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Chapter 1

Adeline

Being in my late twenties and trying to find the one sucks. Seriously.

It's tough. Sure, it might seem easier to some with all these dating websites and apps to supposedly make it easier to meet someone, but that doesn't mean you'll meet someone who wants a future. People just want to hook up and I'm tired of it. I was one of those girls who grew up with her wedding day planned, my color scheme was picked out when I was twelve, and by the time I was sixteen, I even knew what kind of food would be served. Yet here I am at twenty-seven, unmarried, and it didn't seem like my status was going to change anytime soon. I should be happy to be single, I suppose. A few of my friends are married and a few already divorced.

I wouldn't call myself picky. For whatever reason, I always pick the wrong guys.

It was a year ago I signed up for an insane experiment and never thought I'd get this far. I'd watched some reality TV show about couples getting married at first sight, never knowing the other person's name, what they looked like, job...nothing. It was crazy, but I was glued every week when it aired, watching and needing to know what would happen. And then I came across one of those annoying Facebook ads. There was a group of matchmaking experts in my area planning to conduct the same thing, off camera.

So I signed up. Why not? Several of the couples from the TV show had success, maybe I

would too. Of course the day of registration, the place had a line around the block of people wanting to try, I'd never get picked.

But I made it into the top round. For the past six months, I'd been working with the team of doctors about everything from my sex life, my spiritual life, what I wanted in a man, etc. I now waited to see if I would be matched. Hopefully, because my spirits were high. Each time they called me, I got more and more excited about the prospect.

"Adeline." My mom popped her head into my art studio slash apartment. "I made grilled cheese for lunch with tomato soup, want to join me?"

"I'll be down in five. Let me finish up this lake."

"It's beautiful." She closed the door and I went back to painting.

There were perks to living in the loft above my parent's garage. I got fed most days of the week if I was home and well, my utilities were paid for. All I had to do was give them some money each month to help with groceries. They wouldn't take rent since they had paid off the house a few years ago.

I set my paint brushes in water to soak and washed my hands. After I dried them with the towel I kept forgetting to put into the wash, I set my apron on a barstool, making sure the side with any paint on it was face up then headed down to the main house. My mom poured the soup into bowls and my nephew Brady set the plates with sandwiches on the table.

"Hey, Brady, what are you doing here? Don't you have school?"

"I have strep."

"Crap. That sucks." I messed up the hair on his head.

"Nick couldn't take the day off, so he's here with me." My mom put spoons into the bowls. "Come get your soup."

I grabbed mine and Brady's and sat down.

"How is Nick?" He'd had a rough year. My sister-in-law, Jill, up and left without a word. Just didn't come home from work one evening. Nick had been raising Brady since with the help of my mom and dad. "If you promise not to get me sick, maybe you can hang out in the studio with me a bit today before I go into work tonight."

"He needs a nap after this." My mom broke a few crackers into her bowl.

"I'm ten, Grams."

My mom gave him a stern look. "And never too old for a nap. Especially if you want to

fight that infection.”

“I agree.” I loved naps.

My cell phone rang from my back pocket and my mom gave me an annoyed look. She hated cell phones, like hated them. Didn't own one and complained that they were ruining society. I pulled the device from my pocket to make sure the call wasn't important.

Dr. Richards. Was on the screen.

“I have to take this.” I stood quickly and excused myself to the back room. “Hello.”

“Adeline, I hope you're well today. By any chance, are you able to come to the agency this afternoon?”

I really wanted to finish a certain part of my painting before I went into work, but I was also curious why they wanted to see me. “I think I can manage it.”

“Come by around two.”

I could swing that. “All right, see you then.”

Taking a deep breath, my palms started to moisten. I wiped them on my jeans. Usually they gave me some sort of idea what they wanted, but not this time. Oh God, they were going to drop me. No one wanted an aspiring artist who still lived at home with her parents. I was about to be rejected.

I took my seat at the table and finished my lunch before racing back up to my studio to get in a shower and try to look my best. Maybe if I was pretty and put together, they wouldn't dump me as a client. Hell, I didn't care if it took them a year or two to find me a match. I was terrible at this dating thing. Awkward and as soon as a guy learned where I lived, they didn't take me serious. And the art thing. I didn't understand that. Apparently many of the men thought I was flighty and not aspiring. Screw them. I was a dreamer yes, but my art was good. I just needed to get discovered.

I hurried up the stairs toward the meeting room. The elevator was out of order. What the hell? I'd worn my four inch stilettos in hopes to impress the two men at least enough to keep looking for my match. Why had I chosen these shoes though? Surely there was a pair of sexy flats I could have chosen instead.

I made it up the stairwell and to the meeting room. There was another girl waiting outside the door, she had her arms crossed as she fidgeted back and forth between her feet.

“Hi.” I smiled.

“Hey. You here to meet with the so-called experts?”

“Yes, you?”

She nodded. Crap, they were going to dump us together, but at least we could go get drinks together and talk about how we were rejects.

“I’m Adeline.”

“Sarah.”

“Any idea why they called us both here?”

She shrugged. “No idea. They asked me to be here and that was it.”

“Same.”

“I hope they don’t make us wait long. I took a late lunch break and need to be back to work soon.”

The door opened and Dr. Richards, the professor of sociology, greeted us. I liked him. He was always calm and collected, putting me at ease.

“Come on in, Sarah and Adeline. I hope you don’t mind that we called you both here together.”

“Its fine,” I said, even though I wasn’t sure it was okay.

Wobbling on my heels, hoping no one could tell I’d never worn shoes like this, I took a seat next to Sarah, my new BFF, I was sure of it.

Dr. Richards sat down next to the other three experts.

“Thank you both for coming on such short notice,” Dr. Banks, the sexologist, said. She was one of my favorites. She had the kindest heart I’d ever come across.

“No problem,” Sarah said.

“We’ll get right to the point.” Dr. Stellar, the psychologist, picked up two Manila folders and tapped them on the table as he grinned. “You’re both getting married.”

Married? Say what? Had I heard him right? Did he just fucking say I was getting married?

“We’ve gone over this a few times. It’s a real wedding. After you get married to your groom, it’s our hope that you’ll then get a place together. All three of us are here to help along the way. You will be agreeing to stay married for six weeks and at the end, you can make a choice to stay married or not.” Dr. Stellar handed us both the folders.

“You found a match for me?” I couldn’t believe it.

“We have, Adeline. I told you we would,” Dr. Banks said.

“Okay.” I opened the folder, staring at a long page of words. There were multiple pages. I could barely comprehend what they’d said I was so shocked, they expected me to read.

“Read over this file.” Dr. Stellar looked between us. “There is also a sheet at the end about the person you’re marrying. Remember that ‘about me page’ you filled out? Your match is getting a copy.”

“Oh God.” Sarah shook her head. “Why?”

“I think you should know a little something about your future husband as he his wife. No name is given, looks, etc. Except for that small paragraph where you had to sum yourself up in a few sentences. If you read it and any flags go up, contact us. While we think we’ve found your soul mate, it also depends on how honest you’ve been with us.”

“Take those files home, read them over, and then get back to us.” Dr. Banks checked her watch.

“Wait,” I said. “So I could still not get married.”

“Why do you say that?” Dr. Stellar asked.

“My match is getting a file like this too. What if he reads what I wrote and rejects me?”

“Good question,” Sarah chimed in.

Dr. Richards chuckled. “You have nothing to worry about. Anyone who has made it as far as you ladies is serious about this.”

“And if you agree, you’ll be getting married in two weeks,” Dr. Banks said.

Two weeks? That was fast. Really fast. I couldn’t pull off my dream wedding in that amount of time.

“What about planning a wedding?” I asked.

“If you stay married past the six weeks, then plan something. These will be conducted at the courthouse,” Dr. Stellar said.

We chatted a few more minutes before parting ways. Sarah and I exchanged numbers and when I was in my car, I opened the folder, flipping to the back. I needed to know something about my match.

I’m hard working and don’t give up easily. I go after the things I

want and don't share well. You get what you get with me, but you'll be pleased. Not once has anyone ever said they left my bed unhappy. Sex isn't everything, but it's a big role. I'm not looking for something temporary. I want a wife. Someone I can spend my days and nights with, growing old. I want love. Plain and simple. I'm not willing to settle for anything else.

I reread the short paragraph several times. This was my match? He sounded like someone with childhood issues. Not liking to share? What the hell have I gotten myself into? How could the experts think whoever the heck this guy was would be my perfect match?

I contemplated calling them and telling them to find someone else, but this wasn't a dating service. They supposedly worked very hard to find my match and if the experts thought Mr. Sex and No Share was my match, then I should at least give him a chance.

I needed to tell my parents. They had no idea about any of this.

Chapter 2

Isaac

I lied and felt shitty about it now. Love is something I want badly, but women don't see me as love. They see my bank account, my status, and my cock. Okay, the third part might be a bit of a reach, but no one complains.

I just finished my meeting with the experts and learned they had matched me. Part of me wanted to call them on their bluff. How much of an expert could one be if they didn't catch who I really was? Isaac Wright of Wright Enterprises. My family was known. We opened doors, making peoples dream comes true. All that mumbo jumbo and they hadn't caught on to who I was? I put my real name on the application as well as what I wanted in a woman, my sex life, all that crap. Only I pretended to be a guy working in a small marketing firm.

They claimed to do a background check, but they didn't catch that? Or maybe they were fooling me by not saying anything and humoring me. The meeting didn't leave me very confident in their abilities. Some other guy left with me and he was thrilled. The man practically floated out of the building. I, on the other hand, gripped the folder in my hand and didn't open it until I made it back to my office.

"Can I get you anything, Mr. Wright?" Stacy, my secretary asked as I passed by her desk. A blow job. "I'm good. Thank you."

I closed myself in my office and tossed the folder on my desk. I hadn't had sex in months. Months! I liked sex, but I was tired of the women. The ones who wanted my money, expected a diamond necklace after one night together. They did some dirty things in hopes to earn that diamond. I was nothing but a bank account to them. They never even hesitated to ask for something, which shocked me. Maybe I came across as someone who liked to throw their money away. I didn't get where I was in life by doing that.

Sure, I came from the Wright family. I was born into wealth and had a trust fund, but I

also made my own money. I knew how to invest and when to pull out when needed.

The damn folder had my attention. Inside I could read about my future wife. I shouldn't be annoyed with her or avoid learning who she was. With a sigh, I grabbed the folder and opened it. The contract was up first as well as info about the process. I'd send this to my lawyer—shit maybe I wouldn't. I didn't want anyone in my circle to know about this. For the first six weeks of marriage, I wasn't going to talk about my family or let her meet them. I wanted her to fall in love with me, not her future if she passed the test. My lawyer Grant had to keep quiet if he wanted to earn his paycheck.

Ah, the about me page. Time to see who the woman was that was crazy enough to marry a stranger.

I'm a dreamer. I've always wanted a big wedding and to be a wife. Art is a big piece of me. I keep to myself mostly and don't have much of a social life. I probably live a very boring life.

That was all she'd written. I reread it, not finding anything about what she wrote attracting me to her. They didn't give me a photo of her or even a name. If I'd had at least one of those, I could find out who she was, but from this above, she could be anyone.

I did sign up to marry a stranger.

She wanted a big wedding, but we had two weeks until the day. I couldn't draw attention to myself getting married so I preferred if we just went down to the courthouse as the doctors said we should. I leaned back in my chair. If this mystery woman was to be my wife until death do us part, I needed to make sure she got what she wanted. I took my cell phone from my pocket and called Dr. Richards.

"Isaac, are you calling about your match?"

"Yes."

"What do you think?"

Not a whole lot. "She didn't write much about herself."

"Without saying much, I can say you'll be very pleased with her."

I had no doubt and had expressed my shallow side and that looks were important. Surely they were going to give me a hot wife. "She noted she wants a big wedding. I want to try my best

to give that to her.”

“We recommend—”

“I don’t care. My future wife wants a big wedding and I only want to marry once—to her. So as I stated about not having any family, that makes it hard for me.” I’d lied, claiming to have abandoned my family. I had to do what I had to do, right? “I want to give her access to money.” I paused, realizing if I did that, she’d see right away I was wealthy. Shit, how could I do this?

“Are you still there?” he asked.

“Yes, sorry. Just trying to figure this out.”

“Let me have a talk with my fellow partners and see what we can work out,” Dr. Richards said.

“Maybe tell her you guys are giving her a budget of say, thirty thousand.”

Dr. Richards sounded like he choked on his spit. “How much?”

“Never mind. Just let her plan a wedding indoors somewhere and she can have whatever she wants. I will foot the bill, just don’t let her know.”

“Why the secrets?”

I almost wanted to spell it out, but if they hadn’t figured out who I was yet, there was no point. “Just do it.”

I took a deep breath. Today was my wedding day. I couldn’t believe it. The last two weeks had flown by thanks to my packed schedule. I even managed to get some of my traveling out of the way for the next six weeks. Now I could spend all my time with her. I had to play the part of a guy in marketing and not a partner at Wright Investments. I hadn’t stopped to think about if she’d recognize me or my name. Hopefully not.

I paced the small room they put me in, stopping every now and then to look at myself in my tux. They’d told me she liked deep purple, so my tie and vest were that color. I ran my hand across my short beard, it was a bit burly but women seemed to love it. I hoped my wife did too. My nerves were getting to me as I fixed my hair for the tenth time. This pacing wasn’t doing me any good.

“Isaac.” Dr. Banks stuck her head in the door. “Can I come in?”

“Yes.”

She took a seat. “Your bride is here and almost ready. She’s very nervous.”

“The feeling is mutual.” My palms were soaked and sweat formed on my forehead.

“You are aware that her immediate family is here, correct?”

I nodded. I wouldn’t deny her family the chance to see her get married. I wasn’t evil.

“I think you’re going to be very pleased with our choice, and we thank you for giving us this chance.”

I looked hard at her and asked, “Have you had any success with this yet?”

“This is our first time. You and A…” She smiled. “You and your bride are the first to get married.”

“What about the guy from the other day?”

“His wedding is tomorrow.”

Dr. Banks looked at her phone. “It’s time for you to take your place.”

Oh shit. My legs couldn’t move. *I’m not really going to do this, am I? Marry a woman I’ve never met.* I didn’t even have a freaking prenup because I wanted to make sure she didn’t know who I was. Fuck. This woman would own half of what is mine after she said I do, and she had no idea. And if she left me at the end of the six weeks, I’d still have to confess my true identity. Then she can take it all from me. Make me have to work hard again to build up my life.

I hadn’t thought this through.

“Dr. Banks,” I choked out.

“Isaac, you’re white as a ghost. Are you okay?”

I shook my head. “I, I, I.” Couldn’t form the words I needed.

She set her hand on my shoulder. “She’s gorgeous as you asked. A great heart. I promise, she *is* your one.”

“Okay.”

I had to trust them. I’d been honest in everything I wanted in a woman and they had found her. So I needed to go out there and meet her. I followed Dr. Banks out and down a long hallway. I heard someone laugh in a room with the door closed. It was a woman and couldn’t help but wonder, *is that my bride?*

“Right this way.” Dr. Banks pointed to the small room, fully decorated.

I couldn’t believe it. The place had been transformed from when I’d toured it last week. Purple, silver, and white flowers. This was what she’d been dreaming of and I was so happy to be giving it to her. Making my way down the aisle toward the altar, I saw a woman sitting with a

young guy and a child. I stepped up on the altar and turned to them.

“Hello.” What else was I supposed to say?

“Hi,” the woman said.

“Are you her mom?”

“Yes and this is her brother and nephew. I don’t know if I can give names. This is new to me.”

I chuckled. “Me too. Looks like we have a lot in common already.”

The brother didn’t smile though. He looked pissed. This must not be what he wanted for his sister, but at least he was here supporting her. I wasn’t sure if my family had known about it, they would have come. My father would have a fit, no doubt. He liked to keep our name out of the news unless it was positive. Having his son marry a total stranger without a prenup...let’s just say he’d be less than pleased.

The music started and I froze. My bride was about to come out. My feet were lead, even if I wanted to run, I couldn’t.

The doors opened.

There she was.

Holy shit, I’d never seen a woman more beautiful in my life.

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