

CEO's Regret After I Divorced - Chapter 241

Serena's POV

I stood in the spotlight, surrounded by loved ones and elegant strangers, my heart thundering against my ribs as the music suddenly shifted. Ryan appeared, wheeling in an elaborate birthday cake, his eyes never leaving mine as if I were the only person in this crowded ballroom.

"Serena, time to make a wish," he said, voice impossibly tender.

I nodded, joining my hands and closing my eyes. When I squeezed my eyes shut, I thought about wishing for this newfound family connection to last forever, for my memories to continue returning, for...

Suddenly, the room plunged into darkness. When I opened my eyes, confused, a single spotlight illuminated Ryan and me, isolating us in a pool of light while the crowd faded into shadowy silhouettes.

"Maya?" I gasped, spotting my best friend emerging from the darkness, her face glowing with barely contained excitement. In her hands gleamed a small velvet box, radiating significance. "How did you—when did you get here?"

She simply smiled, eyes suspiciously moist, and handed the box to Ryan with ceremonial precision. My breath caught as Ryan extracted a stunning blue sapphire ring that caught the light in hypnotic ways. Somehow, he was also holding a bouquet of lilies—my favorites—their fragrance enveloping us in this magical moment.

Behind us, the massive screen flickered to life, Ryan's voice floating through the speakers with surprising vulnerability.

"I met you three years ago through what I thought was pure chance," his recorded voice declared, rich with emotion I'd never heard from him before. The screen filled with images—photos of us that I didn't even remember being taken. Candid moments: me laughing at something off-camera, Ryan's face soft with an expression I was only now learning to recognize as love, the two of us dancing at some formal event, lost in our own world.

"How fortunate I was," the recording continued as more images flashed by, "that you once agreed to be my wife."

My vision blurred as I watched our story unfold in photographs—moments I'd forgotten during my amnesia and treasured memories that had slowly returned. There was one of us at what looked like a charity gala, Ryan's hand protective on my lower back as I spoke animatedly to someone out of frame. Another showed us in casual clothes, sitting on a blanket in what looked like Hyde Park, sharing what appeared to be takeout containers and laughing.

“My stubbornness and pride cost me you,” the voice continued, and I glanced at the real Ryan, standing beside me in the spotlight, his jaw tight with emotion as he watched me take in our history. “Through endless days without you, I finally understood that you’re not just someone I love—you’re the only one I’ll ever love. The only one I want to love.”

The lump in my throat grew painful as more photos appeared: us at the hospital after my accident, Ryan’s face haggard with worry as he held my hand while I slept. Photos of him visiting during my recovery, bringing flowers, books, anything that might help me remember. Pictures I realized someone must have taken without our knowledge, documenting his devotion during the hardest period of both our lives.

“Serena, we’ve weathered countless storms together,” his voice continued, impossibly gentle. “And now, I long to stand beside you forever.”

Ryan dropped to one knee as the screen went dark and a soft spotlight enveloped us like a blessing. The world contracted until nothing existed outside our bubble of light. The Quinn family, Maya, and hundreds of London’s elite watched with bated breath, but they might as well have been miles away.

“Serena,” Ryan said, his live voice matching the earnest tone of the recording, “I’ve spent so much time imagining the perfect proposal, the perfect wedding. Every scenario seemed inadequate.”

He extended both the ring and lilies toward me, his hands remarkably steady while mine trembled.

“But tonight, surrounded by your family and friends during this celebration of your life, I realized—there will never be a more perfect moment than this one.” His eyes, usually so controlled, shimmered with naked emotion. “Serena Quinn, will you marry me?”

Tears spilled down my cheeks before I could stop them. I tried to speak but couldn’t find my voice immediately. The room’s silence stretched, electric with anticipation. I extended my right hand, watched it tremble in the spotlight, and finally managed to whisper:

“Yes.” Then, stronger, my voice carrying across the ballroom: “Yes, Ryan. Always yes.”

The room erupted in applause as Ryan slid the ring onto my finger, its weight both unfamiliar and perfectly right. He rose in one fluid motion and pulled me into his arms, his heartbeat strong and steady against mine, his warmth enveloping me completely. Around us, the applause continued, but it felt distant, unimportant compared to the way he was holding me like I was something precious and irreplaceable.

“I love you,” he whispered against my ear, his voice rough with emotion. “I love you so much it terrifies me sometimes.”

“I love you too,” I whispered back, surprised by how easily the words came, how right they felt. “I think I never stopped, even when I couldn’t remember why.”

Through my happy tears, I glimpsed Maya openly weeping nearby, clapping with abandon. Beside her stood Ethan, his expression complex as he gently wiped away her tears. Something passed between them in that moment—a charged look that made me wonder if another romance might be brewing.

“You planned all this in secret,” I murmured against Ryan’s ear, savoring his warmth. “What happened to your ice-cold CEO reputation?”

His low laugh vibrated through me as his arms tightened.

“Mrs. Blackwood,” he whispered, the title sending shivers down my spine, “I look forward to spending the rest of my life with you.”

As we stood embracing in the spotlight, surrounded by applause and well-wishes, I realized that my birthday wish had already come true. Against all odds—amnesia, separation, misunderstanding—we’d found our way back to each other. And this time, I knew with absolute certainty, we’d get it right.

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Serena looked up, biting her lip nervously. “Are you mad? I know I should have told you sooner.”

I flopped dramatically onto her bed, scattering her perfectly organized pile of silk scarves. “Hell yes, I’m mad! We’re supposed to be best friends. You know the color of my first period underwear, for crying out loud.”

“Maya!” Serena’s cheeks flushed crimson as she threw a pillow at me.

“What? It’s true!” I caught the pillow, hugging it to my chest. “But honestly? I get why you kept it quiet. Must’ve been terrifying, suddenly remembering you have this whole other life.”

The tension in Serena's shoulders visibly eased. "I was scared," she admitted quietly. "What if everyone just wanted me for my family connections? What if I couldn't live up to the Quinn name?"

I sat up, serious now. "Hey, you built Dreamland from nothing. You made people believe in your designs because they're brilliant, not because of some fancy last name."

"Thank you," she whispered, eyes suddenly misty. "I don't know what I'd do without you."

"Crash and burn, obviously," I quipped, making her laugh. "Speaking of which, you should stay here longer. Get to know your family properly. I'll handle everything at the studio."

Serena smiled gratefully. "You sure? What about the Carter Collection deadline?"

"Please, I can manage Celeste and the team with my eyes closed. Besides, after that epic proposal, you and Ryan deserve some quality time. Though fair warning—if he hurts you again, I'm flying back here to personally remove his testicles."

"Maya!" Serena was laughing now, doubled over.

I checked my watch and groaned. "Shit, I need to get going or I'll miss my flight."

"I'll call a car—" Serena started, but was interrupted by a light knock at the door.

Ethan Quinn stood in the doorway, casually elegant in dark jeans and a tailored blazer. The family resemblance between him and Serena was striking now that I knew to look for it—same warm brown eyes, same elegant posture.

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Twenty minutes later, I found myself in the passenger seat of Ethan's sleek Aston Martin, surrounded by tense silence as we crawled through London's evening traffic. My fingers

drummed nervously against my thigh as I stared out the window, hyper-aware of his every movement.

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“Ethan, do you even know what you’re asking?” I narrowed my eyes, feeling predatory and vulnerable all at once. He couldn’t see my expression with his attention on driving, which somehow made me braver.

“I do know,” he sighed softly. “Maya, I’ve wanted to apologize to you. Everything happened so suddenly back then, and I wasn’t thinking clearly. But lately, I...”

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Before he could respond, I grabbed his collar and pulled him toward me. “Ethan, you better mean what you say, understand?”

His eyes widened as I closed the distance between us, pressing my lips briefly against his—just enough to taste him before pulling away. I turned to face the windshield, suddenly feeling shy despite my boldness.

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“Serena,” Ryan’s voice softened as he took my hand. “Let’s get you home first. I’ll handle all of this.”

Back at the Blackwood mansion, I immediately called my family to let them know we’d arrived safely. Then I dialed Maya, desperately needing my best friend’s perspective.

“Serena!” Maya practically screamed when I told her I was back. “Thank god! I’ve been dying without you here.”

“Are you at home? I can come over,” she offered immediately.

I smiled, picturing her already grabbing her keys. “No need. I’ll be at the studio tomorrow. I brought you gifts.”

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I raised an eyebrow, surprised. “Really? I hadn’t heard anything about this.”

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“True,” I agreed, “but Lucian facing the Vergara family alone must be difficult.”

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“Why keep good news secret?” I defended myself. “Besides, Ethan has never shown interest in anyone before you. You’re special to him. Trust me, someone like my brother would never betray you—I guarantee it.”

As I continued advocating for my brother, Maya changed the subject. “While you two were away, Celestial Gems and Kane have been at each other’s throats. If the Vergara family hadn’t stepped in, Kane wouldn’t have had a chance of standing again.”

I raised an eyebrow, surprised. “Really? I hadn’t heard anything about this.”

“I bet Ryan didn’t want you to worry,” Maya explained. “Besides, Celestial Gems fighting Kane is just free entertainment for you guys—no need to get involved.”

“True,” I agreed, “but Lucian facing the Vergara family alone must be difficult.”

“Serena, you worry too much!” Maya chided. “Ryan knows exactly what he’s doing. He’ll step in when necessary. Even as an outsider, I’m excited to see what happens next. Now that Ryan’s back, Kane doesn’t stand a chance, legs or no legs.”

Her confidence reassured me. “Fine, I’ll stop asking questions. How’s the studio doing?”

“Same as always. Nothing I couldn’t handle,” Maya said proudly.

“Good. Let’s talk more tomorrow then,” I said, feeling exhaustion creep into my bones.

“Don’t forget my presents!” she reminded me before hanging up.

Ryan’s POV

The moment I stepped into my office, I could feel the tension. Every employee seemed to walk on eggshells, watching me cautiously as I strode through the halls. My two-week absence might as well have been two years with how much had changed.

“Give me the complete rundown,” I ordered Simon as soon as my office door closed. “Don’t spare details.”

Simon handed me a thick folder. “Kane’s recovery has been faster than any doctor predicted. The Vergara specialists apparently used an experimental treatment that’s proven remarkably effective.”

“Remarkably convenient, you mean,” I muttered, flipping through medical reports that seemed suspiciously optimistic.

“Yes, sir.” Simon cleared his throat. “While you were away, Kane managed to transfer a significant portion of his Blackwood shares to Tiffany before we could freeze all his assets.”

“How?” I slammed the folder down, my patience wearing thin.

“He used a shell company we weren’t aware of.” Simon looked uncomfortable. “Our legal team is investigating, but—”

“But by the time they figure it out, Kane and Tiffany will be married, and it won’t matter.” I completed his thought, leaning back in my chair.

“Keep close surveillance on Kane,” I finally ordered. “I want to know everywhere he goes, everyone he meets. Don’t let him pull any more stunts without me knowing about it first.”

“Yes, Boss.”

After Simon left, I poured myself two fingers of whiskey, despite it being barely noon. The burning liquid did nothing to ease the cold anger settling in my chest. Kane had made his move while I was distracted with Serena in London. Smart play.

My phone buzzed with a text from Serena: “At the studio with Maya. Don’t worry, I’m sitting down.”

I smiled despite myself. Even with everything going on, she still managed to ease my mind. I quickly typed back: “Just for a few hours. Coming home to check on you at lunch.”

Setting down my phone, I pulled up the latest financial reports. Kane's bold move would impress shareholders, but I had something he would never have—Serena and our child. The thought of our growing family strengthened my resolve. I wouldn't let Kane threaten what mattered most.

"Simon!" I called, already formulating my counterattack. "Get me Lucian West on the phone. It's time Celestial Gems and Blackwood formed a united front."

Kane wanted war? I'd show him what happened when he challenged a man with everything to fight for.

Serena's POV

I stretched out on our massive king bed, grumbling as I tried to find a comfortable position. Being eight months pregnant made everything difficult, especially sleeping. Ryan had been gone for hours now, rushing off to the office after barely unpacking. I couldn't blame him though—Kane's miraculous recovery had thrown everything into chaos.

My phone buzzed with another notification about Kane and Tiffany. God, they were everywhere! I scrolled through the photos of them looking absolutely perfect together at some charity event, her hand possessively on his arm while he stood—actually stood—beaming like he'd conquered the world. The caption announced their wedding date, barely a month away.

"Couldn't even wait for the ink to dry on his medical clearance," I muttered, tossing my phone aside.

I must have dozed off eventually because I woke to Ryan sliding into bed beside me, his cologne mingling with the faint scent of whiskey.

"You're home late," I mumbled, my voice thick with sleep.

He pulled me gently against his chest, his hand finding its way to my belly. "Sorry. There was a lot to catch up on."

"Kane?" I asked, though I already knew the answer.

"That bastard's been busy." Ryan's voice was low, dangerous. "He's marrying Tiffany next month."

I shifted to face him in the darkness. "I saw. Maya thinks we shouldn't worry."

"Maya doesn't understand what's at stake," he said, but there was no heat in his words. "With Tiffany's backing, Kane has actual leverage now. She's already using the shares he transferred to her."

"How the hell did he manage that?" I pushed myself up on my elbow, suddenly wide awake. "I thought those transactions were frozen."

Ryan sighed, running a hand through his hair. “Let’s just say Kane’s more resourceful than I gave him credit for.”

“So what now?” I asked, feeling a flutter of anxiety that had nothing to do with the baby kicking.

“Now we play the game better than they do.” His voice hardened. “I’ve already put Simon on surveillance duty. Kane won’t be able to sneeze without me knowing about it.”

The next morning, I headed to Dreamland despite Ryan’s protests. I needed normalcy, needed to feel useful beyond just being an incubator, even if only for a few hours.

Maya squealed when I walked in, immediately abandoning her sketches to rush over and hug me—as much as my belly would allow.

“You’re glowing!” she declared, stepping back to admire the London gifts I’d brought her. “And this bag is absolutely perfect!”

I smiled, sinking gratefully onto our studio couch. “I thought it would match that ridiculous blouse you bought last month.”

“The one you said made me look like a walking disco ball?” Maya struck a pose. “It’s called fashion, darling.”

Her expression suddenly changed to one of mock outrage. “Wait a minute—why hasn’t your brother brought me anything? He promised to visit ‘soon,’ and it’s been weeks! Not a single text!”

I laughed. “Don’t be dramatic. Ethan’s probably buried in work right now.”

“Men!” Maya threw her hands up. “The moment they think they’ve got you, they stop trying!”

“That’s not fair,” I protested. “If I weren’t so pregnant and miserable, I’d send you to London myself to see him properly.”

Maya rolled her eyes spectacularly. “I was joking! But look at you, taking your brother’s side over your best friend who’s been through hell and back with you!”

I grabbed her hand and pulled her down beside me. “Come on, when you marry into the Quinn family, we’ll all be relatives anyway.”

“Stop!” Maya groaned. “Seriously, does your brother have some terminal illness I don’t know about? Why are you so desperate to marry us off?”

“Don’t say that!” I laughed. “Ethan’s perfectly healthy—always has been. He’s just… never shown interest in anyone before you.”

Maya's expression softened. "Fine, no more jokes. But you need to focus on yourself right now. You're due in a month, Serena! No more coming to the studio unless it's absolutely necessary. When this baby arrives, I want to be the godmother!"

My eyes twinkled as I saw my opportunity. "Wouldn't that be confusing? Shouldn't the baby call you 'Aunt Maya' instead?"

"There you go again!" Maya's face flushed bright red as she swatted at my arm.

I laughed, feeling lighter than I had in days.

CEO's Regret After I Divorced - Chapter 244

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Serena’s POV

Soon enough, Kane and Tiffany’s wedding day arrived.

The ceremony was held at Serenity Valley Manor, with New York’s elite filling the guest list. The venue was transformed into something out of a fairy tale—every detail meticulously planned and executed with no expense spared. Crystal chandeliers hung from white silk tents, while champagne roses created romantic archways throughout the grounds.

Tiffany had insisted on an outdoor ceremony, claiming it would be more romantic. The entire estate bloomed with fresh, beautiful champagne roses that perfectly complemented the dreamy atmosphere she’d envisioned.

I stood there, watching the wedding spectacle unfold with a mixture of amusement and disbelief. Eight months pregnant and feeling like I could barely move, yet I wouldn’t have missed this drama for anything in the world.

“Is Lucian seriously sabotaging Kane’s wedding?” I whispered to Ryan, catching sight of the unmistakable smug smile playing on Lucian’s lips across the venue. The once-perfect outdoor ceremony had descended into chaos—first with the sound system blasting nightclub music instead of the wedding march, and now with ominous dark clouds rolling in where clear skies had been promised all week.

The chaos escalated rapidly. As the electronic dance music pounded through the speakers, several elderly guests clutched their pearls in horror. Mrs. Pemberton, the mayor's wife, nearly fainted when the bass drop hit during what should have been Tiffany's entrance. The wedding coordinator frantically gestured at the sound technicians, who seemed mysteriously unable to fix the "malfunction."

Then the sky opened up completely. What started as a few warning drops became a torrential downpour within minutes. Designer gowns worth thousands of dollars became soggy disasters as guests shrieked and ran for cover. Tiffany's elaborate updo collapsed into wet tendrils, her twenty-thousand-dollar dress clinging uncomfortably to her frame.

"My roses!" she wailed as the carefully arranged champagne roses were battered by the rain, petals scattering across the muddy ground like confetti from a broken dream.

Kane, still in his wheelchair but visibly trying to maintain dignity, barked orders at the staff. "Get everyone inside! Now!"

The migration indoors was nothing short of chaotic. Guests stumbled over each other, heels sinking into the suddenly soggy lawn, while waiters scrambled to salvage what they could of the outdoor setup. The elegant white chairs were abandoned to the storm, and the photographer looked like he might cry as his equipment got drenched.

Ryan squeezed my hand protectively, guiding me toward the covered reception area. "Let's get you inside. I don't trust this weather, and you shouldn't be standing for so long in this chaos."

"Weather that conveniently turned just as Kane was about to say his vows?" I arched an eyebrow, waddling alongside him as quickly as my condition allowed. "Even Lucian can't control Mother Nature."

Ryan's lips twitched with barely suppressed amusement. "Can't he?"

Inside the manor's grand ballroom, the scene was pure pandemonium. Soaked guests dripped onto Persian rugs while staff rushed around with towels and hair dryers. The catering team worked frantically to relocate the entire reception setup indoors, transforming what was supposed to be a cocktail space into an impromptu wedding venue.

Tiffany stood in the center of it all, mascara streaming down her cheeks, looking nothing like the radiant bride she'd planned to be. "This is a disaster! An absolute disaster!"

Kane's face had gone from red to purple as he realized the full extent of the chaos. "Where's the backup plan? Someone must have prepared for this!"

"The weather report showed clear skies all week," the wedding planner stammered, tablet in hand, clearly at a loss.

Meanwhile, Lucian stood near the bar, somehow completely dry despite the storm, casually sipping what looked like champagne. When our eyes met across the room, he raised his glass in a subtle toast before disappearing into the crowd.

“Remind me never to get on Lucian’s bad side,” I murmured, settling into a chair as Ryan draped his jacket around my shoulders, both of us watching the spectacular implosion of what was supposed to be the social event of the season.

“Something’s definitely off,” Ryan murmured, his eyes scanning the venue with the calculated precision I’d grown to recognize when he was anticipating trouble.

The ceremony pressed forward despite the gathering storm clouds. I couldn’t help but snicker watching Tiffany’s forced smile as she glided down the aisle in her designer gown. The picture-perfect bride was clearly fuming about her ruined outdoor wedding.

“If it starts pouring,” I whispered, settling into my chair, “this will be the most memorable wedding for all the wrong reasons.”

Ryan’s lips twitched. “Karma has interesting timing.”

We watched as Kane and Tiffany took their places at the altar, their body language screaming business arrangement rather than love match. The officiant droned on while Tiffany kept anxiously glancing at the darkening sky.

Then came the ring exchange—or what should have been the ring exchange. Minutes ticked by with no ring bearer appearing. The awkward silence stretched painfully across the venue.

“Where are the rings?” Kane hissed at Tiffany, barely disguising his irritation.

“How should I know?” she snapped back, her perfect bridal mask slipping.

Just when I thought it couldn’t get more awkward, a man I’d never seen before strode confidently toward the altar with a ring box in hand. The sudden change in Tiffany’s expression told me everything I needed to know.

“Oh my God,” I gasped, grabbing Ryan’s arm. “Is that—?”

“Tiffany,” the mystery man announced, loud enough for everyone to hear, “are you really going to marry this man?”

The guests around us erupted in hushed whispers. I leaned forward, not wanting to miss a word of this train wreck.

“David, what are you doing here?” Tiffany hissed, her face a mask of horror. “Get out! Now!”

Instead of retreating, this David character moved closer, opening the ring box to reveal not the wedding bands but a massive diamond engagement ring.

“I’ve never stopped loving you,” he declared, dropping to one knee as Kane’s face transformed into a thundercloud. “Give me another chance.”

I couldn’t contain my laughter, quickly disguising it as a cough when several guests glanced my way.

“An ex-boyfriend crashing the wedding with a proposal?” I whispered to Ryan. “This is better than any reality TV show!”

I caught Lucian’s expression across the room—pure satisfaction as he watched Kane’s perfect day implode. The man was enjoying every second of Kane’s humiliation.

“I wonder what’s going through Kane’s mind right now,” I murmured, rubbing my swollen belly as the baby kicked excitedly, almost like they too were enjoying the drama. “His miraculous recovery, this rushed marriage to secure the Vergara connection, and now this?”

Ryan’s eyes gleamed with something between amusement and calculation. “Sometimes you don’t need to fight your enemies directly. Just give them enough rope...”

The guests were now openly gossiping, their whispers growing louder by the second.

“An arranged marriage from the start...”

“The bride never wanted this...”

“Look at Kane’s face! He’s going to explode...”

“Bad weather, bad omens...”

I watched Tiffany’s face transition through shock, embarrassment, and then—most interestingly—a flicker of consideration as she stared at the ring David was offering.

“Tiffany,” David pleaded, his voice carrying across the stunned crowd, “will you come back to me?”

The first crack of thunder punctuated his question, as if the universe itself was demanding an answer.

Every person in that room held their breath, waiting to see if the bride would actually abandon her groom at the altar.

CEO's Regret After I Divorced - Chapter 245

Serena's POV

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Author’s POV

Tiffany grabbed the ring box and tossed it aside before the intruder could cause more trouble.

“Don’t ruin my wedding! Leave now!” Her face darkened with fury. After this spectacle, the Vergara family would become the laughingstock of New York.

“Security! Get him out! Don’t let any more uninvited guests in!” At her command, security personnel finally rushed forward, dragging David away despite his protests.

“Tiffany, don’t be angry! We can talk after you’re done here!” David shouted as they pulled him toward the exit.

“I don’t care that you’re getting married!” he continued desperately. “Tiffany! What we had was real love!”

Each declaration landed like a slap across Kane’s face, publicly humiliating him before all their guests. Tiffany took a deep breath, facing the audience’s curious stares and Kane’s thunderous expression, at a complete loss for how to explain.

“Continue,” she commanded the officiant with forced composure, attempting to salvage what remained of her dignity.

The officiant, proving worthy of Tiffany’s careful selection, quickly regained control of the ceremony, smoothing over the awkward interruption. With the ring exchange debacle behind them, they moved directly to the final vows.

“Mr. Kane, do you take this beautiful woman as your lawful wedded wife? Will you love and cherish her, for richer or poorer?” the officiant asked.

Kane inhaled deeply. This marriage was nothing but a business transaction anyway.

“I do,” he replied flatly as scattered applause rippled through the audience.

Serena couldn’t help but laugh quietly. “Kane’s quite the stoic, isn’t he?” she whispered to Ryan. This absurd wedding ceremony looked like it would finally reach its conclusion, providing excellent entertainment for the guests.

The officiant turned to Tiffany with the same question. Just as he finished speaking, thunder cracked ominously overhead. Tiffany’s expression had moved beyond merely displeased—”disaster” was the only word that could describe her wedding day.

Guests began scrambling for cover as raindrops started falling, their attention diverted from Tiffany’s response. Kane let out a derisive snort. “Are you satisfied now? This is the outdoor wedding you insisted on.”

The officiant, caught between them, trembled as the atmosphere turned frigid.

“What’s that supposed to mean?” Tiffany snapped, fury building. “I arranged every detail of this wedding myself. What did you contribute? And now you’re blaming me?”

“If you want to stand here arguing in the rain, be my guest,” Kane replied coldly before turning and walking off the platform, abandoning her.

Tiffany stood alone on the altar, rain splattering across her gown and veil. Her carefully crafted image of elegance and grace shattered in that moment, along with all her perfect wedding fantasies.

—

Ryan should have been seated at the main table representing the groom’s family. The Vergara family members had already taken their places. Instead, Ryan scanned the room and deliberately led Serena to Lucian’s table.

Lucian raised an eyebrow, not surprised but clearly amused. “Aren’t you worried about causing gossip by avoiding the main table?”

Ryan scoffed. “Everyone in New York knows about my strained relationship with Kane. Why pretend otherwise just to save his face?”

“True enough. Nobody in New York would dare criticize you anyway,” Lucian replied. “That was quite a show earlier. Did you arrange it?”

Lucian smiled cryptically. “I merely passed along some information. I’m not the one who made it happen.”

Ryan’s eyes flashed with understanding. The Vergara family clearly had its own internal divisions.

“Quite the spectacle of a wedding. Kane will definitely need several drinks after this,” Lucian remarked.

“Indeed,” Ryan agreed, his smile tinged with mockery.

The remainder of the reception proceeded without further incidents, though Kane was cornered by Tiffany’s brother, who kept pressing drinks on him. Tiffany’s warning glances proved ineffective, and Kane only escaped by making an excuse.

Back in the private room, he loosened his tie, seething with anger he couldn’t publicly express.

After their exhausting day, the newly married couple wasted no time confronting each other.

“How touching that you have an ex-boyfriend still pining for you,” Kane remarked sarcastically, finally releasing his pent-up anger.

“Stop with the passive-aggressive comments, Kane,” Tiffany shot back. “I knew nothing about this—someone clearly set us up! Do you think I enjoyed having my wedding ruined like that?”

Their first argument as a married couple ended with them sleeping in separate rooms.

Despite their quarrel, Kane dutifully accompanied Tiffany to her family home for the traditional post-wedding visit. Mr. Vergara accepted their tea offering without mentioning the wedding fiasco.

“Tiffany, this is the heirloom jewelry you’ve always wanted. I had it restored—consider it your wedding gift,” Mr. Vergara said.

Tiffany opened the box to find the family treasures she’d coveted for years. Her mood instantly brightened as she thanked her father profusely.

“Now, you two run along. Kane, come with me to my study,” Mr. Vergara instructed, standing up.

Once upstairs, Mr. Vergara poured Kane tea personally. “Don’t be so formal, Kane. Now that you’ve married Tiffany, we’re family.”

Kane forced a smile, recognizing the calculated intent behind the older man’s friendliness.

“Father, since we’re family now, please speak plainly about what you want. Whatever you need, I’ll do my best to deliver—even if it means walking through fire.”

Mr. Vergara, pleased with Kane’s response, patted his shoulder approvingly.

“It’s nothing so dramatic, Kane. I just think it’s a waste for your Blackwood Group shares to sit idle. I’m planning to expand Vergara’s overseas markets, and if you could assist us using your Blackwood shares, I’d put you and Tiffany in charge of our international operations. You two could build something truly remarkable together.”

Like the shrewd businessman he was, Mr. Vergara dangled the promise of power before demanding Kane’s shares. Yet the offer was undeniably tempting.

“Kane, as you’ve seen, Tiffany is my only daughter. Everything valuable I have will eventually go to you both,” Mr. Vergara continued when Kane hesitated.

His message was clear: surrender your Blackwood shares, and we’ll achieve greatness together.

Kane’s eyes glinted with interest. This proposition was attractive, especially since Ryan maintained such tight control over Blackwood that Kane had no real influence there. Perhaps trusting his father-in-law was his best move.

“Father, I understand completely. Since we’re family now, I fully support your decision,” Kane replied.

Mr. Vergara’s smile deepened, increasingly pleased with his new son-in-law.

The two men talked at length before Kane finally left the study, his mind racing with possibilities.