

## Read Billionaire Baby Daddy online free by Claire Adams

### Chapter Ten

Andrew

I knew deep-down, judging by the looks of the kid, that Emma must be my daughter. She looked too much like Katherine for that not to be the case. And to be honest, that scared me. Having a daughter had the potential to disrupt my entire life. I'd grown accustomed to living my life however I pleased, to having my life be all about me and no one else.

Having a daughter would mean responsibilities. It had the possibility to disrupt the good thing that I had going with Renée. It would mean that my life had to be about someone other than me.

And already I was having feelings of guilt, watching Lexi crying in front of me. There was definitely a part of me that wanted to insist that she was just being lazy or that she had brought this upon herself. There was a part of me that wanted to insist that I didn't owe her anything and that if she thought otherwise, she was crazy.

But I couldn't get that little girl's face out of my mind. The way that she had looked solemnly up at Janice, the enthusiastic nod when Janice suggested peanut butter crackers for a snack. She was cute. And she looked like Katherine.

Between that and the tears, it made me want to agree to whatever Lexi was here to propose.

It was a strange feeling to have. After all, it wasn't as though I'd never had a woman come crying to me before. But they'd never been in this situation.

Still, the whole thing seemed strange. Why hadn't she told me when she first found out that she was pregnant? Why tell me now? If I believed what she'd said, she'd been fired by Albright nearly three and a half years prior to that. None of this made sense.

And somewhere deep down, I was still reeling at the thought of having to deal with the responsibilities that came along with having a kid.

I shook my head. "As I said before, I don't like it when people try to take advantage of me," I told her. "You've clearly figured out a way to survive for the past three years, so I suggest you keep doing that. Rather than taking the lazy way out and coming to me, expecting me to solve all your problems."

Lexi gaped at me for a moment, a fresh wave of waterworks threatening in her eyes. She turned her gaze away, staring down at her hands as she twisted her fingers together. "Why are you so sure that this is just a scheme?" she asked. "If this was a scheme, don't you think I would have come here a long time ago? I'm only here now because I'm desperate."

"You hardly seem desperate," I said, snorting derisively.

"I haven't really figured out some way to survive," she admitted, sounding miserable. "We've been living off my savings. Even when I've managed to hold down a job, it's barely been enough for everything that Emma needs. I have nothing left at this point. Thirty-six dollars in the bank. That's it. I was evicted a couple weeks ago. I've been living on at a friend's place, and she's been helping me out with food. But that's obviously not a long-term solution."

"So instead, you want me to help you out with food and accommodation?" I asked snidely, even though I was feeling even more

guilty by the second. I wanted nothing more than to pull her into my arms and promise to make everything better.

I wasn't sure where that feeling came from, but I was determined to push it away.

“You think I want to be here?” she snapped. “You think I want to beg you to help me out with Emma? If I had my way, I would be able to provide the best sort of life for her, all by myself. If you knew her, you'd want the same. She's such a great kid, and she deserves so much better. She deserves so much better than to have an asshole like you for her father, and she deserves so much better than to have a failure of a mother like me. I'd consider putting her up for adoption, but I honestly can't imagine my life without her. She's such a good kid.”

She took a deep breath. “If this were some sort of scheme, don't you think I would have come immediately when I found out I was pregnant? That was only a couple months after we slept together. Like I said, I'm surprised you even remember me at this point. But I didn't want you anywhere near that child. I didn't want Emma to realize what she was missing out on. I didn't want her to know that her daddy was rich and could give her everything that she ever dreamed of, but unfortunately for her, he was also a selfish bastard who refused to share that wealth with anyone.”

Her words hurt more than I would have expected them to, given that I hardly even knew the woman. But there was something about them that reminded me of how my own parents had been. Mom was always so aloof. She'd hated hugs, and she'd pawned off most of her motherly duties on a string of nannies, who never seemed to last very long given that Mom was constantly criticizing them for the smallest of things.

And then there was Dad, whose only concern for me was whether or not I'd be ready t

o take over his business when he was ready to hand it over to me. He'd probably known from the time I was small that he would be dumping Orinoco on me the moment I had graduated from college.

Lexi was probably right, and it was better that I had nothing to do with Emma, even if the girl was my daughter.

"I just don't know where to turn to at this point," Lexi confessed, still unable to meet my eyes. "My mother's an artist. She was barely able to scrape together enough to raise me above the poverty level, and she's been earning less lately. She's living in this artist's retreat at the moment, so I hardly ever even see her, and it's not like Emma and I could go stay with her. It's hard to even get in contact with her. The place doesn't have Wi-Fi, and there's only one phone line for all of them to split."

She shook her head. "Misty's been great, but I know I can't stay there much longer. She can't really afford the place on her own, and it's not like I can contribute anything to rent. I can't even contribute toward groceries. Other than that, I guess it'll just be government aid, but I could be waiting a while before they get back to me, and even then, we all know that government aid doesn't really provide much of a life for kids."

"There are plenty of programs now that would help you," I scoffed. "You might have to live in a low-income area, but you'd have a roof over your heads and food on the table."

"But do you really want your daughter growing up in a low-income part of the city?" she asked, finally looking up at me again, a look of horror in her eyes. "I want her to be safe. I want her to make good friends, have

healthy relationships. She's smart. I want her to go to a good school. I want her to have hobbies, to be able to join clubs or sports teams or whatever she wants to do. I don't want her to get the bare minimum that she needs to survive."

"Well, then you're going to have to work on finding a job," I snapped.

"I know that," Lexi said, and this time, I could hear the desperation in her voice. "I'm trying to find a job. I applied to fifteen jobs yesterday. Some of them, I don't even know how I would get to them if they did hire me because I don't have a car anymore and the public transit system won't get me everywhere. But I'll figure that out if I get hired. I'm just desperate to find something at the moment. But first, I need a place to live. A place that Emma can call home, even if it's just for a little while."

"I have space," I found myself saying, before my brain caught up with my mouth.

"I didn't come here looking for a place to stay," she said, sounding uncertain.

"No, you came here for money," I agreed. "But if I'm making an investment, I like to see what that investment is getting me. You're an insurance analyst. You should understand that. I want to make sure that I know how that investment is doing and make sure that it's meeting the terms stated in the original plan."

Lexi just stared at me, her eyes wide. "'The terms stated in the original plan'?" she echoed.

"Well, if I'm going to give you money, I should have some say in how that money is being spent," I said matter-of-factly. "And as I said, you're going to need to get a job. Apparently, despite your claims that you've

been applying to a number of different positions, you've been unable to get yourself hired, so I'll need to monitor you and make sure that you really are applying to as many jobs as you say you are. You know, if you don't have a job, you should be job-hunting every day."

"You're unbelievable," Lexi said, shaking her head.

I shrugged broadly. "It's up to you," I told her. "You should have known that you weren't going to just get help for free. If you want my help, you're going to live here, and I'm going to interact with Emma just as much as you do. And we're going to sign a contract outlining the rules of this arrangement."

I could see the uncertainty in her eyes, and I only hoped it wasn't mirrored with similar uncertainty in my own expression. I wasn't entirely sure where the words were coming from. I would be interacting with Emma just as much as she did? Did I want to have a relationship with my daughter? The more of a relationship she and I had, the more responsibility I was going to have toward her. It would be much easier to just pay Lexi a check every month and keep them out of my sight.

But for some reason, I didn't want that. I couldn't quite put my finger on it, whether it was those strange feelings that I'd had for Lexi ever since our night together or something tied up with my feelings for my parents. Or that niggling guilt that I had been feeling throughout this conversation. Perhaps it was a combination of all of those things. Whatever it was, I was asking Lexi and Emma to stay.

"I don't want Emma to know that you're her dad," Lexi said slowly. "Not just yet. Please."

“Fine,” I agreed. That was probably best for both of us. “Tell her that we’re old friends. Tell her whatever you want to tell her. I have my own stipulations, too.”

“Such as ?”

“We’re not in a relationship,” I told her frostily. “We aren’t in a relationship, and we’re not going to be in a relationship. I have a girlfriend.”

“Are we going to tell your girlfriend that you and I are just old friends ?” Lexi asked snidely.

“Don’t be ridiculous,” I said. “I’m not in the habit of lying to Renée.”

“There’s a shocker,” Lexi muttered. I glowered at her, and she ducked her head again. “Sorry.”

“I expect you to be civil, if we’re going to be living together, regardless of what your personal opinions are of me.” I paused. “I don’t shy away from my personal responsibilities, you know. Whatever else you might think about me, whatever else you might have heard about me and Orinoco and the way that I do business, that’s one thing that you can always count on.”

“Good,” Lexi said. She bit her lower lip and then stood up slowly. “I guess Emma and I should go back to Misty’s and tell her what’s going on. Pack up our things.”

“Don’t be ridiculous,” I said, knowing she must be exhausted from the outpouring of feelings that she’d displayed during the conversation. “Give Misty a call, maybe. But you can save packing up your things for another time. Let me show you around the house.”

