

Mr. CEO, Marry Me On Conditions [The CEO's Replaced Bride] Chapter 1

[[By Texas the author is referring to the main city of Texas (TEXAS CITY)]]

Ivanna

I will miss Texas, memories I have made here over the past few years. It's my last day in this wonderful state with amazing people everywhere. Life won't be the same as before anymore after I move to my old city again. Even though I miss my family, Texas feels like home because of the freedom and amazing friends everywhere.

"We just graduated yesterday and you are moving out today," Emily frowns at me when we are exploring the busiest marketplace of Texas.

"You know the reason," I say, carrying the big bags stuffed with gifts and chocolates for my family.

"Your sister's wedding? I know. You can just visit and come back again. We will have more time to celebrate before you eventually move out," anger is visible in her voice as she squints her brown eyes at me.

I purse my lips into a forced smile and get back to shop again.

"I have spent a long three years in Texas, Emily. And I don't know why I'm feeling like if I leave, I will not be able to come back anytime soon"

"Why so? You're really superstitious sometimes," she rolled her eyes.

"But trust me. I think you're gonna rush back here. You can't live there, Ivanna. You know it"

I only pass a smile.

She is indeed true. I still remember the day when I left Dallas and came here to Texas, depressed and shattered, lost somewhere away from the track but I don't blame my family for it.

I don't have a normal family. Still, it was not bad as fiction. My father got married to my stepmother when I was ten and they already had a nine years old girl. It didn't take me much time to realise that my father already cheated on my mother long before her death. Her death was a good chance for him to marry his old lover. I never asked questions from him since I hardly faced any problem with his new wife.

She was okay. But she was not my mother. She was the reason why my mother got cheated on and that poor woman could never know that she had been cheated on. She passed away without knowing it. I couldn't digest the truth.

I still have hard and bitter feelings for my father. I lost faith in love and relationships. Whenever I saw my dad and Janice laughing together, staying happy and having a beautiful family, I remembered the unsaid sorrows of my dead mother.

It was not their fault. But what to do? I'm a daughter, after all. As a result, I found it better to leave the house at the age of eighteen and look for my own happiness. Texas and its people helped me to improve myself, get over the tragic death of my mother, forgive my father and stepmother and especially be happy.

Emily follows me as I pay the bill and load the backseat of my car with all the stuff.

As I take the driving seat, Emily sits beside me and slams the door in full force, her face turning red and skin wrinkling.

I laugh. “You’re not gonna let me go. Are you?”

“Go, please,” she scoffs.

“Okay. I’m leaving. But not tonight. I don’t mind having a party night with my fellows,” I giggle as she widens her eyes and gets back to grumpy mode again.

“You could have said something better but at least you said something a bit better. I’ll inform everyone tonight” she looks happier than before which I want.

I don’t want to leave any of my friend’s angry behind. They deserve a cheerful night before my departure. I drive back to my apartment, half an hour away and drop Emily at her home.

As I stop near my apartment, the janitor rushes to help me with the stuff and we move to my floor.

I look at the nameplate hanging on my door and take it off with a smile. Ivanna Rozario. This one should be in my luggage now.

I am Ivanna Rozario, twenty-one years old, postgraduate. After spending three years in Texas, I’m moving back to Dallas, to my family on the occasion of my step-sister’s wedding. Irene is getting married tomorrow and I’m happy for her. I had spent eight years with her and shared a warm relationship. There were no grudges between us as some stepsisters have. It was my hard feelings as a daughter that I kept myself away from all of them. This time I’m determined to accept my family with a warm heart again. After all, with time and gathering experience, I have overcome the bitterness.

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“Irene is a year younger than you, girl. And what are you doing?” Reina teases me like always as I finish the peg. This is it for tonight. I don’t wanna get drunk before leaving for my sister’s wedding.

The club is full of noise but we manage to get a calm place at the corner.

“So? Do you want me to get married anyhow?” I rolled my eyes.

“Where’s your guy? What is he up to? When is he gonna propose you?” Reina comes up with a sack of questions.

“I don’t understand your man either,” Emily frowns, taking a sip of her drink.

“When the right time comes,” I giggle.

“I hope your private relationship won’t turn into a private wedding,” Stella scoffs. “And hopefully we are invited”

“It’s my farewell from Texas party, not my bachelorette party, girls. Stop this” I scowl at all of them and they laugh aloud.

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With the sun shining brighter on the horizon, I step into Dallas airport. The city looks changed. I smile, shortly inhaling the air and squeezing my eyes shut for a second.

When I open my eyes look over the direction, I find my father waiting for me with a slight smile on his face. He indeed misses me. There was not a single day when he used to ask me to come back home when I left. He knew there was something wrong but I never let him find out my hard

feelings for him. A year later my departure, he stopped calling me and motivated me to complete my studies.

“Dad,” he takes me in a warm hug.

“Welcome back,” his voice is low and tired. It’s not like something I expected to witness. It’s a big day. His eldest daughter has come back after years and his younger daughter is getting married.

He should be the happiest man today. I don’t question him and save it for later.

“Thanks, dad. How’s Janice and Irene?” I ask with a smile as his smile fades away.

Now, I know there’s something wrong.

“What happened?” I ask nervously. The situation is not supposed to be so cold now when I’m back to find only happiness in my family.

“Nothing, Ivi” he caresses my hair and holds my shoulder, leading me to the exit. “I’m just tired. You know there is so much work for a wedding”

“Yeah,” I smile and hope the reason is genuine. “I’m sorry you and Janice had to tackle everything alone despite having an adult daughter. From now, I’ll try to fulfil the duties of a good daughter”

We get inside the car as dad smiles at me. The smile doesn’t look like a forced one he passed before.

“I know that,” he says.

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It takes us twenty minutes to reach home. My tiny house still looks the same. The garden, the yard, the little gate, everything reminds me of mom. If she was alive, she would be waiting for me at the door today and she would come rushing to me, taking me in a tight hug.

I miss you so much, mom. I whisper.

But now, I won't let my love for you to be the reason for my hard feelings about Janice and dad.

Dad steps inside and I follow him, rolling my eyes around. There were a few women in the living area. I recognise a few faces. They might be Janice's sisters and friends.

"Dad," I whisper. "I thought I was late for the wedding but what are they still doing here?"

Dad looks at me with no reaction on his face.

He just holds my wrist and takes me to my old room which belongs to Irene now. The room is filled with Irene's pictures and her belongings. Irene is a beautiful woman now. I won't deny it. We have many similarities. Both of us have blonde hair, grey eyes, brownish skin tone, and an oval-shaped face. I had asked dad once if she was indeed my step sister or the real one. Was Janice my real mother or was my mom also Irene's mother? Because it was hard for me to believe that we resembled so much despite having different mothers.

It hits me a bit when I see the photograph of me and mom is not anywhere in the room. All my belongings are shifted from here.

"Dad! I think we're getting late. You are about to walk with Irene to the aisle. Please get ready fast. I'm also getting ready," I immediately open

my suitcase and bring out the red gown that I recently purchased for the prom night.

“Ivanna, you won’t be wearing this today,” dad takes the gown from my hand and places it back on the bed.

“I think you guys have bought something for me,” I smile.

Dad smiles back at me. Meanwhile, Janice walks inside the room with a bag. She’s still gorgeous as before.

“How’re you, Janice?” I smile but my old soul doesn’t let me hug her.

“I’m good, Ivanna. Thanks for coming back and—” she hands me the bag.

“Well, that’s sweet of you. I couldn’t afford two dresses in the same month,” I laugh and take out the brand new white gown from the bag.

It’s so freaking gorgeous, so expensive!

My eyes freeze on this beauty laying on my forearm.

Gosh! It’s indeed so pretty. But isn’t a bridal gown?

I squint my eyes at Janice and crack up. “I think you replaced Irene’s outfit with mine. Hasn’t she got dressed yet?”

“It’s for you, Ivanna,” Janice says in a low tone.

I try to understand what she just said.

“Sorry! I didn’t get you”

“Not only the outfits are replaced but also the brides,” Janice’s voice is numb. She doesn’t look happy at all. Moreover, her words give me a shock.

“What?”

“Ivanna,” dad holds my shoulder and makes me look at him. His face looks sad, broken and failed. “You said that you want to be a good daughter and you want to fulfil your responsibilities”

I shake my head in confusion.

“This is the chance. We need you, Ivanna” he sniffs. “You’ll have to get married. Today!”

I feel like the earth slipping away under my feet with dad’s words. I can’t believe it.

“What?” I part away from dad and take a step back. “Married? To whom?”

“To the man who was about to marry your sister,” Janice says. “You’ll be replacing Irene”