

The Billionaire's Runaway Nanny

by Alison Reid



Before Zara could answer, tiny footsteps slapped rapidly across the upstairs hallway. A little boy appeared at the top of the staircase wearing dinosaur pyjamas despite it being mid-afternoon. Big grey eyes locked onto her instantly.

Liam.

The child stared at her silently from several feet away while Zara stood beside Evelyn in the upstairs family lounge overlooking the lower level of the penthouse. Then, without hesitation, he ran straight toward her. Zara barely had time to react before Liam wrapped both arms tightly around her leg. She blinked in surprise.

“Oh,” Evelyn murmured softly.

Liam buried his face against Zara’s hip like he’d known her forever. Something painful and tender pulled deep inside her chest.

“Hi there,” she whispered gently.

He refused to let go. Evelyn looked genuinely stunned now.

“He hasn’t done that with anyone.”

Zara slowly crouched in front of him.

“I’m Zara.”

Liam peeked up at her cautiously through dark lashes.

“You staying?”

The question nearly shattered her heart on impact. Such a small voice. Such desperate hope inside it. Zara smiled softly.

“If you want me to.”

He nodded once before immediately leaning against her again like the matter was settled. A sharp cry suddenly echoed from farther down the upstairs hallway. The baby. The sound intensified quickly. Not fussy crying. Distressed crying.

Evelyn sighed quietly.

“That would be Sophie.”

The crying grew louder again, carrying from the nursery at the far end of the second floor. Zara’s instincts reacted before thought did.

“Can I?”

Evelyn hesitated only briefly before nodding toward the stairway. The nursery looked like something from an interior design magazine. Cream walls. Custom ivory furniture. Soft gold lighting. Floor-to-ceiling windows overlooking Central Park. Elegant. Perfect. And in the centre of it, a tiny dark-haired baby screamed in a nanny’s exhausted arms. The woman looked relieved enough to cry herself when Zara stepped inside.

“She won’t settle.”

Sophie’s little face was bright red with tears, tiny fists flailing helplessly while exhausted hiccups broke through her cries. Zara held out her hands carefully.

“May I try?”

The second Sophie touched her arms, the baby’s cries weakened. By the time Zara rested her gently against her chest, Sophie had gone almost

completely quiet. The nursery fell silent. Everyone stared. Sophie blinked up at Zara sleepily before giving a tiny sigh and nestling beneath her chin.

“Oh my God,” the nanny whispered.

Zara rubbed the baby’s back automatically while warmth spread unexpectedly through her chest. Something about holding children always soothed her too. Maybe because children didn’t demand explanations. Didn’t ask difficult questions. Didn’t hurt you for disappointing them.

* * * * *

Movement in the doorway shifted the air instantly.

Zara looked up. Charles Wolfe stood watching her. For one disorienting second, she forgot how to breathe. He was taller than she expected. Much taller. The doorway suddenly seemed too small once he stepped into it.

Broad shoulders stretched beneath a charcoal suit tailored with ruthless precision. Dark hair brushed the collar slightly, a little too long like he’d stopped caring about appearances somewhere beneath the grief. Sharp cheekbones. Strong jaw shadowed with exhaustion. But it was his eyes that caught her. Cold grey. Controlled. The eyes of a man holding himself together through sheer force of will. And God—

He was devastatingly attractive.

The realisation hit Zara low in her stomach with humiliating force. Not polished-handsome like Brian had been. Not charming. Charles Wolfe felt dangerous in a completely different way. Quiet power radiated from him effortlessly, filling the nursery until the air itself seemed tighter somehow.

Every instinct inside Zara sharpened instantly. Awareness prickled across her skin. The atmosphere changed the second he entered the room. Quieter.

Heavier. Even the temporary nanny instinctively straightened. Zara rose carefully from the rocking chair with Sophie still sleeping against her chest. The baby sighed softly against her sweater completely content there.

“Mr. Wolfe.”

His gaze moved to her immediately. And stayed. Not inappropriately. Not obviously. But long enough to make heat crawl unexpectedly across Zara’s skin. Professional. Assessing. Intelligent. Like he missed absolutely nothing.

“Ms. Quinn.”

Deep voice. Calm. Controlled. But there was exhaustion beneath it. Real exhaustion. The kind that settled into bone. Zara suddenly understood how loneliness might look on a man like him.

Dangerous thought.

Very dangerous.

“She settled for you quickly,” he observed quietly.

Zara looked down at Sophie instinctively, smoothing one small hand gently across the baby’s back.

“Sometimes babies just want to feel secure.”

Something unreadable flickered across his face. Gone almost instantly. Pain maybe. Or guilt. Before Zara could identify it, Liam appeared behind Charles and immediately wrapped himself around her leg again. Charles noticed immediately. His expression tightened slightly. Not anger. Something more restrained than that. Wary. As though attachment itself made him uncomfortable now.

“She likes you too,” Liam announced softly. “She doesn’t usually like strangers.”

For a second something shifted in Charles’s eyes while he looked at his son clinging to her. Not softness exactly. But something close. The silence

stretched unexpectedly. And Zara became painfully aware of herself standing there holding his daughter while his son attached himself to her like she already belonged upstairs in their private family space.

Her pulse quickened. Charles Wolfe looked at her in a way that felt entirely too observant. Zara shifted Sophie slightly higher against her chest while reaching to catch the baby blanket slipping toward the floor. Her sleeve lifted. Just slightly.

Enough to expose fading yellow-purple bruising near her wrist. Charles's gaze flicked downward automatically. Then stopped. The entire room seemed to still around them. Zara's stomach dropped instantly. Panic flashed hot beneath her skin. She tugged the sleeve down too quickly. But it was too late. He saw it.

And something cold and dangerous moved through Charles Wolfe's expression.

Click here to Buy or Read for FREE with Kindle Unlimited

 **[The Billionaire's Runaway Nanny](#)**