

CEO's Regret After I Divorced

#Chapter 139 Something was wrong - Read CEO's Regret After I Divorced Chapter 139 Something was wrong

Chapter 139: Chapter 139 Something was wrong

Serena's POV

The cold splash of red wine hit my cream dress like an unwelcome fever dream.

I watched in horror as the stain spread rapidly across the expensive fabric, turning my elegant champagne-colored gown into a ruined mess within seconds.

"I'm so terribly sorry, Ms. Quinn!" The woman who'd spilled her drink frantically grabbed cocktail napkins from a nearby table. "I wasn't watching where I was going!"

Her desperate dabbing only seemed to make the stain worse, working the red wine deeper into the delicate material. Great. Just perfect.

A crowd quickly formed around us—nothing draws attention at a high-society event like an expensive dress being ruined. I felt my cheeks flush with embarrassment as whispers circulated through the gathering audience.

Lucian materialized through the crowd, his expression darkening momentarily before softening into practiced concern.

"Serena," he said gently, his voice dripping with solicitude that felt just a touch too rehearsed. "Don't worry about this. Let me take you to change clothes."

I shook my head, trying to maintain my dignity. "Really, it's not necessary to make such a fuss."

"The celebration is far from over," Lucian insisted, his hand finding the small of my back. "You can't leave now—it would be inappropriate. Trust me, there's a rest area in the back where we can solve this little problem."

I scanned the crowd anxiously, searching for Ryan's familiar face, but he was nowhere to be seen. Damn that important phone call. Of all the times to disappear.

With a resigned sigh, I relented. "Fine."

What choice did I have? I couldn't exactly stand around for the rest of the night with red wine seeping through my dress.

As Lucian guided me through the parting crowd, I caught several calculating looks from the women around us. Perfect gossip material: the CEO of Celestial Gems whisking away the head of Dreamland Studio for a private moment. The rumors would be flying by morning.

We'd barely made it halfway to the rest area when Celeste caught my eye from across the room. She looked concerned but was trapped in conversation with an important magazine editor.

I gave her a small nod to indicate I was fine.

Meanwhile, Lucian's assistant was already moving ahead to prepare whatever solution he had in mind. I gave him a pointed look, and nodded slightly toward where Ryan had gone.

He gave a quick nod and disappeared into the crowd.

"This is quite the unfortunate accident," Lucian murmured close to my ear as we walked. "Though I must admit, you make even wine stains look elegant."

I resisted rolling my eyes at the cheesy line. "Let's just fix this quickly so I can return to my guests."

"Your guests?" His tone carried a hint of amusement. "I believe this is my gala, Serena."

The rest area was surprisingly luxurious—more like a small apartment than a changing room. Plush couches lined one wall, while a changing screen occupied a corner. Lucian's assistant had already laid out several dresses on a chaise lounge.

I was examining them skeptically—none looked remotely my size—when the door burst open without warning.

Ryan stood in the doorway, his expression thunderous. My heart did that annoying little flip it always does when he appears unexpectedly.

"Serena, what happened?" His voice was controlled, but I could hear the tension underneath.

"Just a wine spill," I explained, relief washing over me despite myself. "Lucian offered to help me find something else to wear."

"I see." Ryan's eyes swept dismissively over the selection of dresses before he turned to Lucian with barely concealed disdain. "How thoughtful of you, West. Though it appears you don't know Serena's size at all. These wouldn't fit her."

The temperature in the room dropped several degrees as the two men stared each other down. I crossed my arms, unsure whether to be annoyed or amused by Ryan's territorial display.

Lucian's jaw tightened almost imperceptibly. Before he could respond, Ryan continued smoothly, "No need to trouble yourself further. My assistant is already bringing over a suitable replacement."

He walked to the door and held it open with exaggerated politeness. "Your guests must be wondering where you've disappeared to. I'm sure they're eager for their host's attention."

I bit my lip to keep from laughing at the blatant dismissal. Lucian looked like he'd swallowed something bitter.

"Serena," he said stiffly, ignoring Ryan completely, "I'll leave you to it, then."

Only after Lucian had left and the door closed firmly behind him did I turn to Ryan with raised eyebrows.

"Where did you disappear to earlier?" I asked.

"Phone call," he replied tersely, his eyes scanning me from head to toe as if checking for injuries beyond the wine stain. "Important but not nearly as important as what's happening here, apparently."

Ryan closed the distance between us, examining the ruined fabric with a frown. "Did that seem like an accident to you?"

"What else would it be?" I asked, though a niggles of doubt had already formed in my mind. The timing had been rather convenient for Lucian.

"You're dripping with cynicism tonight," I commented, watching him carefully. "Your hostility toward Lucian is showing, by the way. Anyone within fifty feet could feel it."

A cold smile played across his lips. "Trust me, that was me being polite."

I gave him a reproachful look but didn't press further. There was clearly history between them that Ryan wasn't sharing, and this wasn't the time or place to dig into it.

We waited in awkward silence for about ten minutes before there was a knock at the door. Ryan's assistant entered with a garment bag.

"Perfect timing," Ryan said, taking the bag and handing it to me. "I'll wait outside while you change."

I nodded gratefully. "Thank you."

Once alone, I unzipped the bag to find an elegant midnight blue dress that was exactly my size. How Ryan had managed to procure it so quickly were questions for another time.

I changed quickly, smoothing the silky material over my curves. The fit was impeccable, of course. I took a deep breath and stepped out of the rest area.

Ryan was waiting in the hallway, but the moment I emerged, I could tell something was wrong. His expression had shifted from possessive to intensely focused—his business face.

"What's happened?" I asked immediately.

"Serena." He stepped closer, his voice low and urgent. "Derek has been spotted in the vicinity. My security team just informed me."

My blood ran cold.

"I'm going to check it out with my team," Ryan continued.

Pure panic shot through me. I grabbed his arm instinctively, my fingers digging into the expensive material of his suit.

"Don't you dare," I hissed, terrified at the thought of Ryan confronting my stalker. "Last time your security team went after him, he disappeared. This isn't your personal vendetta to handle—call the police. Please."

Ryan studied my face for a long moment, his expression softening slightly at whatever he saw there. Finally, he nodded.

"Alright," he conceded. "But I want you to wait in the rest area until we know it's safe. My men will guard the door."

I released his arm, relief washing over me. "Fine. Just... be careful."

As I retreated back into the rest area, I caught a glimpse of Ryan's security detail taking positions outside. Despite the protection, a shiver ran down my spine.

Derek's appearance tonight couldn't be coincidental—not at such a high-profile event where my attendance had been publicly announced.

Source:

Chapter 140: Chapter 140 Derek has been dead

Author's POV

While Serena waited anxiously in the rest area, events were unfolding rapidly elsewhere in the hotel.

Just above the reception hall, Ryan's security team had tracked down Derek to one of the hotel rooms.

"What should we do now, Mr. Blackwood?" one of the security personnel asked Ryan through his earpiece, his voice low but urgent.

"Station men at every exit," Ryan commanded, his voice decisive as he paced the corridor. "Cover the windows too. And call the police—report suspected gambling activities in the room."

Ryan knew this accusation would bring a swift police response, even without concrete evidence. Once Derek was in custody, at least he'd be off the streets. Most importantly, Serena would be safe from the man who'd been terrorizing her for weeks.

Within minutes, police sirens wailed outside the hotel, their piercing cry cutting through the elegant atmosphere of the gala below. Blue and red lights flashed against the building's glass exterior, creating an eerie dance of colors.

Lucian West's eyebrow arched slightly at the commotion. He set down his champagne flute with a soft clink and summoned his assistant with a discreet gesture, his manicured fingers barely moving.

"Where's Derek?" he demanded, tension evident in his usually smooth voice. A muscle twitched near his temple—a rare sign of distress from the normally composed CEO.

The assistant hesitated, sweat beading on his upper lip. "He should still be in his hotel room, sir. I explicitly warned him not to leave unless absolutely necessary."

Lucian's jaw tightened, his composure slipping momentarily. His fingers gripped his empty glass with enough force to nearly shatter it. "Something's wrong. Check on him immediately."

After taking two steps toward the exit, Lucian paused, seeming to reconsider.

His eyes darted around the room, calculating. "Get Derek out of there," he ordered in an urgent whisper. "Use force if necessary. And make sure nobody traces him back to us. Not a single connection, understand?"

His assistant nodded and hurried away, moving with practiced discretion through the crowd of laughing socialites and business associates who remained oblivious to the drama unfolding.

Lucian didn't follow. Instead, he returned to the gala, casually picking up a fresh drink while calculating his next move.

Ice clinked against crystal as he swirled the amber liquid. His instincts told him Derek had been discovered by Ryan Blackwood's people.

Going upstairs himself would only confirm the connection between them—a connection Lucian couldn't afford to have exposed.

Ryan had been suspicious of his motives for weeks.

If Derek fell into Ryan's hands, the consequences would be disastrous for Lucian's carefully constructed plans involving both Serena Quinn and Celestial Gems.

Despite the approaching police, Lucian remained confident.

His men outnumbered Ryan's in this venue. If it came down to a confrontation, he held the advantage in this particular playing field.

Within minutes, his confidence was rewarded.

His assistant returned with welcome news, leaning in close enough that his breath carried the scent of mint and anxiety. "We've extracted him, sir. Derek is secure."

By the time police officers burst into the hotel room, weapons drawn and voices raised, they found nothing but rumpled sheets and empty glasses still warm to the touch.

Lucian swirled his drink, his eyes betraying a cold ruthlessness that contradicted his polished exterior.

The chandelier light caught in his glass, casting prism-like reflections across his face. He leaned close to his assistant, voice barely audible above the orchestra.

"Take care of it. Permanently."

The assistant gave an almost imperceptible nod before disappearing into the crowd once more, his shoulders set with grim purpose.

Meanwhile, Derek was being shuttled between vehicles, each transfer taking him further from the pursuing security teams.

First a black sedan, then a taxi, and finally a nondescript delivery van. By the third switch, he believed they'd successfully evaded capture.

Slumped against the van's interior wall, Derek gasped for breath, sweat beading on his forehead and soaking through his expensive shirt despite the cool night air filtering through the van's vents.

As darkness settled outside, anxiety gnawed at him like a physical presence. Ryan Blackwood had personally targeted him—would Lucian still protect him after this mess?

"Where exactly is Lucian sending me?" Derek asked the man in the passenger seat, trying to mask his growing unease with a casual tone that sounded hollow even to his own ears.

The man turned, his face half-illuminated by passing headlights, revealing a cold smile that didn't reach his eyes. "Somewhere you won't need to worry about anything ever again."

Derek caught the icy glint in the man's eyes and felt a sudden chill race down his spine. His fingers instinctively clutched the leather seat beneath him. Something wasn't right.

"But Mr. West promised me money," Derek protested, his voice rising with desperation, cracking slightly at the end. "Enough to start over abroad. That was our agreement—fifty thousand dollars!"

"Shut up," the man snapped, his patience clearly wearing thin. "Just sit tight. We're almost there." His hand moved slightly, revealing the outline of what appeared to be a weapon holstered under his jacket.

Derek peered through the window at the landscape rushing past.

The city lights had disappeared, replaced by empty fields and occasional skeletal trees silhouetted against the night sky—desolate terrain without witnesses.

The road beneath them had changed from smooth asphalt to uneven gravel, each bump sending a jolt of terror through Derek's increasingly panicked mind.

After fifteen more minutes of tense silence, broken only by Derek's increasingly labored breathing, the van finally stopped with a crunch of tires on loose stone.

Derek's heart hammered against his ribs as panic set in, the metallic taste of fear filling his mouth.

"Why are we stopping? What's happening?" he demanded, voice cracking as he pressed himself against the door, desperately searching for a handle that wasn't there.

No one bothered to answer. Two burly men grabbed him by the arms, their fingers digging painfully into his flesh, and dragged him from the van.

His expensive leather shoes scraped helplessly against gravel as he tried and failed to gain purchase.

The passenger from earlier approached with something metallic glinting in his hand—a syringe catching the moonlight. "I found you a nice, quiet spot," he said casually, as if discussing the weather. "If your ghost comes haunting, don't blame me. Just following orders from above." The needle plunged into Derek's neck with practiced precision.

Derek opened his mouth to scream, but the sound died in his throat as whatever drug they'd injected took immediate effect.

His body suddenly went limp, muscles failing him all at once as he crumpled to the ground beneath the cold, indifferent stars that witnessed his final moments.

Source: