

Until You're Mine /

The Humble Ex-wife is Now A Brilliant Tycoon

Chapter 16:

Most expected Dylan to move without hesitation, distancing himself the moment Christina stumbled. They knew Dylan despised any physical contact that seemed intentionally flirtatious.

In the dim light near the entrance, the manager stiffened, panic creeping into his chest like a slow burn. Would Christina be another person to incur Dylan's wrath and get thrown out?

Yet what followed left the entire room in stunned silence.

Rather than stepping away, Dylan proactively reached out to support Christina, his response swift and precise.

Ralph and the manager widened their eyes, their faces registering disbelief. Could this truly be the same Dylan they knew?

The very man who had always shied away from even the lightest contact was now voluntarily helping Christina up. It was a sight so out of character that none of them had witnessed anything like it before.

Ralph's mind wandered to a different scene—Katie had flung herself at Dylan, only for him to swerve so fast that she practically crashed into the floor. The memory made the contrast blinding. Dylan's reaction toward Katie had been ruthless. But with Christina? He was gentle.

Ralph's gaze toward Christina grew more intrigued. Was this woman truly special to Dylan, or was Dylan only helping her because of some deal they had struck?

A slow, amused grin played on Ralph's lips as he continued watching, savoring every second of the unfolding twist. Perhaps Dylan might start wooing Christina soon.

"Are you alright?" Dylan asked, his voice touched by an unusual softness in his otherwise guarded tone. Christina's unique scent drifted into his nostrils, faint but intriguing enough to make him linger.

"I'm okay," Christina said, finding her balance as she met his gaze with a calm smile. "Thank you for catching me."

Though even without him she would have kept herself from falling, she still acknowledged his effort.

"There's no need for thanks," Dylan replied casually. "We're sort of business partners, after all."

"You're right," Christina said with a nod. "Since we're partners, it's only natural we look out for one another."

“Right.” Dylan nodded. Strangely, when her claim leaned toward the business angle instead of personal concern, a wave of displeasure stirred within him—a peculiar feeling he couldn’t quite name. No clear reason came to mind for the discomfort that crept in so suddenly. Still, he brushed the feeling aside, locking it away behind habit and control.

To keep his position as the owner of the Morfort Restaurant under wraps, personally walking them out was not an option. Instead, Dylan gave the manager a quiet nod, signaling him to see them off.

The three stepped into the elevator, and as they stepped out, Christina declined the manager’s offer to escort them further, saying she didn’t want to become the center of attention.

Watching Christina and her friend leave, the manager lingered for a beat before turning back to report to Dylan.

Outside Morfort Restaurant, Katie and her crew still lingered.

“Why are we just standing around like lost puppies?” Katie asked, clearly irritated.

Yolanda said gently, her words measured to appear concerned while carrying implications, “Let’s wait for Christina a little longer. After all, she once took care of Brendon, and we shouldn’t walk off—not when she had been summoned away by the owner of the restaurant and still hasn’t returned. Brendon may have faith in her, but we still don’t know enough about the owner of the Morfort Restaurant. What if he tries to force himself on her?”

The implication tightened Brendon’s jaw. For a second, a flicker of worry showed in his eyes before he looked away.

“For Christ’s sake, she’s an adult! Wouldn’t she fight back if she didn’t want it? If she gives in, then maybe she wants it. Why should we even care? For all we know, she’s probably enjoying the intimate encounter,” Katie sneered, her voice sharp with irritation and a flicker of jealousy slipping through.

How could someone like Christina—a divorced woman with a messy past—manage to catch the eye of the owner of the Morfort Restaurant?

“Katie Dawson, don’t forget what I warned you about,” Brendon hissed, his voice turning frigid as he locked eyes with her, his stare cutting cold.

Before Katie could respond, Brendon spotted a familiar figure. Without another word, he left them behind and strode quickly toward Christina, his expression cold as he blocked her path.

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Chapter 17:

Ice crept into Christina's eyes the instant she recognized the man standing in her path. Without blinking, she leveled her gaze and said, "Step aside."

"We need to talk. Just for a minute—away from the others," Brendon said, not budging an inch.

As he reached for her hand, Christina pulled back sharply, not even flinching. "What's stopping you from saying it right here?" she asked, her brow tightening.

Brendon shot Davina a look that said more than words and then reached out once more. "Some things are not meant for the ears of outsiders."

"She's not an outsider," Christina retorted, dodging his reach again. Her eyes were cold as they locked onto his. "Cut the crap."

Her tone—calm but sharp—cut deeper than he expected. Being treated this way in public, with eyes possibly watching, left a sour taste in his mouth.

"Spit it out or step aside," Christina added, her tone sharp and cold. "I have no intention of dealing with your nonsense."

A strange discomfort settled over Brendon. The ink on their divorce certificate hadn't dried yet, but she had already become so detached and aloof toward him. With a mocking smile, he sneered, "What, no time for me, but you've got time to flirt with the Morfort Restaurant's owner?"

"There's nothing improper between me and the owner of the Morfort Restaurant. Whatever you're imagining says more about you than it does about us," Christina retorted, her face unreadable.

A dry, bitter laugh spilled from Brendon. "Oh? What's with the urgent clarification? It seems my words struck a nerve."

Davina let out an exasperated sigh and stepped forward. "This again? Have you even thought before you spew all that nonsense? If you've got no point to make, then get out of the way."

Brendon cut her a glare, full of irritation. "This doesn't concern you. Stay out of it."

With a sharp snort, Davina folded her arms. "That's rich coming from you. You two are divorced."

Color rose in his face, but words refused to follow. He stood there, visibly fuming as he fumbled for words to form a reply.

"Move, Brendon. We're done here," Christina commanded, her voice slicing through the tension.

That simple command made him frown. Watching the unwavering look in her eyes, he knew he'd hit a wall if he pressed on. Reluctantly, he decided to change tactics and lied, "My grandma's been asking about you. She wants us to visit her. Said she misses both of us."

Christina didn't flinch. "Not today." She wasn't in the mood to go.

"If we keep putting it off, she's going to start worrying," Brendon said, trying again, his tone gentler now.

The mention of Bethel gave Christina pause. Her expression shifted as she considered it, her brow creasing. Among all the Dawson family members, only Bethel had ever made her feel welcome. Truth be told, Bethel had offered the kind of affection none of the others had. Over time, she had come to see Bethel as her own grandmother. Judging from Brendon's words, Bethel probably had no clue about their divorce.

"Please, I am begging you," Brendon added, his tone taking on a softer edge. "I just got a call that my grandma's not doing well."

A short pause followed before Christina gave a reluctant nod. "Alright. I'll go. But only to see Bethel."

"Good," Brendon replied with a relieved sigh. "I already arranged for a car. We'll head over together."

Davina, however, wasn't thrilled about Christina going to the Dawson family's house. But she knew exactly how stubborn Christina could be—once she decided on something, there was no use arguing.

"Promise me you'll be careful. And if anything feels off, call me right away," Davina said to Christina, her voice thick with concern. Her eyes then shifted to Brendon, sharp and unforgiving. "If you so much as look at her the wrong way, I swear you'll regret it."

Brendon scowled, clearly irritated. "This doesn't involve you. Stay out of it and mind your own problems."

"Nah, I will step in the moment you try anything funny," Davina retorted, clenching her fists so tightly that her knuckles turned white. If she had her way, she'd have decked him right there. What a complete loser. Every inch of him was so infuriatingly annoying. Just the sight of him made her nauseous. Seriously, the Dawson family had some nerve. They'd somehow managed to rope in someone as extraordinary as Christina and trap her in that miserable marriage for three whole years. Without her, Brendon wouldn't even have registered as average.

Suddenly, a blinding pink sports car skidded to a stop nearby, its engine growling like a beast. A loud whistle followed, capturing everyone's attention.

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The Humble Ex-wife is Now A Brilliant Tycoon

Chapter 18:

All eyes snapped to the source of the screeching tires and blaring whistle.

Inside the loud pink sports car, Ralphy flashed a mischievous grin, his gaze fixed on Christina like she was the only one there. With a smirk tugging at the corner of his mouth, he said, “Need a lift home, Miss Jones?”

Brendon’s jaw tightened instantly. First, the Morfort Restaurant’s owner had shown interest in Christina. Now Ralphy was here, all grins and casual flair. Earlier at the shooting range, Dylan had done the same—stepped up to speak for Christina without hesitation. The memory of his sister’s blunt comments came rushing back. A question crept into his mind that he didn’t want to answer—had Christina already been involved with these men before their divorce?

“I’m good,” Christina replied, her tone cool and unbothered. She slipped an arm around Davina. “But if you don’t mind, could you take my friend home instead?”

It was clear Davina had had more than a few drinks, and driving herself wasn’t an option.

“Anything for you,” Ralphy replied, flashing a boyish grin. “Just say the word, and I’m on it.”

Christina nodded in thanks, steadying Davina as she helped her into the passenger seat.

Despite his laid-back attitude, Ralphy’s friendship with someone like Dylan hinted there was more to him than just flash and jokes.

“I’ve got it covered, Miss Jones. Your friend will get home in one piece. And if she doesn’t, you can hunt me down personally.” Ralphy shot her a wink, still grinning like this was the highlight of his night.

“Take it easy on the road, alright? No need to rush,” Christina remarked, tilting her head slightly, her voice calm but firm.

Ralphy gave a casual salute. “Loud and clear.” Then, with a glance at Brendon and a grin that held more meaning than words, he added, “If anybody bothers you, just say the word. I’ll handle it.”

That earned him a small smile from Christina, subtle but sincere. Moments later, the flashy pink car roared off, disappearing into the distance.

With his lips pressed into a hard line, Brendon stepped closer, eyes narrowed. “What’s going on between you and him?”

Christina didn’t blink. “Why are you asking? It has nothing to do with you.”

Brendon’s expression darkened. “We were once husband and wife. I’m only speaking out of concern. Men like Ralphy—the wealthy, charming types—are always tangled up in rumors and short-lived flings. You shouldn’t fool yourself into thinking you’ll suddenly be swept into high

society just because one of them shows interest. Those elite circles aren't as welcoming as you might believe. Even if someone like him wanted to marry you, his family would never accept a woman who's already divorced.

The only reason you ever became part of the Dawson family was because of my grandmother's insistence. Without that, you wouldn't have made it in. I'm just afraid you'll start chasing something out of reach, trying to live in a world that won't have you, and end up hurt because of it. And when that happens, you'll have no one to blame but yourself. Don't twist what I'm saying. I know it's blunt, but it's the truth. It's better to stay grounded in reality than get swept away by empty dreams."

A laugh escaped Christina before she could stop it, low and amused. So, that was his message in a nutshell—a divorced woman should forget about marrying up. Her time in the Dawson family? Nothing but a lucky accident.

"That's very thoughtful of you," Christina said, her smile faint but firm. "But here's a tip—people who focus on their own problems tend to live longer."

Brendon's eyes narrowed as he caught the bite in her tone. "Are you cursing me?"

With a casual shrug, Christina replied, "Nah. But if you have to twist it that way, be my guest."

His temper spiked fast. "Christina Jones! I gave you more than enough to live comfortably. What more do you want? Why are you still out there, parading around with other men?"

She didn't even blink. "Other men?" she asked with a humorless chuckle. Her stare didn't waver. "Tell me, Brendon. What exactly have I done? Where's your proof?"

"Isn't it clear? First, it was Dylan, then the Morfort Restaurant's owner. And now Ralphie. Don't tell me you're going to stand there and deny all of it," Brendon blurted, locking eyes with her, waiting for her denial as if it was the only thing that could settle the unrest inside him, the only way to quiet that bitter suspicion clawing at his gut.

He didn't love Christina, and he never had any real emotional ties to her. He could excuse his own betrayals without guilt, but the idea of Christina doing the same—that was something he couldn't stomach.

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Chapter 19:

Christina saw no point in offering explanations. Brendon had already passed judgment, so nothing she said would matter. With a shrug, she said purposely, “I am exactly what you think I am. How’s that concern you? After all, you’re just my ex-husband now!”

She lingered on the words “ex-husband,” letting each syllable slice through the tension like a blade.

Instead of denial, her unapologetic admission threw Brendon off, and his features twisted with anger at her blunt dismissal. “You’re free to do whatever you like now, but were you already sleeping around while we were still married?” he demanded, voice raised.

A cold chuckle slipped from Christina’s lips. “That’s rich coming from you. If you want answers about my loyalty during our marriage, I can ask you the same question.”

Brendon retorted, “I never cheated on you—when did I ever step out on our marriage?”

She rolled her eyes, the sound of her laughter bitter. “Come off it. Even with a ring on your finger, your heart always belonged to someone else.” Her gaze flicked to Yolanda, a hint of scorn curling at her mouth.

Yolanda’s voice trembled with mock regret. “Christina, I’m sorry...”

In an instant, Brendon reached over and took Yolanda’s hand, his expression softening for her. He faced Christina again, voice turning cold and matter-of-fact. “Yes, I never loved you. This marriage was forced on me, and I admit I treated you poorly these last years. But wasn’t the settlement I gave you enough? You got more out of this divorce than most could hope to make in a lifetime. Three years, and now you’ll never have to worry about money. Most people would kill for that kind of deal. Christina, I owe you nothing. Yolanda doesn’t owe you, either. The real mistake here was this marriage—it never should’ve happened.”

A sharp, cold laugh slipped from Christina. “So, you think I owe you and Yolanda? You claimed this whole marriage was some grand mistake? But you could have saved us both the trouble by simply not proposing in the first place.”

Had Brendon given even a hint of hesitation before their wedding day, Christina never would have said yes. All along, Brendon’s choices revealed his selfishness. After Yolanda left him shattered three years back with the abrupt departure...

overseas, he had grabbed Christina as a substitute to fill the void, especially since she had been there to care for his wounds left by the accident.

“My grandmother pushed me into marrying you,” Brendon said, brows drawn in irritation.

“Is that so?” Christina’s voice held a mocking edge. “Funny, I don’t remember you putting up any kind of fight. Pressure or not, you had options. You just didn’t use them.”

“I couldn’t exactly refuse! Not marrying you would’ve meant losing my place in the company,” Brendon retorted, exasperation creeping in.

“So much for true love. It falls apart as soon as your bottom line is threatened,” Christina said, her words dripping with sarcasm.

Katie suddenly barged into the conversation, bristling with indignation. “What’s that supposed to mean? Quit trying to sow discord here! Yolanda and Brendon are perfectly happy together, and your spiteful comments won’t change a thing. Don’t fool yourself—Brendon isn’t coming back to you, and you can forget about ever remarrying into the Dawson family!”

A glacial chill settled over Christina’s features. “You read too much into it. Even if the entire Dawson family came crawling, I wouldn’t rejoin them.”

Katie’s laugh was sharp and derisive. “Oh, come on! Don’t flatter yourself. No one in my family wants you back. With your reputation for fickleness and shamelessness, you’re nothing but trouble—no respectable family would take the risk. Forget about high society. Even average people wouldn’t want you around.”

Ice glinted in Christina’s eyes as she fixed her stare on Katie. “You might as well worry about your own skeletons. Wouldn’t want a few nasty secrets ruining your shot at marrying up.”

A flush of panic washed over Katie. “My skeletons? What are you talking about?” Her voice faltered, eyes darting away from Christina’s gaze as unease flashed across her face. Facing Christina always unsettled her, leaving her with the unsettling sense that nothing could be hidden from those sharp eyes.

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The Humble Ex-wife is Now A Brilliant Tycoon

Chapter 20:

“No one is more familiar with the truth than you are,” Christina remarked, her tone cool and steady as she smirked at Katie.

Confusion creased Brendon’s brow. “What are you getting at? What kind of skeletons does Katie have in the cupboard?”

“That’s a conversation you should have with her. I couldn’t care less about her affairs,” Christina answered, sounding indifferent. Had Katie not provoked her, she never would have mentioned a thing.

A gentle protest slipped from Yolanda, her words deliberately chosen to ingratiate herself with the Dawson family while casting a negative light on Christina. “Christina, please refrain from casting baseless accusations against Katie. If someone overheard our conversation, they might start gossiping about Katie.”

“You’re the one making baseless accusations here. If you doubt my words, ask Katie about what she has done,” Christina replied with a cold edge, glancing over at Brendon. “Aren’t we supposed to see your grandmother? Let’s move.”

“Not until you explain what you mean.” Brendon’s jaw tightened.

Backing him up, Yolanda chimed in, “Yeah. Christina, let’s clear the air if there’s any misunderstanding. This way, no one will get the wrong idea about Katie.”

“Katie, they’re so determined to hear the truth. Should I spell it out right here?” Christina’s question lingered in the air. She let a sly grin curl her lips, flicking a meaningful glance toward Katie’s midsection—a gesture that said more than words ever could.

Others might have missed Christina’s quick, pointed look, but Katie’s panic made her notice instantly.

An uneasy thumping filled Katie’s chest, and she bit down hard on her lip. She viewed Christina’s stare as a loaded threat. Despite her defiance, she dared not challenge Christina, not when the risk of Christina holding actual proof of her misdeeds loomed large. If her wrongdoings became public knowledge, her dream of marrying into an elite family would be crushed, and even those with lesser names would likely keep their distance.

Trying to mask her panic, Katie blurted, “What’s there to clarify? I haven’t done anything, so what’s the point in talking?” She swiftly changed the subject. “Are we heading to the Dawson estate or not? Stop wasting time! Grandma’s probably tired of waiting. If we’re not going, then forget it.”

“We’re going—Grandma’s expecting us,” Brendon replied without hesitation. Making Christina come to see his grandmother was a crucial step before he could talk her into handing King’s treatment opportunity to him.

“Then let’s get moving!” Katie spun around, desperate to put distance between herself and Christina before the conversation returned to her misdeeds.

Yolanda turned to Christina, her words measured as she piled on her efforts to make Christina appear vicious. “Christina, we may have hurt you before, but there’s no need to invent things about Katie. She means well—she’s just a little blunt sometimes.”

Christina didn’t hesitate to fire back, “Then keep your comments to yourself.” She climbed into the car without another word.

Brendon’s first instinct was to scold Christina, but he bit back his frustration due to his need to strike a deal with her over King’s treatment opportunity. He turned to Yolanda with gentle reassurance, giving her hand a soft pat. “Don’t let what she said get to you.”

Ever the skilled actress, Yolanda made sure she looked aggrieved yet understanding, nodding as tears threatened to spill from her eyes. “Alright.”

The ride was silent, tension thick in the air. Christina gazed out the window, lips pressed together in silent resolve.

Yolanda and Katie were dropped off at their respective homes first, and then the car headed to the Dawson family estate.

Bethel had never hidden her sharp tongue—Katie took the brunt of it, and Yolanda didn't fare much better.

Back in the day, only Christina enjoyed unrestricted access to the Dawson family estate. Bethel's approval was never required.

"When do you plan to tell Bethel about our divorce?" Christina broke the silence. She wished Brendon would finally step up and handle the situation like a man.

"I'll do it when the moment's right," Brendon replied, avoiding her eyes.

Christina didn't see the point in waiting. "Why drag it out? Let's just tell her today and be done with it." Her voice was flat, betraying nothing.

A frown creased Brendon's brow. "You're really in a hurry to sever all ties, aren't you?"

"We have no ties left to sever," Christina answered.

Her response caught Brendon off guard, stirring an odd frustration in him. With a trace of spite, he responded, "You won't have to worry. I'll make sure Grandma...

Hears everything. Since the divorce is settled and Yolanda's back, I'll be with Yolanda now. Maybe you'll even get an invitation to our wedding."

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