

## Chapter 17

Laura

I clearly understood Richard's reasons for reluctance in refusing Nemesis' demand that my team and I move to Manhattan for the entire duration of the project. Now that Richard knew that Jason was once my husband, he was afraid that Jason might hurt me in some way. I was afraid of that too, and not only that, being close to Jason would open wounds that I had taken a long time to heal. 2

I knew it would be painful to be close to Jason again. Furthermore, I would certainly suffer because everything about him would remind me of the disastrous event that was our divorce, but I had to consider and think very carefully about that matter. The project wasn't just about me, it was about the entire Hextec team. Everyone had worked hard to complete the project, and now that we had won this opportunity, no matter how involved my ex-husband was, it was still a chance too big to be wasted.

I should have gone professional and put my issues aside and just focused on how I would be exposed there and possibly meet Jason more often, but I was willing to go through that if it was going to make our project worthwhile. 2

"What about Anne? Are you going with her too? Are you going to tell your scoundrel husband that you had his daughter?" Richard asked me, looking bitter. He had dropped me off at home that afternoon, so I told him about the decision I made to accept Jason's proposal. I sighed when I heard his question. 3

"Jason can't know that Anne is his daughter; it's not like Anne is his daughter; he's just her biological father; you're her real father, Richard," I said, and I could notice Richard sighed with relief. In the last few days, he had been living under great tension, and it was clear how much he



didn't want to lose me and Anne. 4

"Thank you, Laura," he said, and I touched his hand as always, making him look at me.

"You don't need to thank me, you deserved it. Anne loves you, there's no doubt about that. So you deserve to be her father," I told him, smiling. 1

"What about you? Do you love me too?" He asked so suddenly that it caught me by surprise. I blinked my eyes and stepped back slightly. Did he want to know if I loved him?

"Of course! Of course, I do love you, silly. You're my best friend and partner at all times, of course, I love you," I said, smiling.

"Not in that way, Laura. I'm asking if you love me as a man... Do you love me as a man?" He was holding my hand now, and my smile faltered.

"As a man...?"

"Look, Laura. I know I'm catching you off guard, believe me, I'm a very patient guy. It's been a while since I confessed myself to you, like, I've loved you since the day I met you, and it felt so good to confess my love for you. I'm not complaining about you rejecting me, quite the opposite, I decided that I will wait for you until the end, until the day you decide to return my love," he said, opening his heart to me, and then sighed. "But now, I won't deny that I feel threatened by the return of your ex-husband, he could take you and Anne away from me. I feel like an intruder in your story...!"

I shook my head, not letting him continue. "No, no. You're wrong, my God... It never crossed my mind to get back together with my ex, that will never happen, Richard. Don't worry about it; what I experienced with Jason was too painful; I don't want that feeling to come back." 4



"But did you see how he was looking at you at that lunch? Holy shit, Laura... He still fucking loves you," he said, looking disturbed, but I denied it again.

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