EXCLUSIVE
BONUS EPILOGUE

Blueprints of the Heart

ALISON REID

Exclusive Bonus Epilogue

Blueprints of the Heart

by Alison Reid

Five Years Later…

The ballroom shimmered beneath thousands of crystal lights, every table dressed in crisp white linen and gleaming silver. Crystal glasses caught the light as waitstaff moved effortlessly between tables, while soft orchestral music drifted through the grand room. Architects, developers, engineers, and designers from across California filled the ballroom, their conversations blending into a low hum of anticipation.

The San Francisco Design Awards had become one of the most prestigious nights on the architectural calendar. Tonight celebrated the year's most innovative designs, the visionaries behind them, and the projects that would shape the future of the industry.

Five years ago, Damian had invited Sophie to this very event for their first official date. Damian smiled to himself. Every year, Damian silently thanked whatever force had convinced Sophie Highland to take a chance on the arrogant billionaire who had invited her to the awards simply because he wanted an excuse to spend an evening with her. That single "yes" had changed the course of his entire life.

Business success had once been enough. Now he couldn't imagine measuring his life by buildings, contracts, or profits. His greatest achievement sat beside him.

Sophie adjusted the elegant navy gown she wore, smoothing invisible creases from the fabric before quietly exhaling.

"I don't belong here," she murmured.

Damian turned in his chair to face her.

Five years had passed since the night they'd first met at the hotel bar, when she'd walked in wearing that unforgettable black dress. Yet she still stole his breath with a single glance.

Her chestnut hair fell in soft waves over her shoulders, framing the delicate features he knew almost as well as his own reflection. The sapphire earrings he'd given her on their first wedding anniversary shimmered beneath the ballroom lights, perfectly complementing the deep navy of her gown. Beyond her wedding rings, she wore little jewellery, preferring understated elegance to extravagance.

She had never needed diamonds to command a room. She simply walked into it. Even after all these years—after waking beside her every morning and falling asleep with her in his arms every night—Damian still found himself looking at her as though he were seeing her for the first time.

Beautiful.

Brilliant.

Kind.

Entirely unaware of just how extraordinary she truly was.

At that moment, however, he looked at her as though she'd just said the most absurd thing imaginable.

"You don't belong here?"

She gave a nervous little shrug.

"They're announcing awards for the best architects in California."

"And?"

She gestured discreetly around the ballroom.

"Look at these people."

"I am."

"They've spent decades building their careers."

"So have you."

She smiled.

"I've only been an architect for five years."

"No," he said softly. "You've been building toward this your entire life."

She looked down at her hands.

"You designed one of the most celebrated public buildings in California this year."

"It was a team effort."

"It was your vision."

She smiled shyly but didn't argue. Damian reached across the table and threaded his fingers through hers.

"I've watched you work until two in the morning because one line on a blueprint wasn't quite right."

His thumb traced slow circles across her hand.

"I've watched you throw away weeks of work because you knew you could create something better."

He smiled.

"And I've listened to you explain why every doorway, every corridor, every window should make life easier for the people using the building."

His eyes never left hers.

"You don't just design buildings, Soph."

"You design places where people feel welcome."

Emotion welled in her chest.

"That's because of Mum."

"I know."

She smiled sadly.

"Living with her taught me accessibility isn't about meeting regulations."

She paused.

"It's about dignity."

Damian squeezed her hand.

"And that's exactly why you belong here."

He held her gaze.

"Five years ago, you walked into Prescott Design Group and, in your first week, solved a problem my senior architects had been wrestling with for weeks. You studied the plans for five minutes before quietly offering a solution none of us had considered."

Heat warmed her cheeks.

"You remember that?"

He laughed softly.

"I remember everything."

His thumb brushed gently over her knuckles.

"I remember the woman who worked two jobs while earning two degrees."

She swallowed.

"I remember the woman who devoted every spare moment to caring for her mother."

A familiar ache settled in her chest.

It had been a year since Marie passed away, yet there were still moments when Sophie instinctively reached for her phone before remembering there would never be an answer.

"And I remember looking through your portfolio and thinking..."

His smile softened.

"...this woman is going to change architecture."

She laughed quietly, shaking her head.

"You exaggerate."

"I rarely do."

She rested her head briefly against his shoulder.

"You've always believed in me."

He turned, lowering his voice so only she could hear.

"I believed in you before you believed in yourself."

Before she could reply, the lights throughout the ballroom dimmed. Conversations faded into silence. Every head turned toward the stage as a spotlight illuminated the podium. The host stepped forward, smiling at the audience.

"Ladies and gentlemen..." He paused, waiting until the room was completely silent.

"Welcome to the San Francisco Design Awards."

* * * * * * * *

Later...

"The winner of the Emerging Architect of the Year Award..."

A pause stretched across the ballroom.

"...Sophie Prescott."

For one impossible heartbeat, she didn't move. Then Damian was already on his feet. Applauding. Smiling so broadly his face hurt. He leaned down and whispered against her ear.

"I told you."

Tears filled Sophie's eyes as the ballroom erupted into applause. She somehow found her way to the stage. Accepted the crystal award. Then stepped behind the microphone.

"I've spent most of my career believing buildings should do more than look beautiful." Her voice trembled slightly. "They should make people feel safe." She glanced down at the award. "My mother spent many years living with multiple sclerosis." The room became perfectly still. "Watching her taught me that accessibility isn't a feature." She smiled through tears. "It's dignity."

A ripple of applause spread through the audience.

"I owe everything to my mother, who taught me resilience..." She looked toward Damian. "...and to my husband." His eyes never left hers. "You believed in me before anyone else did." He smiled, emotion shining openly now. "You never saw the waitress." She laughed softly. "You never saw the woman working two jobs." A tear escaped before she could stop it. "You only ever saw the architect."

* * * * * * * *

After the gala, they returned to their penthouse. Damian took Sophie's hand and led her onto the private balcony overlooking San Francisco.

The city glittered beneath them, thousands of lights stretching toward the bay like a sea of stars.

He slipped both arms around her waist and drew her against him.

"I'm so proud of you."

Sophie rested her head against his chest, listening to the steady beat of his heart.

"I still can't believe it happened."

He kissed her temple.

"You earned every second of tonight."

She smiled.

"You know..."

"What?"

She looked up at him, her eyes shining.

"This isn't the happiest day of my life."

His brow lifted.

"No?"

She smiled softly.

"The happiest day of my life was marrying you."

Emotion flickered across his face.

"I feel exactly the same."

She smiled before reaching into her evening clutch.

"I think..." she said quietly, "...I might be able to make tonight even better."

She placed a small blue gift box into his hands. His brow furrowed.

"You bought me a present?"

"Open it."

He lifted the lid. Inside rested a tiny rolled blueprint tied with a pale blue ribbon. His expression turned curious as he carefully untied it and slowly unrolled the page. Across the title block were the words:

PROJECT: Baby Prescott

CLIENTS: Damian & Sophie Prescott

Estimated Completion Date: Seven Months

For several long moments... he simply stared. His eyes moved across the page once. Then a second time. As though his mind couldn't quite make sense

of what he was reading. Finally, they lifted to hers. His voice was barely more than a whisper.

"...Soph?"

She nodded.

"I'm pregnant."

A radiant smile spread across her face.

"We're going to be parents."

The blueprint slipped from Damian's fingers, forgotten as it drifted onto the tiled balcony floor. He cupped her face with trembling hands.

"Really?"

A tear escaped down her cheek as she nodded again.

"Really."

A laugh burst from him—half joy, half disbelief.

"Oh, Soph..."

He gathered her into his arms with such reverence it stole her breath, holding her as though she—and the tiny life growing inside her—were the most precious things in the world. Then, without another word, he slowly lowered himself to his knees. His hand came to rest gently against her still-flat stomach. His eyes glistened.

"Hi, little one," he whispered softly. "I've been waiting for you."

Sophie covered her mouth as tears spilled freely down her cheeks. Damian looked up at her, his own eyes shining with emotion.

"I thought tonight was about celebrating the most incredible architect I've ever known." He smiled through his tears. "But it turns out..." He leaned forward and pressed a tender kiss against her stomach. "...we're about to begin building the greatest masterpiece of our lives."

Sophie threaded her fingers through his hair, smiling down at the man who had once believed he would never fall in love. The man who had transformed her life just as completely as she had transformed his.

Damian rose to his feet, never taking his eyes off her. One hand remained protectively over her stomach as he drew her close.

"I love you, sweetheart," he whispered, his voice thick with emotion. "You have made me the happiest man alive."

She placed her hand over his.

"I love you too, Damian." She smiled through happy tears. "You gave me a future I never dared dream was possible."

He kissed her slowly, tenderly, his hand never leaving the tiny life growing between them.

Together, they stood beneath the glittering San Francisco skyline, holding one another as the future stretched endlessly before them. Every dream they had once imagined had become reality. And now, together, they were about to begin the greatest blueprint of all.

—The End—

Ready for another happily-ever-after?

Discover more emotional, feel-good romances by Alison Reid on Amazon.

👉 **Browse my books on Amazon**