

## Chapter 13

After my boss shared all the information about his trip, Mariana and I returned to our office to continue working. The rest of the workday went by without incident. The day passed quickly, and we were grabbing our bags to leave when my boss's door opened just as Patrick appeared in my office.

"Time to rest, girls!" Patrick said with that huge smile that seemed permanently fixed on his face. "Alexander and I are going to dinner at Giorgio's, and I insist on inviting the two most beautiful women in this company to join us."

Giorgio's was an extremely expensive Italian restaurant in the city. Mel and I had already planned to go there over the weekend after hearing they served the best gnocchi and had delicious house-made wine we wanted to try. Mel had convinced me that I needed to get used to these kinds of places now, since I'd likely have to attend business lunches or dinners.

"Oh, what a shame, Patrick! We already have plans and people waiting for us. Maybe another time," Mariana said, declining the invitation since we were going to have dinner at my house. 1

I just smiled and thanked him, but I couldn't help noticing that my boss's expression grew even darker, as if he were in a bad mood. He looked at us and spoke in a stern voice:

"Come now, couldn't you reschedule your plans to have dinner with your boss? Isn't it discourteous to decline?"

"Alexander, don't be grumpy. The real discourtesy would be making us cancel plans at the last minute. We can have dinner with you tomorrow, right, Catherine?" Mariana always corrected him like a mother scolding her children.



"Of course, Mariana. It would be our pleasure. But if the boss insists, I'm sure our companions would understand it's a work matter," I said, immediately regretting it when I looked at Mr. Miller, who seemed to be fuming with anger and spoke in an unfriendly tone.

"No need. As if I would force you to keep your companions waiting. Never. Have fun, just don't be late for work tomorrow, Miss Vergara."

He stormed out, stomping his feet harder than necessary, and from the elevator shouted "let's go" to Patrick, who just smiled and followed his friend. I didn't understand anything, but when I looked at Mariana, she was laughing.

We left shortly after the boss and went to my house. When we arrived, Mel greeted us with her usual cheerfulness. Mel was an excellent cook and prepared a delicious dinner. Peter was playing on the living room carpet and got up running to hug me. I picked him up and introduced him to Mariana, who made a very funny face when she got a good look at him. 2

"Catherine, your son is such a beautiful boy! And you're right, he has the same color eyes as Alexander," Mariana said, leaving me with the feeling that she had something else on her mind.


She and Mel clicked right away, as if she had been part of our lives for a long time. She played a lot with Peter, who showed her all his toys and was already calling her auntie.

After I put Peter to bed, we sat in the living room. Mel opened another bottle of wine, and we started chatting. Mel talked about her new job, and Mariana mentioned that she would love working with Henry Martin, saying he was a very fun and friendly guy. 1

But suddenly, Mariana looked at me and asked:

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"Cat, what's the name of your son's father?"

I felt a bit embarrassed since I hadn't told her that I didn't know his name and hadn't even seen his face.

"Oh, Mariana, it's so complicated. The truth is, I don't know his name." She looked at me as if waiting for me to continue. "Well, I had been drinking - not that it's an excuse - but he asked me to dance, and with all the talking back and forth, we never introduced ourselves. And since it was a masquerade ball, I never saw his face, just those violet-blue eyes and that smile that made me lose my mind."

"No way! Now I want to know all the details. God, this sounds like something out of a movie, a passionate love affair on a dark night." She said with a huge smile, showing genuine curiosity.

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