

Billionaire Boss Nah, Just a possessive husband!

Chapter 31:

I woke at dawn.

I got up, washed, had breakfast, then went out to buy a new phone.

That afternoon, I drove to The Highgate Sanctuary.

Portia was already waiting for me at the practice range. She wore an oversized cream cashmere jumper, slung loosely over tiny designer silk shorts that looked like pyjamas but cost more than a small car.

She looked me up and down with a sigh of disappointment. “You know, you might as well wear a sack. It has the same effect.”

I shrugged. “I’m here for a job interview.”

I didn't see a problem with my outfit. I had opted for a classic, fitted look that was appropriate for the environment while remaining formal: tailored navy chinos, a crisp, pale-blue polo shirt tucked in neatly, and a lightweight Barbour-style quilted jacket. My hair was in a high ponytail, my makeup a natural no-makeup look. I thought I looked smart, presentable, and perfectly fine.

"But darling, men are visual creatures," Portia insisted.

I disagreed. "If Lochlan Hastings just wanted to hire a beautiful woman as his Chief of Staff, the position wouldn't still be vacant."

"Being beautiful and being capable aren't mutually exclusive," Portia retorted, poking me playfully. "Luckily, I brought a spare outfit. We're about the same size. You can borrow it."

Without waiting for my consent, she dragged me off to the changing room and insisted I change.

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Since I was relying on her for the introduction, I didn't want to seem ungrateful.

I walked out and stared at myself in the mirror.

The look was all technical, high-performance fabric stretched to its limit. I was wearing a micro-mini pleated skort in a searing shade of electric blue, paired with a matching sleeveless compression top that left very little to the imagination.

“Oh my God!” Portia dramatically covered her mouth. “High C, I never knew you were so stacked! Cary Grant is a fool who doesn’t know a good thing when he has it. What does that Vanessa have that you don’t?”

I stared worriedly at my reflection. Dressed like this, wouldn’t Lochlan Hastings think I was trying to seduce him?

“Portia, I really think—”

“Shhh.” Portia silenced me, pulling her phone from her tiny bag. “Hello, Colin?... Okay, we’ll head over right now.”

She took my arm. “Let’s go. There’s no time to change again.”

On the way, I tried to gather intelligence. “Have you ever actually seen Lochlan Hastings?”

“I did, once. But it was ages ago. I was five or six, I think. We went to the Hastings’ house to pay a New Year’s visit. Lochlan was just a boy then, with pale skin, all soft and chubby

and cute, like a little doll. After we moved, we never went again. He was sent abroad in his teens, so he's hardly been seen here since."

"I see."

Pale, soft, and chubby. My mind conjured an image of a freshly baked Chelsea bun.

The golf cart turned a bend on the path.

A vast expanse of green opened up before us. In the distance were forests and a lake. Closer by stood two men in athletic wear, deep in conversation.

The man in the dark blue top and tan trousers was Colin Bridgerton.

Beside him, standing a good half-head taller in pristine white sportswear, was a figure of unmatched elegance. He had the broad shoulders and narrow waist of an athlete, and when he turned his head, the light carved out a profile so handsome it seemed airbrushed.

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Chapter 32:

“Lochlan Hastings!” Portia breathed an excited whisper in my ear. “My God, he’s nothing like he was as a child. How did he get so tall and so handsome? I can’t, I just can’t!”

“You and me both,” I muttered under my breath.

The golf cart stopped. The two men noticed our approach. Colin Bridgerton waved with a smile, his eyes lingering on me with clear appreciation.

A flicker of surprise passed through Lochlan Hastings’s eyes, but it was quickly replaced by an impenetrable, chilly reserve that made him seem utterly unapproachable.

Portia led me over.

“Colin, Mr Hastings,” she greeted them warmly, then eagerly introduced me. “This is my dearest friend. She was especially keen to come today to meet you.”

My heart was pounding, but I maintained a flawless smile.

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Colin Bridgerton teased, “I wondered why Ms Galloway would be interested in a round of golf, and dressed so beautifully too. So it was for Loch all along, huh? You’re breaking my heart.”

I ignored his jibe, greeted him politely, then turned to Lochlan Hastings. “Mr Hastings, hello. It’s a pleasure to finally meet you.”

“A pleasure to... finally... meet me?” Lochlan Hastings’s pale eyes rested on my face. The deliberate pause confirmed he recognised me perfectly well.

I layered on another smile. “Yes. I’m truly very happy to see you.”

A faint, knowing smile touched his lips. “The feeling is... mutual.”

His rich voice held a trailing note of amusement that felt more like a warning than a welcome.

Portia shot me a triumphant look: See? I told you to change. You have to use your biggest weapons.

We started to play. Lochlan Hastings's technique was impeccable; Colin Bridgerton's was also very good. Portia and I took a few swings, but we were essentially just there as part of the scenery.

After a round, we went to relax under a shaded canopy. Portia dragged Colin Bridgerton off to the pro shop to look at new clubs, leaving me alone with Lochlan.

He sat down. I quickly—and rather obsequiously—opened a bottle of water and handed it to him.

He stared at my hand for a few seconds, then, without comment, took it.

But he didn't drink. He simply placed it on the table.

My heart sank. No chance.

“Ms Galloway, whom I am meeting for the... first time,” he began. He didn’t use air quotes, but the heavy emphasis on the word was unmistakable. “You’ve gone to such trouble to get an introduction. It can’t just be to ask for my measurements again.”

I pressed my lips together, thinking quickly. “About that... the reason I contacted your driver was because I’d accidentally ruined your suit and wanted to replace it. As for today, I wanted to meet you because I heard you’re hiring a Chief of Staff.”

He set down the towel he was holding and said, bluntly, “You’re not suitable for the position.”

Then he stood and walked towards the forest lining the course.

Dismissed without even a single question about my qualifications, my stubborn streak flared. I got up and followed him.

As I trailed after him, I heard the sound of a golf cart approaching quickly from behind, followed by fast, determined footsteps.

A familiar hand landed on my shoulder, forcing me to stop and turn around.

“What are you doing here?”

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Chapter 33:

I took one look at Hyacinth's outfit and felt my blood pressure spike.

That blue skirt was so short I could see nearly all of her thighs. The top was a tight, sleeveless thing that clung to every curve and clearly outlined her bra. It made me want to rip the fucking fabric right off her.

"What are you doing here?" she demanded.

The scowl on her face made it clear my presence was both a surprise and a serious inconvenience.

“I asked you first,” I snarled. “What the hell are you doing here?”

“Playing golf. Same as you.”

She always had a tell when she lied. Her eyes would dart away and then, as if she’d just remembered that would give her away, she’d force herself to hold my gaze.

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Just like she was doing right now.

“Same as me?” I repeated, grinding the words out between my teeth.

“Yeah. Aren’t you here to play golf?” She looked pointedly behind me. “Or are you on a date?”

On a date, my arse.

Thinking of the inane small talk and crude jokes from the portly deputy commissioner and his hangers-on, I had to swallow another curse. I fucking hate golf. It's a pointless game for men too lazy for proper sports.

But I had to be here. Despite his polished words, I knew Armond Abrams was still nursing a grudge after his precious little sister went home in tears from my office.

I doubted he knew Hyacinth was the one who'd hit Vanessa, but I had to keep a close watch, just in case. The Abrams family were notoriously protective of their own, and Armond had made it perfectly clear that anyone who crossed Vanessa was his enemy.

That's why, despite my loathing for the game, I hauled myself here the second I got word Armond was on the course.

"Can I go now?" Hyacinth demanded, impatient to get away from me.

I followed the line of her sight and saw a man in white sportswear. I recognised Lochlan Hastings immediately. He was watching us, not even bothering to pretend he wasn't.

As Hyacinth started to move away, I clamped a hand on her shoulder and spun her back to face me. "Did you dress like a slut just to get his attention?"

Her face flushed a deep, furious red. If she were a cartoon, steam would be whistling from her ears.

When she slapped me, I didn't flinch. I'd seen it coming a mile off.

"Not every man is a randy bastard like you, always thinking with his dick," she hissed, making an effort to keep her voice low. "Mr Hastings is my future—" She cut herself off and changed tack. "He's a friend."

"Hastings doesn't make friends with women like you."

"Women like me? What the hell is that supposed to mean?"

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Chapter 34:

“He prefers women with more class, who don’t dress like tarts in public.”

Hyacinth raised her hand again. I caught her wrist mid-air. One slap was enough.

“And need I remind you, you’re married to me,” I said. “Hastings wouldn’t dare touch what’s mine.”

Hyacinth shook off my grip. “First you say he wouldn’t condescend to look at a woman like me, then you say he wouldn’t dare come after what’s yours. So which is it? Is he interested in me or not? Make up your mind.”

I barely heard her. When she’d yanked her arm back, the movement made her breasts bounce, and I was instantly thrown back to that time in her study, when she was straddling me, riding me hard, her tits moving in that exact same rhythm. I licked my lips, my mouth suddenly dry.

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“If you’re quite finished flexing your ego, can I go now?” Hyacinth’s voice was sharp. “I’ve got golf to play.”

“Play as many rounds as you like,” I said, clearing my throat to hide how rough my voice had gone. “But stay the hell away from Hastings.”

“And what if I don’t?” she challenged, her eyes defiant.

“If I catch you with him...” I glanced towards where Hastings had been standing, but he’d vanished into the trees. “I’ll kill you both.”

A visible shudder ran through her.

She knew better than anyone that I don’t make idle threats. “If you’re so worried I’ll cheat, why not just divorce me? It would save you the trouble of having to follow me everywhere.”

I frowned. This was the second time she’d mentioned divorce in a matter of weeks. What the hell had gotten into her?

I pinched her chin, forcing her to look me in the eye. “I’ll never agree to a divorce because this isn’t a marriage. It’s a transaction. Or have you forgotten you sold yourself to me? You’re merchandise I paid for, and only I get to decide when I’m done with you. You don’t get to walk away.”

The words were harsh, but Hyacinth never responded to gentle handling. I needed to drill it into her skull that she belonged to me, and only me.

“You’re sick,” she said quietly, all the anger drained from her face. “You need help.”

My grip on her chin tightened. “I don’t need help. I need obedience. I need you to stay away from other men.”

My phone rang with fucking bad timing. The deputy commissioner was wondering where I’d vanished to.

I swore under my breath, made some excuse about the toilets, and told him I’d be right there.

Shoving the phone back in my pocket, I turned my focus back to her. “You’re going home. Right now.”

“But I—”

“Don’t test me,” I growled.

Hyacinth fell silent, then gave a tight nod. “Fine. I’m going home.”

“And burn that outfit.” I let my eyes rake over her again, feeling myself get hard. “No. Keep it.”

I wanted to see her in it the next time I fucked her. Which would be the moment I got home.

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Chapter 35:

I called Portia on the drive home.

“So, how’s the interview going?” she teased. “Has Lochlan fallen for your charm yet?”

“I’m not at the golf course anymore.”

“What? What the hell happened?”

I told her everything.

“Fuck. Is Scary Cary still with you? Do you need backup? Colin’s useless—he wouldn’t dare go up against Cary—but I could get club security—”

“No. He’s gone. I’m fine.” I wasn’t fine. “I’m on my way home. I need you to talk to Mr Hastings for me. Tell him I’m sorry I had to leave so abruptly. Make up an emergency. Appendicitis or something.”

I couldn’t face Lochlan Hastings again. Not because of Cary’s threat, but because of what he might ask. If he wanted to know who Cary was, I didn’t want to lie, but I knew all hell would break loose if I told him the truth.

Fleeing was my only option.

“Leave it to me,” Portia said.

“Could you also...?” I hesitated, my original purpose for going to the club still clear in my mind.

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“Want me to sound him out?” Portia read my mind. “See what he really thinks of you?”

“Yes, but...” Lochlan had dismissed me before I could even list my qualifications.

“Don’t worry, I’ll talk to him. Or better yet, you should talk to him yourself. Here’s his number. I just got it from Colin.” Portia sent me a contact card.

“I can’t thank you enough.”

“What are friends for?”

I had just reached home when Portia sent another text: [Just talked to Lochlan. Gave him the story about you falling sick. He says you should call him.]

Did he really want to talk to me? A small flame of hope kindled in my chest.

Another text from Portia popped up: [He says you owe him a suit. Whatever that means.]

Oh.

The newly kindled hope flickered and died.

So he didn't want me to call about the job after all.

I stared at Lochlan's number on the screen, my finger hovering over the call button.

Then I tossed my phone aside. I'd deal with it tomorrow. The confrontation with Cary had drained me, and his threat still echoed in my ears.

I wasn't about to bow to his insane demand that I stay away from all men, but I also wasn't going to risk his wrath by meeting Lochlan publicly.

Besides, I needed time to figure out how to handle my next interaction with Lochlan. The man was hard to read.

He had been decent enough to lend me his jacket in the rain, but his demeanour in the lift and his attitude today told me he was arrogant and unapproachable, a man who formed his own opinions without caring what others thought.

I hadn't helped my case by asking his driver for his measurements like a stalker, or by showing up at the golf course dressed like I was auditioning for Hooters.

I winced. What if he, like Cary, thought I was there to seduce him?

Ugh. I groaned and buried my face in the pillow.

If that's what Lochlan thought of me, there was no way I was getting that job now.

I had no idea when I'd fallen asleep. When I woke, it was early morning, and Cary's side of the bed was untouched.

I thought he hadn't come home, but a note on the nightstand proved me wrong.

In Cary's bold, cursive script, it read: [Stay home.] It was an order, clear as day.

I was now officially under house arrest.

That was made doubly clear when I went downstairs for breakfast and Jenna, Cary's household manager, politely informed me that I wasn't to leave the house.

"What if I want to go out?" I asked.

"Jo can drive you."

Jo was the family chauffeur.

"I can't go out alone?"

Jenna's apologetic smile was answer enough.

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Billionaire Boss Nah, Just a possessive husband!

Chapter 36:

“Fine. Have Jo bring the car around. I’m going shopping.”

Portia met me outside Apsley House Plaza. “What’s with the entourage?”

Behind me, Jo and two bodyguards hovered at a discreet distance.

“Just ignore them,” I said, hooking my arm through Portia’s and heading into the mall. Jo and the guards followed.

Portia and I took the lift to the sixth floor, and I made a beeline for the flagship Victoria’s Secret store.

As expected, Jo and his team stopped right at the entrance.

The store was massive, big enough to get lost in. We hadn't even finished browsing the nightgowns section before I'd recounted the entire disappointing story of my interview with Lochlan.

"I think he's into you," Portia concluded.

"Did you miss the part where he walked away before I could even brandish my CV?"

"He's into you," Portia repeated. "Why else would he want you to call him?"

"Um, because I owe him a suit?"

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"A man like him has closets full of suits. He doesn't need another one. He just needs an excuse to get in touch with you." Portia pulled a black lace teddy from a rack and held it up against me. "Trust me, I know how men like him operate. Wear this, strut your stuff, and you'll be starring in all his wet dreams."

I took the teddy from her and put it back. "Thanks, but no thanks. I'm married."

“Not for long. You’ve got to start planning for your future, and I don’t just mean your career. Lochlan is hot, has a body I wouldn’t mind climbing, and is clearly interested. I say go for it. Wouldn’t it be nice to rub Scary Cary’s face in it?”

“I don’t cheat while I’m married.” Even if what Cary and I had barely qualified as a marriage.

I led Portia down an aisle, and we slipped out a side entrance into The Wellington House next door.

She eyed the specialist men’s clothing store and tsked. “Don’t tell me you’re shopping for Scary Cary.”

“No. I owe Lochlan a suit, remember?” I flashed the Black Card in front of her and grinned. “While I can still use Cary’s money, I might as well take advantage of it.”

Portia’s face lit up. “Using your husband’s money to buy clothes for another man? That’s deliciously wicked. I love it!”

We drifted towards a wall dedicated to ready-to-wear pieces crafted from seasonal wools. They all looked beautifully handmade and expensive, but none seemed to match the quality, fabric, and feel of the suit I’d ruined.

“I’ve got an idea,” Portia said. “After you buy the suit, flaunt it in front of Scary Cary.”

“Why would I want to do that?”

“Because that’ll make him jealous, and jealousy leads to better sex. Trust me, I speak from experience.”

“I don’t want to have sex with Cary. I’m divorcing him.”

Portia looked at me with an expression that was hard to decipher, a mix of pity, sympathy, and sheer frustration. “What, you don’t believe me? I already signed the divorce papers.”

“It’s not that I don’t believe you,” Portia said. “But the way Scary Cary’s been acting, I doubt he’ll just let you go without a fight when the time’s up.”

“Which is in another seventeen days,” I said automatically. The countdown was a ritual now.

“What if he tears up the divorce papers?”

“There are backup copies.”

“What if he denies the signature is his?”

“I’ll—no, his mother will get experts to verify it. Believe me, she wants this divorce more than I do.”

“What if he threatens you?”

“With what? With the cheque I was going to get from Tanya Grant, I would no longer be financially dependent on Cary.”

“With your parents.”

“Oh.” I stopped walking.

I still hadn’t figured out how to break the news of the divorce to my parents. They still believed Cary Grant was God’s answer to their prayers, that he adored me.

What if he decided to drop all pretence and reveal the truth to them? I didn’t even dare imagine how Mum would take it.

“Maybe I’m overthinking it,” Portia backpedalled when she saw my anxiety. “Maybe he won’t do anything. After all, he seems completely besotted with this Vanessa woman, right? Maybe he’ll be glad to be rid of you.”

I whipped my head around, scanning the vast store.

“What’s wrong?” Portia asked.

“I’m not sure.”

I thought I saw the flash of a camera out of the corner of my eye.

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Billionaire Boss Nah, Just a posessive husband!

Chapter 37:

“What, you think someone’s secretly taking pictures of you? Like paparazzi?” Portia asked.

“No.” I glanced around but could see no one. “Never mind. I must have imagined it.”

“You’re just stressed out.” Portia patted my arm understandingly. “No one’s stalking you.”

“I hope so.”

“You’re not famous.”

Yeah, I got that, thank you.

“It’s not like anyone even knows you’re Scary Cary’s wife.”

I gave her a playful glare. “Point well received, Miss Pierce. I’m a nobody.”

“Ha. I’m just saying, relax. Don’t be so paranoid.” Her phone rang. She checked the screen. “City Council? What do they want with me? Hello? Yes, speaking.”

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I watched Portia’s face register confusion, then surprise, then pure anger. “No, I don’t—what? You can’t do that!” She stabbed the end call button, fuming.

“What’s wrong?” I asked.

“Some arrogant wanker from the local council says my clinic may have to shut down.”

“What? Why?”

“Something about a CPO, a compulsory purchase order. He says the Council is looking to acquire the land for a public benefit project, whatever the hell that means.”

“They’re going to seize the land your clinic is built on?”

“Sounds like it. Though the guy said the whole thing’s still in the planning stage.” Portia frowned and began scrolling through her contact list. “I’ve got to make some calls. Why didn’t I hear anything about this?”

My mind immediately jumped to Cary.

I had no proof, but my gut screamed it was him.

“Maybe you won’t have to sell,” I tried to reassure her. “You know how slow the Council is. The whole thing could take years.”

“Yeah, you’re probably right. Still, I wonder who’s behind this.”

Portia and I parted ways—her to find her contacts in City Hall, me back to the house that had become my prison.

I had to talk to Cary. If he wanted to punish me, fine, but he couldn’t take it out on my friend.

“What’s the occasion?” Cary looked at the table full of dishes.

“No occasion. I just felt like cooking.” I’d spent hours in the kitchen since coming home.

A hint of a smile appeared on his face. He unbuttoned his suit jacket, tossed it over a chair, and sat down. His smile was replaced by a frown. "What is all this?"

"Dinner." I pointed to the dishes. "Seared king scallops. Oysters Rockefeller. Bouillabaisse."

His face darkened. "You know I hate seafood."

"Do you? Oops, I'm sorry. It must have slipped my mind."

He stared at me from across the table. "You did this on purpose."

I raised a hand as if swearing on a Bible. "I swear I didn't. I just used what was in the kitchen. You can ask Aria."

The live-in cook had long since retreated to her room, along with the rest of the household staff, sensing the impending storm.

"You so seldom eat at home, I suppose I forgot you hated seafood," I said, my tone completely insincere. "I'm sorry. Should I order a takeaway?"

“You want me to eat from a cardboard box while you tuck into oysters?” His face darkened another few degrees, if that was even possible.

“So is that a yes or a no on the takeaway?” I held up my phone, waiting for his instructions like the perfectly obedient housewife I was not.

Cary breathed in heavily. “No.”

I set down my phone and began attacking the scallops. He could sit there and watch me eat. I wasn’t about to starve.

“Is that all you have to say to me?” he said suddenly.

“What?” I looked up, wiped my mouth with a serviette. “Sorry, I didn’t catch that.”

“Don’t you have something to give me?” he hinted.

I didn’t take the bait. “You mean dinner?”

“Not dinner. Something else.”

I tried to interpret the eager, anticipatory smirk on his face. “You mean sex? But I’m having my period.”

“No, not sex!” he growled. Then he looked at me sceptically. “Though... your period’s not for another two weeks.”

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Billionaire Boss Nah, Just a possessive husband!

Chapter 38:

I shrugged. “It’s irregular.” Since when did he keep track of my cycle?

He looked disappointed. “That’s not what I meant.”

“Then I have no idea what you’re talking about.”

“You went out this afternoon,” he hinted again.

I wasn’t surprised he knew. I was sure Jo had reported my every move.

“Yes, with Portia.” Maybe this was my chance to bring up the City Council. “Speaking of Portia, her clinic—”

“You bought something,” Cary cut me off impatiently. “You can give it to me now.”

“I didn’t buy anything.”

Cary tapped on his phone and turned the screen to me. “The Wellington House. You were inside for twenty minutes.”

Something clicked. “That was you? You had someone follow me? You had someone take pictures?”

Cary didn’t bother denying it. He nodded. “I had to keep an eye on you.”

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I sprang up from my chair. “Wasn’t it enough you had Jo follow me everywhere? Who else did you hire? A private investigator? Was there someone in the next cubicle when I used the loo?”

Cary rapped his knuckle on the table. “Sit down.”

“No! I want to know why you are doing this.”

“You need to be watched,” he stated flatly. “You can’t be trusted.”

“What, are you afraid I’ll run off and elope with some random man?” I sneered, anger making me see red.

“You have trouble following orders. You went to a party without telling me. You went to the golf club without my knowledge. And today, after I left a note specifically telling you to stay in, you went out again.”

“Sorry, I wasn’t aware there was a clause in our contract that says I have to stay inside all day, like a frigging housecat.” The closer it got to the deadline, the harder it was to keep my cool around him.

“I didn’t say you can’t go out. I said you must have someone with you.” He ignored my tone. “As for Portia and her clinic—”

I tensed immediately. “You did it. The City Council call was your doing.”

He nodded. “That was just a warning. She’s a bad influence on you.”

“She’s my best friend.”

“Exactly my point.”

“So not only can I not leave the house without a chaperone, now I can’t even have friends?” If the dining table hadn’t been so damn heavy, I’d have flipped it over just to watch it flatten his smug face.

He rapped his knuckle on the table again. “You went to The Wellington House and came out with a bag. What did you buy?”

Was he expecting a gift?

Portia’s advice flashed through my mind.

I stomped upstairs, dug the shopping bag from my closet, stomped back down, and held it up in front of him.

Looking pleased, he reached out to take it.

I snatched it back. “It’s not for you.”

He frowned. “Then who is it for?”

I wanted to provoke him, but not enough to earn a punishment worse than being grounded. “My dad.”

Cary was visibly miffed. “Oh. Did you get anything for me?”

“No,” I said with grim satisfaction. “You have closets full of suits. Why would you need another?”

He had no comeback for that. It was true; he had a whole climate-controlled room dedicated to suits alone.

“Besides, there’s no clause in the contract saying I’m obliged to shop for you.” He loved to throw the contract in my face, and now it felt incredibly good to do it back to him.

His jaw tightened.

“Or do you want to modify the terms?” I mimicked a lawyer’s businesslike tone. “But you are the one who told me the contract is irrevocable. That means it can’t be changed, right?”

Cary shot out of his chair lightning fast.

I immediately realised I’d pushed him too far and shrank back instinctively, my self-preservation kicking in.

He circled the table.

I backed away until my back hit the wall. He opened his mouth to speak—

My phone rang.

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Billionaire Boss Nah, Just a possessive husband!

Chapter 39:

I picked up my phone, silently blessing whoever was calling.

But a hand snatched it away before I could see the caller ID.

“Hey!” I protested.

Cary tossed my phone onto the dining table behind him. Trapped between the wall and his body, with nowhere to go, I glared up at him.

“What if I said the contract could be modified?”

“What?” I didn’t follow his train of thought.

“The contract. The terms. What if I said they can be changed?”

I scoffed. “So what, you want to add a clause that obliges me to buy you clothes? No, thank you.”

“Not clothes.” His voice had dropped, becoming low, thoughtful, and serious. “What if I removed the clause about no kissing?”

I didn’t bother replying. He’d already shattered that rule the night he hauled me out of the club and shoved his tongue in my mouth.

“Or the clause about... no feelings?”

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I stared up at him, stunned. “I... I don’t understand.”

“What if I... allowed you to have feelings for me?”

“Allowed me?”

The sheer arrogance of the man.

If he’d said this a year ago, or even a month ago—before Lisa, before Vanessa—I would have been over the moon.

Of course I had feelings for him, contract or not. How could I not, for the man who saved my mother, who gave me a life I couldn’t have dreamed of, who made me forget my own name in bed?

But it was too late now.

Vanessa's taunts, Tanya's condescending politeness, the dismissive attitude from Cary's friends—everything screamed that I didn't belong in his world. The gap between us was wider than the one between Cinderella and her prince.

At least she had a fairy godmother.

Besides, Cary couldn't possibly be serious.

Feelings? Sometimes I wondered if the man was constitutionally incapable of them.

In three years of living with him, I'd never met a single ex. Either he was a monk before me—which seemed highly unlikely—or he'd discarded his past lovers like used tissues.

Apart from the times in bed when he turned into a force of nature, the man was an iceberg. Whatever feelings I had for him—that messy mix of gratitude, admiration, respect, awe, and lust—could never hope to melt him.

A familiar pressure on my chin forced me to look up. "Answer me."

I let out a shaky chuckle.

Cary pinched my chin a little harder. “What’s so funny?”

“Oh, sorry. I thought you were making a joke.”

“I wasn’t joking.”

“Really? Mr My-Word-Is-Law wants to go back on his own word and change a contract he drafted himself? You’re either joking, or I’ve eaten a bad oyster and I’m hallucinating.”

He let out an irritated breath. “I’m not joking.”

“You really want to change the contract?”

He nodded.

“You want me to develop feelings for you?” Another nod.

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Billionaire Boss Nah, Just a possessive husband!

Chapter 40:

“So I’ll obey your every command like an obedient little wife? So I won’t look at another man? So I’ll shop for your clothes? So my tears will be more heartfelt when I catch you fucking another woman?”

He’d been nodding along until the last sentence. His eyes narrowed dangerously.

“I’ve given it some thought, and the answer is no.”

I didn’t want to develop any more feelings for him than the complicated mess I already had. Besides, the deadline was looming.

“Think again.”

“I just did, and the answer is still no. You said I can’t love you, and I’m simply complying with your terms.”

For a split second, I thought he was going to hit me. The look in his eyes was murderous.

But in the end, all he did was release my chin and storm from the room. Some time later, I heard the crunch of car tyres on the gravel driveway.

I let out a breath I didn’t realise I’d been holding and slowly sank to the floor, hugging my knees.

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Cary’s temper had become more volatile lately. Maybe Portia was right to call him Scary Cary.

But why should I be the one to manage his moods? My tenure as Mrs Grant was almost over. If he needed someone to hold his hand and whisper sweet nothings, he could go to Vanessa, or Lisa, or whichever woman caught his eye next.

Plenty would gladly throw themselves at his Savile Row-clad feet.

Eventually, I got up and grabbed my phone from the table, remembering the interrupted call.

The name on the screen sent a thrill through me. I called back immediately.

“Sorry, Mr Hastings,” I said the moment the call connected. “I was, um, dealing with an emergency earlier. Sorry I missed your call.”

“Don’t worry about it.” Lochlan Hastings’s voice was smooth but dry, like a perfect martini. “I’d like to set up a meeting with you.”

Before I could ask why, he’d rattled off the address of an upscale hotel in Hertfordshire and given me a time and date.

“Um, okay, I’ve got it. But may I ask—”

“Bring the suit.” He hung up.

I stared at the screen.

He wanted me to bring the suit in person? Why couldn't I just courier it?

Was Portia right? Did he have some interest in me?

I shook off the ridiculous thought.

My limited knowledge of Lochlan Hastings told me he was as rich as, if not richer than, Cary. Men like them didn't fall for women like me. They might lust after a young body, but romantic feelings? I scoffed. Hadn't I learned my lesson with Cary?

Still, I decided to go. Whatever his motives, it was a second chance to pitch my CV.

I dragged myself upstairs, stared at my almost-empty closet, and idly wondered when Cary would notice all my things were gone.

Then I started hunting for my passport. After Tanya delivered the cheque, I was getting out of the country—maybe even the continent—for a long-overdue trip.

But my passport wasn't in any of my drawers.

I ventured into Cary's study, remembering his assistant had once asked for it to book a corporate flight. I found it in an unlocked drawer, next to Cary's, lying atop a thick album.

An impulsive rush of curiosity made me pick up the album. I kept one eye on the door as I flipped through the pages like a voyeur.

The photos were from Cary's university days. I instantly recognised the iconic Radcliffe Camera. In one photo, Cary was in white tie, a dinner jacket slung over his arm, standing on a lawn at sunrise surrounded by dozens of friends, laughing with his head thrown back. His tie was slightly askew, as if he'd just come from an all-night party.

His expression was open, carefree, and completely unguarded—the polar opposite of the man he was now.

I couldn't help myself. I kept turning the pages, peeking into the life of a young Cary I never knew. He was either smiling or laughing in almost every photo—at commemoration balls, garden parties, college bops.

It made me wonder: what on earth happened to turn him from a young Lord Byron into the Ice Duke?

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Billionaire Boss Nah, Just a possessive husband!

Chapter 41:

I quashed the sudden urge to understand Cary's past the moment it appeared.

It no longer mattered. I had already signed the divorce papers. Whoever he used to be, and whatever had turned him from Dr Jekyll into Mr Hyde, was no longer my business.

"What are you doing in my study?"

I bit back a scream, hurriedly shoved the album back into the drawer, and shot to my feet. "What are you doing here? I thought you'd gone out."

Cary stared at me from the doorway. "That's what I asked you."

“I was, um...” I waved my passport. “Looking for this.”

“Why?”

“I’m thinking of going on a trip, now that I’ve resigned.” The mention of the company brought back memories of my last day there, and of the phone call that had made me sick all over the gym floor. I suddenly found I didn’t care about Cary’s past at all.

“You look guilty. What were you really doing?”

“I told you, I was looking for my passport.”

“You were looking at something.” He came into the room. “Something in my drawer.”

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I tried to leave, but his arm pinned me back into the leather chair. He pulled open the drawer, picked up the album, and started flipping through the pages.

What was that look on his face?

I would have expected nostalgia, maybe a wistful smile.

But Cary's brows were pulled tightly together, his nostrils flared slightly—a sure sign of irritation. His lips were pressed into a thin, flat line. His jaw was still, but there was a tiny, involuntary clench at the hinges.

If I didn't know better, I'd have thought he was looking at evidence of a past crime, not mementos from his halcyon days.

He shut the album with a forceful thud, strode over to the wall safe, keyed in the code, shoved the album inside roughly, and slammed the door shut.

“Stop rummaging through my things,” he said without turning around.

“I wasn't rummaging. I just happened to see it.” I rose to leave, but a question slipped out before I could stop it. “What happened to the last few pages?”

The final pages of the album held photos of him, but they were torn halves, showing only Cary. He spun around, the intensity in his eyes making me squirm.

“That is none of your business.”

There it was again—that icy, dismissive tone he used to shut down any conversation he didn’t like.

How could I ever have believed he was capable of genuine human feeling?

“I had a roommate at university,” I said, almost to myself. “She tore up all her photos with her boyfriend after they broke up. He cheated on her.”

Cary marched up to me. “What are you implying?”

“Nothing. Just sharing a story.” And wondering if the same thing happened to you.

Cary must have read my mind. He flicked my forehead. “Don’t be ridiculous. No woman would dare cheat on me.”

“”Wouldn’t dare” and “wouldn’t want to” are two very different things,” I shot back.

“They are the same to me. Their feelings are irrelevant. All that matters is that when I want them, I acquire them. They show up. They perform as expected.”

My breath hitched. “And what happens when you stop wanting them?”

“I dispose of them.”

“Like rubbish?”

“Exactly. Like rubbish.”

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Billionaire Boss Nah, Just a possessive husband!

Chapter 42:

The air seemed to vanish from my lungs. I had trouble breathing.

Why was I even having this conversation with him? Was I expecting a heart-to-heart with a man who didn't have one?

Cary leaned back. "But before they reach the end of their usefulness, I expect them to be available to me twenty-four seven."

He didn't need to elaborate. The implication was brutally clear. I had no agency, no power to walk away first. The relationship—no, the lease on me—would end only when he decided I was worn out.

I lifted my chin, the only part of me not trembling. "Understood."

Cary straightened up. "I'm going to take a shower."

Why was he telling me this?

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“Come to bed,” he clarified a second later.

Before I could trot out my excuse about my period, he had left the study.

I dawdled there a while longer, steeling myself.

Just fifteen more days. Fifteen more days and I wouldn’t have to deal with Cary’s mercurial moods and his insatiable sexual demands anymore.

Just fifteen more days, and I could finally discard the irrational, hopeless hope that he might one day develop something akin to tender feeling for me.

I dragged my feet to the master bedroom.

Cary wasn’t in the shower. He was standing in front of my walk-in closet with the doors open, frowning. “What happened to all your things?”

“What things?” I pretended not to understand.

“Your clothes, your shoes, your bags, your jewellery. The closet is almost empty.”

“The clothes and shoes are at the dry cleaner’s. The bags and jewellery are being serviced.” I kept my voice calm and my face a mask of innocent confusion, even as my mind raced.

“All of it? All at once?” He looked doubtful.

“Yes, why not? I’ve been bored, so I thought I’d tidy up. There was so much in here, I’d lost track of what I’d worn and what I hadn’t. I thought it was easier to just send it all off. The jewellery had lost its sparkle and the bags needed re-edging, so I sent them off for restoration while I had the chance.”

“Is that what you’ve been doing around the house?”

“Yes.”

He seemed to buy it. “There’s no rush. You don’t have to do everything all at once.”

“Well, I’m going on a trip soon. I wanted to get everything in order before I left.” Permanently.

He seemed to find another hole in my story. “What about your suitcase? Don’t tell me that’s at the shop too.”

“No. It’s with Portia. She’s helping me pack.”

Cary stared at me for so long without speaking that I began to worry he suspected the truth.

But in the end, all he said was, “I didn’t know Portia was so considerate.”

“She’s a good friend.”

Cary didn’t comment further. To him, Portia was a bad influence, a corrupting friend.

He picked up his pyjamas. “I’m taking a shower.”

I said hurriedly, “I’ll sleep in the spare room tonight. You know, my period. Wouldn’t want to ruin the sheets.”

Cary gave me another one of his long, penetrating stares, then nodded. “Fine.”

I grabbed my own pyjamas and fled.

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Billionaire Boss Nah, Just a possessive husband!

Chapter 43:

I'd messed up.

It's a hard thing to admit, even to myself, but I'd really messed up.

When Hyacinth asked if I'd sent people to follow her because I didn't trust her, I should have told her the truth instead of that lame-arsed excuse.

The Abrams family's connections on both sides of the law weren't just a rumour. It was a fact. Armond Abrams wouldn't think twice about breaking the so-called rules if he found out Hyacinth had hurt his precious little sister.

With that threat hanging over her, how could I not keep a close watch?

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But when I looked into her angry, defiant eyes, my own fucking pride stopped me from telling her. She wouldn't have believed me anyway.

The mocking scorn in her laugh when I suggested modifying the contract—it cut me to the quick.

I had to get out of that room before she saw just how much her rejection got to me.

Was it really so fucking hard to believe I could have feelings like a normal person?

My mother seemed to think so. In fact, she saw my supposed lack of feeling as an advantage.

“Feelings make you weak, my boy,” she’d often say. “They make you vulnerable to other people’s schemes.” From gold diggers, specifically.

She was convinced of it. Maybe she was speaking from experience.

“They’re not here for you,” she’d say. “They’re here for your money. Love? Pfft. Try living like a beggar on the street for a month. See if they still ‘love’ you then.”

Short of actually becoming homeless, I had no way to test her theory.

Would Hyacinth leave me if I were penniless?

It was a moot and ridiculous question. She’d only agreed to marry me for the money. That had been crystal clear from the start.

So why was I suddenly entertaining this baseless hope that she could love me?

I got out of the shower and flopped onto the bed, naked.

The bed felt impossibly big and empty without Hyacinth in it. I knew she’d lied about her period, and I knew she was aware that I knew.

But I didn't call her on it. What was the point? Forcing her to admit she just didn't want to have sex with me would only humiliate me further.

I thought of her in the spare room, imagined her taking off her clothes and pulling on those pyjamas—the ones with the little strawberries all over them that she always wore. She'd had them for years. The cotton was worn so thin I could sometimes see the outline of her nipples when the room was cold.

Or when she was turned on.

I'd used her shampoo in the shower. Inhaling her scent, my hand stole towards my cock.

My phone started vibrating on the nightstand.

“Fuck.” I yanked my hand up and growled into the phone. “What?”

Miles coughed apologetically. “Sorry to bother you at home, sir, but I thought you'd want to see this.”

He sent me a file. I opened it.

It was the pitch deck for the acquisition of a German infrastructure firm, a standard high-stakes deal for Mayfair Global.

I scrolled to the Executive Summary. The flaws were glaring and unforgivable. The KPIs for the target company's valuation weren't the current verified figures but obsolete forecasts from a failed bid six months ago. The cash flow projections violently contradicted the risk analysis. Whole sections were just vague, boilerplate text lifted from an old annual report.

"The presentation is due tomorrow," Miles said carefully. "But, um, I don't think we can present this."

"Of course we fucking can't." I glared at Vanessa's name on the title page and wanted to strangle her.

She went to the LSE. How the fuck could she mess up a simple presentation this badly? And she had the nerve to complain about working late?

I knew she wouldn't be as good as Hyacinth, but I never thought she'd be this fucking useless. The presentation was a complete shambles—an absolute joke.

Rubbing my temples, I found myself missing the days when Hyacinth ran the department. Everything was seamless then.

How had it come to this?

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Billionaire Boss Nah, Just a possessive husband!

Chapter 44:

My plan to make Hyacinth jealous had backfired spectacularly. Sure, she'd had that one outburst in the office, but since then she'd just resigned and was now planning a trip. The distance between us was growing, not shrinking.

It had been three fucking years. How had I failed so miserably to make her fall for me?

“Sir?” Miles prompted. “Your instructions?”

“Who was Hyacinth’s second-in-command in the department?”

“Harper Spiller.”

“Call her. Tell her to redo the deck from scratch. Correct every mistake. I need it on my desk before business hours tomorrow. Tell her there’s a month-end bonus in it for her.”

“On it, sir.”

I hung up, tossed the phone back onto its stand, and glanced at the door. Beyond it, just a few metres down the hall, Hyacinth was in the spare room.

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What was she doing? Sleeping? Showering? Playing on her phone? Or lying awake, tossing and turning like I was?

Realising I was still naked, I stood and reached for my pyjamas. That’s when I noticed the doors to her walk-in closet were still wide open.

Our conversation from earlier came back to me, and I frowned. Something felt off, but I couldn't pinpoint what.

Most of her things were gone—the shoes, the bags, the clothes, the jewellery. All the things I'd bought for her as part of our deal, the birthday and holiday gifts.

A secretary usually handled the purchasing, but I was the one who signed the cheques. That alone put me ahead of most husbands.

But all I ever got from Hyacinth was a polite “thank you”. She almost never wore the jewellery unless I specifically asked her to.

I stared at the empty closet, the sight irritating me more than I wanted to admit.

I had a bad feeling that things were slipping out of my control.

That my plan had only pushed her further away.

That I was no longer her only option.

Lochlan Hastings's face flashed into my mind.

The man was undeniably handsome, and as far as I knew, single.

Was he Hyacinth's type? Suave, polite, controlled, never pushy? I fucking hoped not.

But if he wasn't, why was she playing golf with him? I didn't even know she played.

I knew Portia had set it up, but whose idea was it really?

Hyacinth's, or his?

Shoving to my feet, I paced the room barefoot, agitated. Why the hell was I thinking about Hyacinth and Lochlan? It was impossible.

She was mine. She would stay mine.

I refused to believe that after having sex with me, she could possibly want anyone else.

If it was true for me—that I didn’t want another woman after being with her—then why wouldn’t it be true for her too?

Insomnia hit hard. I couldn’t sleep, knowing Hyacinth was lying less than ten metres away in those see-through pyjamas, smelling of white tea.

When Miles emailed me the corrected deck at 2:14 a.m., I called him back.

“I’ve looked over the presentation,” I said. “It’s acceptable now.”

He sounded relieved. “I’ll have printed copies in the conference room before the meeting. And, one more thing, sir.”

“What is it?”

“Regarding Miss Abrams.”

“Have HR issue a formal written warning. If she makes another mistake like this, fire her.”

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Billionaire Boss Nah, Just a possessive husband!

Chapter 45:

Over breakfast, Cary kept watching me with that inscrutable look of his.

“Is there something on my face?” I finally asked.

He shook his head, still deep in thought.

My phone rang. For some reason, I thought it might be Lochlan, and I didn’t want to answer it in front of Cary.

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I let it ring.

“Aren’t you going to get that?” Cary asked.

I pulled out my phone in slow motion and secretly breathed a sigh of relief when I saw Tanya Grant’s name on the screen. She was probably checking in to make sure I hadn’t changed my mind.

I answered the call. “Good morning, Tanya. I’m here with your son. Would you like to speak to him first?”

As I’d anticipated, she swallowed whatever she’d been about to say. “No, that won’t be necessary. I was just calling to ask if you still wanted that bag you liked the other day?”

“Yes. That’d be great. I’ve sent all my bags off for maintenance, so I’m a bit short at the moment.”

“Good. Then you should come and collect it.”

“Thank you.”

The call ended.

Cary looked at me, suspicious. "Since when did you two become so friendly?"

I met his gaze calmly. "Isn't that a good thing? Or would you prefer it if your wife and your mother were at each other's throats?"

"You don't have to force yourself to spend time with her for my sake," he said. "I know how difficult she can be."

I was long used to the twisted dynamic between Tanya and Cary. They loved each other, that much was obvious, but it didn't stop Tanya from trying to run her son's life, nor did it stop Cary from defying her by marrying me, someone she deemed unfit to lick the dirt from her shoes.

"It's fine," I said, offering a wifely smile. "Tanya can be... generous."

That was clearly a description Cary never expected to hear about his mother, and his puzzled frown showed it.

"If you need a new handbag, call Miles. He'll have the shops send a new selection over."

“No, thank you. I don’t need a new handbag.”

“You just told my mother you did.”

Oops. I backpedalled quickly. “I meant, I don’t need a new one from you, since your mother is already giving me one.”

If he gave me another, it would just sit in the closet gathering dust.

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Billionaire Boss Nah, Just a possessive husband!

Chapter 46:

Over the years, Cary had given me more things than I knew what to do with. He was a generous husband. If providing material comforts was the main criterion for being a good one, he would undoubtedly come out on top.

But...

The problem was, I was both a materialistic and a sentimental girl. Once I had the money to save my mother and ensure my parents were comfortable, I started wanting more intangible things. Things like a true emotional connection and... love.

It was greedy, yes. But I'm only human.

With Cary's abrupt and entirely transactional entrance into my life, my love life had ended before it ever had a chance to begin. I never got to experience the normal things other girls my age did, like a simple dinner-and-a-movie date.

Cary never went to the cinema with me. "We have a home theatre," he'd say. "Why waste time going out?"

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It was impossible to imagine him, in his Savile Row suit, spending an hour wandering through Borough Market and queuing for a cheese toastie. Or him running with me to catch a bus so we could make a two-for-one cocktail happy hour. He had no time or patience for any normal couple activities.

Except for sex. He always had time for sex.

Yes, the sex was great. I had no complaints about what happened between the sheets. In fact, I sometimes wished he would dial it back a little. He acted as if every time was the first time.

But I didn't want to live like this anymore. Sex and money, and nothing else.

After breakfast, Cary left for work.

I waited until the sound of his car engine had faded into the distance before calling Tanya back.

"Cary's left for the office," I said when she answered.

"I need to see you. There are new papers for you to sign."

“More papers? I thought I’d signed everything already.”

Tanya didn’t snort—a lady like her never would—but the slow, drawn-out way she spoke made her scorn perfectly clear. “You’re the one who changed the sum. That required my lawyer to draft a new agreement. If you don’t wish to sign, that’s perfectly fine with me, as long as you agree to take the original amount.”

“Nope,” I said immediately. “I’ll sign. Where should we meet?”

“Kingfisher Park. Tonight, at seven.”

Why did that address sound so familiar?

“Don’t be late.”

She hung up.

Frowning at my screen, I scrolled through my call log until I remembered. Kingfisher Park was where Lochlan had told me to meet him. Also tonight, as it turned out, but at eight o’clock.

I went upstairs to pack the few things I had left, then booked a one-way flight out of the country.

It was scheduled for the day the divorce could be made public. I had no intention of being there to face the full force of Cary's fury when he found out he'd been divorced.

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Billionaire Boss Nah, Just a possessive husband!

Chapter 47:

I drove out to my parents' house.

I hadn't been on the road for more than a few minutes when my phone rang.

“Were you taking a nap?” Cary asked.

It was a trick question, and we both knew it. Was it Jenna who had tattled to him?

I tapped the car horn—a short, sharp beep—picturing him wincing and pulling the phone away from his ear. “I’m driving,” I said. “On my way to my parents’.”

“To drop off the suit?”

Right. I’d told him I bought the suit for my dad. I glanced at the garment bag on the passenger seat. “Yeah.”

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“Give them my best,” Cary said, and then he hung up.

My parents lived in a modest house in the suburbs. Cary had offered to buy them a bigger place after we got married, but they had both refused.

When I arrived, my father was out. Mum was surprised to see me. “It’s the middle of the week. Don’t you have work?”

“I took the day off. Just a bit of a cold coming on.” I touched my throat for effect and gave a little fake cough.

“You don’t look after yourself properly. Your face is all thin.” Mum reached out and cupped my cheek. “Is Cary not treating you well?”

A mother always knows. No matter how much I tried to hide it, she could always tell.

“What? Of course he is. If he ever dared to treat me badly, I’d divorce him,” I said, joking.

Mum didn’t say anything to that.

I changed the subject and started chatting about other things. Being a coward, I planned to tell my parents about the divorce only after everything was settled, to spare them from worrying about me too soon.

“Have you had lunch?” Mum asked.

“Yeah, I have.”

“Oh.” She looked disappointed.

“But I could manage a little something,” I added.

Mum’s face lit up. She stood and headed into the kitchen.

I followed her. “I’m going on a trip in a couple of weeks. Hiking in the Askja region. There’s no signal there. No calls, no internet. So I thought I should give you a heads-up.”

This way, after the divorce became public, she wouldn’t jump to the conclusion that Cary had murdered me when she couldn’t get through.

“What’s so fun about hiking in a caldera?” Mum said. “There’s nothing there except lava.”

“Yeah, well, you’re the one who’s constantly telling me to get off my arse and exercise. There’s no better exercise than hiking for miles through no-man’s-land. Anyway, I’ll bring you back a necklace made of volcanic rock. Do you think Dad would want pumice stones? I hear they make soap from mineral mud. Maybe he’d like some of that.”

Mum turned around and narrowed her eyes at me. “What’s wrong?”

“What? Nothing.”

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Billionaire Boss Nah, Just a possessive husband!

Chapter 48:

“You prattle when you’re nervous, and you’re prattling now.” Mum took my hand and led me out of the kitchen and back to the living room. “Sit. Talk to me.”

I had to swallow the lump rising in my throat. Mum knew me so well it was impossible to hide anything from her.

“Is it Cary? Are things not going well between you two?”

“No, everything’s fine.” Feeling a pang of guilt, I looked away, then forced myself to meet her gaze.

Mum’s face scrunched up. “Oh, my poor Cinny.”

“No, really, Mum, everything’s fine,” I insisted, feeling tears sting the back of my eyes.

Mum pulled me into a tight hug. “My baby.”

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The tears fell, and I couldn’t stop them. “I’m fine, really. I just miss you and Dad, that’s all.”

Mum leaned back. “Maybe he wasn’t the right choice for you. I kept thinking, if my damn heart hadn’t conked out on me three years ago, you wouldn’t have had to marry him.”

“It’s not what you think. I married him because he loves me and I love him. The timing was just a coincidence.”

Mum looked at me with eyes that said she knew the truth but didn't want to hurt me by saying it out loud. She sighed. "Do you really love him?"

"Of course." I squirmed on the sofa. "Anyway, that's not why I'm here. Portia and I are going on the trip together. I'll give you a number where you can reach me. It's for the hotel we've booked."

"You're going with Portia? Not Cary?"

"Cary's... busy with work. There's an acquisition deal going on, and it's all hands on deck."

"Then how come you are free to travel?"

Shit. I'd forgotten I hadn't told Mum I'd resigned from the company. Another bombshell waiting to drop.

"I've got weeks of unused leave piled up. And my part of the project's done anyway." I stood and headed back into the kitchen. "Come on, I've got a hankering for Cumberland sausage. Is there any leftover in the fridge?"

Despite having had a full lunch, I stuffed myself, just so my mouth would be too busy to talk, thus evading any more of Mum's questions.

I hugged her and kissed her goodbye on the doorstep, then got in my car.

The bright smile I'd pasted on my face fell away the moment Mum's figure disappeared from the rear-view mirror. I softly bumped my forehead on the steering wheel and groaned.

The resignation, the divorce, the private arrangement with Tanya... how was I going to explain all of it to Mum?

She'd never forgive herself if she knew I'd essentially sold myself to Cary for the money. I doubted she'd be any happier to learn that even that arrangement had come to an end, all because Cary's mother didn't think I was good enough. What if the news, when it finally broke, gave her another heart attack?

I'd never forgive myself if that happened.

"Any ideas?" I asked my reflection in the mirror.

It just stared back, blank and unhelpful.

One step at a time. I'd just have to drag it out for as long as I could.

I keyed the address for Kingfisher Park into the GPS.

Maybe if things went well tonight, I wouldn't have to deliver the bombshell about losing my job just yet.

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Billionaire Boss Nah, Just a possessive husband!

Chapter 49:

I arrived at Kingfisher Park a little before seven.

The five-star luxury resort had been converted from a sprawling, historic mansion, with a modern wing added on. It occupied three hundred acres of parkland, featuring a championship golf course, an award-winning spa, and multiple fine dining restaurants.

Outside, it was all natural beauty; inside, understated opulence. As soon as I stepped into the lobby, I spotted the Grant family driver. He came forward, greeted me, then led me through a maze of twisting corridors until we reached a room, where he opened the door for me.

I went in. It was a tea room, filled with the mingled scents of tea and perfume.

Tanya Grant sat there, wearing a dark green dress, every bit the elegant, noble matriarch.

“Sit down,” she said, tilting her chin up.

“I thought we were here to sign the agreement. Where is it?” I had no intention of humouring her pretentious airs, so I got straight to the point as soon as I sat down.

“What’s the hurry? Have some tea first, then we can chat properly.”

I raised a sceptical eyebrow.

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I glanced at the tea in front of me, picking it up to examine it closely. “You haven’t poisoned this, have you?”

She let out a derisive sound. “If you’re afraid it’s poisoned, then don’t drink it.”

I set the cup down and pushed it away. She was right—probably best not to.

She gave another scornful laugh, then started in on her usual sarcasm. “Accepting the refreshment offered by one’s host is the simple protocol of the civilised world. But then, I forget myself. One cannot expect someone from your background to grasp the nuances of decorum. You’ve—”

“Oh, give it a rest. That line is so old. Aren’t you tired of it? If we’ve got business to do, let’s get on with it. Stop wasting time.” I cut in rudely.

Tanya Grant’s face turned livid with anger.

She pulled out a document and slid it across the table. “Sign it.”

I picked it up.

It was supposed to be about a change in the payment amount—something that could have been covered in a single page—but they had stretched it out to over ten pages full of legal fluff. The dense language was giving me a headache.

I set the document down. “I need to go over this with my lawyer. I will give you an answer by tomorrow noon.”

“That will not do. If you have any problems with it, tell me now, and I will make the changes.”

You would change it just like that? Then how about I draft a new version?

“Absolutely not. It has to be my version.”

“But you just said you could make changes. Now you’re saying it has to be your way? What is that supposed to mean?”

“It means you are not leaving until you sign it today,” Tanya Grant said.

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Billionaire Boss Nah, Just a possessive husband!

Chapter 50:

I pretended to think it over. “Alright then, let me step out and call my lawyer. If she says it is fine, I will sign right away.”

I stood up and walked out with the contract. She didn’t stop me. The moment I was out the door, I quickened my pace without looking back.

Something didn’t feel right.

While reading those clauses buried in the dozen-plus pages, my scalp had prickled with alarm. One clause in particular stood out: If I were discovered to have an improper relationship with another man before the divorce was final, the contract would be void.

That clause hadn't been in the old contract.

I honestly had not been involved with anyone else, but that kind of thing could easily be fabricated.

Maybe I'd overestimated Tanya Grant's scruples.

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Walking through the winding corridors, my nerves were on edge, and I kept glancing over my shoulder.

The hotel was eerily quiet. I did not pass a single staff member, and the silence was unnerving.

After a while, when no one seemed to be following me, I began to relax a little.

Maybe I was being paranoid. If Tanya had wanted to use underhanded tactics, she would have done so earlier, not now when I was willingly leaving her son.

She was definitely stingy about the money she had to pay me, but I knew that for the Grant family, it was a drop in the ocean. I kept going.

Just around the next corner, and a short walk would bring me back to the main lobby.

I pulled out my phone to check the time.

7:30.

It was about time to contact Lochlan Hastings. I started typing a message: "I have arrived at the hotel. I'm at—"

Before I could finish the last word, as I was about to turn the corner, a woman in a hotel uniform bumped into me. She immediately apologised. "Oh, I'm so sorry." She reached out to steady me.

"It is fine. I am okay, really," I started to say, but before I could finish, a cold, sharp pain shot through my neck.

Within seconds, my vision began to swim.

My awareness of everything around me grew distant and hazy, as if I were falling into a deep pit. My body felt trapped, and though I wanted to struggle, I had no strength. I tried to scream for help, but no sound emerged.

The woman's lips curved into a sinister smile as she helped me stand, gripping me tighter. "Miss, are you alright? Which suite are you staying in? Over there, is it? Okay, I'll help you." She forcibly steered me down another, more isolated corridor.

Panic seized me.

Someone, please help.

I remembered the phone I'd slipped into my coat pocket when she bumped into me, the unfinished message still on the screen. Summoning all my strength, I managed to move my limp hand and reach into the pocket.

My fingers moved slowly, feeling for the keys by touch alone. I typed out "help" and pressed send.

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