

## AwardsCeremony

Isha

I walked into the grand ballroom on Paul's arm at The Harper Hotel. The place was beautiful. Everything was cream, gold and ivory. There was a huge crystal chandelier in the middle of the ballroom. A stage was erected on one side of the room. The oor gleamed, there were round tables with ten chairs to a table, covered in cream and ivory cloth, with a gold H embroidered in the middle of the fabric. A nice-sized dance oor on the right side of the room. The place already had a bunch of people talking and making connections.

"You never told me what you did for a living?"

"Well, it's a secret, my husband doesn't even know. He didn't want me working, he said he didn't want it to look like he couldn't take care of his wife. But anyway, I am a writer."

"Oh? Have you written anything that I might have read?"

"Not unless you like ready steamy romance books."

Paul's eyes widened and I giggled.

"You are a surprise, Mrs. Baxter."

"Please, call me Isha. If you want to read one of my stories, here's my card. I write under the pen name Isla Gold."

I took out a business card that had Isla Gold on it with a QR code to scan for the site.

"And what are your stories about?" he asked.

"Oh, I have an MC series where the bikers of the MC are completely obsessed with their women. I also have a werewolf series and a Polyamory series."

"You become more and more interesting. I will denitely check out your stories. Can I have a few more cards? I know my secretary and some of the women in my oce talk about their spicy novels all the time."

I smiled and thanked him and gladly gave him ten more cards. I always had at least a handful on me, just for occasions like this. Plus, I like to leave my cards in random places. Whether they get used or thrown away, I know I put myself out there and, by the way my sales are going, it's working. I'll probably even drop a few here too.

Paul and I walked through the room. I had lost sight of Jason and Madilyn, and although I was upset at him ditching me, Paul was making up for it with his witty banter, and he introduced me to a lot of inuential people. Even a couple of publishers were interested in reading what I'd written, and so I gave them cards.

"Paul," I heard a deep masculine voice call out.

Paul and I turned to the newcomer and I wanted to moan at the tall drink of water that was coming towards us. I felt my body get hot, and I was sure I was blushing. The man's eyes were a beautiful amber brown, almost honey-colored. He had sandy blonde hair with a very trimmed beard. He was extremely tall. Probably the tallest man in this room, his tux tted him like it was tailor-made for him. Denitely not rented. His body, I could tell, was muscular but not bulky. He had high cheekbones and a chiseled jaw, and his lips were full and kissable. I had to bring my hand to my mouth to make sure I wasn't drooling.

"Dawson, hello, it's been a while. What brings you here tonight?"

"Well, I've opened a security branch here in Denver. I got tired of Las Vegas, so I promoted two of my men, and they are running it for me. My realtor invited me. He's up for some award tonight. I thought I'd take this opportunity to network."

"I'm from Las Vegas," I blurted out. Real smooth Isha.

"Isha Baxter, this is Dawson Becks. He is CEO of Becks Security. I hire him for all my security needs. In fact, I was going to call you to set up a consultation for my new house here in Colorado. I bought a place in Yearling about thirty minutes from here."

"That's excellent. We just moved here to Denver ourselves. I brought Ford, Mic and Davis with me. Made them partners. Isha, it's lovely to meet you," he said.

"It's lovely to meet you too."

"You said you're from Las Vegas?"

"Born and raised, moved to Colorado when I was twenty, needed to get away from family pressure and live my life a little."

"And how is that going for you?"

"Professionally, I am doing something I love," I said, leaving it there.

"Well, that's all we can hope for in our professional life, is doing something we love, right? Take me, for instance. I'm a former Navy SEAL, and I went with what I knew and loved and opened a security rm and hired my best friends, who are also former Navy SEALs."

I nodded, smiling at him like a fool I'm sure. He was just so good-looking. The lights dimmed and then brightened.

Paul and I said goodbye to Dawson, and we found our seats with Madilyn and Jason, who were already sitting at the table. I sat next to Jason. He looked at me sheepishly. I hadn't seen him since he had gotten out of the limo over an hour ago. Why did he even bring me if he was just going to ignore me?

To my surprise, Dawson Becks sat with us and to his right was Aaron Grayson. I looked at Jason and he glared at Aaron. Aaron beamed at him and winked. I had to turn my head to hide my smile. There was another agent at our table with her husband who world in Yearling, and then two women who said they were here networking.

They called the nominees to the stage, eight people in total that included Jason. The emcee went through the line of people, saying their names, which real estate business they worked for and the accolades that had been accomplished over the year. Everyone was humble and polite. They all smiled towards the crowd. Five out of the eight got plaques for various awards, like most sales in a month's time, or most recommended agent. And one got a plaque for Rookie of the year. One by one, they left the stage until there were three people left.

"In third place is Theresa Holms, who sold thirty-six residential homes, twelve commercial buildings, and three plots of land this year. Let's give a round of applause for Theresa."

I clapped for her, that was a great accomplishment. Her company should be proud to have her. I watched her go to her seat and she looked like she was being praised by the people around her. Good for her.

I looked back at the stage. Jason and Aaron were standing a little far apart, so the emcee stood between them.

"This is so exciting ladies and gentlemen. Not only will the winner of tonight's event have the title of being Real Estate Agent of the Year, but they will win a fty-thousand-dollar grand prize and keys to a brand-new 2025 Ford Bronco."

We all clapped. Aaron looked excited, Jason looked like he needed to use the bathroom. I could tell he was nervous. He really wanted this award, and I wanted it for him. Maybe after tonight things will change. Maybe I've been overreacting with Madilyn, seeing things that weren't really there? Or maybe I was just deluding myself, because I loved him.

"Jason and Aaron are the top two realtors in the state of Colorado. Both have sold fty-two houses and eighteen commercial buildings, but only one of you sold the most plots of land. Ladies and gentlemen, your 2025 Real Estate Agent of the Year for the great state of Colorado, with a total of six plots of land and a ranch of twenty acres, Jason Baxter."

Everyone at our table stood and clapped for him. He beamed on stage, holding up his trophy and his brand-new car keys. The emcee handed him a white envelope that probably had the fty-thousand dollar check in it. Aaron was handed a second place trophy. He seemed genuinely happy for Jason and they shook hands.

When they got back to our table, I went to give him a hug and kiss but Madilyn practically pushed me out of the way and jumped into his arms.

"I told you you would win. Daddy buying that ranch pushed you over the edge."

I stood there, stunned. My husband was holding another woman in his arms right in front of me. She had kissed him and he did not push her away. No, when she pulled back he was smiling. I looked at Paul. He was fuming. I looked around the table wondering who else was watching this debacle. Dawson was listening to Aaron frantically whisper in his ear. His eyes looked at me and I just knew Aaron was telling him that I was Jason's wife. The four other people that had been at our table, the one that was an agent, knew I was Jason's wife. She was one of the real estate agents in Yearling. The other two women were oblivious to the drama that was about to unfold.

Jason nally looked at me and his smile dimmed. Paul, not about to stand there another moment, grabbed Madilyn by her arm and pulled her away from Jason.

"Isha, I had a lovely time getting to know you tonight. I am sorry," he said, as he dragged his protesting daughter away.

"Isha, can we speak in the hall for a minute," Jason asked.

I nodded numbly, I grabbed my clutch, and looked around the table. Dawson's jaw was clenched, Aaron looked like he wanted to jump over the table and pummel Jason, and everyone else looked either sympathetic or confused.

I followed Jason out into the hall.

When he turned, he had the thick white envelope in his hand.

"Isha, I love you, I really do, but our marriage isn't working anymore. I've realized you have nothing to offer me. I work and work, and you just stay home and complain. Madilyn, she's got connections I could really use to my advantage to really grow my business. But in order for me to do that, I need to be with her. She deserves to be married to someone that could provide for her the way she's used to. In turn, she will introduce me to powerful people with lots of money that will need someone to nd their forever homes, or second or third homes. Land that they can build on, and that's going to make me rich. I'm sorry, it's come to this. You've been a good wife, but I need someone that can help with my career."

He then handed me the envelope. I just stood there in utter shock. He looked at me with some guilt and then just turned and walked away.

What just happened? I knew I was right. He was having an affair. I wasn't just being delusional. My vision blurred and I felt my world tilt. Strong arms came around me and I looked up. Dawson Becks held me.

"You're extremely pale, we need to get you somewhere where you can lie down. Can I give you a lift home?"

I just looked at him. What was best right now, to have a full-on breakdown in the middle of a beautiful hotel or have a strange beautiful man take me home?

"Home please," I said. Then I gave him my clutch and I passed out.