



16 Chapter 16 First Blood

Author 1

After putting on a fake show of affection with Jack, Elara headed straight to a BMW dealership and bought a white BMW X3.

She paid about \$55,000 for it herself—appearances mattered in business, and a department head needed reliable transportation.

It wasn't the fanciest car, but it looked professional and appropriate for her new role.

When Dominic got home that evening, he spotted the new car in his garage.

"You bought a car?" he asked, one eyebrow raised in amusement.

Elara nodded. "Picked it up today."

Dominic circled the BMW like he was examining a toy. Her \$55,000 purchase was basically lunch money compared to his collection of supercars, each one worth more than most people's houses.

"You know my garage has about twelve cars sitting here collecting dust, right?" he said with a smirk. "You could've just grabbed some keys."

Elara crossed her arms. "Your cars scream



'spoiled rich boy.' I need something that says 'competent professional,' not 'daddy bought me a Lamborghini.'"

She was already fighting an uphill battle being young in a senior role. Rolling up in a car worth more than her coworkers' annual salaries would have been corporate suicide.

Dominic laughed. "Fair point. Though I'm hurt you think I have such terrible taste."

He reached into his jacket and pulled out a small velvet box. "Wedding ring. You'll need one before someone at work starts asking questions."

Elara's stomach flipped. Right. The fake marriage. She'd been so focused on her revenge plot that she'd forgotten about the props they'd need.

She opened the box and nearly dropped it. The diamond was huge. The kind of rock that could blind someone in direct sunlight.

"Holy shit, Dominic. This thing could pay off student loans for half of America." She stared at it. "What if I lose it? And where's yours? People will notice if only the wife is wearing a ring."

"Maybe we should get something simpler. A matching set that actually looks like we picked them out together."

"Then I'll buy you another one," he said. He took the ring from the box and reached for her hand. "You're a Wolfe now, sweetheart. Time to dress the part."

The ring slid onto her finger like it belonged there. Which was annoying.

He pulled out a sleek black credit card and placed it on the counter. "From now on, I pay for household stuff. My wife shouldn't spend her own money on cars and jewelry. I should have given you this sooner."

He wasn't just talking about money. He was establishing their dynamic as husband and wife, even if the marriage was fake.

Elara pocketed the credit card. She tried to look casual instead of like she'd just won the lottery. "Fine. But I'm keeping receipts. This is a business deal, remember?"

"You mentioned matching rings earlier," he said, his eyes lighting up slightly. "You're right—we should get a proper set tomorrow. Very romantic couples' shopping."

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The next morning, Elara drove her new car to work, her leather bag packed with everything she needed for her first official day as HR Director.



Tyler spotted her parking the X3. Nice car, but not flashy. His shoulders relaxed.

He remembered when Nadia brought some other rich girl to the office years ago. That one screamed money with her designer clothes and expensive watch. This one looked more normal. Maybe she'd be easier to handle.

Elara had no idea what Tyler was thinking as she walked past him. She'd dressed carefully today. Professional but not scary. Let them think she was harmless.

When she reached her office, she smiled at her assistant.

"Morning, Ally. Can you set up a department meeting for 2 PM this afternoon? And add me to the team group chat."

Ally looked nervous. "Of course, Mrs. Wolfe. I'll do it right now."

These things should have gone through Tyler, but screw that. He saw her as competition, not his boss. If he wanted to play games, she'd play back.

What Elara didn't know was that Tyler had already created a separate chat without her.

[Tyler: About this afternoon's meeting. Don't worry about showing up. Anyone with

appointments can skip it. Take the afternoon off if you want.]

[HR Team Member: Is that okay? Isn't Mrs. Wolfe our supervisor now?]

[Tyler: I'll handle any problems. She's like twenty-three and only got the job because her mom owns the company. You really gonna let some spoiled rich kid boss you around?]

One of Ally's friends saw this and sent her a screenshot.

Ally worried about it all morning. Finally, at one-thirty, she knocked on Elara's door.

"Mrs. Wolfe? I think you should know something. A lot of people called in sick today. Or took time off. The meeting might be really empty."

Elara's eyes flashed dangerously for a second before going back to normal. "That's fine. Whoever shows up can tell the others what happened."

Ally looked uncomfortable. "But what if almost nobody comes?"

Elara stopped typing and looked up. "Is someone telling people to skip my meeting?"

They both knew only Tyler could do that.

"Don't worry about it," Elara said with a smile



that showed teeth. "We're having the meeting no matter what."

At exactly two o'clock, Elara walked into the conference room.

Just like she expected. Only five people out of fifteen showed up.

Tyler's empty chair sat there like an insult.

Elara's voice was ice cold. "Ally, write down who's not here and why. We're making a new rule. No more than five people can be out on the same day without my permission."

"Tyler approved all these absences, right?"

Ally nodded.

"Good." Elara's smile was ice cold. "Write a memo that Tyler loses his bonus this month for bad management. Send it to all the department heads. And post it in the group chat."

The younger staff were texting like crazy under the table.

One message said it all: "She's got claws! First day and she's already fighting back!"

Elara started the meeting like nothing happened.

But everyone knew they just saw a war begin.

