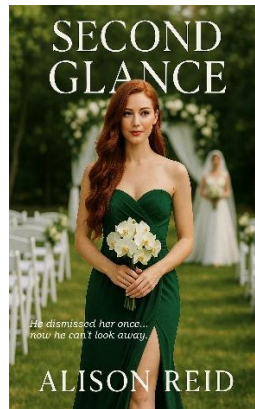


Second Glance

by Alison Reid



After a leisurely lunch, Jackson decided it was time to head to his parents' home in Bellevue Hill. He drove through the familiar streets of Sydney, the city's pulse quiet in the mid-afternoon lull. As he made his way up the long, winding driveway of his family's estate, he couldn't help but feel a sense of anticipation, though he wasn't entirely sure why. It was still hours before dinner, but he knew his father would keep him occupied.

As he entered the grand house, the soft murmur of his mother's voice greeted him. "Your father is on the terrace," she said with a smile, clearly delighted to see him.

Jackson nodded, heading toward the terrace at the back of the house. He found his father standing just inside the terrace doors, gazing out over the pool, his hands clasped behind his back as if contemplating something.

"What's so interesting?" Jackson asked, raising an eyebrow.

His father turned slightly and smiled. "Hi, son."

Jackson followed his father's gaze, curious. What could possibly capture his father's attention like this?

It didn't take long for Jackson to see what his father was looking at. And when he did, his stomach dropped.

There, at the edge of the pool's shimmering water, stood a vision. She was tall—close to six feet—and her body was toned and strong, every inch defined with effortless power. Her auburn hair, soft and wavy, cascaded down her back, catching the sunlight with every movement. She wore a striking emerald-green bikini, the vibrant colour contrasting beautifully with her sun-kissed skin. Every movement she made exuded confidence, grace, and undeniable allure. Jackson's gaze lingered on her, captivated by how perfectly she fit into the scene.

Then, without a moment's hesitation, she flicked back her gorgeous hair and made a graceful dive into the clear water. She began swimming laps, her movements fluid and rhythmic, the water parting effortlessly around her.

Jackson stood frozen, his thoughts racing. It took him a moment to catch his breath as his father's amused chuckle broke the spell.

"Who the hell is that?" he asked, his voice strained as he tried to hide the surprise that flooded through him.

His father chuckled, a low, knowing sound. "Jackson, that's Jessica."

Jackson's eyes widened in disbelief. "Phyllis's Jessica?" He repeated, still trying to process the image before him. He never expected to see her like this. The shy, unassuming girl he remembered from years ago had transformed into someone completely different, someone who seemed to radiate confidence and allure.

His father's amused smile remained, but there was a hint of something more in his eyes. "I think you might be in for a surprise, son."

Jackson stood frozen, still stunned by the sight before him. The transformation was immense, and the impact it had on him was immediate. His mind struggled to process the change, the girl he once thought of as 'Phyllis's plain friend' now standing before him as something entirely

different—someone utterly captivating. The way she moved, the effortless grace with which she swam, it was as though she had become a completely new person in the years since he'd last seen her.

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