

Chapter 136

Alexander's POV

We arrived in New York and immediately had our first meeting with the clients. They gave us a briefing of what they wanted and requested some information. We scheduled a golf game for the next morning. Rick was supposed to contact Catherine and get all the information we needed at that moment.

That night, we decided to go to a bar to unwind a bit. While we were chatting, I felt a hand touch my shoulder, and a sensual voice I hadn't heard in a long time whispered in my ear.

"You're even more handsome now."

I turned around, already knowing who I'd see. She was stunning, with black hair cut in an elegant bob, a slim figure, tall, and with more prominent breasts than I remembered – apparently, she'd gotten implants.

"Liz! It's been so many years. How are you?" I greeted her with a kiss on the cheek.

"I'm good, darling. I must confess, it's a pleasant surprise to find you here. What brings you to New York?"

"Work. And you? Weren't you in Rome?"

"Yes, but that idiot painter loves women and can't stick to just one. I got tired of his cheating and left him a year ago. I ended up preferring to live in New York rather than return to our country."

"I see. You remember Rick? And Patrick – I'm sure you remember him." I



pointed to the table.

"Well, well, if it isn't the snake!" Patrick greeted her with obvious disgust. Rick rolled his eyes and huffed.

"Of course! How could I forget such pleasant people?" Liz responded sarcastically.

Liz was my college girlfriend. Patrick always hated her, saying she was destructive. A few months before my parents passed away, Patrick and Rick discovered she was cheating on me with multiple men, and her current fling was an Italian painter who was spending some time in our city. They arranged for me to catch them in the act, and I ended things with Liz in a not-so-elegant way.

"I'll join you guys." Liz announced and promptly occupied a chair.

"Seriously, you witch? You're gonna sit here?" Rick asked, getting pissed off. He had even more reasons to hate her, as after he helped Patrick open my eyes, she tried to scheme to break him and Tess up.

We started drinking and chatting, and I was actually having a good time with Liz. Patrick and Rick were shooting daggers at her with their eyes.

"Isn't it past bedtime for the children?" Liz looked towards Patrick and Rick with a combative smile.

"Oh, is our presence bothering you, Rick!" Patrick mocked.

"Forgot she's the one who sat at our table uninvited," Rick added.

"Well, if these two idiots don't get the hint, I'll solve it another way. Alex, why don't we go to my apartment to drink and talk a bit more? Just the two of us," Liz invited.



"That's actually not a bad idea, Liz." I smiled, thinking some fun wouldn't hurt.

"Alexander, just to remind you that we have a business meeting early tomorrow morning, and Catherine has already sent the information," Rick said, subtly emphasizing Catherine's name.

"Don't worry, Rick, no disaster's going to happen." I replied carelessly. It would just be one night to distract myself. "Let's go, Liz."

We left the bar and went to Liz's apartment. We spent the night together. I woke up naked in her bed, with her equally naked body clinging to mine and my phone ringing somewhere.

When I found the phone, I answered without even looking at the screen.

"Damn it, Alexander, do you know what time it is? I don't know what else to make up for our clients anymore, for Christ's sake!" Patrick was yelling on the other end of the line.

"I'll be there in an hour." Shit, I had overslept.

"Don't even think about showing up here. I've already told them you were feeling unwell. Go back to the hotel and wait for me there, locked in your room and alone!" Patrick hung up the phone.

Liz was one of the few people in the world who could provoke Patrick's anger, something not even Caroline could do. He always said that when I was with her, I became an irresponsible jerk, and he was right. But I wasn't a college kid anymore. I got dressed and left, leaving only a note apologizing for leaving without saying goodbye.

When Patrick and Rick knocked on my hotel room door, I had my head back on straight. They came in furious and immediately started lecturing

me. I had to listen – I'd really screwed up. 1

"Damn it, Alexander, what's wrong with you?" Patrick was gesturing wildly, clearly agitated.

"Patrick, it won't happen again," I assured him.

"It better not, because like my mother says, if you lie down with dogs, you'll get up with fleas!" Patrick was extremely, extremely irritated.

"If Catherine finds out about this, Alexander, or better yet, if any of the girls find out, you'll lose her forever. Mark my words!" Rick warned me.

"I know. I don't know what got into me last night, I just wanted to have some fun for one night," I tried to explain.

"Oh really? Remember the night we went to the strip club and you paid one of the girls? Remember the night you don't even know if you slept with Caroline? Oh right, you don't remember that one at all!" Patrick spoke with anger and sarcasm. 1

At that moment, I realized what a mess I was making. I love Catherine, but I keep screwing up!

"Can you guys keep this between us?" I asked, already feeling my eyes burn. "I promise for the rest of our time here, I'll only leave this room for meetings."

"You better. If this reaches any of the girls' ears, you'll get Rick and me in trouble too," Rick said. "Virginia and Tess will dump us if they find out we're covering up your mess."

"I promise!" I raised my hand as if taking an oath.

In the following days, I kept my promise, only leaving my hotel room for client meetings, but Patrick and Rick seemed eager to get out of New York as quickly as possible.

We returned home Thursday night. I kept my promise and stayed away from Liz, locked in my room. Patrick said she had come looking for us at the hotel, but he had instructed them not to tell her we were there. Now he was worried she might try to find me again. We closed a very advantageous contract addendum with the New York clients, and at least that calmed Patrick down a bit.

Friday morning we were back at the office and met with Catherine to inform her about everything that had happened. She looked beautiful, although a bit worn out and slightly thinner.

The lawyer called me saying the prenup was ready, sent it to my email, and I read it, feeling satisfied. We agreed he would ensure the tests were a requirement of my father's will, under the penalty of losing all assets to an institution. This would pressure Caroline to take the tests I wanted.

Even so, I couldn't give Joseph Charles a chance to intervene or give her time to think. Then I had an idea. I called Dr. Molina and asked if he would be at the hospital the next day. He told me he usually didn't work Saturdays but that it wouldn't be a problem to see me. So we scheduled the tests for the next day.