

The Unwanted Wife: Revenge After Divorce

Chapter 017

AMELIA

I was bored out of my mind. Leaving with Damian was like living alone. I could barely notice his presence, and even when I did, all I received was a grunt. He was just impossible to bond with.

I left my room for like the tenth time that morning and wandered around the mansion. With nothing to do and nowhere to go, the only option left was to laze about the house, sleeping or eating perhaps and doing absolutely nothing, which I most definitely did not intend to do.

And so, at a few minutes past noon, I took a stroll on the streets close to where I lived. I absorbed the sound of traffic and the sight of people hurrying, going about their business.

The sun was high in the sky but not overly hot. I had decided not to take the car because staying in its air-conditioned comfort sort of separated me from the rest of the world, and today, I craved that feeling of inclusivity more than anything else.

And then I spotted a small cafe. There was something quaint about it, something that appealed to me. Perhaps it was the wooden decor, so simple yet so natural looking among the rather garish and sophisticated looking eateries around. I crossed the street and walked in. A bell tinkled musically as I pushed the door open. I stepped at once into its cool interior. Peasant smells drifted to my nostrils: air freshener, ground coffee, freshly baked bread, and about a dozen different kinds of food that made my mouth water.

As expected, the cafe's atmosphere was cozy and intimate. In the background, from hidden speakers, a sweet, soulful voice crooned a melody. I walked to an empty chair and took a seat. The place was a beehive of activity. I couldn't catch the eye of any waiter or waitress. They were all busy attending to customers. I didn't mind much, though. I was content to get out of the sun and rest my legs for a bit. I admired the beautiful arrangement of fresh flowers on the table when I heard someone clear his throat. I turned to see a man standing beside me. He was squat, balding, and grey-haired but had a disarming smile that made me smile too.

"Good day, ma'am," he said in a quiet, pleasing voice. "I just spotted you. I hope we haven't kept you waiting for long."

"No. Not long. I just got here a couple of minutes ago."

"Good. What can I get you?"

I sniffed the air. "I smell bread. It smells yummy. Can I have some with some chicken soup?"

His smile thinned a little. "Chicken soup, we have, but bread we don't. We sold the last of it early this morning. I do the baking, but-" He sighed. "I haven't had time to do that today. I had to help me attend to the customers."

"Oh. It's the rush hour?"

He shook his head. "It's always rush hour around here. A customer leaves, two more take his place, and it's all me and my staff can do to keep up."

"You're the owner?"

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The little man puffed up his chest proudly and pointed to the tag neatly pinned on his shirt, which I had missed. It read Will Hughes, manager. "That I am."

"It's a nice place you got here, Mr Hughes."

"Oh, please call me Will. Just Will, and thank you. I think it's pretty nice, too; I think I need to do something about my workforce." Suddenly, he frowned and gave me an apologetic look. "Silly me, I'm so sorry. You must be starving, yet here I am, chatting and bothering you with my problems."

"That's quite alright." I gave him a reassuring smile.

Our talk was interrupted when the bell tinkled loudly, and a party of ten breezed into the cafe.

"Hey, please, we need some service here," called a big, beefy man who seemed to be the group's leader to a smallish, harried-looking waitress carrying a tray that seemed heavier than her.

Will grimaced, then turned his attention to me, "I'm sorry that we don't have any bread, but if you order something else, I'll add a little extra to the house. "

"Actually, Will, I was thinking that I could help out a little, attend to your customers. You seem a little out of your depth." Will looked doubtful at the idea, but when five more people came in, it decided him.

"You'll actually do that?" I nodded. "Oh, thank you. You're a lifesaver. But your food..."

"I'll eat later," I said, getting to my feet. "I could do with some actual work. I've been practically lazing about all day."

I followed Will behind the counter, where he quickly explained the different kinds of meals and drinks they had available. Then I set to work, taking orders and attending to customers. Will kept giving me grateful smiles whenever he caught my eye. Finally, a little late in the afternoon, when the stream of hungry customers had trickled down, Will served me that day's special. He insisted on taking no payment. I took it to a table and savoured the delicious meal. Halfway into the meal, he slipped into the chair beside me.

"This is really good," I said, reaching for a glass of water. "It's no wonder customers besiege you."

He shrugged modestly. "We do our best. You did really well today. You blended in. It was almost as if you had been working here for a long, long time. Have you worked in a cafe before?"

"No, but I've always had this dream..."

"Of?" he promoted.

"Of being a baker in an outfit like this."

"You bake?"

"Yes. Very well, if I say so myself."

"Well then, how about you come to work for me as the chief baker? Heavens knows I need one now."

I paused with my fork halfway to my lips. "You mean that?"

"Of course. Seeing you work today, I have no hesitation about offering you the job."

I grinned, pleased. "Wow. Thank you."

He held out a hand, "I should be the one thanking you... I'm sorry. I didn't quite catch your name."

"It's Amelia. So, when can I resume? Tomorrow?" I added as I went back to eating.

Will's grin broadened. "I'll be the happiest man alive if you can resume tomorrow."

"Tomorrow it is." And we shook on it again.

I got home towards the evening after we had discussed payment, and he had introduced me to the rest of his staff. I took a hot, relaxing shower, then put my feet up in front of the television. I was tired but in a good way. Damian came in an hour later and said a hasty 'good evening' without really looking in my direction. I supposed he deserved to know what I would be doing from now on. I called his name. He paused with his foot on the bottom stair but didn't turn.

"Yes?" he said.

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"I just thought you should know... I got a job at a cafe nearby as a baker. I'm resuming tomorrow."

"You what?" He turned and fixed me with a steely glare.

"I got a job as-"

"I heard that part. What I actually meant to ask is, what on earth that is supposed to mean?"

"I don't understand. It's a job-"

"You don't need a job, for Pete's sake!" he exploded and moved towards me. "You have money, the world at your feet. I have told you time without number that you have to act the part of a wealthy man's wife. If you want to work so badly, you can manage the mall I bought for you."

"I want to work there," I said stubbornly, glaring back at him. "Sorry if that disappoints you, but that is my decision, and it is final."

Damian's lips set into a grim line. He abruptly turned and walked away without another word. I knew I'd pissed him off, but I needed to do something I loved.

I was up early the next day. I dressed casually, hesitated, then took off my wedding ring and tucked it into my purse. Someone with a knowledge of jewelry might spot it and wonder what I was doing working in a cafe when I possessed something that could practically buy the place.

I got right into the heart of the thing, baking and helping serve customers when I was done. Will declared that he had never tasted better pastry. I thought he was just being kind, but then I heard the customers compliment my baked goods.

There were many of these customers, mostly belonging to the middle class. As the days passed, I began to recognize their names and faces. Will had an easygoing manner, and his workers did too. The upshot of this was that we all had friendly relations with almost every one of the customers. No one had an idea of who I was, and I had to admit that it felt good serving, talking, and chatting with these humble folks who actually cared about each other and weren't bothered about social standings, the latest models of cars, designer clothes, being invited to the lavish parties and the like.

For the first time in a really long time, I felt content.