

The Unwanted Wife: Revenge After Divorce

Chapter 037

AMELIA

My first impression of Petra was that she was a charming, glamorous, middle-aged woman, but then, when one really looked at her, I could see that her beauty was somewhat marred by the fact that she was perpetually wearing a sneer.

It looked like she had some dirt under her nose and was trying to escape the smell.

She was impeccably dressed, almost to the point of garishness. Her low-backed sequined gown belonged more to a glamorous dinner party. So did the fur stole she had wrapped around her shoulders, the pearl drop earrings, and the really high heels.

She looked like she had stepped right out of the pages of a glossy fashion magazine. Her gaze immediately swivelled to Anton, who had muttered her name purely for my benefit, it seemed.

"Yes, Anton. It's me," she said in a throaty voice.

Anton visibly flushed. He had clearly not expected her to have heard him. Instantly, I was reminded of what Damian had said about Petra not being a woman to underestimate. If her eyes are as sharp as her ears, then Damian and I would really have to work hard at pretending. It would be impossible to do anything without her sniffing it out.

Initially, I had secretly thought that Damian was being a tad paranoid with all his talk of Petra.

Now, I was beginning to see his point. I shifted uncomfortably and wanted to make myself as small as possible. Damian walked stiffly into the dining room, his jaw clenched, looking annoyed.

It seemed Petra had pushed past him into the house without saying a word to him because he said stiffly, "Good evening, Petra. I apologize it's coming a tad late, seeing I was supposed to say that when I opened the door."

Damian's sarcasm rolled off Petra like water off a stone. She moved her fingers impatiently. "Yes. Yes. Good evening to you. You didn't expect me to keep standing outside while you invited me in, did you? It's bitterly cold out there, and I had a really long drive to get here to see you."

She made it sound like Damian had dragged her here by her ears.

Petra surveyed the array of dishes. "Ah... dinner. Good. I'm quite hungry. I didn't have much to eat at the restaurant. The maitre d' kept fawning over me, trying to curry some favour, no doubt. He was such a bore, so I left my food almost untouched."

She laid her fur stole almost reverently on the chair next to hers, which incidentally was where Damian had been sitting. She patted it fondly like one would pat a well-mannered cat, then she promptly sat down, pulled an empty plate towards her and began dishing food into her plate.

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Again, she made that impatient gesture with her fingers, this time at Anton. He followed her gaze to the plate of chicken, which he still held. Deciding it was what she was after, Anton held it out to her.

She snatched it from him without so much a 'thank you'. Anton did not look very offended at this behaviour. Probably, it was what everyone expected of Petra. I frowned and found myself liking Petra less and less, not that I had liked her much to begin with.

Lora opened her mouth and closed it again. I supposed I should say something, probably greet her, but the thought of getting the sort of sharp retort Damian had gotten made me hold my tongue.

Damian shoved his hands through his hair and flung himself into the empty chair beside me. Anton pushed Damian's plate towards him, and he began eating.

At first, Damian and I had kept up with the charade of maintaining a grumpy sort of silence at the dining table, but now it was a charade no longer. The mood at the table had certainly taken a nosedive since Petra's arrival. Anton persistently cleared his throat, his usual prelude to starting a conversation, but he couldn't seem to think of anything to say.

Petra chewed slowly and took fastidious little sips of her wine. After she had eaten some quantity of her food, she finished the remnants of her wine in one gulp and held out the glass to no one in particular.

"Why isn't anyone waiting on us?" she asked Damian. "Don't you have maids? Domestic staff?"

And she looked around as though expecting one to materialize out of thin air.

"We don't have staff waiting on us," Damian said. "Still, we manage to get on. Weird to some people, maybe, but true."

Petra looked affronted. She glared at Damian, who merely kept looking at her enquiringly. Anton and I hid our grins at Damian's jibe, which had found its mark. Dismissing Damian with another glance, she looked around the table.

"You and Anton are still as thick as thieves, I see," she said with her eyes on Anton.

"Yes, Petra. We are," Anton replied with a rather mocking bow. "It's nice to see you looking so well. I wonder why you even bothered to come back. You look so radiant, and it seems the atmosphere wherever you've been really agrees with you."

Petra smirked and patted her perfectly styled hair. "Of course it does, but I had to return to take care of some rather... urgent business."

"Ah. What's this urgent business?" Anton asked politely. When she looked away from him, it was plain he wanted to ask how long it would take for her to conclude her 'urgent business' so she could get back to where she was coming from.

"Just one or two things of importance I need to sort out," Petra murmured unhelpfully. Her gaze slid to Lora. Her brows rose. "You. I remember you. Your name is Lora, isn't it?"

"Er- yes. It is," Lora replied. "Hi," she added somewhat unnecessarily when Petra continued to stare at her.

"Yes. You are Damian's girlfriend," Petra said, half to herself. "One of many who he's had, though it seems you've stayed on longer than many others. I've lost count of the many women in our handsome Damian's life."

"Ex-girlfriend," Damian corrected, hastily swallowing a mouthful of food.

"Sorry?" said Petra, though I was confident that she had heard Damian perfectly well. Petra finally looked me over, and I could instantly tell that she disapproved of me.

"I was saying that Lora was my ex-girlfriend. There is nothing between us now. In fact, I've been dying to introduce you to my wife, Amelia."

Beaming at me, Damian took my hand lying on the table and pressed it to his lips. I smiled back at him. Petra's eyes widened slightly.

"Your wife?" she cried incredulously.

Damian ignored her tone. "Yes."

"I've heard so much about you, Petra," I said. "It's nice to meet you finally. Shame you couldn't make it to our wedding."

"Yes. Yes," she said and resumed eating, but I could feel her eyes on me as Anton made another successful stab at conversation.

I felt hot and uncomfortable. The woman was radiating hostility. Finally, I couldn't take it anymore. Without thinking, I got to my feet. The conversation stopped at once, and I was instantly the focus of everyone's attention. I racked my brains for a plausible excuse to get a breather and found one.

"Excuse me. I have to go and get the extra salad," I said.

"I'll come to help you, honey," Damian offered.

"No thanks, love. I can handle it."

I felt much better in the kitchen and stayed there for a while before I started dishing out the salad. I heard the door open and close. I stiffened immediately when I felt a return of the tension I had felt in the dining room. I knew who it was before I even turned. With her arms crossed, she leaned against the door, determined I wouldn't leave until she had her say.

"So... you're Damian's wife," said Petra.

"Yes. I wish we had been introduced sooner. Damian tells me you have travelled around the world. It must be--"

"Oh. Please spare me the talk, Amelia. I sense that you are a very intelligent woman, whatever else you may be. You know, and I know I did not follow you in here for a bit of chit-chat. In fact, I'm willing to make you an offer, and I expect a straightforward reply. I will pay you double whatever Damian pays you to pretend to be his wife."

I gasped. "I- I don't understand. I don't know what you mean."

"Oh. Don't be ridiculous. Let's not waste each other's time. You know perfectly well what I'm talking about. Okay. Fine. Name your price, any amount, for you to stop this pretence."

"I'm not pretending. I love Damian. I don't know where you got the idea that we're faking our marriage."

An unpleasant smile lit up Petra's face.

"Fine then," she said. "If you insist." With one dirty look at me, she turned and sashayed away.

When she left, I breathed a huge sigh of relief and sagged against the kitchen counter. That had been close. I composed myself, grabbed the salad bowl and returned to the dining room.