the halls of my home for the last one year is nearing its end, and I as step outside of the orphanage, I am bombarded by a sea of tiny arms swallowing me up in hugs and kisses.

"We will miss you, Miss Chelsea!"

"Please don't go, Miss Chelsea!"

Their cries are heartrending and I crumble to my knees in their embrace. I try desperately not to lock eyes with any of them for fear that I may find leaving too impossible. My heart threatens to break further when they hand me roses and makeshift cut-out hearts, each scribbled with their name and signed with, I love you, Miss Chelsea. Miss Maya comes to my aid, peeling the kids away from me and instructing them to give me some room. I stand with tear-stained cheeks and puffy red eyes.

The rest of the staff is just as distraught, quickly wiping away tears to hide them from the children. I make my way over to them and embrace them individually. These women, both local and foreigners from the volunteer group, have become like family to me and leaving them is almost as gut-wrenching as leaving the kids. "You're a kind and gentle soul, Chelsea. Don't ever forget that. You've done an amazing job here and we'll always be grateful for the contributions you've made. Thank you so much, my dear," Miss Maya whispers as her final goodbye with a tight hug.

I nod bittersweetly and make my way to the cab. The driver gets out and opens the door for me, just to close it again once I'm in the backseat. I look out the window, my eyes welling up with tears. The entire orphanage has gathered outside and is waving wildly as the cab drives away. I turn my head to look out the back window, keeping my gaze on everyone until they fade away. My heart feels like it's been ripped out of my chest. The long drive to the airport is dismal as I gaze forlornly out the window at the last glimpses of my beloved Kenya. I take my window seat after checking in and boarding the plane. I'm wandering aimlessly among the fidgety passengers surrounding me. While completing final preparations for takeoff, the flight attendants advise that everyone should take their seats, but I'm too depressed to enjoy the voyage. I still can't believe I'm on my way back home. A house with plenty of flowing water, paved roads, and books. A place where I am not required. It's not like I was here. The flight attendants do their final inspections throughout the cabin, and the plane soon takes off, soaring high above Kenya. I stare out at the scenery intently, taking mental snapshots so I don't forget my time here. I recall the undulating hills, the magnificent sun stretched across the land, and Nairobi's high-rise structures. Pretty soon, I find myself deep in nostalgia.

I remember the day I first landed in Kenya like it was yesterday. I found it overcrowded and

The most difficult adjustment was the blazing heat. Except for a visit in the Philippines with a friend, I had never been exposed to such a humid climate. Aside from that, the only time I've ever experienced tropical weather was at London tanning salons during the winter. I initially regretted my decision to relocate here and found myself wanting home. The uneven dirt roads, the children running around without shoes, the lack of "western world" facilities, and limited resources such as clean running water and ample loaves of bread were all jarring. It took some time for me to adjust, but it was a touching talk with my sister that changed my first perspective. "Keep in mind, Chelsea, this is what you wanted to do." You want to make an impact on the world. Few people have the fortitude to travel to areas like Kenya and assist those in need. If that doesn't

motivate you, consider that after a year, you'll be able to return home to a more fortunate existence. People there are unable to escape their poverty. They have no choice. It's fair that it would take some getting accustomed to, but ignore the tiny details and concentrate on why you're there." I had gone silent after Christie said that. She was absolutely right. I was in Kenya for a reason and that was to make a difference in the lives of all those little orphans. Taking onboard my sister's words of wisdom, I changed my attitude.

In just a few short weeks, I was no longer bothered by any of the things that had shocked me when I first arrived here. I was too busy getting to know my students, helping them to learn, and uncovering the magical-like beauty that Kenya had to offer. Soon, I fell in love with my new home.

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I am jolted from my thoughts by a friendly flight attendant asking me to adjust my seat to prepare for landing. Another tear streams down my face as I prepare for the descent. I brush it away hastily. I must stay strong. The fond memories of my one year in Kenya have left me weary and emotional. So much so, that I barely notice the skyscrapers as we glide over London. The journey has just flown by and I was so lost in my memories of Kenya earlier that I forgot I have not seen my sister in over one year. I also have not been able to speak to her much during my time at the orphanage, as connections in Kenya were somewhat unreliable. There was no way of emailing, Skyping or texting anyone back home.

Every few months, I had to travel to Nairobi on a rickety bus and buy an expensive calling card. But even then I was lucky if the call made it through or if I was able to hear my sister on the other end. I have almost forgotten the sound of her son's sweet and loving voice. I have almost forgotten how much I have missed her and, although I am still deeply saddened to have left Kenya, Christie and her son are the one thing that does make me feel some joy about coming home.

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Billionaire's Accidental Wife by C.ELLICA

Chapter 16 I make my way through the busy airport with my luggage. It takes me a few minutes to adjust to the modern, big city kind of flow to things again. When I finally make it outside to the "pick-up" area, I spot my sister and Peter. She comes barging towards me and embraces me in an enormous hug. I drop my bags instantly and bury my face in her neck. I inhale the familiar scent of her perfume while tears fill my eyes. I tighten my grip on her as we both sob; motionless in the middle of the busy walkway. My sister, Christie, and Peter finally pull away, and I stare into their watery eyes. "Oh, Chelsea dear... I missed you so much, sweetheart," she mumbles, a big smile carved on her face. "And look at you...you're so tanned!"

“I told you it was scorching hot out over there,” I chuckle, wiping my eyes. “But now that I’m back, I definitely don’t mind being a few shades darker. Beats going to the salon anytime soon!”

“You look so beautiful too. I am so proud of you, honey.”

I take a step back, trying to figure out what is also different about her and her kid.

“And what about you, Christie? You are glowing! What’s going on with you?” I scan my sister’s features. She still has the same shoulder length of dark brown hair, the same shade of green eyes as mine, and that warm, contagious smile... except, it is brighter somehow. And in a way that extends beyond her just being happy to see me. My eyes then fall on the glinting diamond sitting on her ring finger. My jaw immediately dropped. “OMG

what is that on your finger?! Are you engaged?!” I squeal way too loudly. But I do not care. This is a huge step for me.

“Who is the lucky guy!?”

“You know him.”

“Oh really now?” Chelsea teased as she held the little boy’s hands.

“Um-Sebastian

Her mouth went wide.

“What?!”

“How?”

Christie’s smile becomes even wider. “Well, the man is a big bear. And yes! We’ve set the date for January next year!”

Her sister squeals back, taking my hands with excitement. “Come on, I will tell you all about him on the way home!”

I follow my sister to the parking lot, and I get quite a surprise when she guides us over to a

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sleek black and expensive looking SUV with a personal driver. Yes. At this time, I am more than concerned. Everything has changed since my arrival and I have missed something. I don’t even know what was happening.

“S-sister...” Chelsea stuttered, looking at her sister and nephew with curiosity. “It’s okay. This is our driver,” Christie replied casually. “I am suddenly confused.” She gasped. An impeccably dressed man in a black suit and tie immediately took her bags from her. She stared at him with both thanks and confusion. Something very bizarre was going on, and she was desperate to find out what her sister had been up to these last few months. Was she engaged to someone rich? “Come on, Lil.. I will explain everything on the way home,” Christie announced, noticing her apprehension. She got into the car and faced her, ready to bombard her with questions. “The connection on the phone was always full of static when I spoke to you in Kenya. It was impossible to explain everything in detail. I really wanted to, but then I thought it would be best to tell you in person.” “Okay. I can understand that. Explain away!” Chelsea muttered, eager to hear all about it. “Well, Sebastian is a wonderful man.”

“Are we taking the brooding Sebastian from one year ago here? Or another Sebastian?” She asked, trying not to think about what happened back then.

“Same!”

“Well, we met again at a fundraiser, and he’s very charming, rich, and sweet. He treats me like a queen. And he’s a millionaire! I sold the apartment and now I live with him in his mansion.” “You sold the apartment!?” Chelsea screamed in disbelief. This news was extremely overwhelming and difficult to take in given her grief over Kenya. “How could you keep this secret from me for so long?” She asked, noting the upmarket looking neighborhood outside the window. “Like I said, it was just impossible over the phone. You will really like Sebastian. He’s a good man.”

Chelsea turns to peer out the window again. The words “fiancée”, “The mansion”, and “millionaire” had hit her like a football tackle.

She stared at the stunning houses as they rounded the corner into a neighborhood called Hawaii Drive.

Her eyes bulged wider as they pulled into a circular driveway and the entrance to the mansion.

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The car stopped in front of a sculpted waterfall designed fountain set in the middle of the most perfect square cut green grass she had ever seen. The mansion was big, almost as big as Richmond’s.

When the driver opened the door for them, she stepped out and gasped at the magnificent pristine white cream mansion. Three large white columns mark the entrance to the large oak front door with a Romanesque style, adding to the pompous extravagance of it. “It’s 6000 square feet and has over sixteen rooms,” Christie whispers, coming up to stand beside Chelsea.

“Christie... I... can't believe what I

'm used to

he apartment. Not this...

“I know. It's a lot to take in. But come on, let me show you around before Sebastian returns from his business trip from Paris.”

Again, Paris' name made her shiver. She wanted to close the door to Paris and to anyone related to Dave, because she knew he hated her. Chelsea felt the forceful sensation of her sister tugging at her left arm, but she ignored it, frozen in awe.

Clearly, her shock had not subsided since they turned the corner on that circular driveway, and as her sister pulled her towards the front door, it was showing no signs of letting up.

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Billionaire's Accidental Wife by C.ELLICA

Chapter 17 Dear Diary Yes, everything is surprising, a mess and I don't like it. I miss the children, I miss Kenya. My life is changing again and I don't need it. I take a deep breath in and exhale, nice and slow. This reality is going to take a hell of a lot to get used to. Not only am I no longer in Kenya, but my step-sister lives in a mansion with a billionaire? With Sebastian? A friend of Dave? This is not happening. F**k it! But can I do something about

I'm not sure how quickly Christie expects me to adjust to having servants who will make me sandwiches in the middle of the night. Not that I'm not accustomed to wealth, but I'm a self sufficient woman. I don't need a servant to do anything for me.

Surely she recognizes that this drastic adjustment will take some time to sink in? This 180-degree turn in my lifestyle is nearly too much to bear: the change in climate; the contrasting culture; the transition from third to first world; Sebastian's home; the engagement; the luxury automobile; and the servants...

It is all enough to give anyone whiplash. Did my sister not realize I am fresh from a one-year volunteer program? To forget something? To forget my life? My past and my heart ache? A program that exposed me to people experiencing destitution, hopelessness, and devastation. How did she think I would react to such opulence back home?

When we step into the mansion's foyer, the first thing I notice is the polished ceramic tiled floor and the huge, crystal chandelier hanging above our heads.

Then there are the two flights of beautiful white spiral staircases, one for each wing of the mansion, and the three white pillars that meet the high arched ceiling laced with gold. A luxurious infinity pool adorned with a flowing waterfall leads to a well maintained gorgeous garden fit for royalty through transparent glass doors between the two staircases. "Isn't it marvelous!" Christie exclaims, doing a kind of twirl on her feet. Her movement surprised me. She is like a whole different person. I never thought she would be enamored by wealth, but evidently, I was wrong. Entering the mansion has transported me into a different realm. A realm that could not be more dissimilar to my tiny bedroom at the orphanage. With such thoughts still racing through my head, my sister proceeds to give me a tour of the place. "And here is the kitchen... Sebastian only has the highest appliances. But you don't have to worry about using any of them. The servants take care of all our meals," she states, a posh tone creeping into her voice.

I am speechless. I never have to make my own meals again? Seriously? Christie moves us on, directing me back to the foyer and up the spiral staircase on the left. After we head down a long corridor into the west wing, she stops by one of the many doors lining the passageway.

"And now for your bedroom. We decorated it just for you. I know you like black and white photos, so I asked the interior designer to pick out a few prints for the walls," she says as she twists the brass, antique-styled handle. And a new wardrobe. We enter, and she points out the opulent California king bed, antique dresser, walk-in closet, ensuite, and sliding glass doors leading to a private balcony. This is utterly absurd. Is this a huge mess? I take a deadpan look around the room. "Isn't it lovely, Lil? You are welcome to come out here and read. Or even have your breakfast brought," sister continues, opening the balcony doors and walking us out to a breathtaking view of the gardens. Or should I come out here and flaunt my rank as princess of the palace? I tell myself.

This display of grandeur does not impress me. Not when I've just returned from Kenya.

The doors were purchased from France, while the linen on the bed was brought from India, according to my sister. But I've had enough. My mind is racing from the events of the day, and I need to unwind. I'm so tired of everything. D**n it! "Christie, I'm tired. I suppose I need to lie down," I remark, a feeble smile on my face. She gives me a surprised expression as she realizes I no longer want to hear about the paint that came from a particular manufacturer in Germany.

"All right, honey. We can discuss the furniture afterwards. When Sebastian gets home, I'll come wake you up. Peter also has karate courses to attend. Tonight's dinner will be served in the ballroom. Sebastian's friend will also be present. I can't wait to introduce you to him!" She exclaims joyfully. "Oh, I can't wait either," I say, faking a smile. I sigh and slump onto the enormous bed covered in various shaped fluffy pillows once she goes. I look up at the ceiling as the events of the day flash before my eyes like I've hit fast forward on a movie. I consider my Kenyan students and how much they would prefer clean drinking water than live in a luxury mansion. I don't fight the tears that fall

down my cheeks. My sister has not inquired about my trip in the least. Or my thoughts on her selling the apartment. She has been so swept up in this new life of hers and has such a strong trophy wife persona that it is hard to recognize her.

Is it true that money has changed her personality? The thoughts racing through my mind make me resentful of her and her fiancée. I'll be meeting Sebastian again, the "owner, Dave's friend" in a few minutes, and I'm not looking forward to it. What the hell happened to him anyway? Who is the man who has turned my sister into a snob?

Christie knocks on my door as I wake up from my sleep. "Chelsea. Sebastian is waiting for you below."

I mutter sharply, "Be right down," and reluctantly get out of bed.

I inspect myself in the dresser mirror before proceeding down the majestic staircase and through the west wing corridor.

Rate this Chapter

Billionaire's Accidental Wife by C.ELLICA

Chapter 18 When Chelsea reached the bottom step, she spotted Sebastian out of the corner of her eye, laughing animatedly with her sister, and Peter. His left hand was planted firmly on her sister's lower back. The sight made her cringe with discomfort, but could she do something about it? No! Definitely not. She sized him up before they noticed her. Unlike before, when the man was brooding, today he was dressed in a designer pinstripe suit, which was appropriate attire for a man of his caliber. He towered over her sister with the same dark hair she remembered one year ago, that faded almost all the way to the middle of his head. However, his face bore the signs of his age, as unwrinkled lines dotted his forehead and eyes. Despite being obviously a lot older than her sister, his attitude was somewhat authoritative over here, and that immediately annoyed her. "Oh! Hi, Chelsea. We've been waiting for you," Christie said, gazing at her. Sebastian smiled and nodded his head towards him.

"Hi, aunt Chels." Peter smiled and waved his hands.

She moved towards them cautiously, still examining her soon-to-be stepbrother-in-law.

"Remember Sebastian?" Christie said, grinning from ear to ear. Clearly, she had anticipated this meeting for a long time. "How can I forget?" she faked a smile. "Nice to meet you again, Chelsea. Your sister has told me so much about you and your trip to Kenya." Sebastian released a big smile and stretched out his hand. She had no choice but to shake it.

She has developed an unexpected distaste for the man who has uprooted her sister from their home in the city by flaunting his hidden wealth and persuading her with

outstanding luxuries. Of course, Chelsea was born with it but her lifestyle changed dramatically one year ago. “Unfortunately, Sebastian, I didn’t even know you existed and that you’d been dating my sister.”

Christie whipped her head around at her in a spectacular fashion, clearly horrified by her aggressive comment.

The air becomes thick with apprehension.

My sister glared at her while Sebastian, clearly offended, stayed calm.

“Well...” Chelsea stated, in what can only be an endeavour to lighten the situation somewhat. “Sebastian has some excellent news for you, Chelsea.” She nudged him. “Tell her, Sebastian.” “Well, your sister and I have arranged an apprenticeship in my company for you while you decide whether to go back to modelling or something you want to do with your life. You will be the personal assistant to my friend.”

The f*****g nerve! How dare they?

“My friend is the head of our family’s mining company,” Sebastian started, with a smug and silly smirk on his face, which made Chelsea want to slap his face with his beautiful antique plates. How on earth could this be the same man from one year ago?

“Excuse me?” They ignored them, clearly amused by her reaction.

“I can’t wait until my friend gets here so you can get to know each other,” Christie added with eagerness. “Aren’t you excited, Chelsea? This is a great opportunity!”

No, I am not excited.

Why the hell would I be?

After a year of important and meaningful work in Kenya, which changed the lives of poverty stricken orphaned children, they just expected her to jump straight into the corporate world? No! She wants to go to Africa soon.

She wants them to join the rat race and be some hoity-toity, billionaire’s friend’s PA?

D**n, Catherine might consider this crazy. She noted to call them or let them know that she was back in London. Has Christie gone bat s**t crazy?

“I’m sorry, but I have no interest in such an apprenticeship,” she muttered, shaking her head.

Their confused faces gawked back at her.

“Dear, come on, Chelsea. You could, at least, give it a try and see how you feel about it later,” her sister pleaded.

“Christie, I have been volunteering in Kenya for the past year, doing work that I love and making a real difference in the world. I have no interest in being anyone’s PA, especially not to another billionaire. I’m sick of their world. I want to go to Africa next. But I guess you are too busy getting engaged and moving into a pretentious mansion to know that about me, huh?” She glared at her as if she had just stabbed her in the heart. Chelsea has never felt so withdrawn from her. She knew her words were harsh, but she had to hear them.

“Excuse me,” Chelsea said, walking away from them and back to the staircase.

Her eyes are swollen with tears. God, why has everything seemed to be so strange and difficult lately? After a year of being apart, her sister and she finally get to be in the same room, only to realize that they have become two different people. And ones that clash. And she hated that idea. She wanted her life back, but after what happened to Dave and her back then, she wanted nothing but to leave Europe.

She felt their eyes watching her as she climbed the steps. They probably do not understand her behaviour. But she was in no mood to contemplate their feelings.

“She’s had a long day. Let’s just give her some time to rest until he gets here,” Chelsea heard her sister’s soft voice say when she reached the top of the stairs. The comment was followed

by her attempt to reassure Sebastian that this was not her usual behaviour and that after she got some rest, she would feel a lot better.

Yeah, right, sister. She was a child no more.

This was not a temper tantrum. This was an adult aversion to what her fiancé had just offered her, which goes against everything she has come to believe in.

Back in her room, she waited for the sound of her footsteps in the hallway and softly knocked on the door. After she let her inside, she would hug her and ask if everything was okay.

But she never comes.

Just over an hour later, Chelsea eventually heard from her. “Chelsea, come down to dinner!” Her voice was chirpy on the other side of the door.

At least one of us was in a better mood. Deciding to give this whole assimilation process another shot, she made her way slowly back downstairs, down the staircase, and into the ballroom where a grand dining table had been set. The twelve-seater was lavishly

arrayed with fancy silver cutlery, crystal glasses, luxurious place mats and a spread of amazing five-star hotel food. Looking around the rest of the room, there were several what appeared to be modern masterpieces on the walls, and three additional chandeliers hovering over the table. Three male servers also stand like statues at either end of the table, each with a pressed white napkin draped over their forearm. Already seated, Chelsea and Sebastian's voices were joined by a familiar, smooth, male voice that she recognized. Her heart hammered.

Rate this Chapter

Billionaire's Accidental Wife by C.ELLICA

Chapter 19

"There you are, Chelsea. Have a seat. Remember, Dave?" Christie suddenly said and smiled at Dave, looking over to where she was still standing in the doorway.

Oh my God. How the hell was he here? Chelsea thought to herself as her heart hammered.

She remained motionless as Dave rose from his seat, approached her, and extended his hand to greet her. "Hi, Chelsea. It's nice to see you again," he said, flashing an attractive smile that left her breathless. Dave looked at her like she was the only person in the room, his eyes wreaking havoc on her already confused mind. Chelsea couldn't believe her eyes.

Dave and Sebastian shared the same towering and slender frame, but that was where their similarities end. Where Sebastian wore an expensive suit, Dave wore a pair of jeans and a leather jacket in a bad boy way that melted her heart.

Dave's piercing blue eyes make her knees quiver as she becomes lost in their intense gaze. Oh God, how she missed him so much. What the hell happened to them anyway?

"What the hell are you doing here, Dave?" She muttered, her angry gaze apparent. She noticed how he had the resemblance of a movie star with his wavy brown hair slicked back neatly, thick manicured eyebrows, straight nose, and chiselled features. God, she missed him terribly.

"Come on, Chelsea, Sebastian and I are friends..."

"I know, so you know I'm back?"

"Yes."

"Then what the hell do you think you're doing? I thought you didn't want to see me ever?"

Wait to go, Chelsea. You totally nailed that. She thought to herself.

“Chelsea-”

“Don’t-” She intruded and looked at her sister and Sebastian, who seemed rather smiling at each other.

“Christie, you knew this?” “Well,” her sister stammered, “Um-Peter invited Dave. I can’t say no to my son, can’t I?” Her eyes darted away from Dave as she rolled her eyes at her sister. She felt like Dave’s smile left her feeling like a shy schoolgirl. She walked forward and took a seat opposite him, next to Christie. “Where is Peter?” “Already in bed, dear... Too tired to even lift a finger after his playtime with Dave earlier.” “Oh,” she grumbled under her breath. Christie had failed to warn her that the man was here and looked exactly one year ago like he could have come straight out of a fashion magazine.

She desperately tried to retain her composure and ignored the burning desire surging through her. She wanted nothing but to run away from him and ran as fast as she could. She had

broken his heart and he had broken hers. She made him choose, her or his career, but Dave chose the latter and told her that he had to finish something. Of course, it broke her heart. She doesn’t want any more gun fights, any more running around the bush, but Dave was under the impression that if they didn’t break up, he would endanger her life. She mentally shook her head. She didn’t want to remember.

“So, Chelsea...” Dave began, sitting back down at the table. She felt herself getting wet over the sound of her name slipping through his s**y lips. “Christie told me you are going to be my new PA.” Her eyes widened, her forehead creased, and she looked at her sister and Sebastian, “Are you kidding me?” Christie raised her brow and shook her head. “Dear, I thought you were looking for a job?” She silently motioned for her to just go with the flow while Sebastian took Christie’s hands and kissed them, which made her sister swoon. Chelsea rolled her eyes and uttered to Dave, without looking at his intense gaze, “Well, I haven’t decided to be there yet.” I need some more to consider.”

“What’s there to consider? It’s not like you have employers knocking at your door,” he chuckled, shooting his friend a quick glance. Sebastian returned the smile.

Great. Another conceited a*****e was joining the family. This day could not get any better. In truth, she should have known that any friend of the former brooding Sebastian would be arrogant and insolent. D**n, if only Dave were not so d**n gorgeous.

She glared at him, getting ready to give him a piece of her mind. “You’re right about that. I don’t have employers knocking on my door. But that doesn’t mean I’m willing to be at the beck and call of a spoiled little rich man who seems to prefer his job over anything else in this world.”

His smile faded and raised a brow. It had not been expecting me to fire back at him. She guessed someone like Dave was not used to being treated the same as everyone else. Her heart began to beat quickly, and she swallowed hard before turning away. But she still feels his eyes on her, irritated by her bold comment. "You know, I have my reasons to choose those things, Chelsea," Dave murmured, his voice trembling a little. "Oh really? That your treasure hunting is more important than the something else?" Hmp. OK well, let's move on from the topic, shall we?" Christie chimed in, ready to break the tension again. Chelsea peered up to see him nod at her in agreement. After an awkward dinner in which she barely ate anything, she decided to make her exit. "May I be excused?" She asked politely, rising from her seat. Dave watched my every move. Even though she thought he was a total jerk, she could not deny her heart was beating so hard.

She needs some air to calm her nerves. "Get a good night's sleep, Chelsea," Sebastian said pleasantly. It was the first time he had spoken to her since she joined them at the table. Like Christie, he seemed quite discomfited by her heated exchange with his friend. Who doesn't? The two knew what happened back then.

"Good night, sweetheart," Christie added, giving her a wave. She refused to look at Dave for fear that she might be pulled in once again by those deep azure eyes.

"Good night, Chelsea. I do hope to see you at the office tomorrow," he said, with all the sweetness of a scathing a****e. "Good night," she said with boredom and rolled her eyes.

The one thing that she wanted Dave to take away from tonight was that she was a woman who made her own choices. No one oversaw her. No matter how affluent and charming they were.

Rate this Chapter

Billionaire's Accidental Wife by C.ELLICA

Chapter 20 Later that evening, fireworks burst overhead, eager laughter swirled around Chelsea, and an attentive waiter pressed a margarita with freshly crushed mint into her hand. After dinner earlier, she managed to call Jane and Catherine, and they decided to have a girls' night out, which involved Shawn Richmond driving the car and giving them VIP passes through the most expensive, new, and well-known pub in the city. It had been a wonderful reunion, and the three of them ended up sobbing and hugging and eventually ruining their make-up.

Ah, this was life. After almost another drink, Jane was almost wasted and Catherine called her younger child on the phone, singing a lullaby. God knows what sort of Peppa Pig song it was. She shook her head and smiled at the embarrassed mom. It had been a couple of years, yet Chelsea saw how the couple still looked at each other's eyes like they were the only ones in the room.

"This is life, right?" Jane grumbled to Chelsea with a grin. She looked beautiful in a knee length dress of shimmery silver gems, while Catherine wore the same sparkling mini-dress accentuated by moonstone clasps at the shoulders and a simple belt that brought out the deep brown of her eyes. "Chelsea, would you believe Shawn wanted to have this fundraiser in a stuffy old ballroom? On a beautiful clear night like tonight?" "It's a good thing he has Cathy to talk him out of it," she said with a playful dig at Shawn's tuxedoed ribs. "I would not have wanted to miss this."

"I second the motion," Shawn said, raising his glass as if for a toast while Catherine was still busy talking to her kid on the phone.

Chelsea was excited to see them, and they had already arranged for some time this week to visit the couple's mansion. Earlier, Catherine asked about her and Dave, but she just gave her a cold shoulder. For now, there was nothing to talk about just yet; for now, she wanted to forget the beautiful b*****d.

However, tonight's dance, banquet, and general-purpose give-us-your-money event were to raise funds for Richmond's latest favourite charity, a group that bussed children in homeless shelters to the library every day, and watched over them while their parents were out working or looking for jobs. This time, two years ago, the only charity Shawn had been interested in was the society for the relief of young naked bimbos, but Catherine had made him a changed man. These days he actually sought out opportunities to do good without the help of his late grandfather, now on his own without any prompting, and when he encountered a cause that didn't have a fundraiser-or even one that did but didn't seem big enough or glamorous enough to raise the necessary awareness or funds-he made one. "So, how much are we getting so far?" Chelsea asked Shawn.

He pulled up some numbers on his phone. "Oh, about nine hundred thousand," he said off handedly. "But I think we can get up to a million by the end of the night, maybe even to five. Thanks for donating those beautiful pots to the auction table, by the way."

"Well, I just hope you guys aren't counting on me for that last two million," she joked, trying

to cover up her blush. Anything close to a compliment about her work tended to do that and being asked to donate an item for a high-end auction definitely counted as a compliment. "I mean, I'm good, but I'm not that good on the fringes or anything." She said and thought about how she missed going like this, but with a guilty feeling that those children in Kenya were the ones who taught her pottery, and it was just a mere coincidence that what she made was left untouched by her sister. "Every little bit helps," Jane added. "And don't underestimate yourself, Chelsea. I'm pretty sure I saw the famous singer giving them the eye at the auction table earlier." "Woah, the hot Michael Libson?! He is here?!" She squealed, travelling up the scale in about three seconds. Shawn rolled his eyes fondly. "I'll leave you three ladies to the fangirling. I've got to circulate, press the flesh." Catherine made a mock-warning face. "Press the flesh, huh?"

Shawn kissed her cheek. "Only of the oldest, ugliest, and most wealthy couples in London, dear, I assure you." Catherine gave his b**t a little swat. "Well, alright. As long as they don't press back" They gave each other a lingering kiss on the lips before Shawn headed out, and Chelsea looked steadfastly away, trying not to feel the jealousy warming up inside Chelsea. She wants that sort of relationship.

It was easier with Shawn and Catherine than it had been with Jane and her lawyer husband, who had a puny d**k, probably because she knew and laughed at it. But it was still hard to see that affection and to know that it was going to be a while before Chelsea had that level of ease and comfort and love with another person again.

Catherine turned around just quickly enough to catch the c**k in Chelsea's armour, and her eyes went wide with sympathy. She patted her arm and lowered her voice. "How are you, really? Is Dave still being an a*s?"

"Calling that douchebag an a*s is an insult to both donkeys and human anatomy," she snapped. Jane was laughing while she was boiling. "I can't believe what I saw in that guy! No hard feelings mean, Catherine, he is your brother, but he is nothing like you. I want to find a time machine and travel back in time and slap myself in the face the second I said yes to a date with him, and then slap him, and then slap him again, and then maybe push him in front of some oncoming traffic!" Her drunk volume had reached the point where people around them were pricking up their ears, so she took a deep breath and continued, slightly more quietly: "Or maybe just leave an anonymous tip to his comrade to kick the hell out of him out of that treasure hunting business. How could he choose them over me?"

Rate this Chapter

Billionaire's Accidental Wife by C.ELLICA

Chapter 21 "Maybe he had a reason, dear," Jane muttered. "It's not too late to do that, is it?" Catherine asked, righteous indignation lighting up her face. "He shouldn't get away with that! But I can talk to him and slap the a****e in the face for you.

That's her, Catherine: valiant champion of underdogs everywhere. She felt a rush of affection for her best friend and gave her a little shoulder shove. "I saw him earlier, in my sister-fiancée's mansion." "Woah! My Dave? The a****e didn't even bother to see me?" Catherine asked. "I ignored the hell out of him and he offered me a job." Jane smirked. "I know where this is going." "Trust me, Jane, I'm going to make him pay for hurting the hell out of me."

Catherine sighed, "Ah, that smarmy jerkwad would just have an excuse ready and waiting. Believe me, he's agreed with so many of his advisors' opinions that the man thinks the sun shines out of his a*s and is responsible for our temperate London climate." Jane made a sympathetic noise. "That sucks. Sorry, it's so hard right now."

“He’ll get what’s coming to him eventually,” Chelsea prophesied, though she wasn’t sure how that was ever going to happen, especially when she had trouble getting him to just leave her alone. Maybe an intervention by the alien? “Catherine, I don’t want to spend this whole evening moaning about Dave. Let’s talk about something happy, like kittens or my imminent business success or how cute you look in that dress. Present from Shawn?” “Bought this one myself, actually,” Catherine said proudly. “From a designer, I discovered while we were in Paris. Although—” and her eyes sparkled with mischief—“you could say that what I’m wearing underneath is a present for Shawn. From me, and indirectly, from you.” “You go, girl!” Jane said. “D**n, but I remember when it was like pulling teeth to get you to wear my designs for a man. She later added in a mocking tone, “Chelsea, he’s an a*****e,” and “I don’t like him like that, he’s just my boss,” and “Okay, Chelsea, we slept together and it was amazing, but now he’s brooding at me like he’s the president of the United States with fake blonde hair”

Jane’s laughter echoed “I never said that, Chelsea,” Catherine said, laughing and giving them both a playful shove. You’re the one with all the fancy literary references; I just go for my spy shows and the occasional movie. Though if you’re looking for a hottie, I think Mr. Dark and Broody over there have been giving you the eye.” Chelsea followed her gaze to a waiter who indeed had a very brooding brow, with a low tumble of dirty blonde hair, flashing dark eyes and slacks that clung nicely to all his... attributes.

“Mmm, yummy,” she agreed. “I can’t go hit on someone on the job, though; I get enough people doing that to me all day long to ever turn it around.” I spared him one last regretful look. Oh, but those shoulders would look nice framed against my bedspread...” “Girl, we need to find you a distraction,” Jane said, slinging her arm around Chelsea and Catherine’s shoulders. Catherine added, “Want me to be your wingman? Shawn’s got a lot of yachting friends that would catch your eye. And possibly also other parts of your anatomy. So. See anything you like?”

Jane laughed again. Chelsea noticed that she was happier and more relaxed these days than she had ever seen her before in her life. And she was happy for her. Of course, she was. Really.

But it was just hard, sometimes, to realize Jane had gone from the happy-go-lucky friend with a bag of good advice to the moping downer who needed to be cheered up.

“Jane, how’s that wedding coming along, by the way?” Catherine asked, in a change of topic, so transparent Chelsea could have used it in manufacturing windows. “Got everything sorted

out?”

Jane sighed, just slightly put out. “Well, it’s been hard to have another wedding. We had to delay again because we’re going to be in negotiations with the Koreans in may. It’s just as well, though, since that timeline works better for my husband-something about being in the third house,” she rolled her eyes fondly. Woah. When Jane spends time

obsessing and overthinking little details, it's usually not long before a freakout and tears are on their way. "What kinds of details?" Jane sighed. "Well, I had a little attack of traditionalism, and I thought: you know what I want? A trousseau! You know, the collection of linens, clothes, and lingerie that a bride traditionally

"Jane, I know what a trousseau is," Chelsea said.

"Of course you do, sorry," Jane said apologetically. "Anyway, and then I had a great big attack of common sense, and I thought: you know who I want to make mine? Catherine's designer, of course, and the two of you. I can't just arrange everything myself, I need intervention, I need help!"

Catherine said, "Wait, do you need any tips on what companies make good stuff? Shawn can help you with it."

Their excitement was palpable. Chelsea felt an answering grin bigger than the Grand Canyon split her face. This was what she needed to occupy herself. "Oh my god, Jane!" Chelsea grabbed her hands and jumped up and down. "Oh my goodness, I have so many ideas already! This will be the best trousseau ever, I swear, all the other trousseaus will just go home and cry their little trousseau hearts out! Oh, yes, I can't even stop thinking of ideas! S**t, I need to write them down." Chelsea dropped Jane's hand abruptly and began to paw through her purse for her notebook while Catherine called her designers. Jane was grinning from ear to ear.

It was just possible that they'd had too much champagne.

Maybe. Just putting it out there as a hypothesis.

A while later, after their discussion, Shawn came strolling up to us with the self-satisfied saunter of a man who has successfully parted several people from their not-terribly-hard earned money for a good cause. He was accompanied by two other guys, one tall and sandy haired in a rumpled suit, his square jaw and slight belly making him look like a jock gone to seed. The other one:

—was Dave.

Billionaire's Accidental Wife by C.ELLICA

Chapter 22

If she'd thought Dave had looked good in that T-shirt while at Sebastian's house one year ago —well, shut her mouth. And open it again, because those dimples were in danger of making Chelsea's jaw hit the floor. How could he look so good in a suit?

He wore a dark navy suit, the jacket unbuttoned and the scarlet silk of his shirt making his skin almost glow. He'd tugged off his tie in the heat and was now absentmindedly

wrapping it around and around his strong, graceful hands. His gorgeous eyes seemed to sparkle in the faint light of the torches and fireworks, and his hair fell in defiant curls around his face. A hint of stubble graced his cheeks, just enough to rasp against someone's skin if he leaned down to claim their mouth with those full, pouty lips... Oops, Shawn was saying words. She should probably pay attention to Richmond's words and not Dave's lips and notice how Jane and Catherine are eying her like a mother hen. Though Dave's lips were definitely more interesting.

He's got a company to run, Chelsea reminded herself. He's off-limits, and also, he's a jerk! He chose his work over hers. Like, who does that? One minute he was telling her he b****y loved her, and the next he told her that she needed to stay away from him for a while.

Jerk!

She reminded herself that she had instituted a strict no-jerk policy! All jerks must be put in checked luggage; if she attempts to board this relationship with a jerk, Security will ask her to step out from the line. "-all in the museum together," Shawn was explaining to Jane. "Dave, my wife and I played Indian Jones together in Thailand. If I'd taken either of their advice back then, I'd have made my fortune a lot sooner." Shawn joked.

The rest chuckled while Dave never left his gaze at Chelsea. Jane gazes at them with genuine curiosity while drinking her tequila. "Pleasure to meet you all." the dark man said to them. While Dave took Chelsea's hand and kissed it. "Nice to meet you again, Chelsea" Catherine and Jane's eyebrows climbed so high they could have formed their own airline. Dave took her hand. "Stop being a jerk, Dave," she said shortly, pulling her hand away. "Dave, did you forget your manners again?" Catherine asked. "He likes to put on the whole Prince Charming act now, but way way back home, he couldn't speak two words to girls that weren't 'move, you're blocking the Twilight chronicles or whatever those nerdy guys called.'" "Catherine, please," Dave said, starting to look embarrassed. "This one time," Dave started, a wicked grin blooming on her face, "he didn't know his crush from the debate team was in the lobby, and he was racing down the stairs, skinny arms flailing in the wind-you should have seen him before he got into body-building, a toothpick could have taken him in a boxing match—"

C22

"Don't go digging up my tragic past, sister," Dave said with a laugh, giving Catherine a friendly punch in the shoulder. His face took on a mischievous cast, and his slightly awkward. smile widened. "Unless you want me to bring up that incident with you, the sorority, the drunk homeless man, ice cream, and the fire department." Catherine shot a fake-panicked look at Jane and Chelsea, who rolled their eyes. Shawn retorted with a smile. "Another tale of your misspent youth? I've probably heard worse.

"I think I'll play it safe," Catherine said, "and change the subject. Where's your lovely date, Dave? Have you met her, Chelsea?" Jane raised her brow and winked at Catherine. Chelsea, however, put on her best blank I-don't-care-look

HI

She was about to say she had not when suddenly a blonde woman who was fifteen pounds too thin and three inches too short to be Daniella Gray shot out of the crowd and wrapped herself around Dave, nestling her head onto his shoulder and letting out a contented little murmur. He had another girl already? Or in addition? This guy gave 'player' such a new name that they were going to have to add another page to the entry in the encyclopedia. "Oh, there you are, Davey dear!" she simpered like a little lost kitten. "Ugh, this charity ball is such a drag! And oh my God, books. Like, what are poor kids even going to do with books? Can they even, like, read? Aren't they all on crack?" Chelsea breathed in harder and raised her eyebrows at Dave. Everyone froze for a second. They could see the thoughts slowly travelling across their faces as they wondered if they had really heard what they thought they had just heard, and if so, whether they should laugh, yell, or cry. Dave looked like he sincerely hoped the ground would open up beneath him and he would be kidnapped by Santa before he had to figure out how to respond.

"Excuse me," Chelsea said as straight-faced as she could. "I think I need more drinks. Yes. A drink. Bye!" And she fled behind the kitchen area where no one could see her. Ten minutes later, when Chelsea had recovered, she poked her head back out and surveyed the scene. The coast was clear; Dave and his bimbo...she wanted to say 'date,' but 'disaster' seemed so much more accurate... seemed to have fled. Jane was nowhere to be seen either, but Catherine and Shawn were still lounging hand in hand where she had seen them last.

She paused for a moment before going to rejoin them, just watching them, so in love and so unselfconscious. Shawn teases Catherine by holding a chocolate-dipped strawberry just too high for her to grab and then kisses her gently before feeding it to her himself. Catherine laughs and relaxes into his arms, her eyes closing in delighted contentment. Catherine had her man and her kids, and she loved them both beyond reason. It was the whole package.

And sometimes, Chelsea couldn't help but wonder if her whole package had gotten lost in the mail.

She set her shoulders and told herself to stop wallowing. She had more important things to focus on. It didn't matter if achieving her dream took years or even decades; she had set her mind and heart on it, and she was going to do it. She was going to f**k the hell out of her fate.

And hey, in the meantime, there was always champagne. She snagged a glass off a passing waiter's tray, and he turned to her with a grin like electricity. Oh, hello, cute

waiter from before. Still looking twice as delicious and intoxicating as the champagne he was carrying. "So," he said with a French drawl that had her contemplating how that voice might sound coming from between her thighs, "what's a pretty lady like you doing in a place like this?" Well, if he was going to flirt with her first, she definitely wasn't going to cling to any reservations about flirting with him. "Oh, nothing much," she answered back, coming forward and letting her hand rest lightly on his arm. "Just... admiring the scenery." Dreams are hard things to achieve. It was a good thing life was stocked with so many pleasant distractions.

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