

## Read Billionaire Baby Daddy online free by Claire Adams

### Chapter Twelve

Andrew

I normally showered pretty quickly in the morning. Showers were just another step in the routine of getting ready for work, and there was no reason to dwell in there soaking up the steam. But the morning after Lexi and Emma arrived on my doorstep, I took my time and thought things over.

Unfortunately, the night had given no clarity to my chaotic thoughts and feelings regarding the situation.

A part of me wanted to write Lexi a check and be done with this whole mess. I had enough money in the bank t

hat I could really pay for everything the both of them would need for the rest of their lives. A place to stay, college money, and everything else. They would want for nothing. And I had lawyers on call who could draw up a contract for us to sign, saying that she would never come back to bother me again.

Lexi would probably be thrilled with that course of action. She'd made it very clear that she didn't want me in Emma's life, and I knew I couldn't blame her for that. I definitely wasn't ready to be a dad.

But something about that plan didn't sit right with me. My own upbringing had been cold, between my mother's lack of interest in her children and my father's total focus on work and only things related to his work. The only person who had shown me any love was Katherine, and despite my flakiness when it came to some of our current

get-togethers, Katherine was still the only person in the world that I knew I loved.

I knew Emma's situation wouldn't be exactly the same as mine. I could tell that Lexi loved the girl, probably more than I ever would be able to. But at the same time, there was something about the idea of writing them a check, of having nothing to do with her, that made me feel just like the kind of parent I'd always sworn I would never become. It didn't sit right in my gut.

The thing is, for all that I liked to have my fun and do things on my terms, I was never totally opposed to the idea of having children. I just thought that stage of my life would come later. But I wanted to have that. I wanted to have a daughter who grew up knowing who her father was and respecting him.

The fact remained, though, that I wasn't ready for it now. Soon, Emma was going to be at the age where she was going to school. And she'd be learning how to ride a bike and read and do all sorts of things. I wasn't ready to teach her those things. What's more, I didn't have time for that now.

It was best that I get rid of Lexi and Emma quickly, before anyone caught wind of this and turned it into some scandal. If I was lucky, maybe I could even get rid of them before Renée caught wind of this and things got awkward between us. The problem was, I had a big business trip coming up in a week, and I needed to concentrate all my energy on that. I couldn't afford to divert my focus to a one-night stand and a child.

But maybe if I focused on the business trip for now, it would give Lexi time to sort her life out. They could stay at the house while I was busy at the office, and then they could continue to stay there while I was out of

the country. After that trip was over, I could get them settled someplace else.

I nodded resolutely to myself and got out of the shower, toweling myself off quickly, dressing in one of my blue work suits, and heading down to have a quick breakfast.

When I got to the dining room, Lexi and Emma were already there, chatting away with Janice, who had joined them with a cup of coffee.

“I used to not like ’nanas, but then we went to the zoo with Aunt Misty, and we saw these monkeys, and they were eating ’nanas, too, and Aunt Misty bought one, and I was s’posed to throw it to the monkeys, but I eated it, and it was good!” Emma was babbling as I came into the room.

I paused for a moment, watching the three of them. It was the perfect scene of domesticity and somewhat unnerving to walk into. It almost felt as though I’d suddenly found myself on the set of some play or in someone else’s house. And yet, this was my dining room, that was my maid, and this was, well, my one-night stand and my daughter.

I took a deep breath, forcing a smile onto my face, and went to take a seat at the table.

Janice jumped up. “I’ve got a plate all ready for you, and a cup of coffee, too, just the way you like it,” she told me. “Let me just grab it from the kitchen. I left it there to keep it warm.”

“Thank you, Janice,” I told her, shaking out my napkin and putting it in my lap.

“G’morning, Mr. Goldwright,” Emma said to me, her face scrunched up like she had to think really hard about the greeting.

I chuckled a little. Whatever my feelings were toward her being my daughter, she was adorable. “Good morning, Miss Emma,” I said to her. “How are you today?”

“Good!” she chirped. “I slept the whole night.”

“You did?” I asked, glancing towards Lexi, who beamed at her daughter.

She looked a lot less exhausted than she had when she’d arrived the previous day, clearly having had a good night’s sleep as well. I wondered how long it had been since she’d been able to let go of her worries and sleep soundly for a night. Too long, from the looks of things.

“Thank you again for letting us stay here,” Lexi said quietly.

“It’s not forever,” I said, taking a sip of the coffee that Janice set down in front of me.

“I know that,” Lexi said defensively.

“I have a business trip coming up in about a week,” I told her. “I don’t want to even begin dealing with this situation until I get back from that. There’s a lot of work that I need to do in the lead-up to the trip. We’re hoping to expand Orinoco to a couple offices in Europe, and that takes careful planning and brand management. So, you won’t be seeing me around here that much.”

“Okay,” Lexi said.

“When I get back from that trip, when everything has calmed down somewhat, we’ll sort out another place for the two of you to live. I have some connections that could be useful. We’ll get you a good place downtown where you won’t have to worry about commuting to work. And Emma could go to a great daycare.”

“I hope you’re planning on paying for all of that, because I certainly won’t be able to, even if I get hired on to something today!” Lexi said.

I rolled my eyes. “Of course, I’ll be paying for that, since you have apparently let your life descend into absolute chaos,” I said to her.

“Sorry, we couldn’t all be handed a flourishing company and a trust fund when we came of age,” Lexi said sarcastically. “Don’t get me wrong, I know that Orinoco has flourished with you at its helm, but most of what you’ve got, you got because of luck. Don’t try to pretend that you’re any better than me.”

I raised an eyebrow at her. “I think I’m being more than generous to you, especially given that you showed up totally out of the blue. If you don’t want to be here, enjoying the benefits of that trust fund and that flourishing company, you can always leave. Although, I don’t know where you would go. But if you are going to stay here with me, I’d prefer that you be a bit more civil. This is, after all, my home.”

Lexi snorted. “You’ve been more than generous to me?” she asked.

“I’ve just offered to put you up in an apartment downtown, a nicer place than you could probably ever hope to afford, and I’ve offered to put Emma into one of the best daycares in the city. In the meantime, before we can get you settled there, I’ve offered to let you have the run of the house, up to and including the services of my maid, who has agreed to look after Emma while you’re busy finding work. What part of that doesn’t strike you as generosity?”

“That’s not generosity,” Lexi said heatedly. “That’s your responsibility. Given that, oh yeah, Emma is—” She broke off sharply, glancing over at the child, but those unspoken words hung in the air between us. Given that Emma is your daughter.

Lexi took a deep breath and let it out slowly, visibly trying to compose herself. Emma was looking back and forth between us, clearly uncertain, and I wondered where Janice had disappeared to. Lexi didn't want to bicker in front of the child, and I had a grudging respect for that resolve. I knew a lot of parents who didn't care what their kids overheard, and I'd always hated that method of parenting.

There might be no love between Lexi and me, but for Emma's sake, we had to at least pretend to get along.

Unfortunately, I wasn't sure how much getting along I could do right then, not when Lexi was insisting on being so rude to me, right there at my own breakfast table. I had a few choice words for her regarding responsibility as well. Regarding her responsibilities to Emma.

But I bit them back and stood up instead, grabbing my jacket off the back of my chair and shrugging into it.

"You've hardly eat

en your breakfast," Lexi protested, and at that moment, for the briefest second, it was as though she put aside all her other feelings towards me and was strictly focused on my well-being. I filed that away for later consideration.

For now, I just grunted. "I'll grab a bagel to take with me or something," I said when Lexi looked like she was going to protest again.

Lexi ducked her head, pushing her eggs around on her plate. "Thank you for letting us stay here," she said again, her voice barely audible.

I nodded curtly at her and strode quickly from the room, forgetting in my haste to even say goodbye to Emma. I wasn't entirely sure why that bothered me so much, but it was all I could think about during my whole drive to work.

Fortunately, once I arrived at the office, the usual chaos, compounded by the potential expansion, was there to greet me, and I didn't have a spare moment to think of anything else.