

EQUILIBRIUM

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Author's Thoughts

In life we all need balance. Whether it be work, pleasure, relationships – we all need that focal point which brings our inner peace to the forefront of our existence. Sometimes the scale tips to one side causing chaos and pandemonium, but all we need is to find that one person who brings it all back to a level we can be ultimately satisfied with. It is there we find our Equilibrium

EQUILIBRIUM

Catarina used to be plus size model. She made quite a fortune from the time she was 16 a fashion designer snatched her up to model his teen lines. She started to drop weight and the designer dropped her and told her she was too small for his designs. She continued to drop the weight until she was at a comfortable 175lbs. By the time she was 21 she had graced every plus size magazine cover in the fashion world. She met Warren at one of his department store openings. She was standing at a cocktail table sipping on a Grasshopper while reading one of the brochures. She turned around to get some finger food and ended up with her drink inside her dress. She looked up to berate the person who ruined her Versace Baroque Print dress. The warmth in the honey brown eyes that stared back at her, told her she would fall in love with their owner.

“I am so sorry, I should have looked where I was going. Come let me fix this.” Warren Dulles signaled to his right hand man, who was always nearby.

“Rene, take Miss?”

“Reid.”

“Reid, to my suite, let her choose a dress from the Versace line and send this dress to be cleaned.”

Rene motioned for a stunned Catarina to follow him and she did so without a word or backward glance at Warren. Rene avoided the crowd and took her through the

store to a secret panel. He pressed a tile on the wall and a door opened up into an elevator.

“After you miss.”

“Thank you.”

It took less than a minute and the elevator doors opened into the homeliest penthouse suite ever. The blending of earth tones was artistic to the point that you became a part of the room. She hesitated and Rene sensing it, spoke softly, belying his size.

“I will let you in on a secret. The boss meant for you to spill your drink. He has had his eyes on you quite a while. I have never seen him plan something down to so much detail. Now, let’s get you out of that dress and the boss will be up to see you as soon as I leave. No fear, he won’t hurt you. The bathroom is that way and I will bring a dress for you. There is a robe if you want to take a shower and undergarments are in the closet on your left.”

Rene disappeared into the kitchen and Catarina went into the bathroom. She hung the dress on a laundry style hanger and hung it on the outside of the door. She took a towel from the rack and a robe and went into the shower. The thoughts running through her head concluded to a mess of madness. She wasn’t ready for a relationship, far less with a man such as Warren. He was sexy as they came and for a man heading for 65, he was as feisty as a 16 year old. He ran his business like he ran his life. Controlled and never in a rush. A knock on the door jarred Car from her thoughts.

“Yes?”

“I am beginning to think you are afraid to come out.”

“A few more seconds.”

Cat, turned off the shower, stepped out and grabbed the towel. She dried her skin quickly and put on a still in the bag butterfly thong and put on the robe over it. She opened the bathroom door to see Warren propped up against the back of the sofa.

“How come you have a bathroom that’s doesn’t have a bedroom?”

“For nosy people excluding you. People have a tendency to search your bedroom on the way to the bathroom. Here.”

He leaned over the sofa and pulled up a garment bag.

“Your dress madam.”

"Thank you Mr. Dulles."

"When you become Mrs. Dulles will you still call me that?"

"All you have to do is propose and we will find out."

"Marry me Catarina."

"Yes Mr. Dulles."

"Next week. This is one thing I want done in a hurry."

True to form, Warren Dulles got married to Catarina in Royal style. Doves, a chariot with 12 horses, 5000 helium balloons with their pictures, silver goblets with their names and the date engraved on them. Gourmet gift baskets from Godiva, a Hermes watch for each guest, and 100 bottles of champagne.

The ceremony and reception lasted an entire day. Warren told the guests they did not need any gifts but they could donate money to a charity on the list at the door.

Catarina was so happy, she knew Warren was a fair man and so far she had not heard a bad thing about him. He married to his high school sweetheart when they were 21 and her father loaned Warren \$50,000 to start a business and he paid him back within a year. Within 10 years Warren brought his business from the ground to the most successful department store chain in the world. The Letters WD could be found in every state in the US, 6 Caribbean countries, Italy, France, England, Germany you name it he was looking to be there. His wife died when she was 58 of breast cancer and Warren retreated from society and spent three years in mourning. One morning he woke up and jumped right back into work. He kept a photo of his wife on his desk.

Catarina was sitting on the bed when he came in.

"Hello Warren. You look beat." She sounded disappointed.

"Nothing a shower won't fix, then I can peel you out of that dress."

"It cost too much."

"For you my sweet, it was too cheap. At least you got to pick your own ring, the one I saw cost 2.5 mil." He looked smug.

"I hope you don't make that a habit."

"I will try not to spend too much on you. Now I'm gonna go get that shower. Join me?"

"Okay."

The shower was filled with giggles and laughter but none of the heated kisses Warren was famous for. Catarina was beginning to think she didn't excite her husband.

They wrapped in bathrobes and returned to the bedroom. Waiting was a bottle of champagne on ice and some strawberries. These weren't any ordinary strawberries, Warren had them dipped in Baileys and frozen, then dipped in dark chocolate and frozen again.

"Ah they arrived."

"You devil, you know they're my favourite."

"What don't I know about you?"

"Oh I'm sure I can find something." Catarina looked at Warren and quickly looked away.

"Catarina? What's wrong?"

"Don't I turn you on Warren?"

"Why in the hell would you ask that?"

"You barely touched me in the shower."

"Get up and come here."

Catarina got up and walked over to Warren. He dropped his robe.

"Oh my god."

"Yeah I thought so. I've been turned on since you said I do and I was wondering why the hell I planned an all-day wedding. I just wanted to get it over with so I could make love to you. I love everything about you Catarina, never doubt that. Now, that robe is in my way."

Warren had the body of a 25 year old. He worked out every day and he ate well. He spent vacations soaking up sun so his body was well tanned. He had no grey hair, hence why people thought he was in his 40's.

He walked over to Catarina and gently untied her robe and let it fall to the floor.

"You are so beautiful Catarina, I can't wait to be inside you."

"Well since it's my first time I can't wait either."

Warren let her go and stepped back.

"Warren?"

"Catarina, I thought you told me you were 25."

"I am, I turned 25 in March of this year. Why?"

"If I had known I never would have married you."

Catarina felt as if someone stuck a knife in her chest and pounded it in with a hammer.

"We can get an annulment, I'm sorry I disappointed you and I won't ask for anything." She started taking off her ring and the tears began.

"Oh my Catarina, you miss understand me. I don't want to get an annulment. I may have said the wrong thing. My first wife was a virgin when we got married, it

was not a pleasant experience for her and it took her a while before she even tried to have sex again, she was afraid it would hurt."

"I'm not afraid Warren, this is our wedding night please don't make me beg for your love."

Warren reached out for her hand and pulled her to him.

"I'm sorry my love, I didn't mean for tonight to be like this. I will try my best not to cause you too much discomfort."

Warren led her to the bed and he sat down and pulled her to stand between his legs. He kissed her breasts one by one and her nipples hardened quickly. His hands roamed her body, massaging her slowly. Warren was so skillful she didn't even realise she was on the bed on her back and he was kissing her stomach. He moved lower and lower until he reached her womanhood. Warren dipped his head and kissed her lightly.

Catarina was as stiff as board.

"Relax my love, this part is to help you." He licked her slowly and pretty soon she was moaning. He began to use his fingers and she opened her legs a bit more. Her scent was intoxicating. She was becoming wetter by the second and Warren was marveling at the young woman beneath him.

Warren began to suck on the outer lips of her vagina very softly, Catarina raised her hips from the bed as high as she could go. She felt her body flush entirely and everything seemed to rush to where Warren's tongue was causing her pleasure. He didn't stop. He licked and sucked until he heard her scream his name.

"Warren!"

Before she could calm down, he knelt between her legs and pushed them as far apart as they could go and slowly pushed inside her.

Catarina squeezed her eyes shut. The pain was bad but not bad enough that she wanted him to stop. When he was all in, he rested on his forearms and looked down at her.

"Warren, oh Warren."

"Jesus, Catarina..... hold on to me my love."

She rested her arms on his shoulders and linked her fingers behind his head. She took her feet and wrapped them around his legs and then tucked her toes under his calves.

"How did you....."

"Sorry, I saw it in a movie, I didn't mean to....." He pushed deeper.

"As long as you are faithful you can do anything and not be embarrassed."

She nodded her head as her husband began the torturous climb to satisfaction. Catarina got there first, she almost ripped the sheets when it hit her. Warren waited a few seconds and started again. Half an hour later, Warren filled his wife with his life essence. He realised too late what he had done and when he pulled out of her, he quickly made his way to the bathroom.

Catarina was confused. She thought he enjoyed himself but now he seemed as if he was sorry he made love to her. She tried to move but the soreness between her legs forced her to flop back on the bed. She groaned.

"Did I hurt you Catarina?"

"Yes by getting up and leaving me as if I had done something wrong. Talk to me Warren."

"I have a confession to make."

"Okay."

"I can't have children. The full realisation of that just hit me and I never thought to ask you if you will want a child someday. God what have I done?"

"We can adopt Warren, of course I would have loved to have a child of yours but if that isn't possible I am okay with it."

"You are such an amazing woman Catarina, let me make love to you again."

"I'm, not sure that I can, you aren't exactly average size and you went a bit wild there."

"It's you who excites me. Come, let me shower you and we can have the chocolate and a toast to us. We can get to know each other better."

They showered and talked for hours. When they finally got to sleep, it was around 3 am and Catarina was hurting inside. She lied when she said it was okay if they adopted. All her life she wanted a baby and now she may never have that chance.

Warren may have only known his wife for a short time but her face told her emotions more than she realised and he knew the baby issue was tearing her up and she was trying to be strong. He would make it up to her somehow.

Catarina lead a humble life. She loved cooking, tending the garden and going to work when there was work. Warren told her she didn't have to work but she insisted and he never pushed the subject. He met all her close friends and he realised that none of them were snooty and ever tried to use her to get to him, neither did any of the females try to seduce him. One friend in particular grabbed his attention and he made a mental note.

Cole was a photographer with the first agency Catarina worked for and they became best friends. What Catarina didn't know was that Cole was in love with her and he never said a word. When she told him she was marrying Warren he was sincerely happy for her but still he wished it were him. He even gave her away as her father had died.

Catarina adored Cole. She could trust him with her life and she knew she fell in love with him but he always seemed caught up with some woman or the other so she kept her feelings hidden.

About a year after they got married Warren took a chance and went to the doc to see if he was still producing sperm. He had a vasectomy about a year after his wife had died. Unfortunately, he found out a lot more than he bargained for. He had prostate cancer and he was a level 8, the highest level there was. The doctor told him they needed to operate within a few days and attempting to harvest sperm would not be in the best interest pertaining to having a child. With a heavy heart he decided to put things into place.

He told Catarina he had to go away for a few weeks on business. At first she faltered and was tempted to ask if he was going to see another woman, once again, her emotions were written all over her face.

"My love, I have none other than you, nor do I wish to. You have given me so much love and I would never do anything to tarnish that, understand and trust me."

"Okay, can I at least go to the airport with you?"

"Yes and bring Cole, he can keep you company when I leave. Make sure you go out with your friends and don't stay home and mope. All I ask is that you keep your cell with you in case I need to reach you."

"I can do that. When do you leave?"

"Tomorrow morning unfortunately, the sooner I leave the sooner I get back. Come now let me make love to my wife so she will remember for the time I am gone."

"As if I could ever forget you Warren, are you sure you're not leaving me?"

"Never my love."

Catarina called Cole and told him Warren was leaving and she would like him to accompany them to the airport in the morning. He agreed.

Next morning Warren wanted his wife again before he left. He was uninhibited and a bit brutal. At one point Catarina winced and he realised he was a bit too rough with her. He so wanted to give her a baby and he didn't know if he would

come through the operation alive and he would hope she didn't mourn him too long if he didn't.

They picked up Cole at his house and made their way to the airport. Warren shook Cole's hand, kissed his wife one last time and boarded his plane. He looked back at the two people standing next to each other and just knew.

Catarina spent the time Warren was away rearranging the furniture, in the garden, she re-painted the garage and their bedroom. She decided she would start her own magazine but she would set up office near home. She found a new building nearby and made the owners an offer. They accepted and within two weeks she was up and running. She hired staff for every department she needed and the first issue would come out about 3 weeks after Warren returned as she wanted to share this with him.

She decided to fund the first issue as opposed to searching for advertisers to fill the spaces. The magazine was called - Dulles. It focused on women of all ages. The topics ranged from fashion to food.

When Warren came back, he looked pale and tired.

"Honey, was the trip that bad? Did you get your business concluded?"

"Ah, yes my love I did and I am very tired. Can you run me a bath and ask cook to bring a light dinner for me?"

"Sure." The feeling that he was away with someone came flooding back to Catarina. He didn't even kiss her when he came in.

Warren strolled through the house and headed into the bathroom. He dropped his clothes on the floor and sunk into the hot water. Catarina appeared with his food and sat next to the tub.

"Would you like me to feed you Warren?"

"That would be nice."

"Can I ask you something?"

"Are you bored with me?"

"Catarina, I was on business in Texas, do you not trust me?"

"I'm not sure, you didn't even kiss me when you came in and the last time you touched me was a month ago when we were at the airport. Something must have happened. Tell me what it is so I can fix it please."

"Enough of this pettiness. I told you there is no one else now, leave me let me eat and have my bath."

Catarina rested the plate on the edge of the tub and fled the bathroom. When Warren found her she was fast asleep on their bed.

He was angry at himself, she didn't give him cancer and he was wrong to take it out on her.

"Catarina, my love, wake up. I need to talk to you."

She opened her eyes and slowly positioned herself on her back and looked up at him. Warren could see the flickering of her eyes and he knew she was preparing herself for the worst.

"I am sorry for snapping at you. I didn't mean to, you are the love of my life and hurting you is not what I should be doing." He bent down to kiss her and she turned her head.

"Sometimes you make me feel as if I don't matter to you and you would rather be married to someone else. Do you have any idea what that feels like? I have given you my love and you throw it in my face. How could you?"

Warren leaned forward and pulled her body to his.

"The business I went to do didn't work out and I'm more frustrated than I thought I would be but that was no excuse to be unkind to you."

"I understand Warren but talking to me should be the first thing on your mind, not pushing me away."

"True, now let me make it up to you, if you will allow it."

"I have been waiting a month, I need you so badly."

Warren dropped his robe and was glad you couldn't see the scar from the operation because of its location. He was fully erect and Catarina was ready for him and she took charge. She pushed him back on the bed and before he could protest, she covered him with her mouth.

"Catarina! Where did you learn that?"

"We have playboy on the channels."

"Oh god."

Warren was restless. He had to get Catarina's magazine up and running so she would have something to keep her going when he was gone. He snuck out of bed and called his PA.

"Jas, get a list of all our suppliers and tell them I have a magazine I need them to advertise in."

"Okay boss."

Within a week of putting the website online, all the space was booked for the entire year. Advertisers were calling her to place an ad instead of the other way around. Catarina was suspicious and decided to question her husband.

"Warren did you...?"

"Yes I did."

"I wanted to do this on my own."

"Oh you will do it on your own. You have to keep your advertisers with the content you produce, just because they booked doesn't mean they can't cancel if they feel the publication isn't worth it. You will lean in this life, a successful business depends on who you know."

"Oh thank you. Are you having lunch with me today?"

"Yes I think I can do that. Be there in half an hour, are you wearing a pants or skirt."

"Skirt."

"Flared or close?"

"Flared, Warren, you can't. Twice this morning and now you want me again, I'm gonna get fat."

"More of you to love, see you in a few, oh and take your panties off by the time I get there."

Catarina laughed and told her Secretary her husband was on his way and to let him come in when he gets here and not to interrupt them.

Warren with all the grace he carries, strolled into Dulles Magazine, dressed in a pair of navy blue slacks, long sleeve white shirt tucked in, brown belt and shoes to match. Yes heads turned when he appeared. He walked up to the reception desk and asked to see Mrs. Dulles. The young girl buzzed Catarina and then she told Warren to go on up, she was waiting.

Warren got to the secretary and she showed him the door with a respectable nod. He pushed the door and locked it behind him. He walked over to his wife lifted her from her chair and sat down it. He looks directly into her eyes and with his right hand he runs his fingers from the bottom of her skirt and trailed them between her legs.

"Mm, I love a woman who follows instructions. Bend over in front of me and spread your legs."

She did as she was told. Warren silently undid his pants and took them off along with his boxers. Catarina was silent and he could smell her arousal.

"This is going to hurt slightly, tell me when it becomes too much to bare."

She nodded in anticipation.

Warren sat back down into the chair and pulled her towards him. He hooked legs arms under her legs, and lifted her onto the chair arms. Her butt was now resting on his tummy and his erection was in front of her.

"Take me in your hand and put me inside you."

He lifted her a bit so she could get better access. When the tip of him was inside he brought her down forcefully.

She bit her bottom lip so hard she knew she broke the skin. This was new, she didn't know what was coming next. Warren was breathing hard against her back. Catarina was trembling.

"Catarina." He whispered as he raised her a bit.

"Yes." He brought her down hard again. She whimpered.

"Am I hurting you?" He whispered again as he raised her.

"Yes." He repeated the same movement.

"Good, this will teach you to remember that I am your husband and the only man who can do this to you." He brought his arms around her mid-section and pulled her down even further.

Catarina held on to the chair arms and tried not to scream.

"What did I do?"

"Shhhh." He pulled her even closer to him.

Warren felt the severe need to really hurt his wife. Someone had taken a photo of her and Cole having lunch together and he was telling her something in her ear that made her laugh. He flew into a rage and torn the pictures up. He trusted them didn't he?

"Warren please....."

"Please what?"

"Stop."

"No." Then he began. Warren proceeded to literally drill his wife in the worst way. He knew he was hurting her and she was confused by it. So was he. He stood up quickly and bent her over the desk and started again. In a few minutes it was over. Warren came with the force of ten men. Catarina never made another sound but the tears were evident. Only heavy breathing could be heard and a periodic snuffle. When Warren pulled out of her, she fell to the floor. He made his way to the bathroom, got cleaned up and left the office, locking the door behind him.

Catarina called her secretary and told her to cancel all her appointments for the day and she could leave early if she wanted. She managed to get to the bathroom, and when she began wiping the aftermath of her husband from between her legs, she saw spots of blood and she just stared at it. She finished cleaning up and dialed Cole's number.

"Hey Rina, what's up?"

"Come get me please, I'm at the office, Warren, he... oh god come now please."

"Give me 15 minutes." He hung up and changed direction.

He walked up to the office and the secretary had already left. Cole pushed the door and found her sitting on the floor.

"Rina, honey, what's wrong?" He sat on the floor next to her and put his arm around her shoulder.

"Warren came to have lunch with me today but when he got here he....."

"Take your time babe."

"It was as if he was someone else, he told me he was going to hurt me and he did. I thought he wanted to make love but he just..... Oh god, I have never felt so degraded in my life and by my own husband."

"Rina, something must be wrong, has he ever done this before?"

"Never, he is a good man, he treats me well but today it seemed as if he knew something I didn't. At one point he said it will teach me that he is the only man who can do that to me."

"Fuck!"

"What?" She looked across at Cole.

"Honey a man only says that when he thinks his woman is cheating on him."

"Cheating on him? Me? But he's my life, why would I do a stupid thing like that? And why didn't he confront me instead ofof.....raping me. Does he have any idea how that made me feel? Like a whore he picked up from off the street. Can I go to your house, I don't want to go home tonight."

"Come on let's go. Are you in pain now?"

"A bit sore, I will live."

He left her car in the downstairs garage and got into his and drove to his house. Cole helped her out of his car and took her inside the house. Neither of them saw Warren parked down the street. He waited about half an hour and then he parked behind Cole's car.

He walked up to the house and knocked on the door. Cole didn't look surprised to see him and he stepped back for him to enter.

"Where's she?"

"Asleep in the spare room."

"I fucked up Cole."

"Uh yehya did. Why tho? You two are the happiest couple I know, it's sickening."

Warren took the fotos from his pants pocket.

"You're joking right? This is what you hurt your wife over? The woman who has stood by all your late nights, trips, business deals, the calls at 2 in the morning telling her you are in their bed, the people seeing her on the street and telling her she should be locked up for killing an old man and everything else that comes her way? THIS is what you tore her body and heart apart for? A fucking photograph?"

Warren looked like Cole had just hit him.

"Ask me."

"Are you?"

"No but I would love to and she doesn't know and you won't tell her."

"Why not?"

"She is my best friend Warren. Do you have any idea what that means? It means I put her marriage before my feelings. It means when she calls, I go. It means when she is sitting on the floor of her office crying because her husband abused her body, I bring her back to my house and put her in my bed because she is scared to go home. It means no matter how I would love to strangle you right now, I have to think of her. That's why. Who sent you the photo?"

"A photographer."

"Would you like to know what I was telling her?"

"Yes."

"The waiter came over and his fly was open, I told her to tell him, cause if I did he would think I was gay. That's why she laughed, I wasn't whispering sweet nothings. God I can't believe you would hurt her over this when you know the type of person she is. She has been faithful to you since she said I do and you know she hadn't been with anyone else before. You need to fix this, I don't know how but fix this."

"I'm sorry, I should have known better. She is so beautiful and I just thought....."

"Well you thought wrong. I am going out, get your wife and take her home."

"Honey. Wake up." He could see the tear stains on her cheeks.

"Warren?"

"Yes my love, I've come to take you home."

"Did Cole call you?"

"No, I figured you would be here."

"What's that mean?"

"It means, Cole is your good friend and you can trust him."

"Oh. Are you still mad at me? Tell me what I did wrong. Why did you hurt me like that?"

"I'm not angry, you didn't do anything wrong and I am sorry I hurt you."

"Talk to me Warren, setting aside the physical pain, you tore my heart apart. I felt like something you picked up out of the gutter."

"Jesus Catarina. I'm a foolish old man. I saw something and my mind lead me astray, come we will talk about this when we get home." He got up and held out his hand to her. She sat up and took it.

As they were leaving, Catarina spotted the photos on the table.

"Warren, you had me followed?"

"It's not what you think, let's go." He gathered up the photos and led her through the door.

When they arrived at home Warren knew he should come clean, she deserved that much.

"I was here when a delivery service brought that envelope. You told me you were going to lunch but you didn't say with who. When I saw them I flipped. All sorts of things ran through my head. I started to doubt my manhood. I should have known you would never be unfaithful to me. Oh Catarina, I hurt you badly. I have never been so jealous over a woman before."

"Do you want to know why I was laughing?"

"Yes." He was curious to see if the stories would match up.

"We order smoothies and when the waiter came his fly was undone, Cole couldn't very well tell him so he whispered to me to tell him so he wouldn't think he was gay. That's all."

"I believe you Catarina. Forgive me?"

"Of course I do but next time instead of abusing me like that, ask me and trust that I won't lie to you."

"It's a deal. Are you still in pain?"

"No Cole gave me some pain killers but I am a bit sore. I'd like to take a shower and get to bed, I have a long day tomorrow."

"Can I come with you?"

She hesitated for a second.

"I won't touch you."

"I want you to touch me but no sex, you really did a number on me."

"Okay."

"Warren?"

"Yes my love."

"Are you jealous of Cole?"

"I used to think I wasn't but I'm an old man and I have to compete with the younger ones to keep up with you."

"I never thought I would ever hear that from you. Have I ever given you any hint that you aren't enough for me? Have you ever seen me acting strange or not want you to touch me or anything? Don't I always tell you where I'm going? Don't you know all my very close friends? Cole is my best friend and he has never done anything to tarnish that."

"I know honey, I know, forgive an old man, I get funny sometimes."

Catarina shrugged and turned to head for the bathroom.

Over the next few weeks, they managed to get over the mistrust issue. Then one day Catarina was walking along the street, looking for a birthday gift for Warren and one for Cole and this woman stopped her and handed her a disc and ran away. She called after her but she disappeared into the melee of shoppers. She dropped it into her bag and continued searching. She found the perfect gift for Cole, an Amazon Kindle Fire HDX 7. For some strange reason, Cole loved to read, when he wasn't working, he took up a book. She also bought complete series of all his favourite books. Next she hunted for a gift for Warren. What do you buy a man who has everything? You don't, you create it. The one thing Warren does not have is a child. Catarina thought long and hard while she was walking and she decided she would find an adoption agency and make some inquiries about the process.

She was rummaging through her bag for her cell and she saw the disc. She went back to her office, locked the door and powered on her laptop. From the moment she pressed play her heart sank. Apparently one of Cole's women had filmed one of their steamy sex sessions and decided to give it to Catarina. She wanted to make her jealous since she was all Cole talked about. Cole was quite the stud, the woman in the video was definitely enjoying herself.

Catarina took out the disc, broke it in half and threw it in the garbage bin.

She picked up a phone book and search for the number for the adoption agency, they told her to come in as soon as she could. She had taken a taxi into town because she wanted to walk around. She took another taxi to the Child Care Services.

When Catarina left she was so excited. She knew that people recognised her and knew who her husband was. She hopped onto a bus and went home.

"Warren honey, are you here?"

"Yes my love give me a minute." Warren was taking his medication which he kept hidden in his study.

Catarina sat on the couch and waited.

"Hello my lovely, what's got your face so bright?"

"I wanna' adopt a baby." She didn't ease into it, she just blurted it out.

"Are you sure?"

"Yes, I was wondering what to give you for your birthday and that's the only thing I have to offer you that you don't already have."

"I am sure you went into the child care office and found some information let me see it."

She pulled the sheets from her bag. They sat and looked them over and Warren appeared not to be excited at all. When they were finished Catarina held her breath.

"Okay, tomorrow we will both go and start the proceedings."

Catarina squealed and flew into Warren's arms.

"Thank you, I know we will make good parents. Oh you have made me happier."

Warren could not tell her he would not be around to raise the child with her. The medication wasn't really working, his last results, showed the cancer had gone from a 4 after the operation back to a 7. He refused to spend any more money, he would leave his entire empire to Catarina.

The next day came and Warren took his wife to start the adoption process. When they got there, it was apparent everyone knew the couple and some people expressed sadness that they could not conceive on their own but were happy to see they wanted to share their love. When they were finished and the paid all the fees, they were taken to a home to look at some children. The neighbourhood left a lot to be desired but they went anyway. The home was set back about a hundred feet from the road with a large garden hosting, play sets, a fish pond, a sand pit and a huge lawn. You could see the house needed repairs badly.

When they got inside they could hear laughter and singing. They pushed the door and all the children looked up and smiled but didn't stop singing. Catarina stepped in but Warren said he needed to speak with the person in charge, he had other ideas.

"Who owns this house?"

"I do." An old lady came up from behind him. Warren turned to face the voice. She looked haggard but strong.

"Hello my name is Warren Dulles, my wife and I are here to look at the children but from what I see everyone here would do with some uplifting.

"Anything you can do to help would be appreciated."

"Do you have a will?"

"Nope when I die the house goes to the state so the children will always have a home."

"How about I buy the house from you and turn it into a bigger home for more children, I know that is one of the bigger issues the state faces."

"You would do that?"

"Madam I would do anything to see my wife smile."

"Well then sir let's get started. I don't have any children and all my relatives are gone so no one to fight you for it. What I would suggest is that I turn the house over to you instead of you paying for it and you agree to provide everything they need to keep it running."

"Sounds great, do you need anything?"

"Just bury me next to my husband when I go, I will give you the location."

"You have a deal."

"What's a deal?"

"It's a surprise, trust me?"

"Always."

"Let's go, we have work to do. You, I will see you soon."

In the next few days, Warren worked quickly, he got his lawyers to draw up the agreement and he never said anything to Catarina. She was still of the opinion that he wanted to adopt one child. In about a week or so everything was finalised and the renovation began. Warren relocated the residents to another house and he paid the rent until the other one was completed. Everything was finished in about 3 weeks' time.

"Honey, I have to go out for a bit would you like to come with me?"

"Sure, let me grab my bag."

They got into the car and Warren chatted about his morning and businesses he wanted to get her into. He was trying to distract Catarina from recognising where they were going. When he stopped he told her to look.

"Where are we?"

"Get out and take a look."

Catarina got out and it's only when the children burst out of the house, she recognised where she was.

"Warren?"

"Yes honey."

"You did this?"

"Yes honey. The old lady who owns it turned it over to me and I agreed I would take care of everything they needed."

"You don't want a baby anymore?"

"Honey listen to me, I know why you wanted this for me and I know you still want a child that is your flesh and blood and I really do understand. Trust me for now and everything will work out okay?"

"Okay."

The children grabbed her and took her for a tour. They had cake, and drinks and decorations. There was an old abandoned house next to the home, Warren had it knocked down and replaced with a swimming pool enclosed with fencing. He

hired a certified life guard who would come in on evenings and supervise the children and teach them how to swim and he would be there all day on Saturdays and Sundays. He bought three other properties along the stretch that were abandoned. Two of them were side by side so he knocked them down and put a basketball and tennis court. The other one he put a fully equipped play park.

Warren felt good that even though Catarina didn't get the baby she wanted, she got the opportunity to help all of the children at the home. She stopped working and she spent her time helping with homework, music lessons, she even swam and played a bit of basketball and tennis. The people in the neighbourhood came to know her as Rina. Catarina was blown away. She knew Warren was a kind hearted man but this was just awesome.

Warren was getting worse, soon he would not be able to hide it from his wife and he knew it was time for him to go. He didn't want her to watch him suffer. He spoke to a friend of his and asked what's the quickest way to die that won't arouse suspicion. He told him Sodium thiopental would be his best option but he would have to get it from a vet. Luckily for Warren, his brother-in-law was a Vet.

"Hello Sheldon."

"Warren, it's good to hear from you. How is that beautiful wife of yours?"

"About to become a widow, I need your help."

"It's that bad?"

"I've stopped taking the medication, it's not helping. I don't want her to watch me die."

"When?"

"In a month, that will give me time to set everything in order if this thing doesn't kill me first. If I need you before then I will let you know."

Warren decided it was time to drop the bomb.

"Catarina honey, some sit next to me, I need to talk to you."

Catarina got up, rested her book on the sofa and went over to her husband.

"I know you have felt a bit left out recently but I just want you to know that I have never stopped loving you and you mean the world to me."

"Then why won't you make love to me anymore? Have I done something wrong?"
"Ah my love no you haven't, I guess it's my time to hang up my hat. I know I can't fulfil your desires anymore so I am giving you permission to find someone."

Catarina pulled away.

"What? You can't mean that. We can go to the doctor, I can take pills to stop the urges, something, please don't make me do this Warren. I won't cheat on you."

"Honey, you are the kindest woman I know. I don't want you to spend your nights hoping my body will change and I don't want you having to spare my feelings and go behind my back. I thought about this for a long while and I am okay with it."

"I'm not Warren, you are telling me you can't make love to me and I am so physically needy that I have to give myself to someone else."

"Not needy, just young. I expect that you will need it at some point."

"I can get toys, we can use them together, oh God do you realise how you are making me look?"

"You are just surprised that I would even consider it honey. Look at it this way, we get to stay married, I know you are with someone and it won't be an issue. Do you understand me?"

Catarina looked at her husband and his face was not one of distress or mockery. How could she knowing sleep with another man and then go home to her husband?

"Don't think too much honey, just know that whoever you choose has to be someone respectable, someone that won't use you or mistreat you."

"I choose Cole. He has been my best friend for years."

"Somehow I was hoping you would pick him."

"Why?"

“I can see he loves you and no I don't think you were cheating with him. He respects you too much for that.”

“.....but isn't this the same thing?”

“No, I know about it and I can trust you. You have been a good wife to an old man like me. I know it hasn't been easy and now that I can't physically fulfill your needs, I love you enough to let you be with someone else and know that I still have your love. Can you understand that?”

“I think so but I am not comfortable with this arrangement. Please don't make me do this. What will people say about me?”

“Don't worry about people, life will sort itself out, you'll see. Now go talk to Cole and hear what he thinks and get back to me.”

Catarina sat on the sofa at Cole's house and repeated what her husband said.

“He wants us to do WHAT?”

“I know, it sounds ludicrous, but that's what he wants. He says for him it's not a sacrifice but unselfish love.”

“I don't know Cat, won't it be weird for him and even you?”

“It will be weird for all of us but Warren seems to be at peace with it so I will try just for him. If it doesn't work out, you and I will remain friends. Deal?”

“Deal.”

For the next 3 weeks, Catarina and Cole spend lots of time together and at times Warren went along. It was awkward in the beginning but as time passed they settled into a smooth transition.

Cole was having trouble hiding his feelings. When he dropped home Cat, he would linger at the door as if waiting for a kiss. He would touch her hand at dinner or if they went to the movies he would buy stuff they had to share.

Warren was dying. He managed kept the symptoms from his wife. He wanted her to go on living and not be bogged down with sorrow. He made his peace and one night Cole dropped off Cat and when he was half way down the street, she called

his cell frantic. Warren was laying on the couch and blood was dripping from his mouth. He died before the ambulance could get there. Catalina cried for hours. She found a letter on the bed and it was only then she understood what the last four weeks were about. During the week leading up to the funeral which Warren had already planned out, Cole changes. He helps her with the funeral and gives her room to grieve. Too much room. His demeanor is not that of a close friend but that of a stranger. He hasn't taken her out, or even come to the house. She calls his cell phone and it's disconnected. She rushes over to his apartment to find it empty. She finds the land lord who is a friend to them both and inquires about him.

"Sorry Cat, he left right after Warren's funeral. He said to give you this." He hands her a green envelope with the Genie from Aladdin sticker on the back. She thanks the landlord and drives home in a daze.

She pulls up to the house and wonders how she will survive with both the men in her life gone. She goes in, turns on the lights and sits on the sofa. She opens the letter and begins to read it.

My Dearest,

I love you. The last four weeks have been the best in my life. With Warren gone, I feared you would end our time together as you were only doing what he wished. I knew I would not be able to handle your rejection, so I had to leave. Right now, I am hurting so badly. I never knew that love could do this to someone. I feel my heart is giving up on me. Warren was a good man, he saw in you what I see – everything.

The reason why I have not touched you is because I would never be able to bare walking away after that. The thought of leaving you to another man is killing me. I hope you find someone as wonderful as Warren to be with and to love you as you deserve. Be happy Rina.

Always Yours

Cole

“He left me without even asking how I feel. How could he? Warren did the same and now him too? Well to hell with both of them. I’m not a helpless wench for crying out loud.”

Catarina, spends every night crying. She lost her husband and the only other man she ever loved all in one week.

'Enough Catarina Dulles. Warren didn't want you to be like this.'

She got up one morning and started packing up Warren's things, her cell phone rang and it was Warren's attorney. He wanted her to come to his office for the reading of the will.

"Can I come now?"

"Yes you may."

"Be there in half an hour."

She took a shower grabbed her bag and she decided to take Warren's car instead of hers.

When she got to the attorney's office the clerk showed her in.

"Hello Mrs. Dulles, have a seat. Now some things are automatic, some things I have to read out no matter how boring they may be, okay?"

"Yes sir."

"No sir, just Andrew."

"Okay Andrew."

"Now I need you to sign all the places marked for me first of all. These are to release any funds Warren had." She signed and passed them back.

"Now the boring part."

Andrew read the will and when he was finished Catarina was in shock.

"Warren left everything to me?"

"That he did."

"But he's worth billions."

"Yes and all of that now is yours. Warren loved you Catarina and if he didn't think you would be everything he expected you to be, he would have sent the majority of this to charities and left you enough to live comfortably until you died."

"Will you continue to be my attorney?"

"That is up to you."

"Okay, it doesn't make sense hiring anyone else 'cause obviously he trusts you as well."

"Now, Warren has some requests which I know you may have some issues with and even though he won't be around to argue with whatever decision you make, I think you should consider them before you say no."

"Okay."

Andrew took a sheet of paper from Warren's file and began to read."

I, Warren Dulles would like the following requests to be carried out by my wife.

1. Don't mourn for me for too long.
2. The children's home is now yours to run, they love you already and I know you won't let them down. Andrew has their list of expenses. Remember to run it like a business and everything will go smoothly. If you need any help Andrew has the resources and you can call on him.
3. Admit to Cole you love him.
4. Get Cole to admit that he loves you.
5. After the two of you realise what a special relationship you have, get married and have children.
6. Name one of your children after me if Cole agrees.
7. Cole has been struggling for a few months and he hasn't said anything to you. Build him a studio and he can work solely for Dulles magazine.
8. Cole didn't leave you. I asked him to give you some space to sort your feelings out. Andrew has his information and only when you are ready, go to him.

Love Warren.

"He had all this planned out didn't he?"

"That he did."

"Answer me this, did he kill himself?"

"Yes he did. The cancer meds weren't working and he didn't want you to have to watch him waste away to nothing."

"I think I understand, can I have that sheet of paper and Cole's contact information?"

Andrew handed her two sheets of paper.

"Thank you Andrew, if there isn't anything else, I will be leaving now."

"Not at the moment. Have a great day Catarina."

"You as well."

Catarina left Andrew's office with tumultuous feelings running through her heart. She was angry that Warren decided to take his own life although she understood why. She was heartbroken that she lost her husband. She was upset with both Warren and Cole for making decisions and not consulting her and she ached for Cole's love. When she got home she cried until she fell asleep.

The next few days Catarina spent with the children. She arranged a party for the neighbourhood at the home and everyone was enjoying themselves except one child.

Catarina walked over to him and sat down.

"Not much for swimming are you?"

"It's too hard Aunty Rina, I keep sinking."

"Tell you what, I have some arm bands inside, you can put them on and still play with the children."

"Oh thank you Aunty Rina."

Catarina got up and went for the bands, she put them on and went back to the child. She put them on and gave him a little wink. Kevin, rushed over to the edge

of the pool and the life guard helped him into the water, within a few minutes he was splashing with the others.

When she got home, Catarina felt so lonely. She ached for company. Picking up her cell phone she dialed the number stuck on her refrigerator door.

"Hello Rina."

"Hi."

"How are you holding up?"

"Terrible, can you come over, I really need a friend right now."

"Catarina, I....."

"Cole please." If it was any other woman, Cole would have blatantly refused but the sheer sound of the desperation in her voice told him he had to be there for her.

"I will be there in half an hour. Do you need me to bring anything?"

"Cheesecake, Ramos Pintos and chocolate ice-cream."

"Jesus, it's that bad?"

"It's worse than that. See you in a bit."

Catarina had made the first move the next would be Cole's. The only time Catarina asked for that combination of items is when she was either worried about something or she had a big event coming up. Even Warren had brought home that combo on a few occasions knowing that's what she needed.

When Cole pulled up to the house, he was apprehensive. Warren had asked him to stay away until she was ready and he had giving this time because he was trying to be a friend.

"Tread careful buddy, she is still fragile, don't mess this up."

He pushed the door bell and when Catarina came to the door, everything thing in Cole stood at attention. He lowered the bag he was carrying so she wouldn't see how turned on he was.

Catarina was wearing a pair of short jeans and a blue halter top and no shoes. Her hair was pinned up in a bun and she was wearing the locket Warren gave her on their wedding night.

"Well don't stand there, the cheesecake's getting mushy."

She grabbed his hand and he kicked the door shut. They went to the kitchen and Cole put everything on the counter. Catarina got a spoon, ice bucket filled with ice and two glasses.

"Let go to the TV room I feel like watching a movie."

"Sure no problem."

Cole didn't know how he was going to make it through the night, he kept shifting position so Catarina wouldn't see his erection.

They went to the TV room and Catarina set the things on the table while Cole brought the other stuff.

As they sat down, Catarina put her plan into action.

"He left everything for me Cole."

"I know sweetie."

"He committed suicide."

"I know that too."

"Okay, let's eat, you pick the movie."

Cole picked a scary movie. Jason IV.

Catarina poured the drink and handed Cole a glass, she opened the ice cream and stuck a spoon in it and handed it to him.

"Are you feeding me Rina?"

"You need fattening up."

The movie began and Catarina continued to eat and hand Cole the spoon. She was getting turned on by his scent. She knew he had an erection from before and she was waiting for the right moment to see how far she could push him.

Just then Jason Voorhees killed someone and Catarina almost jumped into Cole's lap.

"Oh turn it off or I won't be able to sleep tonight!"

Cole laughed and flicked off the TV.

"You are such a chicken Rina."

"I don't care it's too scary, especially when I have to sleep in that big old bed on my own. Warren isn't here anymore....." As soon as she said it the sadness flooded her body.

"He's gone Cole, he left me all alone. What am I going to do now? I have no one." Cole let her go and stood up.

"No one? So what am I? Why did you call me here if I am just another john doe on the street?"

"That's not what I meant, you are my best friend. I need someone to hold me at night, kiss me when I'm sad, go dancing and see plays and visit the children, moonlight walks, driving in the country. Who's going to do that with me now?"

"Me Catarina, I can't take this anymore. Warren asked me to give you time but I don't need to feel as if I'm begging for your love."

"You left me when I needed you most, no matter what Warren said, you left me when the man I was married to took his life because he decided being with me wasn't worth the fight. You left me when all I could think about was how alone I was, I cried every night since he died, I cried when I saw your letter, I don't want to cry again unless I'm happy. Look at this."

She reached into her back pocket and pulled out the sheet with Warren's requests. Cole read it and looked down at her.

"He knew, that son-of-a-bitch knew."

"Of course he knew, that's why he suggested you and I go out when he was alive, he needed to see if what he saw was really there and if we were just pretending. Was he wrong?"

"No he wasn't. He called me and said he was dying and he didn't want you to watch him die. He told me I had to take care of you as a friend but when the time was right I had to tell you that I loved you. He never said he knew how you felt."

"Do you love me Cole and not as a best friend, as someone you could marry and have children with? Be honest please."

"I have always loved you Catarina, I just didn't think you would feel the same. Listen to me, I have never wanted a woman the way I want you."

"What about all those women you went out with? One of them gave me a DVD of you having sex."

"She told me and they were all purely for physical gratification sweetie. I was always talking about you and how great you are, they all knew they could not compare. I stopped that when Warren suggested we go out. I couldn't let anything come between what we had."

"Oh Cole, I love you so much, I told Warren you are my best friend and I didn't lie because you are and I would never have cheated on him with you or anyone but he saw, he saw and he accepted it. Why didn't you tell me you were in financial trouble, you know I would sell a kidney if you needed it."

"Pride. I felt so beneath you, I was about to lose all my equipment and Warren paid for it when he came to see me. I told him I would pay him back, he said consider it a wedding gift. He even gave me this."

He went into his pocket and took out a small green velvet box. He got down on one knee and took her hand.

"Marry me Catarina, make me the happiest man in the world."

"Yes, yes I will!"

He put on the ring and stood up.

"People will talk." Catarina said.

"Warren told me you would say that and he said they will talk anyway don't let it bother you just be happy."

"I am, I am."

"Cole?"

"Yes sweetie."

"Can we wait a while before....."

"It's okay, we have time. Come on, let's look for another movie to watch."

They spent the next few hours watching movies and eating the rest of the ice cream and cheesecake. When morning came, Cole was on the sofa stretched out and Catarina was laying on top of him fast asleep.

Catarina eased up from him and went to her bedroom. When she came back she had his gift in her hand. She sat on the floor and watched him sleep.

"If you don't stop staring, I will come over there and join you."

"Oh you bully. Happy birthday Cole." She took the gift from behind her back and crawled over to him and rested it on his tummy. She had bought the gift before Warren took over the children's home but as a prize she had given one of the children for good behaviour so she bought another one and added something else.

"Thank you Rina, I didn't think you would remember with everything that went on."

"We have been celebrating each other's birthdays for 10 years, how could I forget now. Open it." She was more excited than he was.

Cole ripped open the package like it was Christmas day. When he saw the tablet he smiled broadly. When he saw the other package, he rested the tablet on the sofa behind him and lunged for Catarina covering her mouth with his. She welcomed the kiss and melted into his body.

When he pulled away they were both out of breath.

"I love you so much Rina, let's get married soon, I don't think I can wait much longer. He ground his erection against her and she moaned.

"I need to talk to Andrew first."

"Okay, I'd like to go with you if that's okay."

"Of course it is. I guess you like the gift."

"How could I not, that was the first day we met and you were the first professional model I ever took. Thank you." He kissed her again. The second gift was a framed photo of the first job she had, she was so shy, he sat her down and talked to her and even though they were the same age, he was a natural and so was she. He was doing an internship for a model agency and the shoot he did with Catarina made his career.

"I have a space in my building for your studio."

"Warren told you?"

"Yeah he was a good man Cole, let me do this for you."

"I'm not complaining, at least I will get to be near you."

"Warren was a bit jealous of you ya know."

"He told me but he also told me that he saw in us what he had with his first wife and he also found it with you."

"What's that?"

"Equilibrium."

Two years later

"Wow, I have son."

"Yeah you do."

"Thank you Catarina, you have given me everything I could ever hope for in life and this is the ultimate." Cole bent over and kissed both his wife and his son.

"What will you name him?" Asked the nurse.

"Warren Matthew Saunders." They both answered.

The nurse wrote the name on the tag, placed on the baby's wrist and quietly left the room.

Catarina and Cole went on to create powerful publications with Dulles Magazine, every year on Warren's birthday they would do a feature on his life and the good things he did. Their son Warren grew up to be just like his name sake and both his parents were proud of the legacy they created.

The End.

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