EXCLUSIVE

BONUS Epilogue

FOR

The Billionaire's Accidental Legacy

SOME INHERIT WEALTH.
HE INHERITED EVERYTHING.

ALISON REID

Exclusive Bonus Epilogue

The Billionaire's Accidental Legacy

by Alison Reid

Twenty-Five Years Later…

Tonight, Langford Park was alive.

Hannah stepped out onto the terrace and stopped short.

For the last two hours Bennett had been behaving suspiciously calm, which in itself was alarming. He had kept her occupied all evening under increasingly weak excuses—first insisting she needed to stay upstairs while her "gift" was prepared, then distracting her with champagne, then somehow managing to start an argument with Michael about investment portfolios purely to stop her wandering outside too early.

She had known he was up to something.

But she had not expected this.

"Oh my God…"

The entire back garden had been transformed.

The sweeping lawns beyond the terrace glowed beneath thousands of golden lights woven through ancient oak trees and wrapped around stone pillars. Crystal chandeliers hung suspended beneath clear silk-lined marquees, sparkling against the deep navy sky. Long tables stretched across the gardens dressed in ivory linen, overflowing with white roses and candles flickering in glass hurricanes.

Music drifted softly through the warm evening air.

A live orchestra.

Of course he hired an orchestra.

The fountain at the centre of the gardens—the one that had stood silent for decades before Bennett restored it for her on their tenth anniversary—sparkled beneath floating candles while waiters moved discreetly through the crowd carrying champagne trays.

And there were people everywhere.

Friends.

Family.

People she loved from every stage of her life.

Hannah pressed her hand to her chest, overwhelmed.

"Bennett…"

Behind her, Bennett Langford looked entirely too pleased with himself.

At sixty, he remained devastatingly handsome in a way that should have been illegal. Silver threaded through his dark hair now, distinguished rather than ageing him, and his tailored black tuxedo only emphasised the broad shoulders and composed authority that still made people instinctively move aside when he entered a room.

But Hannah knew the man beneath all that control now. Knew the softness he hid from everyone else. Knew the man who still warmed her side of the bed before she climbed in because he hated when her feet were cold.

"You said you didn't want a party," she accused softly, still staring out at the gardens in disbelief.

"I lied."

Her mouth fell open slightly as she turned toward him.

"You admitted that remarkably fast."

"I've been married to you for twenty-five years," Bennett replied smoothly. "I've learned when resistance is futile."

Hannah laughed softly despite herself. Then her eyes widened again as more details registered.

The photographs.

Dozens of them lined the garden pathways beneath hanging lights.

Their wedding.

Michael as a baby in Bennett's arms.

Angela asleep on his chest.

Family holidays.

Christmas mornings.

Messy birthday cakes.

School graduations.

Ordinary moments captured over twenty-five years of marriage and parenthood.

Every chapter of their life together spread across Langford Park. Emotion rose suddenly and fiercely in Hannah's chest.

"You did all this?" she whispered.

Bennett stepped closer behind her, one hand settling gently against her waist.

"Eight months of planning," he admitted.

She stared at him. "Eight months?"

"You have difficult children."

From somewhere below them Michael's voice carried upward.

"We can hear you, Dad!"

Hannah looked down toward the gardens just as Michael appeared from beneath the marquee holding a champagne glass.

At twenty-four, Michael Langford looked painfully like a younger version of Bennett. Tall, dark-haired, broad-shouldered, and unfairly attractive. Except where Bennett had once been emotionally guarded, Michael possessed Hannah's openness and warmth.

Angela followed beside him moments later in an elegant dark green dress. At twenty-one, she was stunning. She had Bennett's dark eyes but Hannah's smile—the kind that transformed her entire face when she laughed.

"Mum!" Angela called. "Get down here before Dad starts pretending this wasn't all his idea."

"It was absolutely my idea," Bennett corrected calmly.

Michael grinned upward. "He threatened three event planners."

"I did not threaten them."

"You made one cry."

"She was incompetent."

Hannah covered her mouth, laughing helplessly now.

God.

Twenty-five years ago, this house had felt cold enough to echo. Now it overflowed with life. As they descended the terrace steps together, familiar voices surrounded them instantly.

Sally appeared first, glamorous as ever and already halfway through a glass of champagne.

"There she is!" Sally announced dramatically before pulling Hannah into a fierce hug. "Happy anniversary, darling."

Hannah hugged her tightly. "Did you know about this?"

"For six months," Sally admitted proudly.

"You all lied to me?"

"Constantly," Henry replied.

Hannah laughed as Henry stepped beside his wife, still elegant and composed at fifty-nine, though softened considerably by decades spent married to Sally.

Behind them stood their son Ethan. And unfortunately—Angela was smiling at him. Bennett noticed immediately. His entire posture shifted.

Hannah sighed under her breath. "Don't."

"I haven't said anything."

"You narrowed your eyes."

"He's looking at our daughter."

Henry took a slow sip of champagne. "Welcome to the last four years of my life."

Michael smirked. "Honestly, I'm just impressed Ethan survived Dad's interrogation phase."

"I was fourteen," Ethan said dryly. "Mr. Langford asked about my academic intentions like I was applying for national security clearance."

"You wanted to take my daughter to the cinema," Bennett replied evenly. "Preparation was appropriate."

Angela groaned. "You are impossible."

"No," Sally corrected cheerfully. "He's domesticated now. Twenty-five years ago, he was terrifying."

Bennett laughed softly. "I don't remember you being particularly terrified of me. I remember getting thoroughly scolded by you at the hospital."

"You deserved it," Sally informed him immediately.

"Most definitely," Henry muttered into his champagne.

Hannah laughed as Bennett glanced toward her then—and instantly softened. It happened so naturally now that he no longer seemed aware of it. The sharpness left his expression. The constant control eased from his

shoulders. Even after all these years, something in him quieted whenever he looked at her. But Hannah noticed. She always noticed.

The orchestra shifted into a slower piece as guests moved around them laughing beneath the lights of Langford Park. Staff circulated quietly. Candlelight danced across old stone walls that no longer felt imposing.

Only warm. Only home.

Hannah looked around once more, emotion tightening her throat. For years Bennett had claimed he cared about legacy more than love. And yet standing here now, surrounded by children and friends and decades of shared memories, she could see the truth written all over him.

This was his real legacy.

Not the estate.

Not the Langford name.

Not the wealth.

Her.

Their children.

Their life together.

Bennett looked down at her quietly. "You're crying."

"I am not."

"You absolutely are."

"Maybe a little."

His expression softened further as he lifted one hand to brush gently beneath her eye.

"Happy anniversary, sweetheart."

She looked up at him beneath the golden lights.

Twenty-five years later and somehow she still felt it—that same impossible pull toward him.

Only now it wasn't frightening.

It was home.

"I love you," she whispered.

Bennett's hand tightened around hers. And after all these years, the words came easily now.

"As I love you."

Michael handed Hannah a champagne glass before leaning down to kiss her cheek.

"Happy anniversary, Mum."

Angela immediately wrapped her arms around Hannah next. "You look gorgeous, by the way."

"She always does," Bennett said before he could stop himself.

Angela smirked instantly. "That was disgustingly romantic."

Michael grimaced. "I'm never emotionally recovering from hearing Dad flirt."

Bennett gave him a cool look. "You're alive because I flirted."

"That's not technically true," Michael said with a laugh.

Hannah nearly choked on her champagne.

They had told Michael the truth about the fertility clinic mix-up years ago, after he turned eighteen. It had seemed important that both their children understood the unusual beginning of their family story. Bennett remained entirely unbothered.

"Well," he said smoothly, "Angela is alive because I flirted."

"Jesus Christ," Michael muttered, horrified.

Angela burst out laughing while Hannah dissolved beside them, leaning briefly against Bennett's arm as she tried unsuccessfully to catch her breath.

And God, that sound.

Her laughter still hit him the same way it had twenty-five years ago—sudden and warm and devastatingly alive. It filled every empty space inside him without effort.

Even now, Bennett knew with absolute certainty that he would have burned kingdoms to hear it.

The laughter around them blended into the music and candlelight and warm summer air. Glasses clinked softly somewhere nearby. The orchestra drifted into another song. Guests moved through the gardens beneath the glow of hanging lights while Langford Park stood illuminated behind them, no longer imposing and silent, but full of life.

And for a moment Bennett stood perfectly still in the middle of it all. Twenty-five years ago, he had believed legacy came from control.

From contracts.

From structure.

From distance.

He had once thought love weakened men. Made them careless. Vulnerable. Easy to destroy. Now he stood surrounded by the family he never planned to have.

A wife who had dismantled every certainty he once clung to simply by loving him patiently enough to survive all his defences.

Children who had undone every wall he built without even realising they were doing it.

Friends who had rooted themselves so deeply into his life that he could no longer remember what existence had looked like before them.

The irony was not lost on him.

The man who once wanted an heir without emotional entanglement now found himself standing in the middle of a loud, chaotic, fiercely loved family that had become the centre of his entire world.

Langford Park no longer felt cold.

It felt like home.

Hannah glanced up at him then, immediately catching the shift in his expression the way only she could after twenty-five years together.

"What are you thinking about?" she asked softly.

Bennett looked down at her.

At fifty, Hannah still affected him in ways that defied logic. Time had only deepened her beauty rather than diminished it. There was softness in her now that came from years of happiness, confidence shaped by motherhood and love and knowing exactly where she belonged.

With him.

And after all these years, honesty came easier with her than anyone else in the world.

"You," he said simply.

Her smile softened instantly.

"Twenty-five years later," he continued quietly, brushing his thumb slowly across her knuckles, "and you are still the most unexpected thing that ever happened to me."

Emotion flickered across Hannah's face.

"You were pretty unexpected too," she whispered.

Something warm moved through Bennett's chest at that.

Because she still looked at him sometimes like she couldn't quite believe he was real either.

He leaned down slowly, resting his forehead briefly against hers as music and laughter swirled around them.

Then Michael groaned loudly from somewhere beside them.

"Oh my God, they're doing forehead touching now."

Angela shuddered dramatically. "We need therapy."

Sally nearly choked on her champagne laughing while Henry muttered, "Unfortunately, this is still less disturbing than the honeymoon phase."

"I heard that," Bennett said without moving away from Hannah.

"You were supposed to," Henry replied calmly.

Hannah laughed again, the sound muffled against Bennett's shoulder as he finally pulled her fully into his arms.

And Bennett—who once believed love only made men vulnerable—held his wife beneath the lights of Langford Park and silently thanked fate for the one mistake he had never managed to control.

— The End —

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