

Read Billionaire Baby Daddy online free by Claire Adams

Chapter Eleven

Lexi

The shower in the en suite room that Andrew was putting us up in was huge and luxurious. Between the size of the place, the pleasant warmth of the water, and the relaxing scents of his sister's hair products, which I was using to wash away all my worries, I never wanted to turn the water off and get out. But eventually, I did just that, drying myself off with a fluffy towel, careful not to drip all over the floor even though it was just Emma and me using that bathroom.

I got dressed in some clothes that Janice had given me. They belonged to Andrew's sister, who apparently had her own room there at his house, even though she only stayed there infrequently. They were clean and comfortable, and they fit perfectly.

I still couldn't believe his house was large enough that he had multiple spare bedrooms, plus a dedicated room for his sister who was only sometimes there. Then again, I thought, snorting, Andrew himself confessed to not spending very much time here outside of sleeping.

I toweled my hair dry and walked out into the bedroom, smiling at the sight of Emma napping in the middle of the large bed. Heck, that bed was about the size of the living room in my old apartment. We'd need to get her crib put up in there soon, but she could sleep with me for the night.

When Andrew had first suggested that we save the moving for another day, I'd wanted to argue with him, but now, with exhaustion weighing on

my bones, I was glad he'd suggested it. The past few months, or the past few years rather, had been difficult, and now that Emma and I were going to have a relatively stable place at least for a little while, all that stress was catching up to me. I was worn out.

There was a gentle knock on the door, and I blinked, wondering who it could be. I doubted it was Andrew. He'd made it clear that he had work that he wanted to get done for the rest of the day and that he didn't want us to disturb him. The prick had even

mentioned writing something in the contract about his office being off-limits to all distractions, as though Emma and I were just there to get in the way.

Maybe it was the girlfriend that he'd mentioned? But I couldn't imagine Andrew telling her about us already, unless she was living there as well. I didn't think she was, though, based on what I knew about Andrew. And based on the fact that Misty hadn't mentioned anything in the tabloids about him having a live-in girlfriend. She would have known about it if that were the case. I was sure of it.

When I answered the door, it was Janice who was standing there, and I couldn't help but smile at her. The woman had been absolutely wonderful all afternoon. When Andrew and I had walked back into the kitchen, she and Emma had been baking chocolate chip cookies. Emma had been more of a hindrance than a help, but Janice was quick to heap praise on her anyway, and Emma had had the biggest grin on her face.

It was seeing that grin that made me realize how long it had been since I'd really been able to make Emma smile like that, and I felt another stab of guilt.

Janice had also made a great, kid-friendly grilled cheese dinner for Emma that evening, putting some green beans on the side and making sure that Emma ate them. I couldn't thank her enough.

Now, she came bearing a steaming mug of tea, and I practically cried at the sight of it. "Thank you," I said, immediately wrapping both my hands around the mug.

Janice frowned. "It's a bit chilly in here, isn't it?" she said, marching over to the thermostat. She grinned over her shoulder at me while she adjusted it warmer. "I thought it was silly when I first found out that each room in this house has separate heating, just like in a hotel. But then I realized how few of the rooms Andrew actually uses on a regular basis, and I realized it makes sense for him to be able to only heat the rooms that he's using, rather than heating the whole house at once."

"That is smart," I said faintly, moving to sit on the sofa in the "living room" area of the suite.

Janice came and nodded to the seat across from me. "May I?" she asked. "I wanted to ask you about Emma."

"Of course," I said. "What do you want to know?"

"Well, since I'm sure I'll be helping you out with her quite a bit, I just wanted to check in with you about some things. I know you said she doesn't have any food allergies, but does she have any other sort of allergies? Laundry detergent or wool or animals or anything like that?"

"Nothing," I told her, shaking my head.

"Good," Janice said. "I was also thinking that I could pick up some coloring books for her, and other things to keep her occupied while

you're looking for work and her father is away at work. What does she like?"

I blushed. "Uh, I don't know. Animals, I guess. Usually, she just colors things that she imagines. I don't think she's ever had a coloring book before."

To be honest, I wouldn't have been able to afford something that frivolous. Usually, she just colored on the backs of used printer sheets that I got from the recycling boxes at the local schools.

"Animals," Janice mused. "Probably flowers as well. Maybe some pictures of people while we're at it." She smiled at me, taking the sting out of the fact that I had never been able to afford these things before. "How are you holding up, Mama?"

I sighed and shrugged. "This isn't quite what I imagined for my life," I said bitterly.

"Having a kid?" Janice asked.

"No, no, Emma's great," I said quickly. "Just the rest of it." I grimaced. "To be honest, I feel humiliated. I had to come crawling back to the man who used me and then tossed me aside like I was nothing."

"You know he didn't mean it that way," Janice said with a sigh. "He's just overwhelmed. In the course of an afternoon, you've managed to rock his entire world. Can you blame him for being defensive?"

"I had to beg him to help me out with taking care of my daughter. I had to sit there and listen to him tell me about how other women were able to do this, listen to him tell me that I must be lazy, or that I must not be trying hard enough."

Janice was quiet. “Andrew’s had trouble with women in the past,” she finally said. “He’s starting to get better, but he’s still not fully there.”

“I hear he’s got a girlfriend,” I said.

Janice made a face. “He has a girlfriend,” she agreed.

“You don’t like her?”

“Renée can be difficult,” Janice said simply, shrugging her shoulders. “But it is a step forward for him. A small step, maybe, but a step nonetheless.”

I sighed and shook my head. “I’m twenty-six years old. I would have thought that by now, I’d have a successful career and a decent place to live, and maybe I’d have a serious boyfriend. I didn’t expect to have a kid, and as much as I love Emma and I’ll never regret her coming into my life, it’s just strange to be staying here with someone who I don’t actually like, relying on him to take care of me and my daughter. But I don’t have any other options.”

“Andrew can be difficult,” Janice said. “But he really is a good guy. He’s not going to let you and Emma go without.” She was quiet for a moment. “I have one last question that I wanted to ask you regarding Emma. Does she know who Andrew is?”

I shook my head. “At the moment, given that we don’t know what’s going to happen in the future, I think it’s best that she doesn’t know. She’s still so young, and I don’t want her getting attached. For all I know, Andrew could change his mind in a week and ask us to leave.”

“He wouldn’t do that,” Janice said.

I was quiet. “We can’t stay here forever,” I said slowly. “Even if Andrew doesn’t kick us out, eventually, I’m going to get a job and get back on my feet, and I’ll have to find us someplace to live, someplace for just the two of us. I’m not sure what happens to Andrew at that point. I’m not sure what he’s going to want to have happen at that point. If he’s going to want to continue to be involved in Emma’s life, or if he’s going to pretend that none of this ever happened and that Emma doesn’t exist.”

Janice sighed. “That does make sense,” she said.

“It’s bad enough that I’ve had to bounce her from house to house,” I continued. “I don’t even know how to explain that one to her, that we’re not going to be living with Aunt Misty anymore because we’re going to come live here. She’s going to be so upset, even if I take her to see Misty once or twice a week. Not that I don’t think she’s going to enjoy it here. I know she had a good afternoon with you, and thanks again for that. But she’s a child, and children should have a routine, shouldn’t they?”

“There is something to routine,” Janice said pensively, nodding. “But it’s just for a little while. It’s not like you’re going to keep moving her from place to place forever. And I really don’t think Andrew is going to make you leave here until you’re ready to find some stability on your own. Moving your kid a couple times is pretty normal. She’s at an age where she probably won’t even remember it very clearly.”

“That’s what I’m hoping for,” I sighed. I took a sip of my tea. “Do you think being here is what’s best for her?”

Janice raised both her hands. “I don’t know what your situation is,” she said, and I gave myself a mental kick, because of course she didn’t know all the reasons that we were going to be staying there. She’d been in the kitchen with Emma while Andrew and I had been discussing that.

“Despite the fact that Andrew doesn’t really know what to do when it comes to children, he wouldn’t have asked you and Emma to stay here if he didn’t think that it was a good idea,” she said. “If you have any concerns, I’d talk to him about them, but I wouldn’t be too worried. Renée is the person that you’re more likely to get some side-eye from, but that’ll be because she’s jealous of you and because she really doesn’t strike me as the kind of person who likes kids.”

I laughed a little, even though that gave me a whole new panic to worry about. Of course, Andrew was only part of the battle. Who knew what would happen if Renée really didn’t want me to be there. Even if she didn’t convince Andrew to make us leave, she could make things uncomfortable.

At least, it seemed that I had Janice on my side. And Andrew, even if it was just for now.

“Thank you so much for everything you’ve done so far,” I said to Janice.

She laughed. “Honey, if you think I’ve helped you out a lot already, you’ve got another thing coming,” she assured me. “I’m here for whatever you need me for, whether you need someone to watch after Emma, even if it’s just so you can have some personal time, or if it’s a friend to talk to. Or if you need something around the house, just let me know as well. Plus, I know all the comfort food recipes.” She winked at me, and I couldn’t help laughing.

“I’ll have to keep that in mind,” I said. “Dinner tonight was delicious, by the way.”

“I’m glad you enjoyed it,” Janice said. “We could do with getting a little more meat on your bones.” I blushed, but she didn’t dwell on that. Instead, she stood up. “I need to be getting home for the evening. The

hubby will be waiting for me. But I'm around during the day, so remember, if you need me..."

"I'll let you know," I promised.

"Good, good," Janice said.

I took another sip of tea as she slipped out, smiling to myself. Maybe this was the end of my streak of bad luck. I could only hope so.