

Daddy's Girl Gets to Have It All [Preview]

Georgia Cardiff sat alone, staring out her new corner office window on the fifty-first floor of her law firm's building. Any other woman would be smiling ear to ear at this moment, but Georgia was not any woman, and this was not any ordinary day. For Georgia, it was three weeks from her thirty-second birthday, and she was told she had been named the newest partner at Charles, Marquis, and Delvo. This was her life's most significant accomplishment, yet she felt unsatisfied. She tried to compose herself and forced a smile. "I should be happy! I'm finally getting the recognition for the hard work I've put in... But why do I feel like I'm giving something up?"

Georgia felt like a ghost floating from conversation to conversation with her colleagues and new partners. Each conversation presented a new opportunity to rehash the same tired talking points. "Yes, I'm so excited." The first response to everyone's meager offers of congratulations. "You're too kind," came next in response to the praise for being the first female partner of C.M.D. Then, finally, "Let's have lunch, coffee, a drink, etc," would close out the dreary interaction. While these interactions repeated repeatedly, Georgia knew she had to keep up appearances. So, while she felt somber, the crowd raved for her delightful banter and wit.

"You're brilliant and gorgeous to boot! No wonder you were selected, dear," an older woman remarked. Then, another client reminded Georgia of her many accomplishments. "Three dozen cases litigated, and not a single penny in settlements or judgments. You're a miracle worker, Georgia! Here's to never paying a cent to these worms!" To which Georgia simply smiled in response, unwilling to engage any further on this morally dubious view of plaintiffs. That said, she wasn't about to apologize for being very good at her job. That quality is what drew in the high-paying clients that helped elevate her candidacy for a partner.

Nonetheless, Georgia didn't relish the opportunity to demean anyone. These little disturbances served as a barrier to prevent Georgia's mood from improving. There was only one fix for that, and he was fashionably late, as expected. At 8:35 pm, Justin Cardiff walked into the room, and it felt like all eyes were immediately focused on the man. Foremost of them all was Georgia, who warmly welcomed her husband to the party.

"Well, if it isn't the woman of the hour! Congratulations, Georgia!" he said as he leaned in for a hug. Georgia responded with a warm smile as she returned the embrace.

"Thank you, sweetie. I'm so glad you're here."

"The room a bit obsequious? I know how you can get when people behave so... averagely."

"God, yes. I've had the same conversation three dozen times already. I just want this night to end."

"Well, not before I get to see this new office of yours. Maybe we can... slip away for a private moment or two?"

"An office tour, yes, I can do that. A private moment, no. We can't take that kind of risk, babe, but I admit it gets me feeling nicely hot and bothered thinking about it."

Georgia led Justin through the party to her new office for a brief tour. As she went through the motions, she felt frustrated as Justin's suggestion and her reality collided. She knew she couldn't take that risk, certainly not now. But she wanted to have it both ways. She wanted to let her husband have his way with her with no fear of consequences. No fear of being caught and no fear of reprisal. She wanted her cake and to eat it too.

It was times like these when Georgia was forced into a compromise that made her even more uncompromising in other phases of her life. She had been moody all night due to an inner conflict, and despite her unwillingness to have the kind of private moment that Justin suggested, she had a modicum of privacy with her husband.

"You know, I'm not getting any younger."

"Uh-huh, not loving how this is starting. What are you on about?"

"Well, it's just that... Me... my body... it's not going to be youthful and healthy forever. There are certain things that if we're going to do them, we have a bit of a clock we have to abide by."

"Oh... Well, my offer still stands. You do have a lock on that door, right?"

"Justin!" Georgia scolded Justin's playful offer before continuing, "I guess that is the idea. I don't want to be a geriatric mother watching her child graduate from high school or college."

"You know I am on board, Georgia. Whenever you are ready, we will start trying."

"That's just it. As I was thinking about it today after I was told the news, I realized there won't ever be a time that I am ready to put my career aside to start our

family, let alone raise a child," Georgia said as she started to tear up. Justin was quick to respond. He hugged Julia tightly and comforted her as she shed some tears at the realization she had come to.

"There, there, Georgia. Let it all out."

Georgia wiped her eyes, and unfortunately, her mascara smeared along with the motion. She caught her image in the reflection of the glass of her office. She quickly broke from Justin's arms and began to correct the makeup faux pas with some supplies she had stashed in her desk drawer. Justin just stood and watched as Georgia was clinical in fixing her image. This change in demeanor prompted Justin to shift gears, and he expected she would finally be ready to discuss solutions to this conundrum.

"I've got three adoption agency contacts ready to go, Georgia. We can call, and with our collective incomes, I can pretty much guarantee we will have a baby at home in no time."

"No."

"No? What do you mean?"

"No, I'm not open to adoption."

"Why not?"

"Because, call me selfish or narcissistic, but I want our child to be 'ours.' You know, genetically."

"Yeah... I mean, I get that, but there are lots of kids who still need a good home..."

"And we can make a sizable donation to help them. I'm sorry, Justin, this one is a non-starter for me."

"All right, well, there's ways around this problem, too. I will look up some contacts tomorrow, but we can hire a surrogate and go through that process. I hear it can be a little hard on the person donating the eggs, though. Are you okay with going through something like that?"

"The prospect of donating my eggs isn't a problem."

"That's good! But... I still feel like there's a 'no' hidden in that sentence."

"That's because we've been married for seven years, and you actually listen to me,

unlike most men. Sorry, I'm off-topic. You're right; surrogacy is off the table, too."

"Firstly, I accept your answer, and I won't pursue surrogacy companies, but can you help me understand?"

"Justin, I'm a lawyer, meaning I am intimately familiar with the law. Legally speaking, the baby which we would have donated our egg and sperm for would be the surrogate's child. Even worse, if they decided to keep the baby, they could come after us for eighteen years of child support. That would be a sizable monthly payment with our incomes. Any surrogate would do the math and realize they'd never have to work another day. So, no, surrogacy is not an option for us. The risk is too high."

"Well, we're back to being caught between a rock and a hard spot. I see why you are struggling with this; I know being a mother has been a lifelong goal. Then, on the other hand, your career means a lot to you, too. You'll probably become the most prolific corporate law lawyer of the century. If not the millennium! So, it seems like you just have to choose one. I know you don't want to, but there don't seem to be any other options."

"We'll see about that..."