

The Billionaire's Hidden Heiress

Chapter 26

Johnathon POV

Charlotte was furious when she came back from the bathroom. She stormed into the room, slamming her handbag down and casting me a frosty gaze as I shifted in my seat.

“What’s wrong?” I asked, wondering what the answer would be.

Would it be the food? Were the bathrooms dirty? The paparazzi? The service? It was hard to tell what it would be when it came to Charlotte. I was not prepared for the answer that came out of her lips as she slumped in her chair and curled her lip at me.

“Your slut of an ex-wife” she snapped “was in the bathroom and she just insulted me.”

What exactly was I supposed to do with that?

“This place is expensive, the only way she could get in here, is if somebody wealthy was her date” Charlotte continued to vent, nodding slowly “so she’s already gotten over you Johnathon” she gave me a smirk “and has started seeing other men. Who would be foolish enough to date somebody like her?” she asked incredulously “I mean, she doesn’t even compare to somebody like me.”

I took my cue “Of course not sweetheart. Why, you’re a heiress, a wealthy socialite with good standing and powerful connections. Not only that but you’re beautiful and stunning” I said, reaching over and taking her hand as she continued to fume “And she is plain and boring.”

She gave a small huff “At least you’re smart enough to know that” she drawled, giving me a sidelong glance “I want to go home Johnathon. I’ve had enough. This place is horrible. The waiter is rude, the hostess was even ruder and the food is too spicy” she complained. “I have a stomachache and I feel dirty just being here.”

“Of course darling” I soothed, standing up and grabbing my coat, while I assisted Charlotte back into hers and she grabbed her handbag “Perhaps we can go for a lovely walk before we go back to yours?” I asked her hopefully.

It was a beautiful night and the stars were twinkling brightly outside. It was perfect weather for a nightly stroll.

We slowly walked downstairs. The hostess smiled as we walked past “Have a nice night and we hope to see you again” she called out.

“Not likely” Charlotte muttered angrily underneath her breath.

I sighed. “That walk?” I prompted eagerly.

She scowled “I don’t want a walk, Johnathon. It’s been a horrible evening and all I want is to go home” she sulked “Maybe have a long bath and some wine. These heels weren’t made for walking anyway and my feet are starting to hurt” she added pouting as I tried not to let my disappointment show.

I hadn’t seen Flair as we left the restaurant and could only surmise that she had left already on her date. Charlotte slid into the limousine, buckling herself up and glancing around moodily.

“I wonder who was in that VIP room,” she said, crinkling her brow “The room was empty when we went past,” she said annoyed.

I shrugged “It doesn’t matter now, does it?” I asked.

Whoever had been in that room was long gone now. I didn’t understand her obsession with it. Was it because this was the first time she had been denied the room at a restaurant?

She looked despondent but slowly nodded. I tried not to inwardly rejoice that she had given up on the damn VIP room at the restaurant. I was having a hard time trying to hold onto what little patience I had.

“When are you getting my ring?” Charlotte asked, pinning her eyes on me as I swallowed hard, not anticipating that question.

It had come out of nowhere, but I should have expected it considering the engagement party was coming up quickly. “What ring?” I asked dumbly.

Stupid. Of course, I knew what ring she was talking about. It was hard not to. Playing dumb wasn’t going to get me anywhere. My jaw ticked.

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“My engagement ring,” Charlotte said slowly and deliberately, as though she was speaking to a small child “We are having that engagement party in the next few days and I can’t be present without a ring from you. Not to mention you had better be bloody divorced by then” she snorted “unless you want my grandfather to kill you or me to leave your pathetic a*s” she added snidely.

Ah. I tugged at my collar, feeling like it was strangling me. “I will organize the ring in due time Charlotte, will you stop micromanaging me” I barked in exasperation, causing her eyes to widen in disbelief before anger took over her expression “I will do it when I’m good and ready.”

“Like you’re dealing with the divorce papers?” she shot back, her voice accusing “I’m warning you Johnathon that you better not mess this up. I took a leap of faith, falling in love with you and deciding that you were the man I wanted to marry. This engagement party is going to have wealthy people from different parts of the world. The Deluca name is impressive, but I can’t turn up without a ring to impress them with. It simply will not do” she said heatedly.

“Do we need to have the engagement party so soon?” I asked desperately “Would it be so terrible if we delayed it?” She straightened herself upright, her eyes glacial and chilly “My grandfather has already sent out all the invitations” she practically screeched at me “based on the assumption that you actually grow a pair and divorce your good-for-nothing wife. Not to mention there’s only one ring that I want Johnathon, for my engagement ring. I don’t want just any old ring” she said, glaring at me while I fought to maintain my composure “I’m not Flair who will accept a hunk of junk” she sniffed “I have an expensive taste” she snapped.

Flair had been grateful for the ring I had proposed with, I thought blindly, remembering how she had cried over it, with fondness. She hadn’t demanded the ring be of a certain quality or color. She had been happy for it to be whatever, so long as we got married. Money had never mattered to her, let alone how much had been spent on the ring. But Charlotte was not Flair, I reminded myself and boy was I beginning to know it. Charlotte began to examine her nails as the limousine driver tactfully began to slowly drive back towards her house.

“I’m going to need to get a new manicure so that the photos look beautiful” she muttered, eyeing each fingernail carefully “Hopefully my nail person can get me in tomorrow” she added exhaling.

Why did she need a manicure for photos? I was flummoxed. Then it struck me that she meant the photo of her finger with the ring on it.

“Charlotte, I know what ring you want” I began and she looked at me, a triumphant smile on her face “But honey, what if your grandfather doesn’t want to part with it?” I asked quietly.

“He will,” she said with a snarl, her lips twisted “he has to. I’m the only girl in the family, he has no one else to pass it on to. I’ve been coveting that ring for years” she said angrily “and my mother knows it too. It’s worth far more than any ring you can find in some dumb jewelry store. You have to convince my grandfather to release it to you. I don’t care what it takes” she said, folding her arms across her chest and regarding me sulkily “I won’t accept another ring.”

She was being completely unreasonable, irrational, and illogical. Her grandfather did not strike me as the kind to be held hostage to her tears and pleas.

“But what if he doesn’t” I persisted, as she continued to glower “I mean, it was his wife and it’s been in his family for years. It’s sentimental to him. Don’t you think you should have a backup in case you can’t have the ring you want?” I tried to persuade her.

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“Why would I need a backup? Are you telling me that you don’t have the guts to ask my grandfather for that ring Johnathon?” she asked me shrewdly.

“No,” I said, my tone slightly irritated “but I don’t want you to get your hopes up and then have them dashed. Besides shouldn’t the ring be my choice as I’m the one proposing?” I asked deliberately.

She looked mutinous. Her lips tightened. “I don’t want a backup” she insisted, almost hysterical now “I want that ring. It’s mine. It’s always meant to be mine. That stubborn old man can’t find a reason to refuse to give it to me now.”

I sighed. We were getting nowhere. “Fine. I’ll approach your grandfather about the ring” I said glumly.

God forbid Charlotte considered another one. I found myself praying that the grandfather hadn’t given the ring away or decided to keep it for himself. Charlotte was already being unreasonable and I had my suspicions her behavior would only get worse if her plans to get her hands on that black diamond ring were denied her. I didn’t want to be around if that happened.

It was dark when we reached the house. I held Charlotte’s arm, leading her to the house. As we stepped inside, Charlotte looked eagerly for her grandfather, but he was nowhere to be seen, to her great disappointment.

“He never goes out,” she said irritably “he’s like a damn recluse and now when we want to talk to him, he’s bloody gone” she cursed.

Her mother was out at a charity event of some kind, so Charlotte couldn’t even ask her where her grandfather might have got to.

“We can just wait until tomorrow,” I said calmly as Charlotte gave a frustrated yell “It’s not as though that ring is going to get up and walk its way out of the house, is it?” I joked.

“Ha ha,” she said sarcastically, stomping up the stairs “Very funny Johnathon. Hilarious” she quipped “I’m going to bed. Hurry up if you’re coming” she snapped “I need my beauty sleep.”

It was going to be a long night. But the next day, things only got much, much worse.