

## Chapter 56 A Good Match

### Moana

Just as Sophia was going to ask if I was going to dance, her eyes caught something behind me and her face lit up. “Kelly!” she exclaimed, waving over my shoulder. “How nice to see you!”

I felt myself tense, as did Ella, who was still holding my hand. I turned around slowly to see Kelly approaching. I hadn’t noticed before from where I stood and because she was standing behind the podium, but her dress was inappropriately tight and low cut for a charity gala, and she appeared to already be tipsy as she walked up to us. She brushed right past me, as if I wasn’t even there, and walked straight up to Sophia.

“Thank you so much for your donation,” Sophia said, smiling widely and holding her hand out for Kelly to shake.

Kelly gave Sophia’s hand a half-hearted — and almost disgusted — squeeze and swirled the bubbly champagne around in her glass. “It’s my pleasure,” she said.

I was still surprised that Kelly, of all people, would donate any money at all to a foundation for human orphanages, but perhaps she really wasn’t as bad as I had originally thought. “That’s very kind of you,” I said.

Kelly looked over at me as though I hadn’t been standing there at all, and as though she only noticed me when I finally spoke. “Oh, Moana,” she

said, flicking a strand of blonde hair over her thin shoulder. “I didn’t know you were here... You know Sophia?”

I nodded, but before I could say anything, Ella suddenly spoke up. “Moana grew up at the orphanage!” she exclaimed excitedly, unaware of the implications of revealing something like that. Kelly’s eyes immediately narrowed, and as she looked at me, her gaze felt as sharp as a dagger.

“Is that so?” Kelly asked. As she looked at me, I sensed a hint of mocking humor behind her icy eyes.

“It is,” I said, choosing to not let her nasty demeanor take hold of me as I pushed my shoulders back proudly. “Sophia was, and still is, an angel for caring for children as much as she does.”

Kelly paused for a long, uncomfortable moment. “It’s funny,” she said, licking her lips and taking a sip of her champagne, her eyes still fixed on me over the top of the glass, “I actually didn’t know that at all when I originally donated to my close friend’s foundation.”

I supposed that was why she donated so much; if she had known that Oceanside Orphanage was the orphanage that I grew up in, I was certain that she wouldn’t have donated anything at all.

Then, as though a switch had been flipped, she perked up when she saw Edrick walk across the dance floor ahead of us. “Well, I’m going to dance,” she said, her voice breathy. “It was a pleasure seeing you both.” I watched, unconvinced by her platitudes, as she sauntered over to Edrick.

They spoke for a minute, then walked over to the dance floor and pressed their bodies together closely. Knowing now that I was carrying Edrick’s child in my belly, I felt even more jealous than I had on the day that I first met Kelly — but I had to push those feelings down, because as both Edrick and Selina said, I was just the nanny. I wasn’t a romantic option for him, and I likely never would be.

Sophia, however, seemed to have a different opinion of Kelly — one that was likely blinded by her large donation.

“Hm,” she said, watching them dance. “They seem to be a good match, don’t they?”

I felt an ache in my chest at Sophia’s words. Suddenly, as though she shared my mind, Ella spoke up again. “No way!” she said, folding her arms. “They are not a good match!”

Even though I agreed with Ella, Sophia and I couldn’t help but laugh a bit at the little girl’s brutal honesty.

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Sophia and I eventually parted ways, as Ella continuously insisted on tugging me closer and closer to the dessert table. With a promise to say goodbye before we left, I finally relented and let Ella pick something out to eat — and I couldn’t resist getting something for myself, too.

As we were looking for a place to sit, we heard a familiar voice calling Ella’s name and looked up to see Verona sitting at a table nearby, beckoning for Ella. Ella squealed excitedly and ran over to her grandmother, leaving me trailing behind with our plates of food.

“Hello, darling,” Verona said, kissing Ella on both cheeks as I approached. “My, look at your little green dress. You’re as cute as a button.” She looked up at me then, and cast me a warm smile. “Enjoying the gala, Moana?”

I nodded, setting Ella’s plate down in front of her. Verona gestured for me to take the open chair on the other side of Ella, which I did, and tucked a napkin into the front of Ella’s dress to keep her from getting cake icing all over herself.

“I would dance,” Verona said, “but it seems that my husband is nowhere to be found. And my son already has a dance partner.”

I glanced over at the dance floor to see Edrick and Kelly dancing closely to the rhythm of the music. He had told me before that she was just a friend, but that was always the most common excuse in these sorts of situations with men and women, so I couldn’t be fully sure. The way that he gazed down at her gave me a slight pang in my chest, but I ignored it and smiled back at Verona.

“Still,” she continued, breaking my train of thought, “I like your company. And yours, too, little Miss Ella.” With a smile, she reached out and pinched Ella’s cheek, which was full of cake. I was certain that I would be dealing with a sugar high from the little girl later.

The older woman’s kind words were a welcome change from her son’s coldness at home, but I couldn’t stop thinking about what she had just said. It brought me back to the night that he laid me down on the couch, and how he fell asleep in the armchair next to me. After that, he had said that he couldn’t control himself around me... I still hadn’t gotten an explanation as to what that meant exactly, although I was fairly sure that it was in reference to our lustful history together.

I spent the next few minutes sitting with Verona and chatting while Ella enjoyed her cake. It was a welcome distraction from the discomfort of being the only human at the party.

My nerves returned, however, when Edrick suddenly appeared beside the table. When I looked up, he was staring down at me with those icy gray eyes I had become so familiar with.

“Moana,” he said, gesturing toward the bar, “should I get you a drink?”

I froze. I felt my face get hot as my eyes flickered down to my glass of water. “No thank you,” I replied, hoping that I didn’t sound suspicious. “I’m not drinking tonight.”