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about 900 words

Lead Me On

By Cherie Dysard

Lorelei studied her reflection in the mirror of the cheap hotel room. She couldn't believe she was doing this. Her hands shook a little as she smoothed out the non-existent wrinkles of her dress as she had the last twenty times she checked herself in the mirror. It was like she was willing the woman in front of her not to do what she was going to do, as if she could talk herself out of it. But there was no turning back now as there was a light knock at the door.

"Lorelei." Vic smiled at the sight of her. "You look beautiful."

"Thank you." The heat rose in her cheeks from the compliment. She wasn't used to those. "Well there's no reason to just stand there, come in." She stepped aside as Vic entered the

room. He closed the door, adding the slide lock so that they wouldn't be disturbed.

"I brought a bottle of wine." He produced a dark bottle from behind his back.

"I'm already one step ahead of you." She gestured to the open bottle of whiskey on the dresser. "Would you like a drink? I could sure use one right now."

He nodded and she poured him a glass of the amber liquid. Her hands were slightly shaking as she poured herself one too. "Did I say you were beautiful already?"

"Yes, you did." She blushed as she handed him his glass.

Vic downed the glass and set it on the dresser, making sure to lean closer to her. "Well, you are." His breath tickled her ear and sent shivers through her body.

"I don't know how to do this. I mean, I do but I don't. Does that make sense? Maybe I've had too many shots before you got here."

Vic chuckled. "I bet you did, considering that bottle looks half full." He ran a hand through his dark hair. "Truth be told, I don't know how to do this either. I just know I care deeply for you. And I know you feel the same about me. If you didn't, we wouldn't be here right now."

Lorelei stepped away from him to look out the sliding glass door of the patio. The stars and moon seemed so much brighter than usual tonight. She could feel his presence behind her.

"I'm not trying to convince you to do something that you don't want to."

"I know that." Her voice sounded small. He reached out and rested his hands on her shoulders. She relaxed under his touch and leaned her back against his chest. "I know it's come down to this but I can't wrap my mind around it."

"You feel guilty, I get that."

"It's not guilt, Vic. Well, it's part guilt and part curiosity. And you're right. I do care about you. I can't deny that. I just don't know what to do about it."

"You know what to do, that's why you're here. You're exploring your options. What do you expect after years of being unheard and underappreciated? I don't want to sound cliché, but sometimes the grass is greener on the other side."

Lorelei turned to face him. "That's all you can say? That's the worse advice."

Vic just shrugged. "What else am I supposed to say? Your husband is too worried about spending late nights at the office with his secretary than being home with you. He's too worried about that all-mighty dollar than spending it on you. He's putting himself ahead of you, and it was only a matter of time

before you'd go looking for what you needed and what you wanted from someone else."

"Not just anyone else. You." She touched his cheek and looked into his eyes. "You've always been there. I was just too blind to notice. But I see it now. I just don't know what to do with how I feel. That's what makes this so hard."

Vic covered his hand with hers and intertwined their fingers. "Lorelei, you know how I feel about you. You deserve to be loved and taken care of. Let me. I can handle it."

"I want to, and I want you. But I can't."

Vic let go of her hand. "What are you saying?" Lorelei took a few steps away from him, closer to the door.

"We can't do this. It's not right."

"Neither is your husband and his infatuation with his secretary. You know as well as I do that's been going on for a while now."

"So that gives me every right to just jump into your arms? I'm not the type to fight fire with fire. If that's what Tripp wants, then fine but I'm not going to make the same mistake he is."

Vic hung his head in defeat and met her near the door. He opened it. "Then I'm not going to push the issue any further. But just know that I do care about you and I always will." He

picked up her hand and kissed it as tears came to his eyes.

"Goodbye, Lorelei."

He left and quietly closed the door behind him. Lorelei let out a labored sigh and wiped her own tears from her eyes.