

Read Billionaire Baby Daddy online free by Claire Adams

Chapter Seven

Lexi

I chewed on my fingernail as I slowly typed in my bank account password. I knew I didn't really want to see how much money, or how little money, remained in my account, but I also knew that I couldn't avoid looking any longer.

I glanced back towards the envelope at the side of my desk and swallowed hard.

Sure enough, my bank account was just as grim as I'd expected. I only had a hundred dollars remaining.

For a moment, I wondered how it had gotten to this. I had graduated from college with honors, and I'd netted a job shortly thereafter as an insurance analyst for Orinoco. But that had all been a few years

ago now, and in the past few years, everything had changed and gone to shit.

Well, not everything, I thought, glancing towards the living room with a small smile.

The smile vanished as I began to check my email, hoping to have heard back on one of the jobs that I'd applied to. It seemed like I'd applied to hundreds of jobs in the past week alone, but I kept receiving responses that said nothing more than, "Thank you for taking the time to apply for our position. There were many talented applicants, and unfortunately, we

don't have the time to contact each one of you personally. At this time, we don't feel that you are the right fit for this position, but we'll keep your application materials on file for future."

I swallowed hard as I scanned through the third email like that. I didn't know how many more of those rejection emails I could take, to be honest.

I stood up and went into the next room and looked down at Emma, who was peacefully asleep in her crib, sucking away at her thumb. She was the one bright spot in my life lately, the only thing that kept me going no matter how difficult things seemed.

And things had been difficult lately. I'd realized that I was pregnant not long after sleeping with Andrew. I'd gone through all the stages of denial. How could this happen, and was it possible that the baby was someone's other than his? I'd never even considered options other than raising the child, though. Regardless of how she came to be on this planet, I wanted to make sure that she would have a good life.

The problem was the job situation.

Orinoco had passed on buying out Albright. They claimed it was because of further insurance concerns, but Albright passed the blame to me, accusing me of having deliberately sabotaged the deal. They'd subsequently fired me and bad-mouthed me to every reputable company within ear's reach.

When I'd finally gotten a half-decent job offer, I'd been so far along in my pregnancy that I'd had no choice but to ask for maternity leave. My sexist boss had fired me, and although I would have liked to take them to court, they had threatened to make the process drawn out and

complicated, and I didn't have the funds to handle that with Emma on the way.

And by the time Emma was old enough that I could put her in daycare and go back to work, I'd been out of work for long enough that no one wanted to hire me.

"If only your daddy wasn't the kind of man that he is," I muttered to Emma, who slept on, oblivious to her mother's plight.

I'd thought of asking Andrew for help, but I hadn't been able to stomach the thought of it. My own father had been distant growing up, and I knew a lot of the relationship hang-ups that I still had were due to his leaving my mom and me when I was young. I sometimes thought that I would have been better off if he'd never been in my life at all. And I didn't want to have my child grow up thinking the same of her own father.

But I hadn't expected the bad luck streak to last this long.

It wasn't just about the bad luck. Sure, it was hard for me to hold down a steady job when I had Emma to look after. I was shocked to find how inflexible bosses could be when my daughter was sick, or when I was running late because there'd been a line of people waiting to check in their kids at the daycare.

And even when I had a job, minimum wage was barely enough for us to survive on. With the cost of diapers and daycare and clothes seemingly every month, there was no way I was able to save anything. With the periods of unemployment, I had rapidly eaten my way through my savings.

Which brought us to today. Ninety-seven dollars in the bank, a slumbering three-year-old, and a frazzled mother.

And the eviction notice.

My phone rang, and my heart leaped into my throat. I sent up a small prayer that it was someone calling about a job. If I could only get a job, maybe I could get my feet back under me again. I could bring the job offer to the landlord and ask him to bear with me. I didn't know how successful that would be, since he'd already been patiently waiting for me to pay rent for three months now. But maybe, just maybe he'd show me some mercy.

I felt a surge of disappointment as I consulted the caller ID, and then I felt horrible for feeling that way. It was Misty, who was still my best friend through all of this. She'd babysat Emma for free more times than I could count, and she'd taken me out for drinks a few times, too, claiming that it was worth buying my company for the night.

Still, I didn't really want to talk to her right now, with my life totally falling apart around me. I wasn't sure I could get through the call without crying.

I took a deep breath and let it out slowly. Then, I picked up the phone. "Hey, Misty."

"Hey, darling. You sound upset."

"Yeah," I sighed, going back in the other room and flopping down on the bed so that I wouldn't wake up Emma. "It's been a rough day."

"Are you working yet?"

"I wish," I said bitterly. "You know I'd tell you the moment I managed to even snag an interview."

"What's up then?" Misty asked, ever patient with my drama.

“I got an eviction notice this morning,” I told her. “They’re kicking us out at the end of the week, unless I manage to pay them all the back-money that I owe, plus the next month’s rent. I have a whopping ninety-seven bucks in my account at the moment.”

“Yikes,” Misty said. “Have you talked to your mom?”

“She’s still off at that artist’s retreat,” I told her. “Anyway, I wouldn’t really want her to know how bad things have gotten.”

Misty was silent for a moment. “Why haven’t you applied for government aid?” she asked softly.

I sighed. “Because,” I said, even though I knew that wasn’t an answer that she’d accept. I frowned, trying to find some way to elaborate. “I’m college-educated,” I finally said. “I’m able-bodied. I have every quality that should be needed to at least get a minimum wage job as a dishwasher or a, I don’t know, a babysitter or something. I guess I just keep expecting that my luck is going to turn around.”

“Oh, honey,” Misty said, sounding sad. She paused. “How about this?” she asked. “Trish moved out the other day unexpectedly, and I haven’t had the chance to fill her room yet. You could come stay with me for a little while, if you wanted. You and Emma both.”

“I’m sensing a ’but,’” I said suspiciously.

“There is a but,” Misty agreed grimly.

“If it’s applying for government aid, I can do that,” I said. “I’ll get the papers today. I promise. You’re right; I shouldn’t have ever left it this long, not when there’s Emma’s livelihood at stake. I’ve been a really bad mother.”

“You’ve been a really great mother,” Misty said soothingly. “And I know how much you want to do right for your daughter. But I don’t want you to apply for government aid.”

“What do you want then?” I asked. “I can help out around the house, or whatever you need.”

Misty continued to delay. Finally, she sighed. “I want you to promise that you’ll get in touch with Andrew.”

“You know I can’t do that,” I said, shaking my head, even though I knew she couldn’t see it through the phone line.

“I know you don’t want him involved in Emma’s life, but he should still be paying child support or something,” she said. “It’s his child, too.”

“And what if he wants to take her away from me?” I asked angrily. “He could take me to court. He could afford to do so. And if the judge looked at our cases, there’s no reason that they wouldn’t assign full custody to him. I’m unemployed and basically homeless. Clearly, I can’t cut it as a single mother.”

“Do you really think that he would want to take Emma away from you?” Misty asked. “I know you haven’t been keeping tabs on him because it’s too painful, but he’s still sleeping around and partying it up. He’s less ready for the responsibilities of a child than you are, unemployed and homeless though you may be.”

“But what if he wants something better for Emma?” I asked. “Even if he doesn’t want her in his life, he could make the state take her away from me.”

“The guy might

have been an asshole to you, but I doubt he's that cruel," Misty said, sounding exasperated.

We were both silent for a moment. I didn't know what to say in response to that.

But Misty sighed. "I know it isn't really about you being afraid to lose Emma," she said. "We both know that you would never let that happen, and we both know you're being ridiculous about this whole situation. What it really comes down to is the same thing that's been keeping you from applying for government aid."

"And what's that?" I bit out.

I knew I shouldn't get angry with her, especially not when she was just trying to help me, but as frustrated as I was with my current lot in life, I couldn't help taking out some of it on her.

"It's pride," Misty said simply. "You're too prideful to apply for government aid, and you're too prideful to ask Andrew for help."

"That's not it, and you know it," I snapped peevishly. "I mean, okay, the government aid, sure. But with Andrew, pride is the furthest thing from my mind."

"Well, whatever it is, you're going to need to get over it," Misty said matter-of-factly. "Those are my terms, like them or not. If you and Emma want to come stay with me, you're going to have to get in contact with Andrew and tell him about his daughter. If not, you're going to have to figure out something else."

I squeezed my eyes shut, feeling the tears start to come up. "I've been trying to think of something, but I can't," I told her. "I just want what's best for Emma."

“Well, maybe what’s best for Emma is having a nice trust fund set up by her daddy, even if that’s not what’s best for Mommy,” Misty said. I knew she wasn’t saying it to be cruel, and somewhere deep down, I also knew that she was correct. But that didn’t make the words hurt any less.

I sat up, swinging my legs over the edge of my bed, already contemplating how I was going to move all of my things across the city to Misty’s home. It wasn’t as though I had a car anymore. I’d been relying on the bus ever since upkeep on the car had gotten to be too much.

“You’re right,” I sighed, dropping my head and sniffing.

“It’s going to be okay,” Misty said gently. She paused. “And fortunately for you, I know a guy who has a trailer. He’ll be at your place this afternoon.”

“Thanks,” I whispered.