



# The Reason I Married Him

USA TODAY BESTSELLING AUTHOR

MEGHAN  
QUINN

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Reason  
I Married  
Him**

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## **Prologue**

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WYATT

“You smell.”

I glance up from the couch where I’ve left a permanent imprint of myself after claiming squatter’s rights in my best friend’s house for the past three weeks. Yup, three weeks, I have no shame. “No, I don’t.”

“Yes . . . you do.” Laurel immaturely holds her shirt over her nose. “Really bad.”

“Fuck off. I smell fine.”

“Do you?” she asks. “You’re nose blind, completely oblivious to the smell surrounding you.”

“That’s not a thing.”

“Yes, it is,” she says as she holds her phone out to me, flashing the screen of a recent Google search. “It’s also known as olfactory fatigue, where you get used to your own odor. It decreases the perception of scents around you, leading to you being perfectly peachy in your musk while the people allowing you to stay on their couch choke to death.”

I lift up on my elbow and stare at my one true best friend I’ve known since grade school. “You’re being rude during my time of sorrow.”

“For God’s sake,” she says, tossing her arms up in defeat. “Wyatt, you know I feel bad for you. Cadance leaving you the night before your wedding will leave a permanent scar on your heart, and I’ve told you time and time again to please stay with me as long as you want. But, dude, you have to fucking shower. You have to scrub the armpits.” She mimics scrubbing her underarms. “And all the important hot spot crevices.”

“Those crevices aren’t in use at the moment,” I say.

“Exactly my point. Which means they’re festering.”

I wince in disgust. “Don’t say my crevices are festering. They’re not festering.”

“You have not bathed in a week. The festering has reached new levels of fester. Levels of mold growth and, once the mold can’t fester anymore, it festers into new mold growth, which then starts to fester. It’s a vicious cycle.” She motions over my body. “There’s so much festering that I’m truly afraid critters from the streets will think your crevices are holes they can start burrowing into as homes for winter.”

My eyes narrow. “That’s a little dramatic, don’t you think?”

“Not one bit, not when I saw a raccoon sniffing around here the other day. What you think is dramatic will be a reality pretty soon if you don’t shower. Now get up so I can remove your couch sheets, burn them, and add new ones while you shower. And you need to wash, rinse, and repeat at least three times to get the skunk off you.”

“It’s not fucking skunk,” I say as I stand from the couch, feeling slightly weak from lack of nutrients and fresh air. Huh, maybe Laurel has a minor point. I won’t tell her that, though.

“Dear God, the couch has an imprint,” she says as she slips on a mask and rubber gloves.

“Is that necessary?” I ask her.

She nods. “If I had a hazmat suit, I’d be putting that on as well, but I’ll work with what I have.” She motions for me to go shower. “Everything is set up for you in the bathroom, even fresh clothes and a warm towel. Now go.”

Grumbling, I move through her bungalow-style house made for one lady—and not her annoyingly heartbroken best friend—into the vintage bathroom with the salmon and powder-blue tiles. She claims the tiles are a part of history. I say they could easily be removed and replaced with a

fresher design that doesn't make her seem like she's a grandma hanging on to her youth.

I push back the frilly white shower curtain and turn on the water since it takes at least two minutes to warm. Then I turn around and look at myself in the mirror.

Whoa. Yikes.

Grown-out beard. Dark circles under my eyes. And is that . . .

I lean closer to get a better look.

Yup.

That is a melted chocolate chip on my face. I rub my index finger over the mark and bring it to my nose for a sniff. Yep. A melted chocolate chip. After all the festering and mold talk, I was nervous there for a moment that I'd sprouted something of the fungal descent.

I reach behind my head and pull my shirt up and over, only to drop the fabric to the mini-square-tiled floor. When I look at my chest in the mirror, I cringe. Sure, I've been here for three weeks, but that's after spending three weeks alone in my apartment doing nothing but the bare minimum for my job—i.e., answering emails and casually making my way through some edits of a manuscript releasing next year. But the fact that I can already see my hard-earned workouts fading is an indication that maybe Laurel is right .

..

I lift my arm, and just for the hell of it, I give my armpit a sniff, only to be slapped in the face by a bag of moldy onions.

"Mother of . . . fuck," I say while I snort air out of my nose, attempting to reverse the smell I just inhaled.

Okay, yeah, Laurel was right. I needed to be sprung from that couch probably a few days ago. Thank God she had the courage to do it today. Who knows what two more days on the couch would have brought.

Possibly a mashing between the toes . . .

Now, there's something to brag about.

I strip the rest of the way then step into the slightly chilly water, but my body needs soap, and it needs soap now. As I move through the process of washing off the stink, I consider how I got into this position in the first place.

There's truly only one reason . . .

Cadance Clearwater, that's how.

Heiress to Clearwater Coffee—the brand that no one has ever heard of, but Cadance swears is the best coffee on the market. Just a little spoiler alert, it is not.

We met on a windy day in Silicon Valley. It was at a local coffee shop, no less, where she was attempting to sell Clearwater Coffee to the store manager. I was working on my latest thriller about a doctor who helped a husband and wife get pregnant only to use the cord blood of the baby to save the life of their current living but very sickly child—a bestseller, if you're wondering. I was brought out of the moment when I caught her fumbling with her bag of coffee.

She stumbled over her words.

Her bag fell out of her hands.

And the coffee beans spilled all over the floor.

It was cringe-worthy for everyone around.

The store manager was uninterested, and when he dismissed her, she pointed her shaky finger at him and told him he was making a big mistake.

I liked her tenacity.

I found it . . . endearing and ended up helping her pick up her spilled coffee beans.

She said it was love at first sight for her.

For me, I thought she was hot, but love wasn't even a distant thought.

Like, not even close.

But . . . because I thought she was hot, I asked her out on a date.

One date turned into two, then three . . . then four. And on the fourth date, she invited me into her apartment and seduced me. Yup. She was all over me.

She stripped me out of my clothes and had me right there on the floor of her kitchen. Shocked and pleasantly surprised, you could imagine that I was all for it.

The next morning—because obviously, I spent the night—she made me a cup of Clearwater Coffee and then sat naked on my lap. Everything about it was like living out a wet dream . . . well, not everything.

There she was, tits bouncing in my face, rocking over my erection as I brought the cup of coffee up to my mouth. The smell was . . . heinous.

But coffee can be sour sometimes, so I took a sip, and that was when the white light of death flashed before my eyes.

I felt the skin on my face peel back.



My teeth pushed forward, out of my mouth, like a horse reaching for a carrot.

And my armpit hairs twisted in a spiral, indicating the Grim Reaper was on his way, my name on a tombstone being carefully carried in his skeletal hands.

It was official. With one sip, Clearwater Coffee was the most disgusting coffee to ever pass my lips.

Some might classify it as sludge.

I put it under the umbrella of a way to poison your enemies, grow a mustache in under thirty minutes, and get rid of any sinus infection with one sniff.

A dangerous and hazardous artifact to society.

And you must be thinking, who put you in charge of ranking coffee? Let me tell you, being the avid coffee drinker and frequenter of small business coffee shops, I'm well versed in the multitude of coffee flavors. Clearwater Coffee is like roadkill in liquid form.

One sip was all it took for me to make my assessment. This was not something I planned on drinking ever again. It was evident by the way I gagged, shoved her off my lap, and ran to the sink, where I directed my mouth under the faucet and rinsed it out, nearly drowning myself.

Even after that, it took exactly thirty-two hours and eleven minutes for my tongue to forgive me and allow me to taste other things again.

You can imagine how she took that response, though.

She didn't talk to me for a month.

What can I say? Clearwater Coffee is made from tar, and I'm not good at faking it.

I considered it a minor loss. I wasn't too hurt because, let's be honest, I got laid.

I went on with my daily life, writing, researching, and looking up creepy facts on the Internet that could borderline get me thrown in jail.

Until one day, at the same coffee shop I met Cadance before, she ran into me again. Thankfully, when she confronted me, I was drinking tea and told her I was sorry about the coffee gagging. I told her I wasn't much of a coffee drinker, so I wasn't used to such a rich coffee flavor. Lies . . . so many lies, but like I said, she was hot. And besides the coffee, I'd had a good night with her.

To my surprise, she giggled, flipped her hair over her shoulder, and said it was all right.

I invited her to sit with me.

And then from there, we dated.

Fell in love.

I proposed.

She said yes.

And we planned a wedding.

I was the happiest I had ever been, ready to make a life with this woman—coffee-free, which was a sacrifice I was willing to make—until the night before our wedding.

I know what you're wondering. Did she walk in on me drinking coffee, become thoroughly insulted, and call off the wedding? Hell, I wish. I think that would have made the blow much easier to accept.

Nope. Instead, she came up to me wearing her veil, tears streaming down her face and a wobbly lip holding back her sobs. At first, I thought something really wrong had happened, like one of her parents was sick.

Maybe the coffee wasn't delivered for the wedding guests who were attending—the poor guests had no idea what was coming for them.

But, no.

She was upset that she'd let our relationship go this long—to *the point of getting married*—because she didn't love me like she thought she should.

Yup.

She didn't love me.

That was it. Plain and simple. I had love in the tank for her, but she was running on empty for me.

Do I wish she had told me sooner? Yeah.

Do I wonder where I went wrong?

Every fucking minute of every day since she called off the wedding.

She offered no explanation, no reasoning why she fell out of love with me. She just did, and that was that. The wedding was called off, the food was donated to food banks, the wedding gifts were returned, and the flowers were given to local funeral homes for the recently deceased. It seemed fitting since my relationship was as dead as the people in the morgue.

I rinse the rest of my body, still feeling the stab I took to the heart that night. Why did she wait so long to tell me? Why couldn't she have said no

when I proposed? At least if she said no to that, I could have squashed the hopes I had of starting a family.

But nooooooooo, she had to wait until the night before the wedding.

Thank God we hadn't planned a honeymoon because she'd had a big coffee conference to attend. We were going to decide on something after that.

*Good luck at your conference, Cadance. Your coffee tastes like burnt tires that ran through a pile of fresh manure.*

I turn off the shower and whip open the curtain. I grab my dusty-rose towel and quickly dry myself before I move in front of the mirror, only to stare at myself again.

Sad.

Pathetic.

Defeated.

That's all I see.

My penis is even sad. Look at it all drooped and depressed. I can't remember the last time his spirits were lifted—if you know what I mean. *Actually, I can. It was a week and a half before the wedding. Yup. She hadn't loved me, but she'd loved my dick. Yay.*

I drag my hand over my face.

The only good thing about any of this? I don't have a book due for a while because I decided to spend a few months off enjoying married life.

Now those few months off will be spent on my best friend's couch, where I'll wallow in pain.

I finish getting dressed, brush my teeth, and don't even bother with my hair before I walk out of the bathroom, smelling a whole lot better.

"Wow, you look like you scrubbed off a film of disgust." Laurel leans in and tentatively sniffs. "Oh, lovely, you used my soap. Much better."

"I was tempted to use your deodorant as well but opted for mine instead."

"The small miracles are really pulling this day together," she replies as I take a seat back on the couch.

"So . . ." She rocks on her heels. "You're just going to go back to sitting there?"

"Do you want me to do something else?" I look up at her. "Do you want me to leave?"

She shakes her head. The box braids she just had done look incredible on her, and the deep violet adds nice dimension. “No, but I do have to talk to you about a few things and thought that a change of scenery might be nice, like the back patio.”

“Are you saying I need some fresh air?”

“Yes . . . yes, I am.”

I sigh heavily but follow my friend out to the patio where she has two glasses of lemonade set up as well as a plate of chocolate chip cookies.

“You spoil me,” I say as I take a seat and pop one whole cookie in my mouth.

Her eyes watch my puffed-out cheeks handle the large cookie before she takes a seat. “Maybe next time, eat it in bites.”

“Where’s the fun in that?” I say around a mouthful of cookie.

“The fun is in not choking.” She sips her lemonade. “Now, like I said, I want to talk to you about a few important things.”

“Okay,” I drag out. “Why does it seem like you’re about to deliver bad news?”

“Just listen.”

Oh boy, that can’t be good.

I grab another cookie, but I take a bite like she asked.

“First things first. I have a date tonight.”

“You do?” I ask, looking surprised. I didn’t think Laurel was into dating at the moment. Then again, she said that about four weeks ago when I asked her why she wasn’t bringing a date to the wedding. Things could have changed since then.

“Yes, I actually met her at the bookstore when I was inquiring about your books and why they didn’t have them in stock.”

That’s Laurel for you. She’s my number one fan and will travel up and down the Pacific Coast Highway, making sure every bookstore keeps my books in stock.

“Did she tell you why?”

Laurel smirks. “Because you’re far too popular to keep on the shelves.” That brings a smug smile to my face. “We bonded over *Baby for a Baby*, and when she told me she liked my tattoo while leaning in close and touching it, I knew I was good to ask her out.”

“The wrist tattoo?” I ask. She got the tattoo several years ago after she came out to her family. She had a few birds tattooed on her wrist where she

used to cut herself during her darkest times of depression. The scars were covered up with freedom.

She nods. “Yes. I told her I got it when I came out to my family, and that’s when she smiled and moved her finger over it. Anyway, she’s really pretty and super smart. I’m excited, but I don’t want you to think I’m leaving you in your time of need.”

I shake my head. “Live your life, Laurel. And if you need me to leave, I can leave.”

“That’s not necessary. I have zero plans to bring her back to my place or do anything like that. Just getting to know her is all, but I didn’t want you to think I’m rubbing it in your face.”

“Nah, I’m happy for you.” I take another bite of my cookie. “Don’t let my shit love life distract you from living yours.”

“Cool.” She sets her glass down. “Now that we got the easy part over, I have something more serious to talk to you about.”

“What?” I ask.

“Well, when I was running errands earlier today, I went to pick up your mail for you, and this came in.” She pulls an envelope out of nowhere and hands it to me.

“What is it?” I ask, staring down at it.

“I think it’s the title to that farm your brother left you.”

“Oh.” My brows crease together. “Yeah, I completely forgot about this. Cassidy passed away a few months ago. I wonder why this is arriving all of a sudden. Not that I really care about it.”

“Probably took the family lawyer some time to wrap everything up.”

I scratch the back of my neck, looking down at the envelope. “I still don’t know why Clarke made me a beneficiary should his wife pass away. What the fuck am I supposed to do with half a farm? Can’t I just give it over to Cassidy’s family?”

Laurel, who is currently a lawyer—a good friend to have—says, “You could give it to them. You could make them purchase it from you. It’s really up to you as to what you want to do with it.”

“I’m not going to make them purchase it. I doubt they have the money. I don’t need their money, and I don’t need their farm. The whole thing really is an inconvenience.”

“Do you know who owns the other half?” Laurel asks.

“There’s Ryland, Aubree, and Hattie. Those were Cassidy’s siblings. I met them around Clarke and Cassidy’s wedding. My guess is that one of them is taking care of it. I’m pretty sure, from what my parents told me, that Ryland is taking care of MacKenzie, my niece. So that leaves Aubree and Hattie.” Sadly, I didn’t spend much time with MacKenzie, so even though she’s my niece, she’s almost a stranger. As are Cassidy’s siblings. I’m not particularly proud of that, but our lives never naturally intersected, and it was harder to initiate contact once we lost Clarke. The more time passed without me contacting Cassidy, the worse I felt.

Laurel twists her lips to the side, thinking.

“Why do you have that contemplative look on your face?”

She lets out a heavy sigh and turns toward me. “Because I also ran into someone at the store when I got your mail. Someone you can’t stand.”

“Was it Cadance?” I ask, feeling my heart twist in my chest. “Had her roots grown out?” One can only hope for the petty things in life.

Laurel shakes her head. “No . . . worse. I ran into Wallace.”

I feel my entire body go cold.

Not fucking Wallace.

Wallace is my cousin. He’s the bane of my existence. A fucking asshole who doesn’t know anything about loyalty and family. Then again, do I? My brother died, and I didn’t do much to help Cassidy, but we’re not going to get into that right now.

This is about Wallace. And Wallace is the type of guy that when you look him in the eyes, you wonder if his irises are actually yellow or if they’re playing a trick on you.

He’s vile.

He’s calculated.

He’s a non-fiction descendant of Scott Farkus from *The Christmas Story*.

He has hated me ever since we were teenagers when I grew a foot in middle school, and he didn’t.

“What the fuck did he want?” I ask.

“Nothing, but he did make a comment that made my skin crawl.”

“What was it?” I ask. “Did he say something gross about girl-on-girl action? I have no problem throwing a log at him next time I see him. Lord knows he wouldn’t be able to lift it off himself.”



She sets her hand on the table and carefully looks me in the eyes. “He mentioned how he’s closer than you at claiming the cabin now.”

Fuck.

Not . . . not the cabin.

I sit taller in my seat as anger races through my body. “He fucking said that to you?”

“He did.”

And Farkus . . . I mean Wallace just crossed a line.

“That’s fucking poor taste, not to mention no one’s business outside of the family. And sure, I know I’ve told you everything because I wanted you to look at Grandfather’s will, but Jesus fuck, why would he say that to you?”

“Probably because he knew I would tell you.”

I squeeze my lips together, anger bristling inside me as I consider the idea of Wallace taking possession of the family cabin.

The sacred, beautiful A-frame cabin that was the sole basis of happiness during my childhood. He’d renovate it until it resembled nothing of what it’s like now. He’d erase all of the memories we created there. I know this because he’s said it. He never got along with Grandfather, nor did Wallace appreciate the outdoors or the community where the cabin is located. His parents rarely took him up there, and when they did, Wallace would complain the entire time about the ponderosa pines blocking the sun and the weird, kitschy town not having good food.

Unfortunately, when Grandfather passed last year, he stated in his will that the first to get married among the grandkids would take possession. Since I was engaged, I knew that would be me. And now with Cadance gone, Wallace is the only other grandchild in a relationship . . . meaning, if he’s already thinking about the cabin, there’s no doubt in my mind he’ll propose out of spite.

“Fuck,” I say while pulling on the back of my neck. “He’s going to take it, isn’t he?”

“Seems like it,” Laurel says. “Unless . . .”

“Unless what?” I ask.

“You get married.”

I sardonically chuckle. “Think we missed the boat on that one.”

“I was thinking more like a business transaction.”

I raise one brow as I glance in her direction. “Are you saying I marry you? Because you know I would in a heartbeat. The only problem is you don’t like the penis, and everyone knows that. Pretty sure Wallace would call fraud on us and claim the cabin.”

“Not talking about me. I was thinking maybe . . . maybe one of Cassidy’s sisters.”

I blink.

I stare.

Laughter bubbles up out of me. “You can’t be serious.”

“I’m very serious,” she says. “It would work out perfectly. You can make a trade, the farmland for their hand in marriage.”

“Laurel.” I reach across the table and take her hand in mine. “You are my favorite person in the world, and we promised each other to always be honest, especially when one is showing signs of insanity. Well, this is one of those moments. You’re insane.”

“Am I, though?” she asks. “I was going over the will, and you technically only have to be married for a year. You strike up an agreement with one of the sisters—pending one of them is single—offer them the farmland for free in exchange for one year of marriage so you can secure the cabin in your name, make sure all of the paperwork has gone through, and then divorce. What’s a year of someone’s time, really?”

“Uh, a fucking year. Twelve months. Three hundred—”

“I’m well aware of how many days are in a year,” Laurel says. “Think about it, Wyatt. You don’t care about that land, and something tells me they do. And I’m going to guess they’ll care a whole lot more if you show up and try to take control of the portion that’s yours.”

“Wow.” I cross my arms over my chest. “Law school has truly made you diabolical.”

She chuckles. “It’s part of my job to look at every angle, and this is your best bet. You said you want that cabin. You even told me once that you weren’t sure if you loved Cadance or the cabin more. Are you really going to give it up to Wallace?” She leans in closer and says, “He flicked his rat tail at me.”

I feel my nostrils flare. “Fucking disgusting.”

“I wanted to snip it right off.”

“I’ve spent many hours awake at night envisioning how it would feel to cut it myself.”

“So are you going to let him take the cabin and destroy the thing that matters the most to you? Or will you continue to sleep on my couch and wallow about the love you lost?”

“When you put it like that . . .”

She brings her glass of lemonade to her lips. “Want me to help you pack? Possibly plan out the wedding? Write up a prenup? When you divorce, she takes all of the land and you take the cabin? I’m at your disposal. You just tell me what you need.”

“This is insane,” I say. “I have to think about it.”

“Don’t think about it too long. Wallace is one ring purchase away from taking the cabin right from your grasp.”