

My Sister's Wedding

Chapter 4: Meeting the Family

Piper

As we stood at the door, I couldn't help but marvel at the grandeur of the historic mansion before me. The red bricks and white windows gave it an air of elegance and intimidation.

My attention snapped back to the present when the door opened, revealing a stern-looking older man. "Hello, Mr. Young, so good of you to join us," he said with an air of formality, as if he were a butler for the queen.

"Evening, Francis," Tate replied, stepping inside.

"Tate, is that you, dear?" A voice echoed through the house, and moments later, a glamorous, impeccably dressed middle-aged woman appeared in the hallway. "Oh dear, you look absolutely exhausted. Was it a long flight?"

"Nice to see you too, Mother," Tate said, kissing her cheek. "You look stunning, as always."

"And who is this?" She turned to me with a curious grin. "I'm Josie Young," she said, extending a perfectly manicured hand.

"This is Piper, my girlfriend," Tate said, placing a hand on my back.

"Your... girlfriend?" She raised an eyebrow before turning back to her son. "Why on earth didn't you tell us you were dating someone?"

"We've only been dating for two months," I interjected quickly. "We didn't want to make a big deal out of it. It is, after all, your daughter's big day. But I am so pleased to meet you, Mrs. Young."

Her smile was saccharine as she replied, "Well, you are sweet, aren't you? And just absolutely the prettiest thing! Come, let's go to the sitting room. Ariana will be so glad you're finally here, Tate. We all thought you wouldn't make it."

"I told you I would make it, Mother," he said, rolling his eyes.

"Yes, but when has that ever stopped you from pulling out at the last minute?" she retorted sweetly.

Tate sighed as we followed his mother down the hall.

"TATER TOT!!"

I looked up in surprise as a beautiful red-headed woman rushed toward us.

“Hey, Ari,” Tate grinned, embracing her in a tight hug.

“Oh please, enough with that. That is no nickname for a respectable man to have,” their mother huffed, gracefully taking a seat on the couch and sipping a martini.

Tate and Ariana exchanged a knowing look before she turned to me with a smile. “And who is this?”

“This is Piper, my girlfriend,” Tate said.

Ariana beamed. “Oh, I can’t believe Tater didn’t tell us he was bringing you. He’s such a tease.” She pulled me in for a hug. “I’m his sister, Ariana.”

“It’s nice to meet you,” I said with a light chuckle. She released me, and I sat beside Tate on the couch.

“So, Piper,” his mother began, “Where are you from?”

“I’m from New York,” I lied smoothly.

“And how do you know my son?” she prodded.

I looked at Tate with a smile, doing my best to play the part. It wasn’t difficult, considering his tall, firm body and handsomely chiseled face. His honey-colored eyes were emphasized by his dark hair and features.

“We met a few months ago at an event. His company was doing PR, and I was finishing up my apprenticeship at a small gallery. We met at the event and have been seeing each other ever since.”

“Apprenticeship? Are you a student?” she pressed.

“Yes, I am,” I replied.

“Where? What school?” she persisted.

“Mother, enough with the interrogation. Let her be,” Tate interjected.

I placed a hand on his gently. “That’s alright.” Turning back to his mother, I said, “I’m a grad student at Columbia. I’m working on my masters in art history and preservation, with a concentration in English oils.”

“Well then,” she huffed, “You are a busy girl.”

Tate gave me a dark look just as Francis, the old man, entered the room. “Dinner is ready.”

"Mr. Young is not home yet," Tate's mother announced with frustration. "We will be in in a few moments."

Francis left the room, and everyone continued chatting lightly until Mrs. Young stood. "Well, we can't wait all night for him. Let's go in."

As we took our seats around the large, formal dining table, Tate pulled out my chair for me before sitting beside me.

"So, Piper, where is your family from?"

I looked up to see Tate's mother still wasn't satisfied. "My mother was from the West Coast. She passed a few years ago. My father is from New York."

"And what does he do?"

"He... umm..."

"Jason, when are we going to have a rematch out on the green?" Tate interrupted, and I was grateful. My father was a sore subject.

Ariana's fiancé grinned. "You name the day!"

Ariana scowled at him. "There will be no golfing this week. We have WAY too much to do."

"We'll make it your bachelor party," Tate said with a wink.

The women all shook their heads until the room fell silent as a large man entered.

"I'm so sorry. Things ran a bit long for me today. I tried to get out as soon as I could," he said, kissing Tate's mother on the cheek and sitting at the head of the table.

"Tate, you made it. Surprising," he huffed.

"Yep, we made it," Tate replied quietly.

"And who is this?" His father grinned, looking at me.

"Harris, dear, this is Piper, Tate's girlfriend," his mother chimed in, her voice laced with disapproval.

"Oh, really," he said, giving Tate a wide-eyed look. "So, are the plans for this week all settled?" he asked, looking down at his plate.

"Everything is going smoothly for now," Ariana replied.

After dinner, we all made our way to the living room, and I was surprised when Mrs. Young took my arm. "I have a piece in here you would absolutely love, my dear."

I groaned internally. I had dealt with enough people to know when I was being handled. She had the tiniest touch of venom in her voice.

She led me to a large painting. "What do you think?" she asked sweetly.

"It's beautiful," I said, looking up at it. "Bonnard, right?"

"Yes, it is," she replied, taken aback.

"One of his later paintings. I will admit, I like his earlier pieces the best. But this is an amazing piece," I said proudly, knowing I had surprised everyone in the room.

She gave me a narrow smile before walking away.

"Well, did she pass?" Tate's father chuckled as his wife sat beside him with a grumble.

I sat down beside Tate with a smile, looking up to see him staring at me with a mixture of awe and frustration. I grinned, knowing that I just might survive this assignment.

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