

## What Happens In Vegas - Free Novel by C. Qualls

### Chapter 18

Shannon is ecstatic to get a solid, exclusive story. I tell her to meet with Corey for a press pass. At 9:55 Fredrick, Mrs. Harvey, and I make our way to the conference room. Shannon is seated front and center, while we file on to a platform. We are met by, I'm guessing, Mitchell. He's already bantering with the small crowd of reporters and photographers. Fredrick smoothly walks up to the microphone and the cameras flash while people are shouting over each other.

Fredrick holds up both hands, quieting the crowd. "Ladies and Gentlemen. I called this conference to clear my name as a viscous and utterly false claim is causing my stocks to fall. The report this morning did not cause me any harm, however, it does effect my company and therefore all of my over 4000 employees. First of all, I would like to call out the reporter that wrote such trash without any verification. I hope his paper will see that he is reprimanded for his lack of tact and carelessness." Fredrick extends his arm toward Mrs. Harvey. "Secondly, I would like to introduce you all to Mrs. Harvey. My secretary of six years. She and her husband have been happily married for 24 years. They will be welcoming their first grandchild around Christmastime. Congratulations, Mrs. Harvey." She steps forward and bows her head to the crowd. They all applaud her good news. Fredrick continues. "Lastly, I want to take the time to appreciate my wife. She has stood by me through this mess and supports me completely."

The crowd begins speaking over each other again. The cacophony resonates throughout the room. Multiple cameras begin flashing simultaneously. Fredrick holds up his hands again to calm the chaos. "Alright, alright. You all seem like you're dying to ask me questions." Laughter rings out through the crowd. Fredrick points to Shannon. "Miss McLachlan."

Shannon stands up. "Mr. Draven. News of your marriage hit the headlines only a few weeks ago. Are you hiding this mythical wife somewhere?" The crowd busts out in laughter once again. Fredrick genuinely smiles.

"She is not a myth. I am married and I am not hiding her. I'm very proud to be married to my wife. She is an amazing person and she has enriched my life." Shannon smirks at me as she takes her seat. I turn away from the crowd as slyly as possible to wipe the tears that have slipped from my eyes because of Fredrick's words. Fredrick notices me. Of course he does, he notices

everything. He pulls the handkerchief from his pocket and discreetly hands it to me. I wipe my eyes and smile. He points to another reporter. "Yes Mr. Pope."

A balding man in a navy blue suit stands up. "Mr. Draven are you implying that you are not having an affair, just by simply introducing us to your secretary?"

Fredrick smirks. "I am implying nothing. I am flat out refuting the accusation." Fredrick points to a busty blond woman in a skirt suit. "Ms. Reginald."

She stands up with a sultry look on her face. "Mr. Draven, you were reportedly engaged to Ms. Cavanagh, the daughter of your ex-partner, for two years. Why the sudden change of events? And were you cheating on her behind her back?"

Fredrick does not hold back. "Yes, Ms. Reginald, I was engaged to Ms. Cavanagh. I saw it as an opportunity for a business deal, nothing more. She was aware of my standpoint. I never cared for her in any other light. As you mentioned, Mr. Baker is my EX-partner. He is now serving a life sentence for the murder of my father. Tell me, would you want to be married to the daughter of your fathers murderer? My wife and I were married on a whim in Vegas, and we could not be happier." Fredrick points to a younger, sloppily dressed man. "Mr. Davis."

He stands and looks at me with a lewd gaze. "Mr. Draven. Can you tell us who the woman beside you is? She has been seen by your side countless times."

Fredrick keeps his poker face and doesn't even turn around. "She is my new assistant, she has been working in tandem with me and Mrs. Harvey for 4 months. My previous assistant left the company for family reasons." Fredrick Points out a cute, freckled brunette. "Mrs. Springfield."

She stands up. "Mr. Draven it is rumored that your spontaneous marriage is what lead to Mr. Baker murdering your father. Do you feel responsible for your fathers death in any way?"

Fredrick's hand goes to the back of his neck, then back onto the lectern. "No. I am not responsible for the choices made by other people. I had intended to buy Mr. Baker out since I took over the business from my father. I felt he was shady and I did not trust him. I did succeed in securing a majority of his shares. He gambled the remainder of his shares away in a poker game, which in turn lead to my father's murder. This event was recorded and witnessed by

several people.” Fredrick has a habit of alternating from woman to man in his questioning. I bet he points to a man next. I smile to myself when Fredrick points to a larger gentleman. “Mr. Carver.”

The man stands. “Mr. Draven, can you tell us who your wife is? The public is dying to know.”

Fredrick nods. “Of course. Mrs. Draven, would you like to say hello?” The flashes begin going off again and the crowd is louder than before. Fredrick turns to look at me. He gives me his charming, daring smirk. He takes my hand and I step up beside him. His arm wraps around my waist, pulling me closer. He speaks into the microphone. “Ladies and gentlemen, may I present Mrs. Julia Draven.”

That wasn’t as scary as I thought it would be. The reporters continue to ask questions over each other, but Fredrick leads me out of the room, leaving Mitchell to handle the rest. I’m so relieved our secret is out. We make it to the top floor where everyone is gossiping. No one notices us. Fredrick clears his throat. Everyone goes silent and hustles back to their seats. “Come on.” He takes my hand and pulls me into his office. He turns on the television, it’s already set on the stock market channel. He is noticeably relieved that his stocks are already going back up.

Mrs. Harvey buzzes through the phone, “Mr. Draven. Ms. McLachlan is here to interview you.”

He presses the button on the phone. “Send her in.”

I step toward the door. “I should get back to work.”

He holds onto my hand, stopping me from leaving. “I’m sure she’ll have some questions for you too.” He kisses me then guides me to my usual place on the sofa. A knock sounds at the door. “Enter.”

Shannon smiles at me from ear to ear. “Bitch, I love you!”

I giggle as she tackles me back onto the sofa. “Shannon. Go easy on me. Pregnant, remember.”

She pulls me back up. “Sorry little one. Auntie Shan just got a little excited to see mommy.” She says as she pats my tummy. Fredrick is at his desk enjoying the show. Shannon looks over to Fredrick. “Hey, boss man. Thanks

for the inside scoop.” He nods as she pulls out her phone and turns on the voice recorder. “Mr. Draven, Mrs. Draven, I would like to ask a few follow up questions regarding your relationship. Do you have any objections?”

Fredrick speaks up. “None. Please continue.”

She already has a list of questions written down. “Okay. How long have the two of you been together?”

She already knows the whole story, but Fredrick answers anyway. “As I stated in the press conference, we were married on a whim in Las Vegas. That was a month ago.”

She makes a check mark on her paper pad and moves on to the next question. “Mr. Draven. Mrs. Draven is your assistant. Are you comfortable mixing work with your personal life?”

Fredrick smirks his sexy half smile as if he finds something amusing. “Yes.” That’s it?

Shannon rolls her eyes. “Would you please elaborate?”

Fredrick smiles. He’s totally messing with her. “Julia completed her internship as my assistant. She and I were attracted to each other from the very beginning. She is very professional and remains so.”

She turns to my direction. “Mrs. Draven. Do you feel awkward at all working for your husband?”

I shake my head. “No. I did at first, but not anymore. I’m happy to be by his side, helping him.”

She raises her eyebrow. “What changed?”

I have to think about that. I take a deep breath and bite my lip. “Familiarity, I think. Having worked for Fredrick, I understood his habits and personality. When we got married, I was able to learn who he is. Yes he’s the boss, but he’s also a person.”

Fredrick’s eyes are smoldering. I look away from him and keep my focus on Shannon. “Mr. Draven. You said at the press conference that marrying Ms. Cavanagh was a business decision, but then you also claimed that Mr. Baker

is shady and you did not trust him. Why the opposition? And please be thorough.”

Fredrick stands up from his desk and comes to sit on the coffee table in front of me. He sandwiches my legs in his. He takes my hand. “Please understand, Ms. McLachlan, Julia has made an impression on me. Because of her, I believe I have become a better person. Before her, I only cared about business. My goal with Ms. Cavanagh was acquiring shares and expelling her father from the company. I planned to be married to her for only a short time, after which we would divorce and she would receive shares as compensation. She was aware of my intentions. I made myself perfectly clear with her. She agreed because my lifestyle suited her.”

Shannon scoffs, giving Fredrick the stink eye. “Wow! Fredrick you’re a real piece of work. How long do you plan on stringing Jules along before you dump her too?”

I clear my throat. “Shannon, that’s not...”

Shannon cuts me off. “Oh come on, Jules.” I quickly turn off the recording, I know I’m in for a tongue lashing. “Do you really expect me to believe this shit? What happens when the year is up, huh? You guys have a baby to think about now. Is he just going to dump you and the kid with a nice payoff and call it business too? Think Jules! You think mister rich man here is going to change?”

Fredrick takes one of my hands in his. He strokes my lip with his thumb. “I’m going to let you two talk.” He kisses my lips and stands up. He solemnly nods to Shannon. “Ms. McLachlan.” He grabs his empty coffee mug, gives me a wink, and leaves his office.

I shake my head. My jaw flexes in frustration. I can’t believe her. “Shannon, what the hell was that? I can’t believe you would say such a thing. He’s more happy about the baby than I am, and I’m stoked! He wasn’t lying when he said we’re happy.”

Shannon crosses her arms, shaking her head. “Jules, you told me yourself you agreed to this charade.”

I take her hand. “I did agree to that. But things are different now. We aren’t going to split up after a year. He’s so good to me, he treats me like a princess. No, more like his queen. Shan, he wants me.”

Shannon rolls her eyes. “Those are just words. Can’t you see he’s using you to get his way?”

I put my hand up to stop her from speaking. “It doesn’t matter! Even if he’s using me, which I know he’s not, I would let him.” I take a deep breath. “I’m in love with him.”

Shannon looks at me with sorrowful eyes. “I knew this was going to happen. Jules if you’re happy I’m happy for you, but I still worry. I mean does he love you back?”

Oof. I can’t answer that honestly. “I don’t know if he knows that yet. The way he is with me makes me think that he does.”

She raises her eyebrow at me. “What the hell does that mean? You don’t know if he knows...”

I shake my head. “I can’t explain it. It’s like he wants to love me, but he doesn’t know what it truly means to love. I do know he wants me to love him. And I do. I just haven’t told him yet. I’m not going to be the one that says it first.” I need a change of subject. This conversation is too much. “How are you and Corey getting along? I can’t believe you kept me in the dark on that.”

Shannon scoffs. “Hello Mrs. by the way I’m married, but let me wait a week before I introduce you to my billionaire dreamboat husband.”

I laugh. “I told you about the baby right away. Besides, I introduced you to Corey.”

She rolls her eyes. “Yeah, okay. Corey and I... we’re good. I’ve never met anyone as straight forward as him. He’s definitely a reliable guy.”

I wave my hand for her to continue. “But?”

She takes a deep breath. “I don’t know if I can stay with him. He’s an amazing guy, but he’s marriage material. I’m not sure if I want to settle down already, ya know. I want to experience life a little; party, have fun, maybe even travel. He did invite me to the gala coming up.” She rests her head on my shoulder, then continues. “Jules I don’t know what to do. I really like him. He treats me like a queen, as you put it.”

I lay my head on top of hers. “Why not enjoy it for a while? He can do those things with you, or at least be there while you do stupid things. And we’re going to have to go shopping soon.”

Shannon laughs. “Deal. Sorry about earlier. I hope things work out for you two, honestly. You are a really cute couple. After my article, you’ll be the envy of every woman in America.” We both laugh.

Shannon packs up her things and I escort her to the elevator. Fredrick is at my desk, with his feet up, drinking his coffee. He smiles when he sees me. “Everything good now?”

I nod my head. “We’re fine. She just worries about me. That’s all that was.”

He hmphs. “I don’t think she likes me very much.” I lean on my desk.

“She just doesn’t know you. She’s always been like that to guys I’ve dated. In fact I think she’s like that with guys she’s dated too.”

Fredrick laughs then stands up, offering me my chair. “Well, Mrs. Draven. This has certainly been an eventful morning.” I giggle at his understatement. He kisses my cheek. “I’m going to grab another coffee. I believe your tea is cold. Would you like another?”

I look at the full mug sitting at the edge of my desk. I had completely forgotten about it. “I don’t need another one. But if you could just warm it up, I would appreciate it.” He grabs my mug and makes his way to the break room.

“I bet she slept with him just to get her position. What a slut.”

“Can you believe all this time it was her he married. The lucky bitch.”

“Yeah right, lucky. She must’ve tricked him somehow. Maybe by spreading her legs for him.”

“She hasn’t even been here very long.”

“I bet she whored herself out from day one. How else could an intern get on his good graces.”

“I never had any clue they were together. She always seems so professional.”

“Professional? You mean as in street corner professional.”

The office gossip is beginning to turn my stomach. I know the truth and so does Fredrick. I know the news will try to put me in a bad light, but I didn't think my co workers would be so nasty. Actually it sounds like only one is being catty. I try not to listen, but her words are not exactly quiet.

"She must be amazing in bed to snag him out of no where. She had to have thrown herself at him."

"It doesn't matter now. They're married, not having an affair."

"Well if she can throw herself in front of him, why can't I? I'm way better looking than her. I definitely have a better body than her fat ass. I wonder if he likes it rough."

Fredrick sets my mug down and walks past me. "Is there a problem?"

My catty co-worker startles, then turns around to face him. "No, Mr. Draven. I was actually thinking, if you're not busy later. You and I could find a quiet place to talk."

He has a look of fury in his eyes, but his body is still relaxed. "I'm not interested in women with questionable morals. I am a very busy man, I actually work here. Unlike you. Pack your things and leave my building. Mrs. Draven is not only your superior, but she is my wife. You must have some nerve. How dare you have the audacity to insult her and then insult me. My company needs employees with brainpower and integrity. You have neither. 15 minutes." My mouth hits the floor. I am shocked by what just transpired. Fredrick pulls me from my chair and plants a deep, passionate kiss on my lips. "I'm sorry you had to listen to such disrespect from such a trashy woman. You will not be insulted again, my beautiful wife." He kisses me again before walking back into his office.

The whole floor has gone quiet, while heads turn to look at me. Mrs. Harvey stands up and claps her hands twice. "What are you lot staring at? I'm sure you all have work to do. Get busy." I give Mrs. Harvey a thank you smile. She winks then sits back at her desk, returning to her work. Ivan and Peter soon exit the elevator and walk up to my ex-coworkers desk. They oversee her as she finishes packing up. She gives me a death glare, but I just bite my lip to keep from smiling. I sip my peppermint tea that my husband so sweetly warmed up for me. My stomach begins to settle, and I shift my attention back to my work



