EXCLUSIVE

BONUS Epilogue

FOR

The Billionaire's Unexpected Heir

ONE NIGHT.
ONE SECRET.
ONE LIFE
THAT CHANGES
EVERYTHING.

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Exclusive Bonus Epilogue

The Billionaire's Unexpected Heir

by Alison Reid

Five Years Later…

The Aegean Sea sparkled beneath the afternoon sun, its endless blue stretching toward the horizon like a painted dream.

Calista stood on the terrace of their villa, one hand resting on the gentle curve of her swollen stomach as warm sea air teased through her dark curls.

Seven months pregnant.

A son.

Even now, a week after the appointment, the words still felt surreal. She smiled to herself as laughter drifted across the garden below. Nickolas was in the pool.

Or rather, being attacked in the pool.

Chloe launched herself at him with all the determination of a seven-year-old who refused to accept defeat.

"I'm going to win this time!"

"You said that last time," Nickolas drawled. "And the time before that. And the time before that."

Chloe splashed water directly into his face.

"Cheating!" she declared.

Nickolas looked genuinely offended.

"I wasn't even doing anything."

"You were thinking about cheating."

Calista laughed.

Across the pool, three-year-old Sophia sat on the shallow steps wearing bright pink floaties and an expression of complete delight as she watched her older sister wage war against their father.

"Daddy lost," Sophia announced.

Nickolas immediately nodded.

"Daddy lost."

Sophia clapped happily.

The mighty billionaire who intimidated CEOs and dominated boardrooms across three continents had absolutely no defence against his daughters. None whatsoever. Not that he ever tried.

A pair of small arms suddenly wrapped around his neck from behind as Chloe climbed onto his back.

"Victory!"

Nickolas staggered dramatically.

"Oh no. I've been defeated."

"Again."

"Again."

Chloe grinned triumphantly. At nearly eight years old, she was all long limbs, golden curls, and endless energy. The little girl who had once entered his life unexpectedly had become the absolute centre of his universe.

Calista watched him pull Chloe into his arms and press a noisy kiss against her cheek. The look on his face softened her every time.

Because there was still a small part of her that remembered the man she'd first heard about. The man who didn't want children. The man who insisted he didn't do family. The man who viewed emotional attachments as weaknesses.

That man no longer existed.

"Oh dear."

Calista turned toward the voice. Cassia appeared beside her carrying two glasses of lemonade.

"You've got that look."

"What look?"

"The one where you're staring at your husband like he's the last man on earth."

Calista laughed.

"He's being a good father."

"He worships those girls."

Cassia handed her a drink.

Below them, Sophia had somehow convinced Nickolas to wear a plastic tiara she'd found in the toy room. The billionaire shipping magnate now wore a bright purple crown while carrying one daughter on each hip.

Cassia burst out laughing. "Exhibit A."

Calista couldn't even argue. "He cried."

Cassia nearly dropped her glass. "What?"

"When we found out the baby was a boy."

"He did not."

"He absolutely did."

Cassia stared. "The Nickolas Drakos cried?"

Calista nodded. "A single tear."

Cassia laughed so hard she nearly choked. "Oh, I'm telling Henry."

"Henry already knows."

"Of course he does."

Below them, Henry stood near the outdoor barbecue trying unsuccessfully to stop his two-year-old son Theo from feeding pieces of bread to the villa's resident cat.

Nickolas had spent years insisting he disliked animals. Now there were three cats living at the villa because Sophia had asked. The man had become hopeless. Completely hopeless.

A warm arm slid around Calista's waist.

She hadn't even heard Nickolas come upstairs.

"Talking about me?"

His deep voice rumbled against her ear.

"Always."

His hand immediately settled over her stomach. As it had every chance he got for the past week. A smile spread across his face.

"My son."

Calista rolled her eyes. "There it is."

"What?"

"The smug expression."

He looked entirely unapologetic.

"I would have been happy either way."

"Mmm."

"I would."

"Mmm."

Nickolas narrowed his eyes.

"I would have."

Calista turned to face him.

"You absolutely would have loved another daughter."

"Of course."

"But?"

His smile grew.

"But having a son is nice."

"There it is."

Cassia laughed.

"I knew it."

Nickolas shrugged.

"A man should have at least one ally in this family."

A shriek rose from the pool below.

"Daddy!"

Sophia was calling.

"Daddy!"

Another voice followed immediately.

"Dad!"

Then Theo.

"Uncle Nick!"

Nickolas sighed dramatically.

"My allies appear to be unreliable."

Calista leaned into him as his hand remained protectively over their unborn son.

Five years ago, she'd never imagined this life. Never imagined Greece feeling like home. Never imagined Nickolas becoming the kind of father children adored. Never imagined a family this large. This loud. This happy.

As if sensing her thoughts, Nickolas lowered his head and kissed her gently.

"What are you thinking about?"

She smiled.

"You."

His expression softened immediately, the hard edges that still appeared in business meetings vanishing completely.

"Dangerous habit."

"Very."

A familiar voice interrupted them.

"Lunch!"

Henry emerged from the villa carrying a huge platter piled high with grilled chicken, lamb skewers, vegetables, and fresh pita bread.

The smell instantly had everyone turning toward the terrace. The girls practically launched themselves out of the pool.

"I'm starving!" Chloe announced dramatically as she raced toward the table, water dripping everywhere.

"You were starving an hour ago," Cassia called after her.

"That was a different starving."

Sophia nodded solemnly.

"I'm starving too."

Theo immediately joined in.

"Me too!"

Henry laughed. "Amazing. Three tiny people who haven't stopped eating all week."

"They get that from Nickolas," Calista said.

"I heard that."

"Good."

Nickolas narrowed his eyes at her before reaching for her hand and helping her from the lounge chair.

The large terrace table overlooked the sparkling sea, and soon everyone had gathered around it. The conversation flowed easily.

Chloe told an elaborate story about a dolphin she'd seen earlier that morning that somehow grew larger with every retelling.

Sophia insisted she was old enough to swim across the entire Aegean Sea by herself.

Theo repeatedly stole olives from Henry's plate.

Cassia laughed so hard at one point she nearly spilled her wine.

Calista sat quietly for a moment, simply watching.

This. This was what she loved most. The noise. The chaos. The family she'd never imagined having. Across the table, Nickolas caught her watching him.

His gaze softened instantly. That look still did ridiculous things to her heart. Five years later. Still.

After lunch, the adults lingered over coffee while the children became increasingly restless.

"I want a movie," Sophia declared.

"I want ice cream," Theo countered.

"I want both," Chloe said.

"Naturally," Henry muttered.

Eventually Cassia stood.

"Come on. Movie time."

The children cheered.

Henry groaned as he gathered plates.

"You all realize I'm doing the cleanup."

"You're very good at it," Cassia said sweetly.

He stared at his wife.

"You don't even pretend to feel guilty anymore."

"No."

A few minutes later the villa grew surprisingly quiet. The sounds of an animated movie drifted faintly from inside.

Calista glanced toward the house.

"Think they'll survive without us?"

Nickolas followed her gaze.

"Highly unlikely."

She laughed and reached for his hand.

"Come on."

His fingers threaded through hers immediately.

"Where are we going?"

"You'll see."

She led him toward the pool.

The afternoon sun warmed her skin as she slipped off the lightweight dress she'd been wearing, revealing a simple black bikini underneath.

Nickolas stopped walking. His gaze swept over her. Slowly. Appreciatively.

"You still look stunning."

Calista rolled her eyes.

"I distinctly remember you calling me huge when I was pregnant with Sophia."

His expression became one of complete innocence.

"I don't believe I would have said that."

"You absolutely did."

"I may have said adorably huge."

She laughed.

"That's not better."

"It was intended to be."

He helped her down the pool steps. The cool water surrounded them as they descended together. The moment they were waist-deep, Nickolas wrapped his arms around her. As always. Like he couldn't help himself. Like five years of marriage hadn't lessened his need to touch her. Not even a little.

He pulled her against him and kissed her. A slow, lingering kiss that still managed to make her forget her own name for a few seconds.

When they finally separated, she noticed the small smile tugging at his mouth.

"What are you smiling about?"

His hands settled on her hips.

"I remember the first time we were in a pool together with your legs wrapped around me."

Calista laughed.

"Oh, you do, do you?"

"Very clearly."

His eyes danced with amusement.

"I also remember how innocent you were."

She groaned.

"There it is."

"There what is?"

"The revisionist history."

He looked offended.

"I am simply stating facts."

"Facts?"

"Facts."

She slid her arms around his neck.

"Well, I am no longer innocent thanks to you, Mr. Drakos."

His laugh echoed across the water.

"No. You definitely aren't."

Calista smiled as he brushed a loose curl behind her ear.

The years had changed both of them. Nickolas was softer now. Not weak. Never weak. Just open in ways he never had been before.

She'd watched him become a father. A husband. A man capable of loving with his whole heart. And somehow, impossibly, she loved him more now than she had at the beginning.

His hand drifted down to rest against her stomach. Immediately. Always. Their son gave a sudden kick.

Nickolas froze. Then grinned.

A full, boyish grin she still couldn't believe belonged to the same man who once terrified boardrooms.

"Did you feel that?"

"Yes."

"He kicked me."

Calista laughed. "He kicked both of us."

"I think he knows it's me."

"You are ridiculous."

"I am his father."

His expression turned unexpectedly tender as he rubbed gentle circles over her stomach.

"My son."

"There it is again."

"What?"

"The smug look."

Nickolas made no effort to deny it. Not even a little. And judging by the happiness shining in his eyes, he wasn't sorry either.

"We are blessed," Calista said softly.

The teasing smile faded from his face, replaced by something deeper. Something quieter. His gaze drifted toward the villa.

Through the open doors, she could see flashes of movement. The children were undoubtedly causing chaos while Cassia and Henry attempted to maintain some semblance of order.

A burst of laughter floated outside. Chloe's. Then Sophia's high-pitched giggle followed.

Nickolas listened, the sound washing over him.

Five years ago, those sounds wouldn't have meant anything to him. Now they were everything. A slow smile touched his lips.

"Perfect."

Calista looked up at him.

"Perfect?"

His arm tightened around her waist as he drew her closer.

The afternoon sun danced across the water around them. Beyond the pool, the sea stretched endlessly toward the horizon, brilliant shades of blue and gold.

But Nickolas wasn't looking at the view.

He was looking at the villa. At the life waiting inside it. His daughters. His son growing beneath Calista's heart. The home that was never quiet and never orderly and never empty. The life he'd spent years convincing himself he didn't want.

"Perfect," he repeated.

Emotion lodged unexpectedly in Calista's throat. Because she knew what he meant. She remembered the man who had stood in that office years ago, furious at the possibility of fatherhood.

The man who believed attachments were liabilities. The man who thought happiness came from control. That man had vanished somewhere along the way. Replaced by a father who built sandcastles with his daughters. Who wore plastic tiaras without complaint. Who read bedtime stories using ridiculous voices. Who talked to their unborn son every night as though the baby could already understand him. Who loved with his entire heart.

Nickolas reached up and gently brushed a strand of damp hair from her face.

His grey eyes softened. "Thank you."

The words caught her off guard. "For what?"

A smile tugged at his mouth. "For all of it."

His hand settled over hers on her stomach.

"For Chloe." Emotion tightened her chest. "For Sophia." His voice had grown rougher now. "For him."

The baby chose that exact moment to kick. Nickolas laughed. Actually laughed. The deep, warm sound rolled through her.

"And for me."

Calista's eyes burned suddenly.

"Nickolas—"

"No." He shook his head. "You gave me a family, agapi mou."

His forehead rested against hers.

"The greatest thing that ever happened to me wasn't building an empire."

Her breath caught.

“It wasn’t making billions.” Another kick made him smile. “It was a little blonde girl who turned my life upside down.”

Calista laughed through suspiciously watery eyes.

“Only Chloe could get credit before your own son is even born.”

“She’s the eldest. She’ll never let us forget it.”

They both knew that was true. Inside the villa, Chloe’s voice suddenly echoed through the open doors.

“Dad! Mom!”

A beat. Then—

“Sophia stole my popcorn!”

“I did not!”

“You did too!”

Nickolas closed his eyes.

“There it is.”

“The peace didn’t last long.”

“It never does.”

Another shout erupted. This time Theo joined in. Then Henry. Then Cassia. Complete chaos. Nickolas looked toward the villa once more.

His home.

His family.

His future.

A future he once would have run from. Now he couldn’t imagine living without it. He looked back at Calista. At the woman who had changed everything. The woman he’d fallen hopelessly in love with. The woman carrying their son.

His smile returned.

“Come on.”

"Where?"

"Our children are probably destroying the house."

Calista laughed.

"They'll survive."

"Perhaps."

He kissed her one last time before helping her toward the pool steps.

As they walked hand in hand toward the villa, surrounded by sunshine and laughter and the beautiful mess of family, Calista felt her heart settle.

Steady. Certain. Full. And for the first time in her life, she believed some things truly were perfect.

— The End —

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