

The Billionaire’s Hidden Heiress

Chapter 13

Johnathon POV

“You didn’t really mean that you would have her fired if she didn’t hurry up and sign the divorce papers did you?” I asked Charlotte as we walked into her family home, Charlotte’s expression petulant.

“Of course I did,” she said icily, looking at me incredulously “You heard my grandfather. He wants us to announce our engagement as soon as possible. The longer she takes, the angrier he’s going to be with me. Besides, why do you care?” she asked, flipping her hair over her shoulder and casting me a sidelong glance “don’t tell me you’re having second thoughts about this marriage Johnathon,” she said sharply as I sat down in the living room with her “I’ve already picked out the dress I want and started the guest list.”

Already? It felt like there was a noose around my neck choking me. I struggled to come up with an excuse, some reason for my hesitation but her mother Karen came walking in, her heels clacking loudly on the floor.

“Darling,” she said sweetly, kissing her daughter on both cheeks as Charlotte became distracted by her mother’s presence.

“Mother,” Charlotte said, relaxing as her mother joined her on the couch “How is grandfather today?” she said in a hushed whisper.

Karen rolled her eyes. “The old fart has been on a tangent today. He’s in a right mood” she said huffily “All because I accidentally broke a vase that was sentimental to him. It was ugly anyhow” she said raising a brow and sounding unapologetic “he should be thanking me for getting rid of that atrocity.”

“It was not an atrocity, it was one my wife made and it meant a lot to me” barked the grandfather, storming into the room and glowering at everyone.

Karen wisely zipped her mouth shut. The grandfather eyed her with contempt. I wished I could get up and leave, but the grandfather set his eyes on us next.

“So how did it go? Are the papers signed and filed?” he asked tersely, sitting down and staring at Charlotte with a fierce scowl on his face.

Oh boy. Charlotte shook her head, frowning “She refused to sign the papers without having a lawyer look at them first” she said angrily, waving her hands around dramatically.

Instead of looking angry, her grandfather smiled. “Good, she’s smart then, unlike you,” he said, looking at me disapprovingly “And you,” he said cuttingly to Charlotte “an intelligent woman who is using her brain and you wish to tear her down?” he shook his head “if only you had half the wits this woman is exhibiting.”

Charlotte pursed her lips. “You could act as though you care” she shot at the old man.

He guffawed “I’m not the one who had an affair and then got it plastered all over the newspapers. Don’t expect me to be sorry for you, simply because you are my granddaughter. You expect everything to come easily to you, or for others to do the work. This time you’re going to have to and it must pain you” he said shaking his head.

“You’re the one who wants the papers signed immediately” Charlotte griped.

“I still do” the grandfather snapped “but I appreciate a woman who isn’t cowed into signing something without looking it over. You would do well to learn that same lesson” he added with disdain.

“Look, Flair is a reasonable woman, I’m sure it will only be a matter of a day or two before she signs the papers” I interjected, trying to bring some calm to the situation.

The grandfather’s bushy eyebrows rose “Reasonable?” he said with a sneer “I’m quite sure that reasonable went out the window when you cheated on her.”

I swallowed hard and said nothing. The grandfather eyes us all, his eyes resting on his daughter-in-law who stiffened. “I rue the day my son married you,” he said with disgust, “he too cheated on his first wife, with the likes of you. I guess the apple doesn’t fall far from the tree” he grunted, shaking his head at his granddaughter who stiffened “like mother, like daughter,” he said contemptuously.

“Your son loved me,” Karen said irritably.

“My son was a fool” the old man sniffed “too blind to see past your beauty and the exterior to see what was underneath.” Karen gasped in outrage, while Charlotte put a hand to her mouth.

“How dare you” Karen stammered, “I did everything I could to make your son happy,” she said indignantly.

“Wrong. You did everything you could to get your hands on his money you miserable harpy” the old man said sharply.

Karen tightened her lips. She looked away, her face flushed in embarrassment. I felt uncomfortable. It was clear to see how much contempt this old man had for not only his daughter-in-law but his own granddaughter. Rumour had it, he didn’t like his grandson much either though. Not that I had ever met the grandson.

I cleared my throat “With all due respect sir, I am in love with Charlotte, and I fully intend to marry her. I acknowledge that we could have gone about this better” I said, as the old man fixed his beady eyes on me, narrowing them “and I take full responsibility for the scandal in the newspapers. Charlotte and I should have been discreet or waited until I divorced my wife first.”

“Yes, you should have” the old man snapped “As it stands, I still need to have an engagement party for the two of you. If you don’t have this sorted by the end of the week, I will be choosing my grandson to take over the family company instead of the requirements I have in place.”

“Grandfather you promised that it would go to…”

“The first person to marry and provide me an heir,” the grandfather said loudly “I haven’t forgotten. I’m not old and senile” he barked at her as she widened her eyes “but I’m displeased with the way you are handling this whole mess and the way you are dragging down the infamous Deluca Name. You have no shame” he hissed, his jaw quivering with rage.

“I’ll get it done,” Charlotte said frantically “Don’t change the terms grandfather. That wouldn’t be fair”

“Yes, give her a chance to right her wrong” Karen pleaded on her daughter’s behalf “Don’t penalize Charlotte just because you’re angry Grandfather” she begged.

“Hmmp” he muttered, “what would any of you know about fair?” he demanded frostily, getting to his feet and glaring at the lot of us.

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I shifted awkwardly in my seat. His eyes seemed to bore into me. There was a knowing look in his eyes. They seemed to be saying they could see right through me. He looked at his granddaughter and shook his head. “Make sure that this marriage is what you want” he advised her coldly as she stared at him expressionless “I advise you to think long and hard before you walk up that aisle. The both of you,” he said cruelly “because once the words have been uttered, they cannot be undone, At least not…”

“I know, not for at least a year” Charlotte interrupted him, rolling her eyes “I know Grandfather. I know exactly how long I have to be married for to meet your conditions on getting the company.”

“Is that right?” her grandfather said cryptically, a strange gleam in his eyes “Then I suppose there is no need to repeat myself” he said calmly “Not if you know what you’re getting yourself into.”

He proceeded to get up and move through the doorway leaving us to exhale in relief as we heard his footsteps heading for the stairs. For an old man, he was quite agile and sturdy, his body still remarkably strong for his old age.

“Mother” Charlotte wailed “What are we going to do? That old bastard is up to his tricks again. I’ve come too close now, to fail. How do I get Flair to sign the papers?” she complained, “we’ve only got a week.”

I reached for her hand. I had as much at stake as Charlotte. After all, I was relying on this marriage to open up more networks for my law firm and increase my own wealth. I gave her a reassuring smile “Flair will sign the papers” I said eyeing her consideringly “we just need to come up with a way to encourage her to do it.”

“We could kidnap her and force her to sign,” Charlotte said darkly.

I coughed not certain she was joking. “That’s a little heavy-handed. Let me speak to Flair again, alone this time” I added as Charlotte opened her mouth “I might have more luck convincing her if we speak to each other without you there” I said gently as she looked at me with blazing eyes “it will be for our sake love” I whispered, cupping her cheek.

She blinked. I saw her melt. She leaned into my hand and batted her eyelashes at me. “Speak to her then” she whispered, as I kissed her on the forehead, her mother silently watching “but if you don’t persuade her to sign the papers Johnathon, I’m taking things into my own hands.”

I dreaded to think what she might mean by that.