

My Invisible Husband

By Shelia Goss

“Congratulations on your wedding, Nikki.”

“Thank you,” Nikki Montana replied as she looked up into the eyes of her co-worker, Kenneth Capers.

“When will we get to meet the lucky groom?” Kenneth asked as he ate the last bite of cake on his plate.

Her eyes darted downwards as she repeated to him the response she had rehearsed and given everyone all day. “As soon as his schedule allows, I’ll bring him up to the office for everyone to meet.”

Nikki thanked everyone for coming to the wedding shower her manager insisted the department throw for her. As an account executive at Midas Touch, Nikki was responsible for coming up with innovative advertising campaigns. Her accounts consisted of small to global companies in all types of industries. She had been receiving gifts from her clients all week. Deep down inside she felt guilty about accepting the gifts her co-workers and clients so thoughtfully picked out. She glanced at her watch. Her plane for Las Vegas would be leaving in less than twenty-four hours so she knew she had to get home to do some last minute packing. And when she returned to work a week later, she would be a married woman.

Some of her co-workers helped carry her gifts to her car, congratulating her once more along the way. For the rainy season of April, it was a beautiful sun shining spring day and under normal circumstances she would have driven with the top down on her convertible candy apple red BMW, but today she had to worry about the trail of gifts and cards that she could possibly leave down the highway. So the windows being partially rolled down would have to suffice.

As Nikki stopped at a red light, the passenger in a midnight-blue SUV that was stopped next to her attempted to flirt with her, but she ignored his advances. As she sped away, she heard him yell obscenities at her.

“That’s why I didn’t acknowledge your existence,” she blurted out.

She drove the rest of the way home listening to one of her favorite Dallas radio stations. “The Drive at Five” radio mix always calmed her nerves during rush hour traffic.

When she pulled into the driveway of her two-bedroom ranch style home, she spotted a familiar car. It belong to none other than her best friend, Charlotte. Nikki had hoped to avoid Charlotte until after her return trip from Las Vegas, but luck wasn’t on her side.

Nikki got out of the car, deciding to come back for the gifts and cards later. When Charlotte saw Nikki get out of her car, she got out of hers as well. The two greeted each other without speaking a word, but with a hug only. Nikki could since that Charlotte wanted to explode with words, but as she followed her up the sidewalk and to the doorstep, she stood silently until Nikki unlocked the front door and the two entered.

“How could you plan on sneaking to Vegas without a word?” Charlotte said, closing the door behind her. “I had to find out from your sister that you were leaving in the morning.”

Nikki knew that she wouldn’t be able to keep her secret for long and

really needed someone to confide in. "If you give me a minute to get settled, I'll explain everything," she said, setting her keys and purse down on the living room end table.

Charlotte crossed her arms and with an attitude responded, "You'd better, because we've been friends far too long for me to hear about this from someone else. This really hurts. I thought we were close, but I guess I was wrong."

"Calm down. I'll explain it all in a minute," Nikki announced, trying to calm her friend down.

Charlotte rolled her eyes. "Whatever. You definitely have some explaining to do, missy."

"Make yourself at home," Nikki said, as she headed towards her bedroom. "I'll be right back."

When Nikki returned to the living room she could hear some rustling around in the kitchen, where Charlotte was making herself a turkey and Swiss cheese sandwich. Nikki went into the kitchen and took a seat on one of the wooden barstools at the island and sat silently until Charlotte finished making her sandwich and joined her on the barstool next to her.

She and Charlotte had been friends and inseparable since first grade. Although they each had siblings, they were more like sisters. They were both five feet eight inches tall and wore their hair in a short Halle Berry style that was made famous years ago. Although both were attractive, Nikki's breasts were larger and her sparkling hazel eyes usually captivated most men. Charlotte, on the other hand, was well proportioned and had legs to put Tina Turner to shame. When it came to dealing with issues, especially issues that involved men, they were complete opposites.

Nikki cleared her throat. "I know what I'm about to tell you might sound crazy, but please hear me out before you interrupt."

Charlotte took a bite of her sandwich and after swallowing said, "Sure." She continued to eat while listening to Nikki.

"I'm going to Las Vegas because everyone thinks the ring I'm wearing is an engagement ring."

"Okay, I know that much," Charlotte said in a nonchalant tone.

"And they think I'm going to Vegas to marry my fiancé."

Charlotte almost choked. "What in the world? What fiancé? How could you keep something like this from me? Who is he? Do I know him?"

Nikki waited for Charlotte to stop blurting out questions. "Are you through so I can finish?"

Charlotte took a sip of her drink. "Go ahead," she said as she looked at Nikki in amazement.

"The key word is everyone *thinks*. I'm tired of everyone asking me about my personal life...asking me when I'm going to settle down. The idea hit me after I saw this lady do it in a movie."

"Uh huh," Charlotte said as she stared at her in disbelief. "The idea of what?"

"If everyone thinks I'm married, maybe they'll stop asking me about my love life. Then I can go on with my life worry free. I won't have to worry about being thirty-four and unmarried. And I sure won't have to listen to the countless questions about why, when, etcetera."

Charlotte put her drink down and pushed her plate away. "So you're

telling me you've planned a fake wedding and everyone, including your family, thinks you're going to Las Vegas to get married?"

"Yes," Nikki said, putting her head down in shame.

Charlotte looked at her with such pity before bursting out into laughter. "Girl, are you crazy? How in the world do you think you're going to pull it off? You do have to come back. And when you do come back, without a husband I might add, what will you tell everyone?"

"Actually, I've told everyone he travels a lot and when he's in town, we only have time for each other."

"You've been setting this up for awhile. I thought you bought the ring to ward off men you didn't want to talk to. I never thought you would do something this stupid."

Nikki defended herself. "I don't think it's stupid at all," she said getting up from the barstool and began pacing. "Besides, I'm due for a vacation and this will keep people out of my business, especially the people at the office. Now maybe my director will stop flirting with me every chance he gets."

Charlotte shook her head and said, "I can see you telling those busybodies at work, but did you have to lie to your own family?"

"You know my family. They're as bad as my co-workers," Nikki said, throwing her hands up. "You know for yourself that they're always asking me when I'm going to settle down. I'm sick and tired of being made to feel like something is wrong with me because I'm not married," Nikki said, in frustration.

"I hear you, but still this is going to back fire and then what?"

"This will bide me some time. I can always tell them it didn't work out and I got a quick divorce."

"Sounds like you've thought of everything."

Nikki walked towards the side door of her house, which was off the kitchen. "I sure did. Now help me get my wedding presents out of the car."

Charlotte shook her head and began to chuckle. "Girl, all I can say is you're something else and watching you work your way through this one is going to be good!"

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