

Read Billionaire Baby Daddy online free by Claire Adams

Chapter Nine

Lexi

We had hardly crossed the threshold before Emma was whining, “Mama, I’m hungry.”

I gave her a distracted smile, hardly able to draw my eyes away from Andrew, who looked somehow even better than he had the last time that I’d seen him. “Emma, remember, we said we were going to go have a picnic after we had our meeting with the nice man here.”

Emma folded her arms across her chest, pouting. From the way her lower lip wobbled, I could tell that we were minutes away from waterworks. If that.

I wished I had a granola bar or something else in my purse that I could give her, but I hadn’t been able to afford granola bars or other snacks in ages now. I felt a stab of guilt and looked towards Andrew, wondering what he was making of all of this. He was as stoic as ever, though, with his arms folded across his own chest in a pose that mirrored Emma’s.

“I’m Janice. Why don’t I take her in to the kitchen?” a woman asked, bustling out of nowhere. She nodded at me. “Don’t you worry about her. I’m Andrew’s maid now, but I used to do more work where childcare was involved. Does she have any allergies?”

“No,” I said, looking between Andrew and his maid. “Honestly, are you sure? She’s just being fussy. She had a solid breakfast.” Misty had been helping me out with food in addition to housing. It made me feel a little

uncomfortable, and I'd promised to pay her back as soon as I could, but I didn't really have the option of refusing her help.

I hated handing Emma off to strangers, but I had to figure that if Andrew trusted the woman enough to work for him, then she had to be trustworthy. Besides, she seemed friendly enough. A pleasant, middle-aged woman, warmth oozing from her, in contrast to Andrew's perpetual frostiness. And I had to think that this conversation with Andrew would be a lot easier if Emma was occupied with something else while we chatted.

"Not to worry," the maid said, crouching down until she was at Emma's height. "I bet you'd like some crackers and peanut butter, wouldn't you? Just something small. We wouldn't want to spoil your lunch."

Emma nodded vigorously, and after one more glance between Andrew and the woman, I shrugged. "If it's all right with you," I said. I bit my lip. "Andrew and I have quite a bit to discuss, anyway."

"That, I'm sure, you do. Don't worry about your daughter, we'll have some crackers, and then I'll see if I can rustle up something to keep her occupied." Janice's voice was warm. She led Emma off down the hallway, making chitchat with her as they went.

I breathed out a sigh of relief, watching them retreat. "I really lucked out," I said to Andrew, looking back towards him. "Emma's never been one of those shy kids who cries every time you try to leave her at daycare. That, at least, has made this all a little easier." It was a small ray of sunshine, most days, but I'd take what I could get.

Andrew jerked his head towards the open living room, and I followed him in there, remembering the last time we'd been in there. The views were just as impressive this time, but I hardly spared them a glance,

knowing I had to stay focused. Andrew couldn't be happy to see me, and I doubted he was going to acquiesce quickly to my requests that he pay childcare.

"I'm surprised you're here, Lexi," Andrew said flatly, sitting in the chair opposite the couch rather than beside me like he had the previous time.

That was probably for the best. A little space between us would do some good. I couldn't deny how attracted I was to him still, and it didn't help that it had been a really long time since I'd hooked up with anyone. Since before Emma was born.

I rolled my eyes at him, though. "I'm surprised you even remember who I am," I told him. "You've probably slept with a dozen girls since you and I hooked up."

It was flattering, in a sense, to know that no matter how rude he'd been to me the morning after we'd slept together, I must have made some sort of an impression on him. I doubted he remembered the names of all of his conquests. I doubted he even knew the names of all of his conquests.

Andrew snorted. "A hundred girls, more like," he said. He paused, though, looking away from me for a moment, his eyes cloudy. "I remember more than you would expect." Then, he shook his head. "You said you were on the pill."

"I was," I told him. "But no birth control method is a hundred percent. The pill can only do so much. Now, if you'd been wearing a condom as well, maybe you wouldn't have fathered a child."

"You told me it was okay if I didn't want to wear a condom," he accused.

“I said I was on the pill; I didn’t say that I was ready for children!” I snapped.

“Well, I figured that if you found out you were pregnant, you’d take care of it,” Andrew said, flapping his hands at me.

“That’s our baby you’re talking about,” I reminded him.

“Says you,” he said, shrugging. “For all I know, you’ve slept with a hundred guys since you and I were together. There’s no reason to believe that it’s my kid.”

I stared at him for a minute. “Unbelievable,” I muttered.

This was worse than I’d even expected it to be. I’d expected that he’d want no part in the kid’s life. I’d expected that it would be a fight to get him to shell out any money in child support. But I hadn’t expected him to deny any sort of wrongdoing.

“As far as I’m concerned, that child could be anyone’s,” Andrew said flatly, folding his arms over his chest again.

“A paternity test wouldn’t be very difficult,” I muttered. “And yes, I am that sure that she’s yours.”

“How old is she, even?” Andrew asked. “She’s too young to have been mine.”

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sp; “She just turned three,” I told him. “She acts older, but she’s only three.” I smiled at him. “She’s really smart. Persuasive, too. I’m sure she gets that from her father. She likes to color and play make-believe, and she’s incredibly good at making friends.”

I didn't really know why I was telling all of this to him. I was sure he couldn't care less about the girl. And I still didn't really want him to know anything about her. Emma was my daughter, and I didn't want him to have any part in her life. But maybe if he was able to think of her as a child, as our child, he'd be more likely to help us out.

I should have known better than to think I could humanize her to the king of ice, though.

"If this is just some ploy of yours to squeeze money from me, I hope you realize that I could have this tied up in legal proceedings for years to come," Andrew threatened. "I can stall. I can get my lawyers on it, and you won't see a dime from me for all of that time. I don't like people trying to take advantage of me."

I stared at him for a long moment, and then, before I even knew what I was doing, I crossed the space between us and slapped him hard across the face. "How dare you," I hissed, scowling down at him. "Taking advantage of you? Is that really what you think I'm doing? I've been working my ass off trying to raise our child without any help from you, and you refuse to even consider that you might have some responsibility to her." I took a deep, shaky breath, but before I could continue, Andrew butted in.

"You keep insisting that she's our child, but you haven't given me any proof of that! I don't run a charity, and I'm not going to give handouts to every woman who comes here claiming that I've gotten them pregnant. Not that that's ever happened before. It was easy enough to get you to go to bed with me, so why should I assume that you keep your legs closed for other people?"

I glowered at him. "Want to know how I know it's your child? Because unlike you, I don't sleep around with hundreds of people. In fact, I haven't slept with anyone since you and I slept together. And before that,

well. Let's just say that all the evidence is there. You're the one who got me pregnant."

It was silent in the room.

"This righteous indignation is refreshing," he told me, surprising me. "I don't think I've ever been slapped by a woman before."

"You deserved it," I muttered petulantly, but the so-called righteous indignation was quickly disappearing, replaced by tears. "You don't know how hard it's been."

Andrew rolled his eyes. "You should have known it was going to be difficult before you had the kid," he said. "Why didn't you put her up for adoption if you didn't think that you could handle it? Or better yet, you could have gotten an abortion and saved yourself all the trouble."

"I didn't realize how hard things were going to be," I told him. "And I'm not just talking about Emma." I took a deep breath, knowing that I had to tell him the rest of it, to explain why I had really come. "I was fired from my job at Albright."

"Because you were pregnant?" Andrew asked, raising an eyebrow at me. "That's not legal."

"Not because I was pregnant." I paused. "Orinoco decided to pass on the acquisition deal. My bosses at Albright thought I, and that one-on-one insurance meeting that you and I had, had something to do with it. Or rather, they needed a scapegoat. They needed to explain to everyone at the company why those big bonuses that everyone was expecting weren't actually going to happen. And they chose me as their scapegoat. I was an easy target."

“So, they fired you,” Andrew said. “And you decided to be lazy and stay out of work so that you could take care of your daughter, rather than doing what every other working mom in your position would have done and gone out to find a new job.”

I gave an incredulous laugh. “You don’t know me at all,” I snapped. “How dare you make accusations like that.”

Andrew gave me a mild look. “Then please do tell me why things have been so difficult for you.”

“They blackballed me,” I told him. “I haven’t been able to get any work at any decent companies since I was fired by Albright, no matter how hard I try. And believe me, I’ve been trying. I’ve sent my application out to hundreds of companies since I was fired. Not just for insurance analysis positions, either. I’ve worked as a waitress, a retail seller, a secretary, and really anywhere that would give me a job. But being a single mom and holding down a full-time position is impossible.”

“Hire a nanny,” Andrew suggested. “I don’t know what you want me to tell you. There are plenty of mothers who do it every day. Maybe your attitude needs to change.”

I sobbed. “Oh, really?” I asked. I shook my head, pressing my fingertips to my eyes and trying to quit crying. I needed to hold on to that anger for a little while longer.

“Why are you here?” Andrew asked, sounding aggravated. “You want me to be part of Emma’s life? You want her to know who her father is?”

“Actually, neither of those things,” I told him. “If I had my way, you wouldn’t even know about her. And I definitely don’t want a cold asshole like you being involved in her life. But I’m desperate, and I need your help. Ever since I slept with you, it’s just been one long string of bad

luck that I can't seem to recover from. I keep expecting that the worst is over, but things never seem to turn around. You're the last person that I wanted to ask, but I need your help. Please. For Emma's sake."