



## Chapter 41

### Alexander's POV

I sat in a dark room in my apartment. I couldn't look at my bed without remembering the incredible night I had with Catherine, feeling despair take over me knowing it had all been a huge lie. How could she do this to me? I was consumed by the pain of that woman's betrayal.

Since that party years ago, the day my parents died, I hadn't gotten involved with anyone, saying I wouldn't fall in love after being abandoned by that woman. But then I let Catherine into my life so quickly. Actually, I didn't let her in, she simply arrived and occupied all the space. And she was the snake that struck and completely destroyed me.

I was in heaven today and suddenly got dragged to hell. When the hacker called saying that only Patrick, Mari, and I should go because he already knew where the information had leaked from, I couldn't imagine it had been her, the woman I was falling in love with.

When I read those emails, I felt like I'd been run over by a steamroller. The first one I could maybe have handled and listened to her explanation, but the second one, realizing she had planned to seduce me just to use me, that was devastating. I was blind with rage and pain.

I kicked her out of my company and my life - she betrayed me in the lowest way possible. But why did I feel so awful? Why did I fall in love with a fake woman? Why did I lower my guard and let her into my heart? 1

I left the office right after she left my room. I went home, needed to be alone, and if I stayed at the office, Patrick and Mari wouldn't leave me in peace. I turned off my phone for the first time in my life. And I wasn't answering the doorbell or intercom - I wanted to be alone and feel my pain all at once.



But then the light turned on and I heard my friend say:

"Forgot we have the key?"

Patrick sat beside me and Mariana in front of me. I glared at them. And Mariana immediately said: 1

"I'm not afraid of mean looks. You've already yelled, raged, been alone - now you're going to listen to us, and quietly."

This woman talked like my mother. But I wasn't willing to talk about Catherine. When I opened my mouth to protest, Patrick held up a gag and handcuffs in front of my eyes and said:

"If you won't listen the easy way, it'll be the hard way, but you will listen."  
"

"And you think I'm going to let you use your sex toys on me?" I asked grumpily.

"You don't need to let me. Now shut up and listen." Patrick said. "Mari and I talked and concluded that it makes no sense for Catherine to have leaked the information. She was vetted, Alex, by you and Mari. Moreover, the idea of how to audit the company was all hers. She recommended Alan, and he's been friends with my parents all his life, just like he was friends with your parents - he's extremely trustworthy. We talked to him too, and he's certain someone set Catherine up, he'd stake his life on it. We should give her the benefit of the doubt, Alex." 1

"What? You think someone entered the presidency and sent the email from her computer just to harm her? Even though I restricted access to the presidency before the emails were sent? You're not that naive." I said mockingly.

"No, Alex, I'm saying the traitor could be someone else inside the presidency." Patrick said patiently.



"Patrick, everyone there has been with the company for over ten years. That would be impossible!" I raged.

"Would it really, Alex? The company has been being robbed for a long time and we only noticed now. Do you think it's so impossible that someone could have been infiltrated in the presidency for a long time without us noticing?" Patrick insisted, and I stopped to think. "Look, at first I was also sure Catherine was guilty, but I think I was wrong. Man, what I saw in Catherine's eyes when I showed her the emails was confusion, but guilt I didn't see. She was hurt, angry, disappointed, but not guilty."

I sighed, reflecting on what he was saying. But it didn't make sense. Nothing made sense. I heard Mariana speak calmly:

"Son, Patrick and I started an investigation. I wouldn't forgive myself if I didn't investigate and left Catherine bearing guilt that isn't hers. The cameras were already installed today, but the one in Catherine's office had a defect. Still, they're being reviewed, and the hacker will try to recover something. But we had an idea and put it into action."

I looked at her suspiciously and asked:

"What idea, Mari?"

"We're going to test each member of the board, including Rick. And we've already started with Celeste. We asked her to take some copies to Patrick's office since Rick wasn't around. When she entered, we continued talking and let it 'slip,' let's say, that we would be checking last year's accounts. As you know, we already have the documents, but if anything disappears, we'll know she leaked the information. Alan and the team will check tonight."

"Celeste? What a waste of time, Mari! You know how long she's been with us, for God's sake!" I protested.

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"It's easier to accuse Catherine than admit we're big idiots who've been deceived for years by someone on the team we thought was loyal to us. But there are people who've worked in that company for years who are stealing." Patrick spoke wearily. "Catherine told me this today, and she's absolutely right. Let's investigate, man. Open your mind."

I sighed tiredly.

"Fine, investigate and make sure," I decreed.

"Alex, one more thing," Patrick told me. "One of the detectives in Bellwood is my friend. I asked him to investigate Catherine, so you can be sure of who she is."

That seemed crazy, but it was already done. I just nodded in agreement.

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