

CEO's Regret After I Divorced – Chapter 309

Serena's POV

Dinner with Ryan had the Bellagio's top floor restaurant all to ourselves. The Strip stretched out below us like a glittering carpet of light, but honestly? I couldn't care less about the view outside when the view across my table was Ryan sipping his scotch, the amber liquid catching the light just like his intense eyes.

“So,” he placed his glass down with deliberate slowness, “those three inefficiencies you mentioned?”

I smiled, taking a sip of my champagne before answering. “First, your customer flow pattern creates a bottleneck by the main diamond display. People naturally gravitate there, but the layout forces them to double back rather than continuing through the store.”

Ryan’s eyebrows raised slightly, interest sparking in his expression.

“Second, your sales staff rotates too frequently between departments. I watched three different associates struggling to answer specific questions because they’d been moved from watches to gemstones just last week.”

“And the third?” His voice had dropped lower, more intimate somehow.

“Your inventory system doesn’t integrate customer preference data with your design pipeline. You’re sitting on a goldmine of information about what your highest-value clients actually want, but not feeding it back to creation.”

Ryan leaned back in his chair, studying me with newfound appreciation. “Most people see a luxury store and just notice the shiny objects.”

“I notice systems,” I shrugged. “Always have.”

“That’s why your designs work so beautifully,” he replied. “They’re not just pretty. They’re functional.”

Our food arrived—Kobe beef for him, truffle risotto for me—and Ryan smoothly transitioned into business professor mode. He explained his approach to vertical integration, how controlling every aspect from sourcing raw materials to final sale gave Blackwood its edge.

“The margins in luxury aren’t actually in the product itself,” he explained, cutting into his perfectly seared steak. “They’re in the story, the exclusivity, the experience. That’s why I’m obsessive about store layout and lighting. A million-dollar necklace in poor lighting might as well be costume jewelry.”

I leaned forward, genuinely fascinated. “How do you balance innovation with tradition? Luxury brands often get stuck in their heritage.”

“That’s the billion-dollar question,” Ryan nodded appreciatively. “You need enough consistency that clients trust you, but enough evolution that you don’t become irrelevant. The trick is to innovate within tight parameters.”

For the next hour, he walked me through financial models, market segmentation strategies, and competitive analysis techniques. I soaked it all up like a sponge, realizing how much I’d been running on pure instinct with Dreamland Studio.

“You know,” Ryan said after explaining a particularly complex hedging strategy for precious metal purchasing, “most women would be bored to tears by now.”

“I’m not most women,” I replied, tracing the rim of my wine glass.

“No,” his eyes darkened slightly. “You’re definitely not.”

The waiter cleared our plates and Ryan declined the dessert menu with a wave of his hand. “Work portion of the evening is officially concluded,” he announced, his voice dropping to that dangerous register that made my stomach flutter.

“Is that so?” I asked, trying to sound casual while my heartbeat picked up speed.

“Mmmm,” Ryan nodded, reaching across the table to trace his thumb across my lower lip. “The rest of the night is strictly personal.”

I swallowed hard. “And what did you have in mind?”

“I’ve been thinking about getting you out of that dress since the moment you put it on,” he said matter-of-factly, his eyes never leaving mine.

The temperature in the room seemed to spike twenty degrees. “That’s... direct.”

“I don’t believe in wasting time,” Ryan signaled for the check. “Especially when all I can think about is how you taste.”

My legs actually trembled beneath the table. This man had a way with words that bypassed my brain and went straight to my core. By the time we reached the private elevator to our suite, I was practically vibrating with anticipation.

The moment the elevator doors closed, Ryan had me pressed against the wall, his mouth hot on my neck.

“You smell incredible,” he murmured against my skin, hands sliding down my sides to grip my hips.

I gasped as he found that sensitive spot just below my ear. “Security cameras,” I managed to whisper.

Ryan chuckled darkly. “Private elevator. No cameras.”

When we finally stumbled into our suite, I was already half-undressed, Ryan’s tie abandoned somewhere in the hallway. He guided me backwards toward the massive bathroom, his mouth never leaving mine.

“The view from this tub is spectacular,” he murmured against my lips as he reached behind me to turn on the faucets. “But I promise you won’t be looking at the skyline.”

The marble bathroom was bigger than my first apartment, with a sunken tub large enough for four people positioned by floor-to-ceiling windows overlooking the city.

Steam began to rise as Ryan slowly unzipped my dress, letting it pool at my feet. His eyes darkened appreciatively as he took in my black lace underwear.

“Beautiful,” he whispered, tracing the edge of my bra with one finger. “But unnecessary.”

I reached for his shirt buttons, suddenly impatient. “You’re wearing too many clothes.”

He smiled wickedly, shrugging off his shirt to reveal that perfectly sculpted chest. As he unbuckled his belt, I stepped into the rising water, the heat making me sigh with pleasure.

Ryan followed, naked and magnificent, water lapping around his powerful thighs as he pulled me against him.

“I’ve been thinking about this all day,” he confessed, hands sliding down to cup my ass. “You standing there taking notes, that brilliant mind working... do you have any idea how sexy that is?”

I laughed breathlessly as his mouth found my breast. “If I’d known business strategies were your aphrodisiac, I’d have talked profit margins hours ago.”

“It’s not the business,” he said, lifting me effortlessly so I straddled his lap in the water. “It’s you. Your mind. Your passion.”

When he entered me, the sensation was so intense I cried out, clutching his shoulders. Water splashed around us as he guided my hips, setting a rhythm that had me seeing stars.

“Ryan,” I gasped as he hit that perfect spot inside me. “Oh God...”

“That’s it,” he encouraged, one hand tangled in my hair. “Let go for me.”

I came apart spectacularly, trembling in his arms as wave after wave of pleasure crashed through me. He followed moments later, his face buried in my neck as he groaned my name.

As we lay there afterward, water cooling around our intertwined bodies, I gazed at the glittering Vegas skyline through half-lidded eyes.

“Still think the view’s the best part of this tub?” I asked lazily.

Ryan laughed, pressing a kiss to my shoulder. “The view’s definitely spectacular,” he admitted. “But it doesn’t compare to watching you come undone.”

Vegas, it seemed, was turning out to be quite the adventure after all.