

Buzzkill Excerpt

“Okay now, let’s see.” Mr. Andre lowered his head, revealing the roots of his mousse-spiked, bleached hair. He wore a dark maroon suit with a matching jewel-toned silk shirt unbuttoned midway, showing sparse hair on his skinny chest. “Do you have a photographer?”

“Yes,” I ventured.

“No,” Aunt Maggie cut in. “She has some guy who shoots kiddie team pictures.”

“Oh my.” Andre circled something on his clipboard. “No photographer.”

“And you’ve gone for a wedding cake tasting?”

“A tasting? I think I already know what vanilla and chocolate tastes like by now.”

Andre shook his head as if I were a child. “No, my dear. You will be pleased to find out there are other flavors like white amaretto, champagne – girl, you can even get peanut butter if that’s what floats your boat. So I take it you haven’t had a cake-tasting session?”

“You would be correct,” I replied.

“I see.” He circled another line. “And your flowers?”

“She’s using Lenny Stokes, and she’s already put a deposit down,” Aunt Maggie said.

Andre grimaced.

“I see. I’ll need his number and address so I can get in contact with him to put him on my approved vendors list.” He circled another line. “And what is the venue?”

“We are going to have the ceremony at the community church.”

Andre’s eyebrows raised as he nodded and smiled. I had finally done something right.

“Do you have any kind of documentation on this?” he asked.

“Not officially, no,” I said. “I have talked to the pastor about it, though and he says it’s open. We live in a small town, Andre. Documentation isn’t always required.”

“Mr. Andre,” he corrected.

“We just don’t have the same kinds of waiting lists like there are in the big city.”

He clutched his hand to his chest. “Well, that’s a relief.”

“And your invitations?”

“We weren’t going to send those out until mid-January. We were afraid people would lose them. I have them ordered.” Mr. Andre’s eyes slanted toward me. “Well, they’re not exactly ordered, but I do have them picked out.”

A pause hung in the air as Mr. Andre summoned up the strength to go on. “Are you sure we’re planning a wedding and not some kind of country barbecue where they cook a pig over a spit?” He clasped his

hands together in front of him to emphasize his point. “You are in crisis mode, Madame Happy Hinder.” I gulped. So maybe, just maybe, I hadn’t nailed down enough of the details. I felt a tear escape onto my cheek. Andre, used to overwhelmed brides, reached over to a satin-covered tissue box and slapped it down on the table in front of me.

“Dry your eyes, sweetie. We’ve got work to do,” he said. “You should know what a lucky girl you are. I just removed myself from a wedding on the same day. No one – I repeat, no one – does a wedding like Mr. Andre, but even I have my limits on troublesome brides and monster mothers. As fate would have it, I’m yours.”

He walked over to a filing cabinet and pulled out a large white leather binder. Mr. Andre’s picture was on the front, and underneath that, “Weddings Exclusively by Mr. Andre” was embossed in gold lettering.

“I don’t care what religion you are,” he said. “This, lovey, is your new bible. Carry this with you everywhere and fill it with notes, questions, business cards, quotes and everything – I mean everything – that has to do with your wedding. Is that clear?”

“Yes, sir,” I said and saluted before I could stop myself. Aunt Maggie broke out into a laugh, but Mr. Andre turned quickly, fixing his eyes on her. She quickly stifled her reaction and stood up a little straighter, becoming just another draftee in the world of white satin.

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