

This scene was chopped because, while fun, didn't add to the story. This is Elena and Nick, posing as prospective clients, trying to get a lead on Patrick Shanahan. In the book, they still make the visit, but we don't see it play out.

Panicked Parents

Patrick Shanahan's office was only a couple of kilometers from our hotel, so after I'd shopped and dressed, we walked over. Together with two associates, he shared a suite in a skyscraper. When we reached his office and opened the door, it was like stepping into one of those upscale SUVs Jeremy had been trying to sell me on, all gleaming chrome and black leather and polished wood. It even came with that new car smell, though it may have just been the admin assistant's perfume.

The secretary herself wasn't one of the sporty late models, but an older version, chosen more for reliability than sexy curves and a high revving engine. Yet, if she was past her years of being chased around the desk by the boss, apparently no one had told her. She still dressed the part, complete with plunging cleavage, and brassy blond dye job.

"He—he's gone?" I said when she told me the news. I wheeled to look up at Nick. "But he told us to come by. At the party. He said he'd set us up with everything we needed, didn't he?"

"He did," Nick said.

"And he didn't say anything about going on vacation or we would have come in earlier." I laid my hands on my stomach as I turned back to the secretary. "The doctor says any day now. He was saying it would be a few weeks, but now he says any day and

we haven't made arrangements. We need to make arrangements."

The secretary looked at Nick, but he only shrugged, as if to say, *Hey, you and I know it's not going to make any difference if the kid doesn't have a college fund at birth but, at this point, I'm not arguing with her.*

"Oh God," I said, clutching my stomach. "First, the Norwegian bedroom set has been delayed, and now this." I looked up at Nick, eyes wide with panic. "We aren't ready."

Nick put his arm around my shoulder, kissed the top of my head and murmured something reassuring, then turned to the secretary.

"Do you have a contact number for Mister Shanahan? We'd really like to get this arranged right away, and he did say he'd look after us."

"He's . . ." Her gaze traveled from Nick to me, then back, as if trying to figure out how to word it without setting off the hysterical pregnant woman. "Temporarily unavailable."

"Unavail—" I squeaked. I clutched Nick's hand. "He took off. Just like Jody and Raoul's advisor. Took all their money and fled for the Cayman Islands."

A middle-aged man in the waiting room lowered his newspaper, and looked over at us.

"No!" The secretary's voice rang through the room, then quickly dropped as she looked around. "Mister Shanahan had to leave town for a few days to meet clients who don't wish to travel to Toronto, given the cholera situation.. He should be back in a week or so—"

"Or so?" Nick said, frowning. "That doesn't sound good. Maybe it's not just clients who are worried about the cholera. We don't want a nervous investment agent, hon. Maybe we should go elsewhere, just to be careful. It is a lot of money."

"And I assure you, it would be in excellent hands here at Shanahan, Gold and Morris.

Perhaps if you'd care to speak to Ms Gold or Mister Morris . . ."

I shook my head. "I met Mister Shanahan and I liked him, but if he's not available, then maybe my husband is right and we should look elsewhere."

We turned to leave.

"I could give him a message," she said. "He calls in every day for his messages."

I smiled at Nick, then turned back to the secretary.