

Until You're Mine / Humble Ex-wife is Now A Brilliant Tycoon

The Humble Ex-wife is Now A Brilliant Tycoon

Chapter 131:



“So?” Elliott shrugged. “None of that bothers me. She’s exactly my type. Plus, I’ve always liked women who can handle a race car.” He paused, letting the words sink in. “If I win her over, we can race together anytime. Sounds perfect to me.”

The instant those words left Elliott’s mouth, Brendon’s complexion darkened. Every muscle in his arms went rigid, his fists clenched so tight that his knuckles turned white, veins standing out like ropes along his temples. If he hadn’t been so damned cautious about picking a fight with Elliott, he would’ve swung at him right then and there.

Off to the side, Bruno gaped, his jaw practically unhinged in disbelief at the scene unraveling before him. Was this seriously the same Elliott he’d always known? Elliott barely wasted breath on anyone outside his tiny circle. Getting him to talk more was like trying to squeeze blood from a stone. Even with his family, he never bothered with extra words. And now, out of nowhere, Elliott was leaping to defend a woman he’d just met, launching into an uncharacteristic speech on her behalf.

Bruno’s eyes narrowed, his mind racing with schemes. Was Elliott actually interested in Christina? Calculation flickered in his eyes.

Elliott looked at Christina, his voice low and direct. “Need a ride?”

Christina offered him a measured, friendly smile, dangling her car keys between two fingers. “Thanks, but I brought my own.”

“Alright, everyone. We’ll take our leave,” Christina said, glancing at Davina and giving her hand a gentle squeeze before the two of them turned to go.

Davina gave Christina’s hand an eager squeeze, lowering her voice to a murmur. “Be honest—what do you think of Elliott? The way he jumped to your defense? Damn, that was hot. I’m telling you, he’s totally into you. You should go for it!”

Christina let out a dismissive laugh. “You’re reading way too much into it. We’re both in the racing circuit—maybe that was just his professional ethics coming into play. Plus, I’m divorced. And older than him.”

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“So what?” Davina shot back, arching a brow and waving her hand like the idea was ridiculous. “If he doesn’t care, why should you?”

Christina shrugged as she argued. “Maybe he doesn’t, but what about his family? That’s a whole other problem.”

Davina scoffed, rolling her eyes. “Please. His family’s opinion isn’t worth a dime. Frankly, he’d be lucky to have you. If his family knew who you really are, they’d be crawling on their hands and knees just for you to marry into their family!”

Davina thought even the Scott family, the most elite family in Lorbridge, should consider themselves honored if Christina became part of their lineage.

But honestly? Davina believed no man alive was good enough for Christina—she belonged on a pedestal, adored and revered like some untouchable goddess.

A quiet laugh slipped from Christina, but her thoughts wandered back to everything with Brendon. If he’d ever known her true identity, he wouldn’t have dared treat her with such icy contempt. He’d have put on a show—fawning over her, drowning her in phony praise, and pretending she was everything he wanted.

Yet, what was the point of that empty performance? When money and power entered the picture, who could separate truth from pretense? Christina’s voice softened. “You know how it goes. The moment wealth and influence show up, everything gets complicated. I just want something genuine.”

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Davina studied her friend's wistful smile, her own chest tightening with sympathy. So much warmth, so much devotion—Christina had given it all away to people who never deserved it.

“Let those blind fools rot in regret!” Davina declared, rallying with infectious energy. “My Christina is the best! Anyone dumb enough not to treasure you is clearly an idiot!”

Christina couldn't help herself. She laughed out loud, the last shadows of gloom lifting from her face.

From his seat in the stands, Ralphie, who'd always had a knack for lip-reading, caught every word between Elliott and Brendon. A sly grin spread across his face the moment he pieced it together. “Yikes, you're in trouble now,” he snickered, jabbing Dylan in the side. “You haven't even staked your claim yet, and here comes the competition. That Hubbard guy just flat-out said he doesn't care that Miss Jones is divorced or older. That she's exactly his type and everything. Even hinted that if he wins her over, they'll be racing side by side.”

Ralphie let out a low whistle, shaking his head in feigned pity. “Sure, his family's not as filthy rich as yours, but he's still loaded, easy on the eyes, and—bonus—he's younger. And let's be real, mature woman and younger guy? Total trend these days...”

Before he could land on his conclusion, Dylan shot to his feet, fury written all over his face, and stomped away without a word.

“Hey! Where the hell are you running off to?” With a ragged yell, Ralphie bolted after him, determined not to fall behind. “You seriously going to start a fight? Wait up, man!”

Approaching her compact car, Christina pressed the key fob and popped the door open.

A delighted gasp escaped Davina. “This car is adorable! When did you snag it? How come you kept this hidden from me?”

Earlier, Davina had noticed the little car but hadn't had a chance to ask about it until now.

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Christina gave a calm response, “Dylan gave it to me as a gift, but I insisted on paying for it through my salary.”

Davina knew Christina had been working for Dylan, helping look after Chloe these days.

“Sure, it's cute, but aren't you a little tall for such a tiny ride?” Davina teased, eyeing the car with curiosity.

A small smile played on Christina's lips. "It looks small, but there's actually plenty of room for quick trips. I'm comfortable in it, even with my height."

"Let me take it for a spin later. I'll just have my driver take my car home," Davina suggested.

"Go for it," Christina replied, handing over the keys with a nod. Both women were about to hop inside when a voice from behind called out, "Hold on."

They turned in unison to see Elliott striding over. "I need a minute with you, Christina," he said, his attention fixed squarely on her.

Curiosity piqued, Christina asked, "What's on your mind?"

Glancing around at the others, Elliott hesitated. "Can we talk alone for a bit?"

A quick suggestion came from Christina. "We were heading out for pizza. If you're interested, tag along and just follow in your car." Truthfully, Christina had hoped for a chance to thank Elliott privately for standing up for her earlier.

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"Would you mind if I rode with you instead?" Elliott ventured, testing his luck.

Before Christina could answer, an icy interruption cut through the moment. "That won't be possible."

Dylan appeared suddenly, his gaze cold as ice, with Ralph trailing behind, a mischievous smile plastered on his face as always.

Feeling the tension spike, Elliott met Dylan's stare and sensed a wall of hostility that he couldn't explain.

Christina's eyebrows shot up in surprise. "What brings you here, Dylan?" Dylan's presence could only mean he'd found out about her racing tonight. She hadn't tried to

keep her driving skills a secret, especially with all the spectators who had witnessed her performance. She just hadn't prepared herself for running into him here.

Dylan kept his tone cool as he explained, "Ralphy mentioned your friend was racing, so I thought I'd swing by."

Initially, Dylan had intended to step in if Christina's friend needed help, but seeing Christina show up herself had caught him off guard. A simple "Alright," was all Christina said in response.

Nearby, Ralphy couldn't stop grinning, his gaze practically glued to Christina with admiration. "Miss Jones, I had no idea you could race like that! Those two matches earlier were unreal. I'm seriously a fan now!"

A flush of embarrassment crept up Christina's cheeks. "You're giving me too much credit."

"Even if you hadn't shown up, Dylan would've made sure your friend didn't lose out." Ralphy's grin only widened.

Trying to ease the awkwardness, Christina glanced around. "Well, since everyone's here, how about we all grab some pizza together?" Gathering in a group was already starting to attract stares from passersby.

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In perfect sync, Dylan and Elliott agreed. "Sounds good."

The next second, frosty glances were exchanged between the two men, neither hiding the fact that they weren't fans of each other.

Neither Dylan's commanding air nor Elliott's unshakable calm budged an inch. Their eyes locked in silent challenge, neither willing to show weakness.

The tension was thick enough to snap in an instant.

Christina tried to steer the conversation elsewhere. "So, where did you guys leave your cars?"

Both men answered at the same time, "The driver already took it home."

That answer left Christina blinking, momentarily thrown off. They just let their drivers take the cars? Were they both really planning to walk home from here?

They didn't seem to be lying, so Christina turned her attention to Ralphy. "Did you drive yourself tonight?"

A casual shrug from Ralphy. “Nope, I hitched a ride. Didn’t bring my car at all.”

This seating puzzle just kept getting trickier. Christina was sorting through options in her head. Her car could seat three passengers, but fitting everyone, especially with all the guys towering over six feet, was going to be a challenge. Davina’s sports car couldn’t help much, as it only had room for one passenger.

Davina chimed in just then, cutting through the dilemma. “How about this? Elliott and I will ride in Christina’s car.”

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“No!” Dylan and Ralphy snapped at the same time.

Davina froze. Letting them take her flashy sports car wasn’t enough? She raised a brow. “So what do you suggest? How about you all ask your own drivers to bring the cars back so you get your own ride?”

Ralphy stepped forward, waving off the idea. “No need for all that. You ride with me in your sports car. Dylan and Elliott can squeeze in with Miss Jones.”

Davina eyed him, doubtful. “You sure about that?”

Ralphy nodded. “One hundred percent.”

Not wanting any last-minute changes, Ralphy took Davina’s hand right away. “Come on. Let’s get going before the pizza place shuts down.” As they walked off, Christina turned to Dylan and Elliott. “Do you guys want to call another car?”

“No need,” Dylan and Elliott replied in sync.

“Thanks for the lift, Miss Jones,” Elliott said smoothly. He reached for the door and slid into the passenger seat without missing a beat.

Dylan’s face dropped. Seriously? That fast?

Elliott glanced at Dylan and smirked.

That smug little grin made Dylan's jaw twitch.

Christina looked at Dylan. "What's wrong? You not getting in?"

Dylan muttered, "Nothing." His voice was tight.

Then, after a beat, he frowned and added flatly, "I get carsick."

Christina blinked. "What? Since when? You've never gotten carsick before."

They'd ridden together plenty of times—he was always fine.

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"Just feeling off today," Dylan said quickly, even adding a hint of weakness to his tone.

Christina studied him. He did look a little pale. "Then take the front seat. Might help," she offered.

If it were just regular carsickness, she'd let him drive. But if he was sick, she couldn't risk that.

"But—" Dylan glanced at Elliott, who was already stretched out comfortably in the passenger seat.

"I'll handle it," Christina said, walking over to the car. She opened the door. "Mr. Hubbard, can you move to the back? Dylan is not feeling well."

Elliott frowned. He hadn't expected Dylan to pull off that trick. "I get carsick too," he shot back. His triumph had been short-lived—now he was the one getting blindsided. Dylan was really a scheming fox. The old folks weren't wrong about Dylan.

"Mr. Hubbard, you were just fine racing around earlier," Christina said dryly.

"Yeah, well... now I feel sick," Elliott said stubbornly.

Christina sighed. She saw right through it. "Fine. Then you drive. I'll sit in the back."

"Deal!" Elliott said immediately. Since Dylan resorted to such a trick, he would return the favor. He quickly moved to the driver's seat, flashing Dylan a mocking look. "Hop in, Mr. Scott," he said, the formality dripping with sarcasm.

Dylan clenched his jaw and moved to open the back door.

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Christina stopped him. “If you’re sick, sit in the front. Don’t push it.” She opened the passenger door for him. “Actually, maybe we should go to the hospital?”

“No need. I’ll be fine after some rest,” Dylan muttered. With no other choice, he slid into the front seat. Great. His little lie had backfired. If he insisted on the back now, Christina would haul him to the ER.

Elliott looked smug again. He glanced at Dylan—only to meet a cold, cutting stare.

The tension inside the car was thick enough to slice with a knife.

As the car pulled off, Elliott checked the mirror and asked casually, “So, Miss Jones... What’s your relationship with Skybreaker?”

Christina’s expression faltered slightly, though she had expected this question to come up eventually. After all, hiding the fact that she and Skybreaker were one and the same could only go so far. No matter how carefully she changed her look, her habits might still betray her. To a casual observer, these things would slip by unnoticed. But to someone with sharp eyes, like Dylan’s? The familiar moves and style would be registered at once.

Long ago, Christina had rehearsed what to say if she were ever confronted. With an easy laugh, she slipped on an air of slight embarrassment. “Looks like you’ve figured it out.”

Acting as if it hardly mattered, she shrugged. “Since we’re talking about it, I’ll admit it—I’m actually Skybreaker’s protégé.”

Most would find this story believable. After all, it was common for a protégé’s style to mirror that of their mentor.

Elliott didn’t hesitate to accept the explanation. “That actually clears things up.”

This matched his assumption perfectly. Not once did he suspect that the poised, confident woman before him could ever be Skybreaker, a scruffy and wild man in his imagination.

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Tossing in a little extra to seal the story, Christina asked, “Could you keep this quiet for me? I’d rather people not know about my connection to Skybreaker.”

A quick nod from Elliott. “Of course.” Then, unable to hide his curiosity, he asked, “Is your mentor still around?”

The question almost made Christina laugh out loud. “Alive and well—no need to worry.”

Anticipation flickered in Elliott’s voice as he replied, “If I manage to beat you, could you introduce me to your mentor? I’d love to challenge him.”

Without hesitation, Christina agreed. “You got it.”

She couldn’t help but imagine the shock on Elliott’s face when he finally realized the truth: beating her would mean he had already bested Skybreaker.

Meanwhile, Dylan remained quiet, his expression frozen and cold. Yet, as he caught sight of Elliott’s hopeful grin, a sly satisfaction flickered in his eyes. Having deduced that Christina was actually Skybreaker, while Elliott remained in the dark and still dreamed of a challenge with Skybreaker, gave him a private sense of amusement.

The more Dylan turned it over in his mind, the more it entertained him. He couldn’t help but feel an unspoken bond with Christina, one that ran deeper than anything Elliott might claim.

Meanwhile, Christina remained unaware of the quiet amusement flickering in Dylan’s eyes.

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Chapter 136:

At the pizza joint, as soon as the group of five—three men, two women—stepped through the door, every head in the diner turned their way. Admiring glances followed them from every corner, regardless of age or gender.

Choosing discretion over spectacle, they made a beeline for one of the private rooms tucked away from prying eyes.

No sooner had the group vanished from view than the place buzzed with excited whispers.

“Damn, did you see that crew? Absolute stunners! I thought they were movie stars for a second!”

“Forget celebrities—those five are like characters out of a high-budget video game. I could stare at them all night!”

“They are way too attractive. I’d swap five years of my life just to have a shot with one of them!”

Speculation swirled. “Three guys and two girls. Think any of them are single? If they weren’t hiding in a private room, I’d walk right over and ask for a number!”

The debate ended as reality sank in. “Give it up. Folks like that don’t mix with us mortals. Just focus on your pizza.”

Meanwhile, inside their cozy room, none of the gossip reached their ears.

Hardly had Christina settled into her seat before both Dylan and Elliott slid in, one on each side.

Left with no room to squeeze in, Davina’s hand hovered midair in defeat. A sly smile flickered across her face, but she didn’t bother calling out the obvious. Instead, she glided into the next available spot with practiced ease.

Watching her best friend sandwiched between two impossibly attractive men, Davina felt a twinge of envy mixed with pride. Christina really was living out a modern-day fantasy—two gorgeous guys practically tripping over themselves for her attention.

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If marrying two men were on the table, Davina would’ve encouraged her best friend to marry both of them.

“Alright, everyone. What’s the game plan for food? Place your orders,” Davina announced, shifting the focus to dinner.

Christina declared, “I’ll take care of the orders for Davina and myself. The rest of you can pick what you want.”

Having decided on the food choice for herself and Davina, Christina moved to put down the menu. No sooner had she held it out than Dylan and Elliott both reached for it at once, their hands almost colliding.

For a moment, Christina sat frozen, clutching the menu as indecision flickered across her face. Handing it to either Dylan or Elliott first seemed like an impossible choice—no matter what she did. Across the table, Davina watched with undisguised amusement, soaking in every detail of the unfolding drama, thoroughly entertained from her ringside seat. Whoever claimed that a woman's worth faded with divorce clearly hadn't met Christina. In this room, Christina was the center of gravity. Anyone unable to spot the difference between gold and gravel clearly needed their eyes checked. Dylan and Elliott, at least, weren't so blind—both men could see Christina's brilliance. She was a rare find, extraordinary in every respect.

Part of Davina wanted to stir the pot even further—maybe hatch a plan to nudge one or both of the men closer to her best friend.

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Chapter 137:

Meanwhile, Dylan and Elliott squared off in a silent duel, neither willing to show weakness or break eye contact, as if this were a test of nerves as much as charm.

With a decisive breath, Christina made her choice. She handed the menu to Dylan, her familiarity with him just tipping the balance. "Pick your food."

Then, without skipping a beat, Christina motioned for Davina to take another menu and passed it along to Elliott. "Go ahead—order whatever you want," she said lightly.

The second Dylan got his hands on the menu, a flicker of satisfaction crossed his lips—quickly masked, but not quite invisible.

Elliott's expression darkened, the edges of his composure fraying with each passing second. Noticing Dylan's barely concealed smirk only heightened his frustration.

“What’s the holdup? Go on and order already,” Christina urged. “Once you’re done, the rest of us will pick something. Let’s just finish placing the orders quickly, eat, and get some rest.”

Weariness crept in after a long, demanding day. The adrenaline from the car race had faded, and with it, the last reserves of her energy seemed to vanish.

Despite his irritation, Elliott resigned himself to scrolling through the menu, fingers tapping clumsily at the unfamiliar options.

Neither Elliott nor Dylan was comfortable with this sort of food. They struggled to make their choices as they scanned through the menu, hesitant and full of awkward pauses.

Watching their struggle, Christina stifled a sigh. Letting them choose their own food had been a mistake. She’d have finished twice as quickly just handling it herself. No doubt about it, both men had been brought up with silver spoons—years of elegant dinners where waitstaff anticipated every whim. No wonder navigating a pizza menu had them tripping over themselves.

Concern flickered through Christina’s mind—how would their delicate appetites cope with the non-organic food? If either one wound up with a stomachache, she’d feel at least a little guilty for dragging them into this pizza joint.

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Davina, on the other hand, looked on with gleeful indifference. Their prospective digestive issues were their own problem. So long as she and Christina were enjoying the meal, nothing else mattered.

Elbows propped on the table, Davina watched with a satisfied, cat-like grin. Her best friend was in her element—expert at keeping tempers cool and everyone content. Christina could run a harem and never break a sweat.

Meanwhile, Christina had no inkling of Davina’s running commentary. When the two men finally finished muddling through their orders, she took back the menu and expertly added a few extra dishes, making sure everyone would have plenty to share.

Elliott seized the moment, shifting the conversation toward racing. His words tumbled out effortlessly, and laughter soon filled the space between them, as though they were old friends catching up after years apart. There was an immediate, easy rapport—each story or joke landing perfectly, the air alive with energy.

Dylan’s brows furrowed with each passing minute. Time and again, he seemed ready to jump in, only to fall silent as the conversation moved past him.

A sudden, theatrical cough cut through the noise—Ralphy’s not-so-subtle way of grabbing attention.

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Chapter 138:

Every head turned his way. Flashing a mischievous grin, Ralphy gestured in Dylan’s direction. “You know, Miss Jones, Dylan isn’t just good company—he’s a force on the track. You two ought to square off sometime and see whose nerves hold up better.”

Ralphy had spent enough time watching Dylan fumble for an opening—now he was determined to give his friend the spotlight.

Caught off guard, Christina’s eyebrows shot up as she glanced at Dylan.

“You race, too?”

“Yeah,” Dylan replied, his tone measured, poker-faced.

Ralphy, clearly unimpressed with Dylan’s curt reply, couldn’t help himself. This was Dylan’s chance, and he wasn’t about to let him blow it.

Eager to raise the stakes, Ralphy added, “No exaggeration—Dylan’s the best I’ve ever seen.” He tossed a knowing look at Elliott, his grin widening. “If Dylan hit the track, even that legendary Darknight would have to watch his back.”

Elliott let out a low, icy chuckle. “Oh? Is that so?”

“Of course! You think I’d lie about that? I’d bet money on it!” Ralphy’s faith in Dylan was unshakable.

Elliott smirked. “Then have your friend test his luck with me first. If he can’t beat me, he’s got no business going up against Miss Jones.”

Before Ralphy could respond, Dylan stepped in. His face gave nothing away. “Alright,” he said. “Name the time.”

Elliott challenged, his eyes locking onto Dylan's. "After your family's reunion banquet. We'll settle it then."

"Deal," Dylan replied coolly. Elliott had no objections. With the banquet coming up, he didn't have the energy to waste before then anyway.

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"These are amazing—anyone wanna try?" Christina offered, holding out a plate of chicken roll-ups.

There were two flavors. One was plain, the other drenched in pesto.

Dylan and Elliott both frowned at the pesto ones. They weren't fans of basil leaves. But watching Christina dig in so happily, even they couldn't deny—the chicken roll-ups with pesto looked good.

"I'll give it a try," Dylan said, scooping up a piece. The food exploded in his mouth. The pesto gave a savory, rich, earthy umami flavor to the dish. Not bad.

Not wanting to be left out, Elliott tasted the food himself.

"Good?" Christina asked between bites. This place really knew how to cook their signature dishes. She and Davina had been here before and loved it.

Elliott nodded. "Yeah. These folks know what they're doing."

"The ravioli is even better. Here, try some," Christina said, handing some to him.

Dylan spoke up. "I'd like some too."

Christina didn't dwell on Dylan's request, assuming he just wanted to try the ravioli instead of seeing it as a competition with Elliott for her attention. Without hesitation, she served him some.

"They also do great baked ziti—the creaminess of the provolone cheese and sour cream, and a homemade meat sauce. I ordered two plates, but we can get more if it's not enough," Christina kept chatting as she grabbed a morsel of baked ziti and consumed it in one bite. The dish was full of flavor—top-notch. If only she had a cold beer to go with it, it would've been perfect.

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Right on cue, Davina asked, “Grab some beers?”

Christina’s eyes lit up. Davina always got her. No words needed—just vibes.

But the light faded just as quickly. Christina remembered she had to drive. She sighed and shook her head. “Tempting, but I’ve got to drive. Next time.”

“Alright,” Davina said with a small sigh. She’d been hoping for a laidback night with drinks.

Dylan noticed her disappointment. “If you want one, go ahead. We can call a driver later.”

Elliott chimed in, “Yeah, it’s a special night. A drink or two won’t hurt. And if no one’s available, I can get us a ride.”

“Well then, why not go all out?” Ralphy jumped in, his eyes glinting. He saw an opening. If Dylan got drunk, maybe he’d crash at Christina’s place. After that—who knew what could happen?

Davina lit up at the idea. She hid her grin behind her hand, already imagining it—two handsome men, a little tipsy, caught up in Christina’s world. Just the thought made her giddy. “I’m in!” she said, all smiles. “How about the rest of you?”

Christina hesitated. Everyone was looking at her. She didn’t want to be a buzzkill. So, with a small smile, she nodded. “Fine with me.” With her on board, there was no way Dylan or Elliott would back out.

“No drinks without games!” Davina said, lifting her brows. “Dice or cards?”

Ralphy suddenly leaned forward. “Why not Truth or Dare?”

The table went quiet.

Everyone at the table, regardless of their backgrounds, seemed to be carrying secrets of their own.

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Oblivious to any tension, Ralphy just frowned at the group's sudden quiet, completely confused by the shift in mood. A tentative smile spread across his face as he asked, "No one's up for Truth or Dare?"

Davina broke the ice with a teasing grin. "Truth or Dare at a pizza joint? Next thing you know, I'll dare you to cook in the kitchen for free and cover the losses if the food doesn't sell!"

That actually got Ralphy thinking. "Fine by me. I'll take the challenge."

Left speechless, Davina blinked in disbelief. If it were up to her, Christina would stay far away from any games that risked exposing her discreet identities.

Chewing on baked ziti, Davina pitched a new idea. "Let's switch it up. How about we play cards? Everyone draws one, and whoever gets the lowest has to down half a glass of alcohol. Easy and painless!" Her eyes scanned the table, looking for approval. "Any takers?"

Ralphy grinned. "Count me in. Doesn't matter what we play, as long as we're having fun."

Meanwhile, Dylan and Elliott sat quietly, their stares locked on Christina.

Feeling their focus, Christina glanced around, caught off guard by the expectant silence. An awkward smile crept onto her lips. "I'm good with that, too."

"Fine by me." Dylan gave a short nod.

Elliott voiced his agreement, "I'm in."

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Chapter 140:

"I'll go find a deck." Without missing a beat, Davina hopped up.

Ralphy stood up as well. "I'll handle the drinks."

The two left the private room. Davina had to leave the restaurant to find a pack of cards.

Ralph placed the drink order and then hesitated before trailing after her, determined to keep her company on the errand.

Back in the private room, only three remained.

While savoring potato wedges, Christina picked up on a subtle change in the air—a heaviness settling between Dylan and Elliott. Whether it was her imagination or not, a strange tension seemed to be brewing between the two men. But when she looked up, but neither man appeared overtly hostile. If anything, they wore their usual unreadable expressions.

Without a word, Dylan slid a plate of potato wedges toward her. At that exact moment, Elliott did the same, both of them silently vying for her attention.

Elliott nudged the plate closer. “Best to eat while they’re still warm. Cold food just doesn’t hit the same,” he suggested.

Staring at the two generous helpings in front of her, Christina hesitated for a split second, caught off guard by their eagerness. “Thank you,” she said as she reached out and gathered both plates in front of her at the same time.

Dylan’s icy stare met Elliott’s equally cold gaze. For a moment, the tension between them crackled with a sharp, dangerous energy. Without a word, the air seemed to turn heavier, the tension practically humming between them.

“The garlic bread’s worth a try too,” Elliott added, reaching for the serving tongs.

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Before his words even settled, both Elliott and Dylan moved at once, each about to drop a piece of garlic bread onto her plate.

Loaded down with potato wedges in both hands, Christina found herself unable to even hold out her plate for the food they were offering.

She barely managed to part her lips before Dylan swooped in, snatched her plate, and made room for the garlic bread he offered with practiced precision.

A beat too late, Elliott hovered awkwardly, unsure where to set his offering.

“I appreciate it, but there’s no need to fuss over me,” Christina assured them. “I can help myself. You two should dig in as well.”

Uncertain if some hidden rivalry was playing out, she turned her attention to Elliott and flashed him a warm smile. “You really should have more of the garlic bread. It’s honestly delicious.”

Her words seemed to put a spring in Elliott’s step. He grinned and nodded. “Alright, I’ll have a couple more.”

While Elliott nibbled on the garlic bread, he sent Dylan a sly, triumphant look, clearly savoring his small victory. Seeing this, Dylan’s eyes narrowed, his mood souring.

Christina glanced Dylan’s way. “You seem to like the ravioli. Here, have some more.”

Dylan accepted the offer and said, “Thank you,” taking the food as his gaze flickered pointedly toward Elliott, who now looked far less chipper.

With the tables turned, a quiet satisfaction crept into Dylan’s expression, while Elliott was left stewing in frustration.

Beyond the restaurant’s glow, Davina stepped out of the convenience store, a fresh deck of cards in hand, only to find her path blocked by three middle-aged men with matching beer bellies.

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