

CEO's Regret After I Divorced – Chapter 308

Serena's POV

The Original Blackwood Flagship Store.

The building before us was understated elegance personified – smooth stone façade in cool gray tones, discreet gold lettering. No flashing lights, no gaudy signage – just quiet, confident luxury.

“This is... different,” I remarked as Ryan helped me from the car.

“That's the point,” he replied, his hand settling naturally at the small of my back. “Vegas is a city of spectacle. We wanted to be the complete opposite – the place where real money comes to actually relax.”

I had to admit, the contrast worked brilliantly. While neighboring establishments competed to be the loudest and brightest, the Blackwood store commanded attention precisely because it didn't beg for it.

As we approached, I noticed several staff members assembling near the entrance, straightening already perfect clothing. The doors opened before we reached them.

“Mr. Blackwood,” a tall man with salt-and-pepper hair stepped forward, extending his hand. “We weren't expecting you until tomorrow morning.”

Ryan's handshake was firm but brief. “Plans changed, Marcus. This is Serena Quinn. My wife.”

“Mrs. Quinn, welcome to Blackwood Las Vegas,” he said, with genuine warmth rather than fake politeness. “It's an honor to have you here.”

The management team – about six people in total – showed similar restraint. They clearly respected Ryan, but there wasn't that nervous, walking-on-eggshells energy I'd seen around many powerful executives. These people weren't scared to death of him; they were genuinely excited to impress him.

“I'd like to walk the floor,” Ryan announced without beating around the bush. “Full operational review.”

“Of course,” Marcus replied, waving off two assistants who stepped forward with prepared presentations. “Where would you like to begin?”

“Main showroom. Then private viewing rooms. Back-end stuff last.”

I pulled out my phone, opening my notes app as Ryan began his inspection. I wasn't entirely sure why I was documenting this, but something told me to keep track.

What unfolded over the next three hours was nothing short of a crash course in business operations. Ryan moved through the store with surgical precision, examining everything from customer flow patterns to lighting angles. He ran his fingers along display cases, checking for dust. He tested the weight and balance of doors. He even inspected the hinges on jewelry boxes.

I followed silently, observing not just the store but Ryan himself.

“The security cameras in the northwest corner leave a three-second blind spot during rotation,” Ryan noted, pointing to a seemingly random area near an emergency exit. “Fix the overlap pattern.”

Marcus nodded, immediately punching notes into his tablet. “We’ll recalibrate today.”

“This display is way too busy,” Ryan continued, moving to a case featuring platinum watches. “We’re showing seventeen pieces where twelve would pack more punch. Quality over quantity.”

A woman stepped forward – the merchandising director, I gathered. “We cranked up the density based on the quarterly report suggesting better sales with more options, but I totally agree with your assessment. We’ll reconfigure.”

I watched, fascinated, as they discussed the psychology of luxury purchasing – how too many choices could actually kill sales in the super-premium segment.

When they reached the private viewing rooms, Ryan tested every chair, sat at every angle, and checked lighting from every possible perspective.

“The recessed lighting creates shadow on pieces when customers are seated here,” he demonstrated, pointing to a specific spot. “It makes diamonds look eighteen percent less brilliant from this viewing angle.”

The store’s technical director looked genuinely shocked, immediately verifying Ryan’s observation. “Holy shit, you’re absolutely right. I can’t believe we missed that.”

But what struck me most wasn’t Ryan’s eagle eye for detail – it was how the entire operation responded to his leadership. When he spoke, everyone listened, not from fear but from respect. He didn’t need to blow up or throw his weight around. His authority was rock solid without being dictatorial.

This wasn’t just managing a store. This was conducting an intricate system where every element worked in perfect sync with dozens of others.

When Ryan pointed out that the scheduling software needed reconfiguration to account for seasonal tourism patterns, rattling off specific algorithms they should consider, I felt my heart skip a beat. The depth of knowledge required to make that kind of assessment was mind-blowing.

By hour three, we were in the back offices reviewing inventory systems. Ryan pulled up sales reports on a monitor, identifying patterns I couldn't even see until he broke them down.

"These fluctuations in the sapphire line aren't random," he explained to the inventory manager. "They're following a twenty-eight day cycle that doesn't match up with our marketing pushes. Figure out why."

The manager nodded, already frantically typing queries into the system.

I stood in the corner, still taking notes, suddenly painfully aware of the massive gap between my understanding of business and Ryan's. I ran a successful design studio, yes. But this... this was playing in the major leagues.

As we finally left the store, I remained quiet, processing everything I'd witnessed. The Nevada sun was setting, casting long shadows across the sidewalk as we waited for our car.

"You've been really quiet," Ryan observed, studying my face. "What are you thinking?"

I looked up at him, making a decision in that moment. "I'm thinking I need to seriously upgrade my business education when we get back to New York."

His eyebrow raised slightly. "Oh?"

"Yes." I met his gaze directly. "I want to truly understand this world. To stand beside you as a real partner."

Something shifted in Ryan's expression – a mixture of surprise and what looked remarkably like pride.

"You were already taking notes in there," he said softly. "Nobody else does that."

"Because nobody else gets what I see," I replied, my voice steady despite how vulnerable this moment felt. "Or perhaps they see it but don't understand its value."

The car pulled up, but Ryan made no move toward it. Instead, he reached out, his fingers brushing a strand of hair from my face.

"I've spent years building this company," he said quietly. "And do you know what I've learned? The most dangerous thing in business isn't competition or market crashes."

"What is it?" I asked.

"Being surrounded by yes-men who only tell you what they think you want to hear." His eyes held mine. "Your notes weren't just observations, were they?"

I smiled slightly. "Nope. I saw at least three inefficiencies your team missed."

Ryan’s lips curved upward. “Spill over dinner.”