

My Sister's Wedding

Chapter 1: Bad Ideas

TATE

“Yes, Mother, I’ll be there on time,” I assure her, rolling my eyes as I hold the wedding invitation between my fingers. “No, I promise. My flight gets in at two.”

My mother’s voice is loud and insistent on the other end of the phone, and I can’t help but sigh. “Yes, yes. Goodbye, Mother.”

I end the call and toss my phone onto the desk, leaning back in my chair. I try to focus on work, but my mind keeps drifting back to the wedding. My relationship with my family is complicated, to say the least. I love my sister, but the thought of attending her wedding and the two weeks of parties and events that follow is overwhelming.

To make matters worse, my sister has invited the entire family to join her on her honeymoon in the Maldives. Who does that? According to my mother, it’s mandatory for all of us to attend.

I consider making up an excuse, telling them that a work emergency has come up and I’ll have to leave right after the wedding. But I know my mother will never let it go. She’ll bring it up every chance she gets, using it as ammunition to make me feel guilty or to get what she wants.

And then there are the inevitable questions from family and acquaintances about when I’ll get married, when I’ll have children, and how my life is going. Not to mention the random people offering to set me up with their daughter or niece.

“If only I had a date,” I mumble to myself. “No, a date would require actual attention...”

Suddenly, a crazy idea pops into my head. I open my laptop and search for agencies based out of Boston. After some research, I find what I’m looking for and send an email to the agency’s director, explaining my situation. Within minutes, I receive a response telling me to expect a call within the hour to discuss specifics.

Deciding that this conversation is better had in the privacy of my own home, I leave the office and head to my penthouse apartment. As soon as I step inside and loosen my tie, my phone rings.

“Tate Young,” I answer curtly.

“Mr. Young, my name is Edna Smith. I’m calling from Advantage Incorporated. I must say, I was quite surprised to receive your email requesting our services. I can’t imagine you having any trouble finding a date for this event.”

I huff in annoyance. Sure, I’ve been voted most eligible bachelor a few times, but that’s not the point. “Look, Ms. Smith,” I reply. “Finding a date isn’t the problem. I just don’t want to deal with a real date and her real expectations. I need someone to fill the role, to make my family back off so I can get through this wedding as painlessly as possible. Can you do that, or do I need to look elsewhere?”

“No, no, sir,” she responds quickly. “We would be more than happy to help you out. Now, can you give me an idea of what you’re looking for?”

I explain that I need someone who doesn’t look like an obvious escort, someone with class who can keep up with the high-end events and top-tier guests. “She needs to be able to make educated conversation and use the right damn fork at dinner,” I finish, pinching the bridge of my nose in irritation.

“Well, sir, all of my associates have class,” Edna replies bluntly. “I do have a few in mind for you. What about looks? You will want someone you are attracted to, yes?”

I sit down on the couch and close my eyes. “It doesn’t matter. I won’t be sleeping with this woman. I don’t pay for sex. All I need is a date who can believably be my girlfriend. I don’t need some girl getting sloppy at the wedding.”

“I understand, but Mr. Young, if you don’t give me a general idea of looks, I can’t successfully match you with someone,” she says, her voice tinged with irritation.

I think about Jamie, my ex, with her long blonde hair and slender frame. “Not a blonde,” I say firmly.

“I have the perfect girl in mind,” Edna says, her voice brightening. I can practically hear her grin through the phone. “I’ll send you the price breakdown and her information before tomorrow.”

“Fine. Thank you,” I reply before hanging up. I sink back onto the couch, wondering what I’ve gotten myself into. “This is a stupid idea,” I mutter, pacing the apartment and talking myself into and out of the plan several times.

When I finally receive the email with the bill, I can’t help but exclaim, “You’ve got to be kidding me!” The price is astronomical, but I pay the first half as a deposit. I don’t even pay my lawyer that much.

“Well, there’s no going back now,” I mumble, resigned to my decision.