

CEO's Regret After I Divorced – Chapter 246

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.

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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.

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Ryan's POV

I'd never imagined Kane would be this bold. Sitting at my desk reviewing the reports Simon had just delivered, I could feel my jaw clenching tighter with each page I turned. That bastard was actually using his Blackwood Group shares to broker deals with the Vergara family.

If any of these half-baked schemes failed—which they inevitably would with Kane's track record—it wouldn't just be his reputation on the line. The entire Blackwood Group could face serious blowback.

I caught Simon nervously glancing at me, clearly gauging my darkening mood.

"Contact Lucian," I said, keeping my voice deliberately controlled. "I need a private meeting. Tonight."

"Right away, Mr. Blackwood," Simon nodded, quickly stepping out.

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By evening, Lucian and I sat in a private tea room downtown.

Lucian poured himself some tea with practiced elegance before finally breaking the silence.

"So, Mr. Blackwood," he said, his voice casual but eyes watchful, "what's so urgent you needed to meet in private?"

"The grudge between you and Kane," I replied, watching his reaction carefully. "It's still unresolved, isn't it?"

His hand paused mid-air, teacup halfway to his lips. He looked up at me with sudden interest.

"As if you don't already know," he said dryly.

"I've heard the details," I acknowledged, "but I also know Celestial Gems doesn't have enough influence in New York yet. And with Kane now backed by the Vergara family, you can't touch him."

Lucian scoffed. "I'll have my revenge eventually. It's not your concern."

I took a slow sip of my tea, letting the tension build. The fragrant aroma filled my senses, but it did nothing to ease the cold calculation now evident in Lucian's expression.

"Is this really all you wanted to discuss tonight?" he asked, losing patience.

"Surely you don't think I'm here to defend my so-called uncle?" I replied.

Lucian laughed harshly. "That would be the day."

"On the contrary," I set my cup down with purpose. "I want to help you, Mr. West."

His eyebrow arched in surprise. "You've always stayed clear of our feud. What changed?" His eyes narrowed. "Kane's done something, hasn't he? Something that's finally crossed your line."

He was sharp—I'd give him that.

"I see no point in hiding it," I said, leaning forward slightly. "Kane framed your parents, destroyed your family. I can provide all the evidence you need."

"Together, we can put him away sooner rather than later."

Lucian's eyes flashed with something dangerous. "You're actually willing to work with me?"

I nodded once. "Let's put our past disagreements behind us. They only happened because Kane manipulated you."

Despite my olive branch, Lucian remained cautious. I could practically see his mind working through the implications.

"Mr. Blackwood, I don't understand why you'd go this far," he said slowly. "Even if Kane's challenging your authority, couldn't you just strip him of his responsibilities? Send him to manage some distant branch office where he can't cause trouble?"

He was testing me, wanting reassurance that I wouldn't turn on him later.

I considered my words carefully before responding. Some truths needed to be shared to cement this alliance.

"Kane orchestrated the car accident that killed my parents," I said, my voice dropping to a deadly calm. "That's why I shattered his legs. Does that answer your question, Mr. West?"

Lucian froze, genuine shock registering on his face. He clearly hadn't expected this level of blood feud between uncle and nephew.

"I apologize, Mr. Blackwood. I didn't mean to bring up painful memories," he said quietly.

"It's fine. If Kane had stayed in the rehabilitation center where he belonged, I might have left him alone. But he used my grandmother's sympathy to return to New York and somehow secured shares in the Blackwood Group." My voice hardened. "Now he's married into the Vergara family, planning to leverage our company's shares for his schemes. If I let this continue, he'll destroy everything my family built."

Lucian nodded slowly. "I understand completely. Let's proceed as you suggested."

"Kane will pay dearly for what he's done. I owe that much to my parents."

—

It was well past midnight when I returned home. The moment I stepped into the living room, I spotted Serena asleep on the couch, her face peaceful despite the awkward position.

"Welcome home, Mr. Blackwood," our housekeeper greeted me quietly.

I frowned, gesturing toward Serena. "Why is she sleeping here?"

The housekeeper sighed. "Mrs. Blackwood insisted on waiting for you. None of us could persuade her otherwise."

Without another word, I removed my coat and approached her. She didn't stir at all as I moved closer—she must have been exhausted.

I carefully lifted her into my arms, carrying her upstairs to our bedroom. As I placed her on the bed, her eyes fluttered open.

"Ryan? You're home?" she murmured, rubbing her eyes and sitting up groggily.

"Why were you sleeping downstairs? You could catch cold," I chided gently, sitting beside her.

Serena smiled sleepily. "I didn't realize you'd be so late. I was wide awake earlier... I just dozed off."

"I'll be more mindful of the time next time."

I loosened my tie, feeling the day's tension still knotted in my shoulders.

"What's keeping you so busy lately?" she asked. "You're coming home later and later. I'm in the third trimester now—what if I suddenly go into labor when you're not here?"

My hands froze mid-motion, alarm shooting through me as I turned to examine her face. “Are you feeling unwell? I’ll have Dr. Lay come check on you tomorrow.”

“I was just saying,” she laughed softly. “Look how worried you got.”

Her eyes narrowed slightly as she studied my face. “You look exhausted. Have you been skipping meals again?”

Since returning from London, Serena had barely visited her studio. Not from lack of passion for her work, but because her pregnancy was now making it difficult for her to sit at a drawing table for long periods. Even the slightest strain caused her back pain. She took no chances with our baby’s wellbeing, choosing instead to rest at home.

“It’s nothing serious,” I assured her. “Just work matters.”

She hummed skeptically. “It’s Kane, isn’t it? Now that he’s married Tiffany, I bet he’s making all sorts of moves. Is dealing with him what’s wearing you down?”

I hesitated before deciding she deserved to know something. Otherwise, she’d just worry more.

“I met with Lucian tonight,” I explained, giving her an abbreviated version of our conversation.

“So you’re finally joining forces?” Her face brightened visibly. “That’s good. The sooner you deal with Kane, the sooner we can stop worrying about what he might do next.”

Relief softened her features, which was exactly what I’d hoped for.

“Exactly,” I smiled, reaching out to touch her rounded belly. “Your only job is to focus on giving me a beautiful daughter or energetic son.”

She grinned. “Yes, sir, Mr. Blackwood. How could I possibly disobey such an order?”

“Still, I’m having Dr. Lay come tomorrow for a checkup.”

Serena nodded, not arguing this time.

After a quick shower, I returned to find her already asleep again. The moment I slipped into bed, she instinctively moved closer, nestling against my chest in that way that always made her feel secure.

I couldn’t help smiling as I wrapped my arm around her waist, feeling our child between us, and thinking that everything I was doing—everything I would ever do—was to protect them both.

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Maya's POV

I slammed the phone down so hard the receiver practically bounced, then switched it off with a decisive click. There. Let's see how you like being ignored, Ethan Quinn.

My fingers drummed against my desk as irritation bubbled up inside me. Men are all the same! The moment they think they've got you figured out, they disappear like smoke. I could practically hear his voice in my head: "Sorry Maya, work's been crazy..." Work, work, work. What am I, chopped liver?

I started pacing, my heels creating a staccato rhythm that somehow matched my racing pulse. He promised he'd visit. PROMISED. How many weeks ago was that now? Three? Four?

If I wanted to date a ghost, I would have signed up for paranormal romance, not whatever this is supposed to be.

The rational part of my brain—the annoying little voice that sounded suspiciously like Serena—whispered that he probably really was swamped with Quinn family business. But the irrational part of my brain, which was currently winning this internal war, wanted to march straight to London and give him a piece of my mind.

Maybe show up at his office in my best dress, just to remind him what he's been too "busy" to see.

Holy shit!

I collapsed onto my office couch and grabbed a throw pillow, pressing it over my face. This is ridiculous. I'm a successful, independent woman having a meltdown over a man who probably doesn't even realize he's in trouble.

But God, it would feel so good to make him grovel just a little bit.

Ethan's POV

I stared at my phone screen, the "Call Ended" notification mocking me. This had to be the twentieth time Maya had hung up on me this month.

Nobody had warned me relationships would be this complicated. The boardroom negotiations I handled daily suddenly seemed like child's play compared to navigating Maya's expectations and my own fumbling attempts at... whatever this was supposed to be.

After a sleepless night of tossing and turning, I made my decision before dawn broke. A few quick calls to reschedule meetings, a hasty briefing with my assistant, and I was booked on the earliest flight to New York.

I arrived empty-handed—a rookie mistake that hit me the moment I stepped off the plane. Spotting a flower shop near Dreamland Studio, I ducked inside, hoping to salvage the situation.

“Red roses, please,” I told the shop assistant, who smiled knowingly as she gathered a stunning bouquet.

“Would you like to include a note, sir?” She handed me a small card.

I froze, pen hovering over the blank space. What exactly was I supposed to write? I wasn’t good at this sort of thing—never had been.

The florist noticed my hesitation. “First time buying roses for your girlfriend?” Her smile was gentle, understanding. “If you can’t think of what to say, you could always write the meaning of red roses.” She pointed to a poster on the wall.

There it was, simple and direct: “I love you.”

My mouth went dry. Despite dating Maya for months, I’d never actually said those three words out loud. Our entire relationship had been her initiative from the start—she’d asked me out, made the first move, said “I like you” first. I’d just nodded and followed along, content to have her in my life without ever verbalizing what I felt.

Our daily phone calls typically featured Maya chattering about her day, her designs, her frustrations with difficult clients, while I listened, offering occasional “hmms” and “I sees.” I genuinely enjoyed these conversations—hearing her voice was the highlight of my day—but Maya often accused me of being dismissive or uninterested. How could I explain that I wasn’t good with words, that listening to her was enough for me?

“Sir?” The florist’s voice pulled me from my thoughts. “They’re just three little words. Women like hearing them, you know.” She winked. “Loving someone is like tending a garden—you need to give warmth, express your feelings. That’s how love grows.”

With a deep breath, I carefully wrote “I love you” on the card, my hand trembling slightly.

“Should I add anything else?” I asked, feeling strangely vulnerable.

“Write both your names with a heart between them,” she suggested eagerly.

I followed her advice.

“Perfect! You have beautiful penmanship, sir. I wish you both happiness.”

Walking the short distance to Dreamland Studio with the ostentatious bouquet, I felt conspicuous. Heads turned as I passed, but I quickened my pace, focusing only on reaching Maya.

When I entered the reception area, the front desk assistant’s eyes widened—first at the roses, then at recognizing me.

“Mr. Quinn? What a surprise...”

“Is Maya available?” I asked, trying to sound casual despite my burning ears.

Her eyes lit up with undisguised curiosity. “Miss Carter is in her office. I’ll show you right in.”

Walking through the open workspace, I felt the weight of curious stares. Whispers followed me:

“Is that Ethan Quinn from LUXE?”

“Are those flowers for Maya?”

“Oh my god, are they actually dating?”

Maya didn’t look up when her door opened, clearly assuming it was her assistant.

“What is it?” she asked distractedly, still focused on the sketches spread across her desk.

“Maya, I... I’m here.”

Her pencil froze mid-stroke. Her head snapped up, disbelief written across her face. I could see the anger from our phone fight still lingering in her eyes, but it was rapidly being replaced by surprise.

“What are you doing here?” She stood up, walking toward me with quick, purposeful steps. “What, were you afraid I’d run off with someone else?”

I considered her question seriously before nodding. “Something like that.”

Her laughter burst out unexpectedly, the sound making my chest feel lighter for the first time in weeks.

“These are for you,” I said, offering the roses with what I hoped was a charming smile but probably looked more like a grimace.

“How cliché,” she said, but her eyes sparkled as she took them. She spotted the card immediately, plucking it from among the blooms. “Did you write this yourself?”

“Yes.” I couldn’t meet her eyes, suddenly feeling like a schoolboy presenting his first love letter.

“You think some flowers and a note will make me forgive you?” She raised an eyebrow, but I caught the hint of softness in her voice. “If we hadn’t fought, you wouldn’t even be here right now, would you?”

Panic flared through me. Without thinking, I stepped forward and wrapped my arms around her, pulling her close before I could overthink it. I felt her stiffen in surprise.

“Ethan? Are you okay?” Her voice had lost its edge, replaced with genuine concern.

"I am now," I murmured against her hair, breathing in her familiar scent. "I know I've been too busy lately, but will you let me explain why?"

She patted my back awkwardly. "Fine, but you can let go now."

I released her reluctantly, but kept my hands on her shoulders, needing the connection. "LUXE is opening a branch in New York. I've been finalizing everything these past weeks."

Her eyes widened. "What? That's amazing news! Why didn't you tell me?"

"I wanted it to be a surprise." I smiled, feeling more confident now that the secret was out. "Everything's nearly ready."

"So... no more long-distance?" The hope in her voice was unmistakable, and it made my heart clench.

"No more long-distance," I confirmed.

"Thank god!" She threw her arms up dramatically. "I was getting sick of it. Now when we fight, I can just slap you in person instead of hanging up the phone."

I couldn't help laughing, my heart feeling fuller than it had in weeks. This was exactly why I'd fallen for her—her ability to make everything, even our fights, feel like an adventure.

"Whatever you want, just don't be angry with me anymore. Please?"

Maya's cheeks flushed pink, and for once in her life, she seemed speechless, managing only a small nod as she clutched the roses to her chest. In that moment, watching her try to hide her smile behind the flowers, I knew I'd made the right choice coming here.

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Serena's POV

I slumped into the lounge chair on the balcony, letting the sunlight wash over me while boredom slowly ate away at my sanity. Even after a nap, exhaustion still clung to me like a second skin. Probably because I've been cooped up in this mansion for what feels like forever with zero physical activity.

When I heard the soft knock on the door, I perked up at the prospect of any distraction.

"Come in," I called, trying not to sound too eager.

The butler stepped in with his perpetually perfect posture. "Madam, Dr. Lay is here to see you."

I acknowledged him with a lazy “Mmm” and slipped my feet into my slippers before heading downstairs. Ryan had been insistent about these medical checkups every three days—all for the wellbeing of me and our little one, he’d say.

I yawned dramatically as I settled onto the sofa, submitting to the now-familiar routine of prodding and measurements.

After finishing her examination, Dr. Lay smiled warmly at me. “Mrs. Blackwood, you’re perfectly healthy. Your complexion is a bit dull, though. That’s likely from being confined indoors all day.”

Her next words made my ears perk up like a cat’s.

“You should get out occasionally, see some friends. It would be much better for you, actually.”

My eyes lit up before I remembered Ryan’s countless warnings. My excitement deflated instantly.

“Ryan says I’m in a critical period and should stay home, not moving around too much,” I recited his words like a well-trained parrot.

Dr. Lay’s brows furrowed. “Mr. Blackwood’s intentions are good, but he’s mistaken on this point. Moderate activity and fresh air benefit both you and the baby.” She leaned in slightly. “Constantly being shut in isn’t healthy for anyone, especially not an expectant mother.”

As she emphasized this point repeatedly, a rebellious plan began forming in my mind. What if I just... went out while Ryan was at work? I’d only visit my studio, not climb a mountain or go skydiving. What harm could possibly come from that?

“I understand. Thank you, Dr. Lay,” I said, newfound determination creeping into my voice.

After she left, I remembered that Ethan was having his branch opening ceremony today. As his sister, I absolutely had to be there to congratulate him.

When I came downstairs dressed in a chic maternity outfit, the butler’s eyes widened.

“Madam, are we expecting guests?”

“No,” I replied breezily. “I’m going out for a bit.”

The poor man looked like he might faint. “Madam, Mr. Blackwood specifically instructed—”

“I know what he said,” I cut him off with a wave of my hand. “But you heard Dr. Lay yesterday, didn’t you? She recommended I get some fresh air. I’m not made of glass, for heaven’s sake!”

When my determination didn’t waver, he tried a different approach. “Let me call Mr. Blackwood and ask—”

“Absolutely not!” I snapped, perhaps too quickly. If Ryan knew, my little adventure would be over before it began. “I won’t be going alone. What are you so worried about?”

I narrowed my eyes. “Or am I actually a bird in a gilded cage? Do I have no rights at all?”

The butler sighed in defeat. “Please be careful, madam. At least take the bodyguards with you. For safety’s sake.”

“Fine,” I agreed, knowing this was the best compromise I’d get. “And not a word to Ryan!”

He pressed his lips together but nodded reluctantly. “Please return early, madam.”

“I will,” I promised, already halfway out the door.

Sitting in the car with the window down, feeling the breeze on my face, my mood instantly lifted. Dr. Lay was right—I needed this escape more than I’d realized.

When I arrived at LUXE’s new branch, Maya’s eyes nearly popped out of her head seeing me there.

“Serena! What on earth are you doing here?” Her gaze shifted to the two stone-faced bodyguards flanking me. “Wow, Mr. Blackwood really does treat you like fine china, doesn’t he?” she teased.

I laughed it off. “Better safe than sorry, I suppose. Where’s Ethan?”

“He’s tied up at the moment. Let’s go upstairs where it’s quieter—the crowd should thin out soon.”

I nodded and turned to my shadows. “You two can wait in the car.”

The bodyguards exchanged troubled glances. “Mrs. Blackwood, we should at least remain by the door. We won’t intrude, but—”

“What are you so worried about?” I insisted. “This is Quinn territory, and Maya here is a Quinn herself. Plus, the place is crawling with people. I’m hardly going to be in danger sitting with my friend.”

Maya gave me a sympathetic look before addressing them. “She’ll be perfectly safe with me, I promise.”

With visible reluctance, they retreated, and Maya linked her arm through mine as we headed upstairs.

Once settled in the private lounge, we dove into girl talk like we hadn’t seen each other in years. Maya’s face glowed with happiness—her relationship with Ethan had clearly progressed significantly.

“I’ve heard all about how you helped Ethan with this branch,” I said, pouring us both some tea. “You two seem inseparable these days. I’m guessing a Quinn family wedding might be on the horizon?”

Maya blushed adorably. “If I do marry him, what does that make you? Family from my side or his?”

I burst out laughing. “Officially, I’d be your in-law. But between us?” I squeezed her hand. “I’m definitely your ally. Don’t worry—he wouldn’t dare mistreat you.”

We exchanged knowing looks and dissolved into giggles, enjoying this rare moment of freedom and friendship that felt so precious to me now.