

THE BEAUTIFUL MISFITS

by Susan Reinhardt

EXCERPT

She'd felt the bump of her lower abs, firm with life as she stood from the vanity and twirled in the fitted, beautifully cut gown, its swishy A-line skirt floating beneath her waist. In the mirror, the iridescent beads shimmered against the sun drifting through her bedroom window.

Her parents' fifteen-room Beaux Arts mansion spoke Southern elegance at its uppity best. As she admired the gown, she heard staccato raps at the door. Without invitation, her mother burst into her pink-and-cream bedroom with its billowing canopy bed that made Josie feel protected. "You look beautiful," she said, scanning her in her entirety. Josie waited for the "but." "Turn around and let me see you from the side."

Katherine looked striking—and intimidating—in her ruby mother-of-the-bride gown, its ruched waist showing off her incredible figure and a front slit opening to reveal a long, tanned leg. "The dress is deliciously posh. However..." she said, hands on Josie's shoulders as she angled her in the light. She rubbed her forehead. "I'm having second thoughts about you wearing white. Anyhow, too late now, isn't it?"

Josie inhaled sharply, refusing to let her mother ruin this day. "Can't you wear a support garment? Around your middle?"

"I'm four months pregnant, Mother. It's not exactly a secret."

"Secret or not. We're not the bloody sort to display our premarital lust at the altar."

Josie flushed but said nothing. Her mother's barbs and put-on British jargon would not get to her today. She had nothing to hide. It was 1994, for heaven's sake, and not puritanical times when young women like her had been shuttled away to stay with "beloved relatives."