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"Spill," Lilly said as she was leaning back in Charlie's bed, a gin and tonic in one hand, a plate with butter chicken and rice balanced on the knee and a fork full heading to her mouth. Charlie was sitting opposite her on the bed, almost in the exact same pose.

"Spill what?" she asked.

"What ever have got you all jittery and spaced out," Lilly said. Charlie sighed and decided to tell her friend everything, starting from the first date with James. "What a fucking dick," Lilly said when Charlie was done.

"Who?" Charlie asked. Lilly raised her eyebrow. "I know, I know. But I can't make up my mind who's the biggest dick. Vidar for putting all of this into my mind, or James for not telling me."

"So it's Vidar..." Lilly said. Charlie blushed. "I can see you point. But you know James, he probably got orders not to tell anyone and you know he will follow shit like that."

"I know. But there is a little voice in my head now that is asking if the reason he asked me out is to get information from me," Charlie confessed. Lilly looked at her in a way that told Charlie she hadn't considered that.

"Do you think he would do that? That he would risk his friendship with Huxton?" Lilly asked.

"Probably not, but it keeps nagging at me."



"Okay, so let's put that to the side. You will never know by torturing yourself about it. You kissed? Was it a good kiss?"

"It was a nice kiss," Charlie said.

"Ouch. That is almost worse than a bad one," Lilly said.

"Why?" Charlie asked.

"No chemistry, babe. Someone who is a bad kisser you can teach to be good. But no chemistry, not much to do about that," Lilly told her. Charlie thought about it and it tracked.

"But what if it was just me and my stupid thoughts which made the kiss nice and not great?" she asked.

"I guess that is possible. But let me remind you that you have a history of ignoring your own instincts and ending up with idiots. Mini cock is an excellent example," Lilly said.

"Right."

"I'm not saying James is a dick or that he has done something wrong. Maybe you are just better as friends? Let me ask you this; what do you feel when thinking of Vidar?" Charlie blushed. She had spent a couple of hours the night before trying not to think about her boss. It had failed miserably. "I see," Lilly said with a smug face.

"He's my boss," Charlie said.

"Yeah, I'm not saying it's a good idea, babe. But I get it, even I think the man is hot. Like melting the polar caps hot," Lilly said.

"So I should tell James we should remain friends and try to forget about my boss?" Charlie asked.

"I think it would be the best solution for you. I know it's not fair. But maybe after your contract with Mr Grim is up, you can give it a go," Lilly comforted her.

"No, not as long as I work for Jenni, it would feel disloyal," Charlie said, shaking her head.

"Oh please. You know as well as I do every waitress fighting to be the one to serve them, is hoping one of the Thursday club will make her their girlfriend," Lilly huffed. That was true, Charlie thought. But then, she didn't know how Vidar felt about it. Sure, he had made some cryptic remarks, but it didn't mean he was interested in something between them.

"Okay, fine, I'll think about it. Now, what is up with you and Nea?" Lilly gave up a heavy sigh and started poking her chicken.

"It's the usual. She is jealous, obsessive, she can't see that I need friends. She thinks I should only need her. But I need other people as well, and I hate she makes me feel guilty about it," Lilly said. The usual cocky and sassy woman was looking beaten and depressed.

"Lilly, there is nothing wrong with wanting to have friends and family. How many times haven't you been there for me when a loser of a boyfriend

dumped me? How many times haven't we consoled each other? Relationships end, friendships stay," Charlie told her.

"Yeah, I know you are right. But still," she said.

"It's easier to say than to practise," Charlie said. Lilly nodded. "You know she won't change. If she would, she would have done so after the second or third time," Charlie gently told her friend.

"I know. I know I shouldn't take her back. I know. But then she pleads with me and she is so fucking hot and I hate when she is sad," she told Charlie. Charlie had sympathy for what Lilly told her. She had her own share of bad relationships behind her. Both boyfriends and family. It was hard putting down boundaries.

"Next time, call me and I will remind you of why you broke up," she offered. Lilly smiled.

"If nothing else, it will piss her off if she knows I'm calling you," Lilly said. They laughed and after finishing off the butter chicken, they refilled their gin and tonics, took out the chips, and Charlie took her laptop and put on a sappy romcom. They snuggled up under the cover and tried to forget their lives for a while.

The following day, Charlie was working from home. She was finally feeling confident enough with the system to start looking into the issue. As she started isolating the delayed messages, tracing them and looking for data spikes and unusual information flows, she got a nagging feeling it all was familiar. It kept bugging her all through Monday as Lucas and she discussed

it. Tuesday, she was ready to throw the computer out of the window in her office. She was in a foul mood as she got home. Her phone rang, and she saw it was her brother.

"Hi, just so you know, I'm in a lousy mood," she answered.

"Sorry to hear that, sis. I was going to invite you to do the honour of babysitting my angels on Friday evening. Tyson and I could use a little alone time," her brother said.

"First; Eww. Second; Sure, I was planning to go out with James, but we haven't made any plans, so I will choose to help you. But I only do it because the angels are adorable and Tyson deserves to be wooed sometimes," she told him, feeling in a better mood already. There was a pause. "Huxton?"

"Why would you be planning to go out with James on Friday?" her brother asked.

"It's one of my free nights and, as you apparently have figured out, it's a good date night," she said, confused by his question.

"You and James are dating?"

"Well, yes, but you know that already," she told him.

"The fuck I do," he said. Charlie could hear Tyson scolding him for using such language.

"What? But he said he had cleared it with you. He said you were okay with

it. If he hadn't told me that, I would have checked with you," she told him. She was really confused. Why had James lied to her? This wasn't something he had just omitted to tell her. This was an outright lie.

"I'm going to pound that fucker," her brother growled.

"Huxton, no. Calm down," she told him. She heard his husband telling him to go outside if he couldn't behave around the kids. "Why are you so against us dating?" she asked. She heard a door opening and shutting and her brother taking a deep breath.

"Do you know what he is working on?" he asked her. Had everyone but she known?

"He is trying to find dirt on my boss," she said.

"What the fuck, Charlie. You knew, and you agreed to go out with him? Do you not see the problematic place it places you in?"

"I didn't know, okay? I asked, and he told me he couldn't tell me and I bought it. But then someone else told me. I haven't seen him since I found out. We are supposed to see each other tomorrow, and I was going to ask him about it."

"Yeah, I need to make sure he never comes near you again. He might be my best and oldest friend, but if he thinks he can use you, lie to you, well then he has another thing coming," Huxton fumed.

"Huxton, no. I appreciate the outrage, but you have a family and he is a cop.



If you pummel him to the ground, one of two things will happen. Either he will beat you up and Tyson will have to spoon feed three babies instead of two. Or you will mess him up and get locked away, leaving Tyson to be a single parent. Get your head in the game, I can handle this," she told him. Her brother grumbled, cursed a little, and then sighed.

"Fine," he admitted.

"Good. Now let me talk to my favourite brother," she told him.

"I don't need Tyson babysitting me," her brother said.

"I know. I just want to let him know I'll be over on Friday in case you forget. Now let me talk to him and go and clean or something." Charlie heard him mutter about cocky baby sisters as he handed the phone over to Tyson.

"Charlie?" Tyson asked.

"Hi, Tyson. First of all, I'm happy to babysit on Friday."

"Okay, thanks. Should I worry about him?" he then asked.

"I would keep an eye on him. James has done something idiotic and my brother is feeling the need to teach him a lesson."

"Has this idiotic thing anything to do with you?" Tyson asked.

"Yes. But it's not half as bad as you think it is. He lied to me and has taken me out on a couple of dates," she confessed.

"And this lie, if he hadn't told it, had you agreed to date him?" her brother-

in-law asked in a dark tone.

"Well, no. He lied about getting Huxton's blessing to ask me out. I would have asked Huxton myself if he hadn't told me that. And my brother has a good reason why I shouldn't go on dates with him at the moment."

"Are you available to babysit tonight? In case me and my husband have some things to take care of, as a couple?" he asked. Charlie had to smile. Most of her family was a mess. But Huxton had done well when he got Tyson to agree to marry him. She loved the two of them and was grateful to have them in her life.

"I'm relying on you to be the smart one. Let me deal with James and you deal with my brother," she told him.

"Okay. But I want you to call us tomorrow and let us know what has happened," he said.

"I promise. I will let you get back to your three babies. Kiss them all from me. Thank you Tyson, I love you," she said.

"I love you too. We all do, little sister."

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