Façade

by Prince_Hel

Summary

They had tried to avoid it. They had tried to deluded themselves and ignore what they felt, knowing that it was wrong, not only at society’s eyes but because the lives they were living didn’t make it possible. But how it was possible to stop love when you were face to face to the person that was meant to be for you?

Notes

This fic wasn’t a spur of the moment, I started it since January but at some point I hit a wall when I was close to finish it. This week I finally found the inspiration to do it and I’ve been feeling quite frustrated when it comes to my writing that it made me feel good to know I’m still able to write and finish something. Hope you guys enjoy it.

“...""But why do I have to go? You know I don’t have a good time in those parties. I never know what to talk with those people.” Therese wrinkled her nose, showing her distaste. She was sitting on the edge of the bed, watching Richard getting ready for what she had been referring to the ‘annoying party’ since the man gave her the news.

Richard paused the task of tying his tie to look at Therese through the mirror. “Sweetie,” he used the patronizing tone that he got confused with loving. “You know this is important for me. For us,” he hastened to add. “Our future depends on this.”
It took Therese an effort to not roll her eyes. “You already have a decent job.” And also to not whine like a child.

Richard didn’t answer as he finished tying the tie, turning around once he was done, walking towards Therese, squatting in front of her, resting his hands on her knees for support. “But I have the opportunity for something better. Besides,” he smiled charmingly, “I want to give you everything you deserve without having to worry about the money. Now more than ever.”

Therese took a deep breath. “I don’t need-” she cut herself off when Richard stood up.

“Terry, we have had this conversation every time we have to go to one of these parties,” he said calmly. Therese couldn’t recall ever losing his patience with her even when sometimes it was exactly what she was looking for.

“And you keep taking me with you!” She stood up, starting to pace. “Your boss treats me like a retarded that doesn’t have an idea of what you are talking about only because I don’t work in the same thing.” She sighed. “And his wife …” she trailed off, closing her eyes as if that gesture was enough to say it all.

Once again, Richard walked to Therese, after applying some lotion that made Therese scrunch her nose up when he came near. He had been using that lotion since she met him and he never changed it even when she, in an attempt to be subtle, gifted him with a new one, more friendly aromatic. “Terry, I’m fairly certain this is going to be the last time we need to kiss those rich people’s asses.” He put his hand on her shoulders. “I’m going to be promoted and we won’t have to worry about mingling with them anymore.”

He had been saying the same thing after the first time they went to one of these parties. Therese also knew that even if Richard was promoted, he would keep kissing his boss’ ass because he was the kind of man that stroked someone’s ego, desperate to be in their good graces. It was embarrassing to see the man that everyone knew was her partner pleading with actions to gain his boss’ liking.

More disgusting was that Therese would do what she always did in these cases: close her eyes and sigh resignedly to then open them back, forcing herself to smile. “All right.” She stepped back, looking around. “I’m going to get ready then.”

“It’s going to be worth it. I promise,” Richard tried to reassure her, watching her taking only a moment in front of the closet before she reached her arm, taking her chosen outfit, giving the impression that she didn’t care for appearances when in reality she knew this was going to happen, knowing that she wasn’t strong enough to defend her position and she had taken the decision of what to wear long ago.

Therese didn’t stop as she headed to the bathroom, feeling her stomach fluttering at what awaited her.

“You look gorgeous.”

Carol diverted her eyes from her ear as she fastened an earring to look at Harge, whose eyes were drinking her in. At least one of them think so, which made sense because he had bought the dress, not wanting to give her the opportunity of wearing dressing pants as she preferred. However, Carol
smiled softly, compliantly, instead of voicing her real opinion. “Thank you.”

“You will be the star of the night, as usual.” He tucked his shirt under his pants, getting ready.

Carol concealed the tired sighed that she wanted to make. “Who’s coming this time?”

“The same as usual. My associates, some alone, some accompanied. Harrison and his wife.” Despite the several times Carol had clarified Jeanette’s name, Harge always did this. “Richard and his girlfriend, Theresa.”

“Therese,” she mumbled under her breath.

Harge continued, not listening to her. “I think this is the last time I’m going to invite Richard. He used to have potential but he has been stuck in the same place for a couple of months as if he didn’t have anything else to give.”

Carol momentarily froze before finishing fastening the second earring, brushing her hair behind her ear with her fingers once she was done to admire the jewels. “I thought you had realized that a long time ago and that you kept him around because you liked to have an eager puppy around.”

Harge laughed. “Is that obvious, huh?”

The right corner of Carol’s lip curved slightly as she hummed in affirmation. “Nobody would blame you, you know?”

His frown furrowed. “What do you mean?”

“If you keep him around nobody would question it.” She walked to him, standing next to him for which he had to turn his head to look at her. “Men like you,” she lowered her voice as if she was trying to mesmerize Harge with it by forcing him in paying attention to what she said if he wanted to listen, at the time she placed her hand on his forearm, “are surrounded by people that will never reach their level. Isn’t like that how their authority is acknowledged? How they know they are better than others?”

Harge looked pensively. “I suppose you are right,” he finally replied.

“So,” she licked her lips, “it wouldn’t be a bad idea to keep Richard around. Doing everything you ask for.” She squeezed the arm under her arm meaningfully.

Harge looked at Carol’s lips, slowly lifting his gaze until making eye contact, finding Carol with an innocent expression. “That’s actually a good idea.”

Carol smiled, recovering her compliant attitude, patting her husband’s chest, leaning forward to press a quick kiss on his cheek. “Don’t worry, nobody has to know I gave you the idea.” She went back to the vanity table although she was ready to go, pretending she was giving the last touches to her makeup.

It was until Harge mentioned that he was going to make sure that Florence has everything ready, reminding his wife of not taking too long because their guests would start to arrive in half an hour, leaving the bedroom in the next second without waiting for an answer that Carol grinned like the cat who ate the canary.
Therese found exasperating the fact that Richard was so concerned when it came to punctuality for two reasons; the first one was that it was exclusively for this, always arriving late for their dates or leaving Therese the task of hurrying him whenever it was something she was eager to do. The second (and this one was what importuned Therese the most) was that because of it, they were always the first ones to arrive at the Aird’s home, giving them (and surely Richard would consider this as an opportunity to score points but for her it was plain uncomfortable) alone time with their hosts.

When her eyes caught the sight of the big house, Therese tried to reach for Richard’s arm to stop him, feeling an already familiar sensation washing her over, but it was as if the man was suddenly invigorated because he fastened his steps, making her jog to be at his side where she tried again. “Richard, why can’t we-?” It was like talking to a wall because he was already lifting an arm to ring the bell.

His only attempt to acknowledge her was looking at her after doing it with a big smile. Therese sighed with resignation, feeling her stomach jumping to her throat as she listened the steps inside the house getting closer although she knew she was getting ahead because she counted with a few minutes more of tranquility because it was the housekeeper who always opened the door.

However, her eyes widened in surprise when she saw Harge opening the door. “Richard. Always in time.”

“Mr. Aird.” He stretched his arm to shake hands with his boss. “We have to seize the day, sir.” Harge nodded in agreement while Therese, mentally, rolled her eyes.

“Come in, come in.” He didn’t look at Therese, as if she wasn’t there, until they were inside and Richard was helping her to take off her coat to then, already familiarized with the place, opened the entrance closet door to put hers and his away. “Theresa.” He tilted his head in greeting.

Therese looked over Harge’s shoulder, looking at Richard, who was making a pleading look for her to not correct the mistake, which in reality it would be pointless because she did it every single time she faced the man but if coming here was nerve-wracking for her the last she could get was her name right. She cleared her throat, parting her lips but before she could say a word, she was interrupted.

“Harge, how many times do I have to tell you that her name is Therese?”

At the time the men turned their heads at the woman’s voice direction, goosebumps burst in every single part of Therese’s body, making her freeze for a beat before following the men’s action, looking towards the stairs, watching Carol coming down. The women’s eyes locked momentarily, sharing an intense look before Therese looked down, trying to hide her blushing.

Carol, as she insisted to be called, had always had this strong power of making Therese extremely self-aware of herself, to the point that the young woman felt an unavoidable desperation to run to a mirror, wanting to verify she was presentable enough to be in the presence of this woman.

“Mrs. Aird, you look gorgeous as always.” Richard broke the silence, walking to the woman when she finished stepping down.

Carol hummed. “Thank you, Richard.” She leaned a bit to receive the man’s kiss on her cheek. Afterwards, opposite of her husband’s attitude, she focused her attention on Therese, smiling almost playfully. “Therese.”
Slowly, acting like a scolded dog, she raised her head to look at her. “Hello, Mrs-”

“No, no,” she quickly interrupted. “I’ve pleaded to you to call me by my name. And I doubt you are as stubborn as my husband to not remember that.”

Harge grumbled that he didn’t do it on purpose but only Richard was paying attention to him. “C-Carol.” Therese smiled, hoping that it didn’t look as forced at it felt. “How are you?”

“Fine, darling. How about you?” She took Therese’s hands, squeezing as she leaned down to kiss both of her cheeks.

Therese hardly moved, allowing Carol to be the one doing so she wouldn’t end up doing something ridiculous like moving to the same direction Carol went like had happened in the past. Afterwards, she had to control the desire to pull her hands free and touch her cheeks. “Fine. It’s always a pleasure to come.”

Carol raised an eyebrow, pursing her lips together in an attempt to school her features and not give anything away. That was another reason for Therese to be so alert — the sensation that Carol could always see the truth underneath. “I’m glad. It’s always a pleasure to plan these gatherings.”

This time it was Therese who had to school her features to not smile when Carol winked, finally letting her go, knowing the comment had been a blatant lie. At least they had something in common.

On the bright side, for Therese, it wasn’t that long until the bell rang again and other guests started to arrive. On the bad side, that meant that groups started to form, which made her feel like a fish out of water even more than before since men mostly talked about work and women about family and kids, which Therese lacked, earning her pitiful looks as if she was failing in life.

Carol usually defended her, thing Therese appreciated to some extent but once again, it made her feel uncomfortable because she was sure that everyone judged for not being able to defend herself. But right now that wasn’t happening because as a good hostess, Carol was spending time with her husband, dedicating a few minutes to chatter with every guest so Therese had to give the women she was with a strained smile, quickly looking around to make sure nobody was paying attention to them, excusing herself, pretending she was going to the bathroom, not realizing that a pair of grey-bluish eyes were following her.

The first thing Carol saw upon entering the home office, was Therese standing in the semi-circular bay window, behind the desk Carol usually used, hugging herself, the moonlight highlighting her beauty. It was a breathtaking image and it pained Carol that she couldn’t be able to make Therese realize the way she looked at her.

Since Carol didn’t have the intention to remain unseen, she closed the door normally, the soft but natural sound of it making Therese startled, turning around, her eyes widening when she looked at Carol, as if she didn’t have in consideration the possibility of being discovered. Her lips started to move but Carol didn’t give her a chance, speeding towards her. Therese gave a step back, almost as if she was afraid, bumping against the desk at the time one of Carol’s arm reached for her, a hand sliding where her ear joined her neck through her hair, tugging her softly to capture her lips with hers.
In that moment, the masks that Therese had been gathering all day dropped like a leaf during Fall, making her wrap her arms around Carol’s torso, this time taking a step in her direction even though the other woman was making the same action to back her to the desk, sitting her on the edge.

They pulled back when they were getting out of air, only to rest their foreheads together, Therese looking up at Carol with longing, who was looking back fondly. “Darling, I understand we have to pretend but there are people wondering if you don’t like me after the way you were treating me today.”

“I’m sorry, I-” She closed her eyes, taking a deep breath. “Today, more than ever I felt that everyone would notice because I had been missing you so much. Do you have any idea how hard it was to stay in the same place when I saw you coming down the stairs?”

Carol started to brush Therese’s hair, loving the softness. “As hard as it was for me not to kiss you in front of Harge and Richard?”

Therese blushed but she smiled coyly. “Really?”

“Oh, Therese. You should know how I feel about you. Don’t you?” She frowned, a little bit upset imagining the young woman doubting about her feelings for her.

“I do,” she answered honestly but it was a little hard keeping it present, especially because they were only capable to see each other once a month.

They had met each other six months after Carol had given birth to a beautiful baby girl and the pull had been immediate even though both women tried to deny it to themselves. Carol had a family, with a recent member that had become their parents’ world. Her marriage might not be perfect, she might not allow Harge to touch her since they procreated their child but with Rindy in the picture, she simply couldn’t throw it away. Therese might not count with such commitment but she knew that feeling attracted to a woman, a married woman nonetheless, wasn’t correct, reason why she forced herself to make her relationship with Richard work, even when she felt her stomach fluttering unpleasantly whenever he touched her.

They tried to deluded themselves, ignoring their feelings due to the fact that they didn’t see each other frequently but it was simply impossible to keep their eyes away from each other when they found in the same place, impossible to deny they were interested in getting to know more about the other, much less ignore the way their bodies shivered at the other’s proximity and touch. For both of them, a reaction completely opposed to the way their respective partners made them feel.

The fourth time they saw each other after meeting, they finally caved to their feelings, not aware of who had given the first step, not actually caring for such fact because the only thing that matter was having the softest skin against their lips, caressing them with hesitating tenderness, unsure and afraid that they were going to be rejected but unable to keep their desire in check any longer, the kiss soon deepening once they realized the other was reciprocating eagerly.

Behind doors they talked, wanting to know everything about each other, inevitable falling in love while at everyone’s eyes they only interacted because their partners’ worked together and there was no other option than dealing with each other. But as her feelings grew, Therese started to get paranoid and even when what she wanted was nothing more than being with Carol, she knew it was impossible, knowing that even if Carol separated from Harge, they wouldn’t have the chance of living their love freely without being judged and attacked.

Carol remained silent, scrutinizing Therese to be certain that she knew about her feeling, softly dropping her hands on the woman’s thighs. Once she was satisfied with what she saw, she looked
down as Therese’s hands covered hers, reliving the moment when she felt her heart stop beating as she greeted her lover. “It seems congratulations are in order.” Her tone wasn’t reproachful but the sadness was unmistakable.

Therese looked down, spreading the fingers of her left hand. Of course Carol had felt it when she held her hands. “You know I only accepted to have a reason to see you, right?” Carol found Therese’s eyes on her when she lifted her head, eyebrows furrowed with concern. “If I said no, most likely our relationship would have ended and I would no longer have an excuse to see you. I couldn’t bear that.”

Carol held Therese’s head in her hands, pecking her lips once and again, hoping to calm Therese’s anxiety. “I know, I know,” she reassured between kisses. Because she did know but she couldn’t deny that it hurt. Perhaps it was unfair because from the moment she met her, Therese had been experiencing the fact that the woman she loved was married.

“It’s you who I want to be with.” Therese’s eyes filled with tears. “It’s you who I want to come home and see. With who I want to share my days. The first thing I want to see in the morning and the last during the nights.” Now Carol’s eyes were filled with tears too. “You are who I want, Carol. Only you.” Carol closed her eyes, pursing her lips when she felt them quivering. “Tell me you know that,” she whispered, her voice cracking.

Carol’s eyelids opened slowly, taking the sight of Therese’s tears falling down her cheeks, making her reach to wipe them away with her fingertips. “I know, darling. I know.” Life was an uncertainty that made her feel adrift, a thing she had enjoyed during her youth but after their marriage it made her feel like drowning. When she met Therese, it felt like she had found a wood that would help her to float and the moment they exchanged the first ‘I love you’ she knew it was her who was going to be her constant.

Therese sniffed, smiling a little. “I will never love anyone but you. You are my one and only.”

“Good.” Therese’s smile disappeared at the serious tone. “Because you are mine.” Carol felt a pang of desire when the woman shivered. “He could be the one calling you his wife but you are mine and you will never give yourself to him in the way you did with me.” She cupped Therese’s face, approaching her own to hers, their breathings mingling into one. “Your heart is mine.” The young woman let out a soft pant. “Your body is mine.” She moved forward, giving the intention to kiss her but she diverted in the last moment, taking her lips to her ear. “I will never forget the way you trembled as I touched you and kissed you for the first time — the way you reacted to every caress.” They had only been intimate once, and it had been a quick affair because it had happened in a party like this but nevertheless, it had been wonderful and neither hadn’t been capable to stop thinking about it, eager to repeat it and incapable to allow their men to touch them after that perfect moment. Wanting to have the proof to her words, Carol lowered her head, pressing her lips on Therese’s neck, kissing it slowly while the woman’s body covered in goosebumps. “You are mine,” she repeated.

Therese made her head fall to the side, closing her eyes as Carol peppered kisses along her neck. “Yes, yes, yes.”

Therese clenched her fists on Carol’s waist, trying to conceal her need to voice the same phrase but questioningly. She knew that Carol loved her but that didn’t mean that she was giving herself without reservations. Several times the question had been on the tip of Therese’s tongue, ready to blurt it out but the fear of a negative was what kept her in silence. She tried to reassure herself, telling that what Carol gave her was enough but sometimes it felt like being with Carol was like standing at the edge of a cliff and there was the uncertainty that she would be there to catch her
when she would put her life at risk, making sure that Carol was never hurt.

Carol slowed down her caresses without stopping entirely, noticing Therese’s mind was somewhere else even when it was clear she wanted this. She placed a hand on the other side of Therese’s neck, caressing softly with her fingertips as she pulled back. “What is it, darling?”

Therese opened her eyes, her blush deepening and not due to the arousal. “N-nothing.”

Carol softly held Therese’s chin, prompting her to lift her head to make eye contact when the young woman looked down. “You are a terrible liar when it comes to lying to me, my love.” Therese smiled sadly. “Tell me,” she ordered pleadingly.

“It’s just …” She nibbled her lower lip, nervously. The last thing she wanted was to cause an argument or to make Carol feel like having her love wasn’t enough for her. But she couldn’t fight back against the way Carol was looking at her, with concern and nerves. “I just wondered … if you are mine too,” her tone was meek, almost as if she was embarrassed to ask.

Carol blinked with bewilderment, moving her lips trying to say something but it was only after trying a couple of times that she found her voice. “Has that been your concern all along? How I feel about you?” She wasn’t sure if she should feel sad, angry or offended.

Therese shook her head. “I know you love me. I have no doubt of that. It’s just …” Her eyes diverted once again, a frustrated sigh leaving her lips, unsure if she could explain clearly what was her problem. “I’m yours, Carol.” She made eye contact, hoping that it would help her to convey what she wanted to say. “Entirely,” she claimed fervently.

Therese’s eyes were shining with the emotions and it was easy for Carol to read what she was trying to say. “Oh.” She looked down for a moment, pondering, looking at Therese’s hands that were on her lap, her fingers moving nervously. A soft smile curved her lips and she placed her hands on Therese’s, stroking them tenderly. “When Rindy was born I experienced a happiness that I hadn’t known and I knew it was going to be impossible to ever feel something compared to that.” Therese nodded, looking resigned, as if she was expecting this answer because it made total sense that her daughter was everything for her but she smiled at Carol when she looked up, without any trace of reproach. “However, there was something still missing. I love Rindy with all I am, but it wasn’t until I saw you that my world became colorful. It was until then that I reminded that I’m my own person and not just somebody’s partner or mother. Harge is a good man, a good father but he possessed me, having a certain idea of how I should be, and I allowed him to mold me because I didn’t know otherwise and I lost myself in the process.”

Carol lifted one of her hands to stroke Therese’s cheek with the back of her fingers. “But when I saw you … everything came back to me. I recalled things I had locked down, things I wanted to do, who I truly am. That I have a voice and the right to choose what’s best for me. It was easy to go against my own grain because there wasn’t a reason to not do it because I sadly admit that I wasn’t strong enough to fight in this path alone.” She took a deep breath, feeling slightly disappointed with herself.

“You shouldn’t feel any kind of regret in the way you decided to live your life back then,” Therese reassured her. “We know it’s not easy and it could be dangerous. And Rindy wouldn’t be here otherwise.” She smiled at the little girl’s mention. She hadn’t interact much with her, just enough to deduce she was a very easygoing baby, able to make Therese relaxed instead of anxious at the idea that there was a child in Carol’s life.

Carol chuckled. “Right. I can regret many things but never she.” The women shared a smile but in the next second, she was serious again but with a purpose. “I don’t think we are ready just yet,
Therese, but I know we will and when the moment it’s right, I’ll be more than willing to take Rindy and you to be just us, because that’s what I want. A life with you.” Therese gasped. “So to answer your question more clearly in case there’s still some kind of doubt: I’m more than yours.” She rested her forehead against the other woman’s, looking at her, her eyes filled with conviction. “I choose to be yours.”

Words wouldn’t be adequate to reply Carol’s confession so Therese simply cupped the woman’s face, looking at her with all the emotion that was overwhelming her in that moment, causing her heart to beat furiously and her eyes shine with unshed tears, before pulling her to her, disappearing the distance between them, joining their lips in a deep kiss where they could pour everything they were feeling.

Carol returned to the gathering with poise, smiling confidently to everyone that turned around to look at her, making her way straight to Harge, who wrapped an arm around her waist once he noticed her (which was right away because the group momentarily focused their attention on the woman), softly kissing her cheek. Carol inwardly rolled her eyes when she saw the others smiling at the scene as if she was the most lucky woman for having such man as her husband, but she managed a smile.

When Harge pulled back, he narrowed, looking down at Carol’s lips. “Did you brush your teeth?” he wondered, detecting the fresh smell of mint.

Carol didn’t even break a sweat, already used to inappropriate men’s comments in front of other people, smiling softly. “I did. I’m not particularly fond of the taste smoke leaves afterwards.”

But oh, how she wished to tell the truth just to see everyone’s reactions, especially Harge’s. To tell everyone that she had to wash away Therese’s flavor after spending minutes on her knees, ravishing her with her mouth until she made her come. During their first time, Carol had only used her hands to take Therese over the edge and she couldn’t deny it had been a wonderful experience but this time it had been extraordinary.

Therese was trembling the moment Carol’s knees touched the floor, never breaking eye contact with her as she pulled her skirt up. Though it had been a first for both of them, it was easy to react and reciprocate accordingly to the movements the other made as it proved the fact that Therese slid towards the edge of the desk once Carol kneeled, raising her hips so she pulled her panties down without any word exchanged between them.

Carol’s caresses were reverent, every single one making Therese feel like the most significant creature ever existed, sensation that only increased, mixed with an arousal that threatened to blow her mind, once Carol’s tongue slipped between her folds at a slow pace, not leaving a place untouched, savoring her over and over again, as if she could never get enough of the woman writhing under her ministrations.

Carol only paused to asked Therese if she was enjoying it, if not, to tell her what she liked to make the experience unforgettable. Therese would have laughed at the ridiculous notion of not enjoying something Carol did to her if she could have done something else beyond moaning. The proof came when Therese couldn’t control herself, exploding embarrassingly fast, which was a shame in her opinion because she would have loved to feel Carol’s tongue for all eternity.
Carol then helped Therese to sit, weak thanks to her post-orgasmic bliss. Nevertheless, she was lucid enough to notice her arousal smeared in her lover’s lips and chin, and when Carol stretched an arm to take a tissue to clean herself, Therese held her wrist to stop her, softly pulling her to her until their chests collided and ended up in a hug. The young woman, between kisses and licks, cleaned Carol’s face, tasting herself for the first time which was slightly strange but not unpleasant, coaxing her to slip her tongue inside Carol’s mouth to dwell in it, making her desire increase and more than eager to do what Carol had done to her but the intimacy came to a halt when the other woman reminded her that they couldn’t take more time and that there was something she wanted to share with her before they went back to the gathering.

“I’ve told you you should quit it,” Harge’s voice pulled her out of her memories. Carol looked at him, making eye contact. Harge often did things like this, trying to put Carol in the spotlight, and she usually hummed dutifully, trying to appear the perfect wife at other’s eyes though both were aware that she wouldn’t do whatever he requested.

“Did I miss something important?” she changed the subject, ignoring Harge’s comment.

“Actually, we were trying to find Richard’s girlfriend.” Carol looked at the mentioned man, who was looking around like an eager puppy though there was a frown tarnishing his features, wondering if he hadn’t shared the fact Therese was his fiancée or if Harge ‘forget’ as usual. “We wanted to share the good news with you.” He winked furtively at Carol, who played along.

“Really? And what news are those?”

Before Harge could answer, Richard’s eyes widened and Carol noticed his body relaxing momentarily. “Therese!” He raised his hand so the woman could see as if the shout hadn’t been enough to reveal his place.

Therese hurried her steps, a soft blush covering her cheeks which where Carol’s fault but luckily it could be taken as embarrassment after what Richard did, avoiding eye contact from the people that were looking at her, convinced that some were pitying her for the uncomfortable situation and others upset with her that she was the cause of such scene. Without making contact with anybody, she smiled awkwardly to the rest of the people, her body immediately reacting to Carol’s presence.

“Where have you been?” Richard whispered with concealed anger that only Carol was capable to distinguish, making her frown when she saw him manhandling discreetly the woman she loved when he wrapped his hand around Therese’s forearm.

Carol’s common sense abandoned her at the image, seeing Therese stuttering a credible excuse but luckily, Harge intervene just in time. “Ah, Therese,” he pointedly looked at Carol, which helped to calmed her down, rewarding him with a smile. “I’m glad you arrive so we can share the news with both of you.”

Therese briefly made eye contact with Carol, holding back a smile, knowing what this was about because the woman had talked to her about it as they exchanged some kisses in between words. “I’m honored for the inclusion and I apologize for making you wait.”

Harge waved a hand dismissively. “Pay no mind.” Only then Richard relaxed entirely because if Harge wasn’t angry for Therese’s disappearance, he shouldn’t either. “I’ve decided to make Richard,” he patted the man’s shoulder, making him smile and swell proudly, “my apprentice.” He didn’t have plans to make him next in line, the person who would take over after him but that’s how he sold it so he didn’t feel like he was belittled him and accepted the proposal.

Richard knew that once they were back at the apartment, Therese was going to complain about
this, especially because he had promised her that this would be the last time they were going to mingle with the Airds, reason why Therese’s reaction surprised him because it sounded truly sincere. “That’s amazing!” When she turned to look at him, he was looking at her with widened eyes. “Isn’t it?” She doubted Richard would ever reject such opportunity, even if it wasn’t what he believed it was, so she was confused by his reaction.

“Of- of course it is!” He chuckled, hugging her in what it looked a celebratory hug but it was to whisper in her ear so nobody else listened. “But I thought you wouldn’t be happy about it.”

Therese’s eyes looked at Carol before answering, who had taken two champagne glasses from one of the waiters and was looking at her as she took one of the glass to her lips. “Of course I’m happy.” Like never before. “I’ll manage … at least Mr. Aird remembered my name now so perhaps it’s a good sign and I can get along with her wife someday.”

“Oh, Terry. This is going to be the first step of endless amazing things for us. I can tell.” He grinned, looking down at her with affection.

If only you knew that has been happening in my life since I met Carol, Therese thought. If only they could get rid of their partners everything would be perfect but she definitely wasn’t going to complain.

“You know, Therese,” Carol finally interrupted them, stepping forward when the couple pulled apart, extending one arm to offer the champagne to the other woman. “Since our men are going to spend so much time together from now on, perhaps you and I should do the same so we don’t get bored on our own waiting for them to come home.”

Therese held her breath, praying with all her might that she wasn’t blushing. She knew this offered them a huge opportunity but making it known to their partners was totally unexpected. “I …”

“I actually think that’s a wonderful idea. I don’t like the idea of you spending too much time alone,” Harge intervene, quickly supported by Richard, who looked at Therese beseechingly (as if it was even necessary).

“Of course, I would like that very much.” Therese was quick to board the ship. She should receive an award for appearing so calm when inwardly she was jumping with excitement. She had been worried that her chances to see Carol would be diminished or disappeared entirely and now she was facing the opportunity to see her frequently, which surely they would take advantage of.

Carol winked at her after the toast, just when both women took their respective glass to their lips, taking a sip in an attempt to conceal their secret smiles. Carol walked to Therese when the men (after kissing their cheeks) moved towards another group, standing next to her, close enough so their arms brushed. “Who the hell was the person who believed men are the biggest masterminds?” Carol whispered, using the glass to hide her moving lips.

“A man, surely,” Therese replied without missing a beat.

They turned their head at the same time to look at each other, sharing an amused laugh, drawing the attention of some people around them, their partners included, who smiled watching them, believing the image they wanted to sell of two women that were in the process of getting along and become good friends, entirely oblivious to the love and purpose their eyes held whenever they saw each other.
There's a song in Spanish called "Algo Más" from the group "La Quinta Estación" that talks about two people with their respective partners that are lovers but it's so much more than a simple affair, according to the lyric, they are completely in love. One day I listened to it and I got the inspiration to make this fic, which is totally ironic because I can't stand cheating, lol.

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