



Chapter 72

During the game, Levy was gentle and attentive to me the whole time, even with Alexander practically growling at him. He softly touched my hands, explained the game in my ear, and I gave him plenty of attention. Alexander was getting increasingly grumpy.

"So ladies, where do you want to have dinner today?" Angel asked, quickly glancing at his cards before fixing his eyes on Melissa.

"How about a private room at Le Soufflé?" Leonard suggested enthusiastically. "Have you been there, Tess? The food is delicious."

"I've heard of it, but never been. It's hard to get a reservation there," Tess replied, showing interest, which made Rick very angry.

"It's not hard for Leonard, his uncle owns the place," Michael commented. "If everyone agrees, I think it's a great choice. The restaurant is very pleasant and the food is delicious. It's worthy of these beautiful women!" he said, winking at Samantha. Henry was sweating nervously.

"Well, then it's settled. But you'll have to drive us home afterward, we've already had drinks at brunch and you can't go to a French restaurant without having good wine," Virginia decided.

"Oh redhead, you're already sure we're going to lose? Don't you have faith in us?" Patrick whined. He was at her feet.

"Oh Patrick, anything can happen," Virginia gave him an innocent smile.

During the game, we did everything to distract our men from playing. We openly flirted with Levy and his friends, and our men were fuming with rage, including Fred, who's usually so controlled.



Leonard was the first to leave the game. Without needing to play, he focused all his attention on Tess, making Rick huff with anger and lose concentration. It wasn't long before Rick was also out and competing with Leonard for Tess's attention.

Then Michael left, dedicating himself to flattering Samantha, causing Henry to leave the game almost immediately. Next were Angel, who started whispering very close to Mel's ear, making Fred leave the game right after. Finally, Luke laid down his cards and declared he was out, and before he could even look at Virginia, Patrick had already thrown his cards on the table and pulled Virginia's chair closer to him.

Only Alexander and Levy remained. I was between them, and Levy's eyes were sparkling with a beautiful smile; he was enjoying the situation.

"Well, beautiful Catherine, looks like I'll be taking you to dinner," he said, giving me a wink.

"Hell no, Levy!" Alexander roared. "I'm doubling the bet!"

Levy stared at him, narrowing his eyes as if sizing up an opponent, but Alexander's face remained impassive with the same scowl since the moment he sat down. He didn't waver, didn't tremble, didn't change his voice, didn't move a single facial muscle.

"I'll match your bet, my friend. And raise it by ten thousand." Levy looked at me. "This woman is worth any risk."

Alexander's eyes sparkled at the challenge. He pushed all his chips to the center of the table and gave a slight crooked smile.

"All in! Like you said, this woman is worth any risk."

Alexander's bet was substantial; from what I understood, there was a lot

of money in those chips. Levy sat up straight in his chair. He looked at his cards, thought for a moment, and examined Alexander again. He threw his cards on the table and said:

"I'm out. I guess luck wasn't on my side this time, lovely Catherine!" He took my hand and kissed the back of it as if apologizing.

"Excellent, we won. Now gentlemen, if you'll excuse us, we're taking our beautiful ladies to dinner," Alexander said, standing up, throwing his cards on the table and collecting his chips.

Leonard rushed to the table, turned over Levy's cards and then Alexander's, and whined in disbelief:

"Damn, Levy! You fell for this guy's bluff like a complete sucker. I can't believe it. You had a full house and he only had a flush. You could have won this game, man."

"I told you you wouldn't be having dinner with our women!" Alexander said with an arrogant smile at Levy. "Now if you'll excuse us."

"We'll have a rematch, Miller," Levy said, standing up to say goodbye, but the guys quickly whisked us away, only giving us time to smile and wave at Levy and his friends.

They took us to dinner at a very cozy bistro. It was small and not crowded, but the food was delicious. It was such a good group of friends, everyone got along well, and we laughed the whole time.

"So, gentlemen, were you spying on us?" Melissa asked brazenly.

"Not at all, Mel, it was a huge coincidence finding you there," Henry replied. "I'm just curious to know how you ended up meeting Levy and his gang."



"Pure coincidence, Henry. We went into the casino, and Virginia saw her brother, so we went to say hello. We were just going to greet them, but they invited us to join them, and one thing led to another... well, we couldn't be rude," Tess explained with complete naturalness.

"One thing led to another, Tess?" Rick was outraged. "You can bet I'm going to use that whip on your behind tonight, and that will lead to many other things."

"Oh, are you going to punish me, hubby? You have no idea how much I like it when you punish me," Tess responded with an innocent look.

Rick's eyes sparkled with promise for his wife. We all burst into laughter. The two of them were such a funny couple.

"What I find strange, girls, is that you didn't come to talk to us," Fred said, hurt.

"Oh, prince, I'm sorry, but we didn't see you!" Melissa lied blatantly and gave Fred a quick peck. She was crazy about her boyfriend, but she would never reveal our little secrets.

After dinner, Alexander ordered chocolate pie for dessert and shared it with me, as we always used to do. With each piece he put in my mouth, his eyes sparkled a little more, full of desire and promises.

Afterward, Alexander insisted on taking me home, even though Melissa said she and Fred were going to the same apartment. When he stopped the car in front of my building, he got out and walked around to open the door for me. But before saying goodbye, I needed an answer, so I asked:

"Alexander, why are you still here?" Seeing his confused expression, I clarified, "I left you a goodbye note."



He smiled, placed his hand on my face, and gave me a quick kiss.

"Catherine, I will never say goodbye to you! I've already told you, if necessary, I'll spend the rest of my days begging for your forgiveness, and I will never give up on you. I love you!"

"But—" he didn't let me finish, silencing me with a kiss.

"Now go inside, tell Peter I sent him a kiss. Sweet dreams, my love!"

I turned and entered the building. I couldn't understand how he had so much faith that everything would be okay, but at the same time, I was happy he wasn't giving up. ¹



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