

Her Lucky Charm

Bonus Scene



Rose

Four Years Later

“That’s right!” Danny told the little girl at his desk. “If you connect the hard drive to the motherboard it can boot up when we give it power...”

I smiled at the scene inside the big room. There were dozens of tables inside the Lucky Girls Community Center, each one occupied by an expert in a specific skill. After so long in Las Vegas, I wanted to help little girls who *weren’t* as lucky as I was. This was a place they could come to after school and get mentored on skills that interested them. The kind of things little girls normally didn’t get opportunities to learn.

I was finally putting all my gambling winnings to good use.

Danny was teaching basic computer hardware. Three little girls were huddled around him on the table, peering into the inside of a

computer tower. He was so patient with them, explaining what every single piece of hardware did.

Roman had a station dedicated to computer software and Microsoft training programs. Four girls sat at computer screens while he explained how to use Microsoft Excel. It even looked like he was teaching them how to use formulas.

He saw me walking by, and gave me a little wave.

I passed a table where one adult volunteer was teaching origami. The next station was more elaborate and spread out: Bill was showing a cluster of girls how to use different grains of sandpaper on a piece of wood. A variety of other woodworking tools were on the table behind him. After that was the welding and metalworking section of the community center, but it was empty today because the volunteer was only here to teach on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

Finally I came to the back corner. Vic was standing with a wide stance, gently shifting his weight from one foot to the other. His fists were up in front of his face.

“Keep your hand up like this,” he was telling the six girls in front of him, who were trying to mimic his stance. “When you throw a punch, you’re not just using your arm. You’re using your whole body. You need to *twist*, like this.”

He demonstrated a punch. All the girls copied him.

“Yeah! Just like that!”

“How’s the Vic army coming along?” I asked.

“Not my army, Shamrock,” he said. “Just makin’ sure they can protect themselves. And they’re all naturals. They’ll be beating up boys on the playground in no time.”

“The purpose is *self-defense*,” I pointed out.

Vic grinned at me. “Sure. Self-defense. Right, girls?” He winked at them, and they all giggled.

I tapped my watch. “Be ready to leave as soon as we close up, alright?”

“Got my bag all packed, Shamrock.”

The thirty-six girls all continued learning at their stations until their parents came to pick them up. On weekdays we were open until six o’clock, so parents could pick their kids up after work, but today was Saturday so we closed at noon. Most of the girls hugged me as they left. That warmed my heart even more than the knowledge that they were learning new skills they could use in life.

It feels good to pass on some luck, I thought as the last girl departed.

We put away all the equipment, then locked the building and turned on the alarm. Then we rushed home, collected our luggage, and drove straight to the airport.

“Excited?” Roman asked me on the plane.

“I am!” I said. “It’s been a while since we’ve had a vacation like this.”

“It’ll be just another day at the office for me,” Danny pointed out.

Vic scoffed at him from across the aisle. “Ain’t always about you, kid. Shamrock needs it.”

“I do need it,” I said.

Our flight to Atlantic City was smooth and uneventful, with a layover in Charlotte. We took a taxi to our hotel, which was right on the boardwalk.

“Want to relax in the room?” Roman asked.

“Relax is totally a euphemism,” Danny said. “I know what Roman really wants.”

“Don’t act like you don’t want it too,” Roman shot back.

“Just making sure we’re all on the same page.”

“I want some action,” I said with a grin. “But not with you three. Let’s go downstairs!”

I hadn’t gambled in Las Vegas in years. Not since *that* night. It

was too risky, even sports gambling. I didn't want to do anything to draw the attention of the Vegas casinos. I knew they would be watching my every move.

But out here in Atlantic City...

I grinned widely as we walked out onto the casino floor. The smells awoke years of nostalgia in me: freshly-cleaned carpets, the felt card tables, even the faint scent of cigarette smoke. The sounds of different slot machines filled the air with videogame-like noise.

"What do you want to do first?" Roman asked me.

"Slots," I said. "Let's go find a Wheel of Fortune slot machine!"

We found one over in the back corner. It was occupied by a customer, so we stood around and waited until they finally left. I sat down and fed a twenty dollar bill into the machine. The screen flashed to show my balance.

I pulled the lever. The slot columns spun, then came to a stop.

"Aww," I said when I didn't win anything. "Bad start."

My luck had never returned since that night in Vegas. It was gone forever. Sometimes that made me sad. Like an appendage that I had lost, tingling with ghost-sensations. Part of me was gone, and it would never return.

But it made the act of gambling more exciting. When you expected to win most of the time, it got boring. Now every time the slot machine chimed with noises when I won, I got even more excited than I ever did in Vegas.

Vic played the slot machine next to mine while I continued playing, while Roman and Danny watched me. After a few minutes I cashed out, then took my ticket over to a blackjack table. Ten minutes there and I had lost everything.

"It's less fun when you're a mere mortal, huh?" Danny teased.

"I'm having *plenty* of fun," I said, giving him a quick kiss. "Let's play craps!"

We found a craps table that had room for us, then placed some bets. Another gambler was throwing the dice, so I was just making side-bets. We won on the come-out roll, and then I woke two out of the next three rolls.

“Okay, I’m out,” I told the croupier.

“Really?” Roman asked. “After only a few seconds?”

“I’m quitting while I’m ahead!” I said cheerfully.

Vic patted me on the back. “Smart girl.”

Vic and Roman played a little bit longer, then we went to find a restaurant to get dinner and drinks. After two gin fizzes, I was feeling pretty good about the vacation.

“It’s nice to get out of town, even if we came to a different gambling spot,” I said.

Roman brushed back his dark hair. “I used to travel a lot more for my job. Since I started working remotely in Las Vegas, I kind of missed it. So yeah, thanks for bringing us out here.”

Vic raised his drink. “Thanks for bankrolling it, Shamrock.”

“You guys have been so good at the community center,” I said. “I wanted to make sure I thanked you.”

“The girls are easy,” Vic replied. “Most of them *want* to learn self-defense and these other skills, but they were always told they couldn’t.”

“Opening the Lucky Girls Community Center was the best decision you ever made,” Danny said. “Aside from hooking up with the three of us.”

“That was a pretty good decision,” I agreed. I studied the ice in my drink. “Seeing the three of you mentoring those girls... it kind of makes me want some of my own.”

Each of them became very still. “You serious, Shamrock?” Vic asked.

“This isn’t the kind of thing you should joke about,” Roman

said solemnly. “Do you mean it?”

Danny blinked rapidly while waiting for my answer.

“I’ve been thinking about it for a while,” I admitted. “Seeing you guys with those girls... I finally understand when women say their ovaries twitch. I think I’m ready to start a family. One big family, with all of you. If you’re ready too, of course. I don’t want to derail any of your plans for—”

“Oh *hell yeah*,” Vic interrupted, scooting his chair around. He wrapped me in a big bear hug. “Been wanting to put a baby in you for a long time, Shamrock.”

“Really? You never said anything!”

“Roman and I are ready too,” Danny said. “We actually kind of talked about it a few months ago. We were waiting for you to bring it up.”

“I want a whole bunch of girls,” Vic said. “Like, five of them. A basketball team.”

“Boys for me,” Roman said. “A little Roman or Danny junior.”

“Three boys would be fantastic,” Danny said with a huge grin.

“Woah, woah, woah,” I said. “Eight sounds like a lot. Let’s focus on the first one, okay?”

“When do you want to start trying?” Roman asked.

“Well, it just so happens that I forgot my birth control. I left it in Vegas.” I sipped my drink to hide my smile.

“What would you have done if we said we *didn’t* want to start a family?” Danny asked.

“I guess we wouldn’t have had sex on the trip,” I said.

Vic barked a laugh.

Roman put down his drink and smirked at me. “What are we waiting for? Let’s get upstairs and start working on it.”

I tingled with excitement. “But our food hasn’t come yet.”

“The only thing I want to eat,” Vic growled, “is *you*, Shamrock.”

I threw down a hundred dollar bill and we hurried upstairs to our hotel room, eager to start a family of our own.