

Read Billionaire Baby Daddy online free by Claire Adams

Chapter Thirteen

Lexi

I smiled over at Emma as we colored side-by-side in one of the books that Janice had bought for the girl. “That’s a very pretty flower,” I said to Emma, pointing to the smear of red that she was coloring.

Emma shrieked with laughter. “Mama, it’s not a flower,” she said. “It’s an apple.”

“Sorry, pumpkin,” I told her. “You’re right, of course it’s an apple.” I hid my grin, coloring in the sun that she had imperiously told me to color in bright pink.

I still felt a little uneasy about this whole thing, especially the idea that Andrew wanted to keep tabs on my job search. I’d already applied to fifteen jobs that morning, but I still felt guilty taking a one-hour break to play with Emma. That wasn’t fair. I didn’t want to be one of those mothers whose kid never saw her because she was too busy with work.

For better or for worse, though, that wasn’t looking like it would ever be an issue, since I’d have to get work in order for that to be the case. And that wasn’t happening.

I was drawn from my gloomy turn of thoughts by the sound of my phone ringing. I rolled to my feet and grabbed it off my bedside table, quickly answering the call when I saw that it was Misty.

“Hey,” she said, sounding excited. “I take it that since you’re still not here at my place, things are going well between you and Andrew?”

I glanced back at Emma and then stepped out into the hall. The chances of her overhearing something that she would understand weren't very high, but all the same, I'd rather not have this conversation in front of her. The one with Andrew at the breakfast table had been enough as it was.

"Things went well enough," I said cautiously.

"Come on, I want more information than that," Misty said, and I could tell that she was rolling her eyes. "All you said in your message yesterday was that you guys were both exhausted and you were going to spend the night there with him. So, I guess you did that, but what happened next?"

I sighed. "I didn't want to tell you all the details in a message because I wanted to talk to you about this," I told her. "Andrew has agreed to let Emma and I stay here. Not forever, as he's very quick to add, but at least for a couple weeks."

"Oh, wow," Misty said. "That's good, right?"

"I feel humiliated," I told her. "I had to come crawling back to this guy, this guy who treated me so poorly, and beg him for a place to stay and food for my daughter."

"It's not like he can't afford it," Misty pointed out.

"So not the point," I said, shaking my head. "This just isn't what I want with my life."

"But this isn't about you, remember," Misty said. "This is about Emma and getting Emma what she deserves. And she deserves to grow up in a nice home, with enough to eat. You may not like the current situation, but you can make it better. This is just a step towards making things better."

“I’m trying to be positive, and I’m trying to look at things that way, but it’s difficult,” I told her. “I’m also not sure what’s going to happen long-term. I haven’t told Emma who Andrew really is, and I don’t plan to, not yet. Andrew says we can stay for a couple weeks, while he goes on a business trip, but after that, he wants us out of here. He’s talking about getting us settled in a nice place in downtown and getting Emma set up at one of the best daycares in the city.”

“That all sounds great,” Misty said. “You haven’t said no to him, have you? I know you have your pride, but all the same, that offer is too good to pass up.”

“I don’t really know what it entails, though,” I said, feeling pained. “When I first showed up, Andrew told me that if I was just here to try to squeeze money out of him, he would tie this thing up in court for years and make sure I didn’t see a cent from him. I can’t afford to have that happen. What if he gets us all set up and then decides that he’s spent all the money that he’s willing to spend on us?”

“I highly doubt he’d do that to you,” Misty said.

“But you don’t know him,” I told her. “You know about him from the tabloids and whatever, probably more than I do. You’re always good about following the gossip. But you don’t actually know him.”

“You don’t really know him either,” Misty pointed out. “You had one great night with him, and then you had what sounds like a lukewarm reception at his house. Which makes sense, given that you sprang a three-year-old daughter on him with no warning. But it sounds like he’s trying to do the right thing here. He’s at least offered you a place to stay for the time being, and then if he gets you set up in downtown, you’ll

have a month or maybe two months to figure out what you're going to do from there."

"A month or two months before I have to uproot my daughter again and move her to god-knows-where," I muttered.

"What happened to trying to be positive about things?" Misty asked, but her rebuke was teasing and good-natured.

I slid down the wall until I was sitting on the floor, hugging my knees to my chest. "It's just so hard to stay positive when things have been so bad for so long," I confessed.

"But they have to turn around eventually, don't they?" Misty asked rationally. "Maybe this is the start of a string of epic good luck, to balance out all the bad luck you've had lately."

"Maybe," I said. "Or maybe this is just going to all blow up in my face as well."

"Look," Misty said, "if I were you, what I'd be thinking about right now is, you've got a shelter, and you've got food, at least for the next month or so. That gives you plenty of time to find a job and start getting back on your feet again. Even if Andrew decides to quit paying for your apartment after that, he's probably going to work out some sort of sensible and decent child support system."

"He's got no reason to do that," I muttered.

"He's got every reason to do that," Misty countered. "He's a billionaire, Lexi, and that means that he is constantly being watched by members of the press. In fact, he was recently voted one of Seattle's hottest young bachelors. Now, imagine what would happen if the press were to find out that Andrew wasn't the unattached bachelor that he might appear to be.

He doesn't want you to take this story to the press, and that gives you leverage against him."

"I wouldn't want to do that to him, though," I said. "I wouldn't want to do that to Emma, most of all."

"Of course not," Misty said matter-of-factly. "And I know that, and you know that. But you know what? I doubt Andrew knows that about you. He might suspect that you wouldn't go to the press, but there is still that risk there."

"Sneaky," I said, smiling a little, in spite of myself.

"If nothing else, Andrew is going to want to avoid looking like a jerk," Misty said. "Trust me; he'll figure out some way to pay you a decent amount as child support."

"I hope that's true," I said. "But he wouldn't be the first billionaire to flat-out deny the fact that they had sired a child. Steve Jobs spent years denying that he had a daughter. He publicly challenged the DNA test that purportedly proved that she was his. How do I know that Andrew isn't going to be just another Steve Jobs?"

Misty was silent for a long moment, and my heart clenched at the possibility of that scenario happening. When she spoke again, though, her voice was strong. "You don't know if he's going to be just another Steve Jobs," she allowed. "But Steve Jobs did, eventually, reconcile with his daughter. You want what's best for Emma, I know. But Emma's going to do just fine, with or without her father's help. And if Andrew can eventually find it in himself to be there for Emma, maybe that's all you can ask for."

“But what do I do between now and then?” I asked exasperatedly. “Yes, Misty, it would be nice to know that he would be there for her eventually. But I need her to live long enough for that to happen, and in order for her to live long enough, I need for Andrew to not tie us up in litigation from now until eternity.”

“Maybe the opposite will be true, though,” Misty suggested. “Maybe Andrew is going to turn out to be way better than you expected. Maybe now that he knows about Emma, he’ll work on getting his life together. Stop sleeping around and start taking care of you the way that he should.”

“He’s apparently already stopped sleeping around,” I told her. “He has a girlfriend. His maid, Janice, doesn’t seem to think much of the woman.”

“Hmm,” Misty said, considering that. “Sounds like that girlfriend is probably the reason Andrew wants you out of there so soon, then. That makes sense.”

“It does,” I sighed. “But it doesn’t mean that things are going to continue to be good once Andrew moves us out of here. Out of sight and out of mind.”

“How’s Emma taking to all of it, anyway?” Misty asked.

“You know her,” I said, shaking my head. “Totally unflappable. Actually, she’s over the moon. Yesterday, she and Janice baked chocolate chip cookies, and today, Janice bought her a few coloring books and a new box of a hundred crayons. Did you know crayons even came in boxes of a hundred? How many different colors does a kid really need?”

“Sounds like you’re a little jealous,” Misty said, and I could hear a hint of amusement in her voice. Her tone softened. “I know that you want to be able to

give all of that to Emma, but for now, aren't you just happy that somehow, some way, Emma is getting to live in a nice house and eat cookies and color?"

"I am," I sighed. "I really am. It's just difficult."

"Maybe you should take a lesson from Emma," Misty suggested. "Be unflappable. Settle in, even if it's not going to be forever. Try to get along with Andrew. He can't be too horrible if he fathered a girl as sweet as Emma."

"He's just a rich jerk," I told Misty. "These rich guys hold all the power, and they know it. They don't think of anyone except themselves. From the way he talks, Andrew still doesn't think he owes anything to Emma. Or to me. Especially not to me."

Misty made a sympathetic noise. "For now, it sounds like all you can really do is try to stay calm, look for work, and hope for the best. Don't go looking for trouble where there's none to be found. If Andrew is willing to let the two of you stay, even for a little while, that's better than the position you were in yesterday."

I sighed. "The thing is, Misty, with my luck, I have to expect the worst. I need to be able to see trouble coming so that I can deal with it. If I don't expect that he's going to kick us out in a month or two, if I don't expect that he could kick us out tomorrow, I'm going to be caught flat-footed when it actually happens. And that's no way to live."

"But is this really any better?" Misty asked.

I picked at a hole that was forming in my jeans and shrugged my shoulders, even though I knew she couldn't see me do so. "I have to go," I said as I heard Emma call for me from inside the room. "I'll be by to get our things sometime soon."

“Okay,” Misty said. “Keep your chin up, girl.”

“Thanks,” I said. “Thanks for everything.”