

## Chapter 57 Social Climber

Edrick

Throughout the gala, I tried not to look too long at the way Moana's body looked in her dress — but there was also something else that caught my eye and held my attention, even while I was busy schmoozing with other wealthy socialites to get donations for the foundation.

Her belly, which was always slim with nice curves at the waist, was a little bit rounder.

I quickly looked away as her eyes met mine, chalking it up in my head to the simple monthly fluctuations in a woman's body; besides, if she gained a little weight, maybe it was good for her. As far as I was aware, she had next to no money before she began working for me, so maybe she didn't get enough to eat and now her body was settling into a healthier weight.

Soon, however, I had to push aside these thoughts as it was time to give my speech. Kelly, who made a generously large donation prior to the gala, made a speech as well, followed by Sophia, who said a few words of gratitude. When the speeches were finished, there was a champagne toast followed by a dance portion of the event.

I stood off to the side, watching as the couples that had come together — many of them married — headed toward the dance floor. I wasn't planning on dancing, but when Kelly scurried up to me with a particular look on her pointed face, I knew what was coming.

“I think you owe me a dance after what happened at that family banquet,” she said, shooting me a sultry look as she sauntered up to me. “What do you say?”

“Ah, no,” I said, shaking my head. “I really should be mingling.”

“Do you think that you’ll get any extra donations if you clearly refuse a dance from a lady?” she asked, placing her hands on her hips. I noticed that she was wearing an almost inappropriately tight and low-cut dress, and seemed to be wearing a brand new diamond necklace. Kelly had always been the type to obsess over fashion, but as we grew up together, it became more and more obvious to me at events such as these that she was dressing particularly slutty, for lack of a better word, to try and get my attention — even though I told her repeatedly that we could only ever be friends.

I sighed, shutting my eyes for a moment, before finally relenting and holding out my arm for her to take. Kelly grinned as we made our way to the dance floor, then pressed her body uncomfortably close to mine when we began to dance.

“So,” Kelly said, flicking her hair over her shoulder, “you didn’t tell me that this orphanage was the same one that your nanny grew up in.”

I shrugged. “Is there a problem with that?”

Kelly scoffed. “No, not at all,” she said, her voice sounding overtly melancholy. “It’s just...”

“She knows the director of the orphanage,” I interjected. “It’s just business. It’s better for PR.”

“Oh.” Kelly glanced over her shoulder at Moana, who was speaking with Sophia. She had a glass of water in her hand, rather than champagne, which I found a bit odd, and also seemed to be doing that thing that she had been doing quite frequently lately...

Holding her stomach.

Kelly, noticing this, looked at me with a sly smirk. “She’s gained a little weight, no?” she asked. “What are you feeding her?”

Seeing Moana drinking water and holding her belly like that, and thinking about her sudden bouts of nausea lately, made me wonder already. Meanwhile, Kelly’s comment only added to my suspicions. Was Moana pregnant?

It couldn’t possibly be mine. I was always careful, and we had had our one night stand over a month ago. Surely, it was someone else’s.

I thought, then, back to Moana’s secret fling with none other than my own brother. They had been running around together at the night of the family banquet, and possibly even before that since they apparently knew each other through their volunteer work at the orphanage. Was it his?

The dance came to an end, and I couldn’t contain my curiosity any further. Kelly made her way across the dance floor to carouse with one of her friends, but I stood there for several moments, still as a statue, as I watched Moana. She was now sitting with my mother. Finally, Moana’s eyes met mine, and I straightened my tie before walking over to her.

“Ah, there you are,” my mother said, reaching out to squeeze my hand as I approached. “I just heard that Sophia, the director from the orphanage, was looking for you.” I glanced over the crowd, breaking my gaze from Moana temporarily, to see Sophia lock eyes with me and wave for me to come over.

Sighing, I straightened my tie again to go and talk to her. My investigation of Moana’s strange behavior would have to be put on hold. I made my way over to Sophia, who beamed at me brightly.

“Edrick, I really can’t thank you enough for what you’re doing for the orphanage,” she said. “Really. The children are so excited, and they wanted to give you this.” She pulled a small envelope out of her purse and handed it to me.

Furrowing my brow, I opened the envelope and pulled out a small, handmade card. It was only a single piece of paper folded over with crayon stick figures drawn on it, and on the outside, it read “Thank You, Mr. Morgan!” while inside was a series of children’s names, all also written in crayon — some of the letters were backwards, and the warm thank-you’s were often misspelled.

For a moment, I forgot all about my strife with Moana as I looked down at the card and imagined each of the children taking extreme care to write their names and their little messages, and although I would never admit it to anyone, I was touched.

I glanced up at Sophia then, who was still beaming at me, but something else caught my eye over her shoulder as I noticed Moana. Her red hair cascaded down her back, and the black dress she wore hugs her curves, although not nearly as perfectly as the sky blue dress she wore the other day at the farmers’ market...

I blinked, refocusing my eyes on Sophia as I pushed Moana’s appearance out of my mind. I couldn’t be looking at her like this. It wasn’t healthy or professional.

“Thank you,” I said to Sophia, tucking the card into the inner pocket of my suit jacket. “Enjoy the gala.”

Finally, after being stopped by a few other potential donors, I made my way back to where my mother sat with Moana.

“Can I get either of you a drink?” I asked.

My mother shook her head. Moana froze for a moment, her freckled cheeks turning a slight tinge of red before she shook her head and averted her eyes. “No thank you,” she said. “I’m not drinking tonight.”

I frowned. There was one thing that is almost certain: Moana was pregnant, and it was likely my brother’s baby.

Did she really think she can hide that from me?