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To Begin Again

Chris Allen
&
Jim Tritten

Elke, her face pressed against the airplane window, felt her husband Robert tugging at the sleeve of her Fair Isle ski sweater.

“Darling,” he said, “the flight attendant is talking to you.”

Elke looked past Robert to the male flight attendant, whose belt was at eye level. She stared for a second, then looking upward. Strong jaw and a warm smile. Blonde hair with a hint of white. Emerald green eyes, late forties. For half a second, Elke’s eyes shot up in surprise. For goodness sakes, she wasn’t that old. Men had been flight attendants for years now, but then they’d never exuded the masculine magnetism like this one.

“Another Pinot Grigio?” he asked with the hint of a Teutonic accent.

“Please,” Elke said, taking another look out the window at the snow-capped mountains, before turning back to Robert.

“Do you think it will have changed much?” she asked him.

“Mount Adelbert?” he asked.

She nodded. The flight attendant returned handing Elke her Pinot, Robert a Manhattan, before disappearing as quickly as he’d appeared. The benefit of First Class: attentive yet subtle service. Elke looked to see the attendant and his very tight little tushie vanish behind the curtain. She sighed and raised her glass of wine in Robert’s direction.

“Here’s to second honeymoons,” she said.

“Here’s to thirty years,” he responded.

Elke tapped her glass against his. “A good thirty years.”

Robert set his glass on the tray table. “So, what do you think about Adelbert,” he said, “do you think it will have changed?”

“Since 1986?” She laughed. “Yes, I’d have to say it’s probably changed significantly. I’m guessing there might even be Wi-Fi.”

Robert smiled at her, tilted his seat back and closed his eyes.

Wine in hand, Elke released the lock on her seat and leaned back, allowing her mind to drift back to the tiny village tucked away high in the Alps. Adelbert was in the east of Switzerland, far from the crowds of St. Moritz or Davos. It was a quiet hamlet with world-class skiing and shopping, upscale dining, and secluded chalets. A perfect honeymoon spot and now their destination for a significant anniversary.

Our very own undiscovered gem, Robert had called the place.

Not quite their very own. Elke settled deeper into her seat, remembering the first time she’d been in Adelbert. It was 1981, five years before she’d marry Robert; she was twenty-two years old and alone on vacation. She had been determined to spend two weeks focusing solely on her skiing, concentrating on becoming the best skier she could.

That's how she met Terry, her instructor at *AdelbertÉcole de Ski*. Tall, broad-shouldered, tapered hips, with blonde hair, weathered skin, and pale blue eyes. Terry was the quintessential ski instructor physically, and his constant teasing and good humor made him the model instructor mentally, as well. In short, Terry was the perfect teacher. One might even say, the perfect man. For two weeks, every day, from early morning to late afternoon, they'd be on the mountain, where Terry brought Elke from a wobbly beginner, afraid of the bunny slopes, to a confident skier, eager, yet not quite ready, to tackle the black diamond trails.

And at night? Off the mountain?

Terry once again was the consummate teacher, and Elke the eager student. Even thirty-five years later, she remembered every detail: The charming hotel room with the leather furniture and antique desk; the bed, feel of the flannel sheets, the smell of the fireplace and the crackle of the fire; the touch of Terry's expert hands, his tongue teasing her. Terry had introduced her to being a fulfilled woman, and she had never experienced lovemaking like his ever again. She sipped her wine, breathed in ever so slowly, and shivered.

The flight attendant must have noticed her shiver, for suddenly he was there in the aisle, offering her a blanket. Elke grimaced and sensed the flush erupt in her face. She hadn't realized her memories were making a public spectacle.

She smirked as she waved away the attendant, sinking back into the past. Terry had been such an enthusiastic lover, passionate yet silly, making her laugh, even as she responded to his magical fingers that played her like a musical instrument, being satisfied completely and repeatedly. Afterward, they'd lie in bed, Terry still touching her, stroking her hair, massaging her neck and shoulders, and singing under his breath: "She'll tease you she'll unease you...she's got Bette Davis eyes."

She laughed now. *Bette Davis eyes. Not at all.* Elke Schmidt-Andersen was not that kind of woman. Next to her, Robert snored softly. He was what society touted as the ideal husband, steady and rock solid. Always there to ground her from her flights of fancy. He'd given her a comfortable life; everything money could buy. No worries. She was grateful. Robert deserved her loyalty, and yet here she was, thinking not of him but instead, of Terry. And that handsome flight attendant. She hadn't thought of Terry on her honeymoon. In fact, she'd given *AdelbertÉcole de Ski* a wide berth, shocking Robert as she taught him what Terry had taught her.

Either Robert was not the student she had been, or she was not the teacher Terry had been, for her husband never quite took to skiing, or lovemaking, the way Elke had hoped. Although an efficient, purposeful skier or lover, Robert was not one to take risks or get silly afterward.

Now thirty years later, they were headed back to Mount Adelbert, and she was preoccupied with Terry: Would he still be there? Would he remember her? Would he look the same, act the same? Was he now flabby and bald? Elke shook her head; this was no way to head into her thirtieth wedding anniversary.

Unknown to Robert, she'd even booked lessons at *AdelbertÉcole de Ski*.

She finished her wine, set it on the table tray, put her seat into its upright position, and glanced over at Robert, still sleeping; he had his eyes shut, and his hands folded across his chest. To Elke, he appeared the same as the first time they met. Of course, his hair had grayed and thinned over the years, and he'd put on a few pounds, but his eyes were still the same warm brown. Kind and gentle. He was such a noble man, but theirs had been such a tiresome marriage.

He stirred, then opened his eyes. "I had the impression you were staring at me. What's up?"

Elke took his hand and brought it to her lips. "Nothing. Just thinking what a lucky woman I am."

The Adelbert airport was just as Elke had remembered it: small, with only two baggage carousels; yet cosmopolitan, with people from Germany, France, and even Japan milling about, chattering as they collected luggage and ski equipment. Elke and Robert waited as the empty carousel went around and around.

"I hope they haven't lost it," Elke said. "That'd be a hell of a way to..."

A familiar and soothing Teutonic voice beside her interrupted: "In all my years, we've never lost so much as an overnight bag. I'm sure you'll be fine."

Elke followed the sound of the voice; it was the flight attendant.

Robert nudged her. "There they are," Robert said, pulling two matching bags off the conveyor with distinctive airline club identification tags, and placing them at Elke's feet.

The flight attendant smiled and said, "See, we always keep our luggage with our passengers."

"That's all, right?" Robert asked her. "Nothing more?"

Elke shook her head. "All our equipment, I shipped straight to the hotel."

"Then we are good to go," Robert said, taking her by the elbow and leading her toward customs.

One final glance—bordering on a stare—at the handsome flight attendant in his sharp blue uniform with wings on his jacket. She sighed, and then shook her head. The younger man was still smiling at her. Elke slid her arm through Robert's, as they made their way through the terminal and outside, where the temperature was brisk and the ground covered in fresh white snow.

Robert put his arm around Elke's shoulder and pulled her close, kissing her hair. "Beautiful," he said, his breath fogging the air.

In the morning, the sun barely up, and the snow fresh and powdery, Elke and Robert checked in at *Adelbert École de Ski*, a dark wood building with heavy doors, wide windows, and decorative lattice work at the roofline. The two approached the sign-in desk, where a young pink-cheeked woman, with a regional white blouse and *dirndl* outfit adorned in silver, asked if she could help them. Robert asked for an instructor who specialized in "nervous beginners."

Elke shook her head in disbelief. "Beginner?" she asked. "After all the times we've been skiing, you think you're a beginner?"

"Simply being prudent," he responded.

“But, Robert, I’ve....”

“I know, dear, and don’t think I don’t appreciate what you’ve taught me; however, I believe that I’m entitled to *one* lesson before I venture onto the slopes.”

Even though he was smiling, his words stung. She shrugged. Hardly an auspicious beginning.

Another young woman, dressed in a red and white ski jacket, grabbed Robert by the arm and danced him across the floor. Elke watched them leave, listening as the young woman chattered, “You’re going to love skiing, I promise. It’s just *so* much fun.”

Elke turned back to the sign-in desk, “I don’t suppose by any chance you still have an instructor named Terry Miller?”

“Terry?” The young woman raised an eyebrow and grinned. “Of course Terry is still here. He is one of our most popular advanced instructors. But your husband indicated you were beginners. I have you scheduled with Rolfe this morning.”

“He was speaking for himself. Terry was my instructor some years ago. I would like to continue with him. You know, pick up where we left off.” Elke immediately regretted her choice of words.

“Ah, well in that case, let me see....” She flipped some pages in the appointment log. “Ah, yes, Terry will be in at ten o’clock, in about fifteen minutes. He isn’t available until this afternoon. Shall I re-book him for you?”

Elke’s again sensed her cheeks flush, and she lowered her eyes. “Yes, please.” Just the thought of seeing Terry again wiped away the years and the petty annoyances with Robert. She giggled. She actually giggled. She hadn’t giggled in years, not since her first visit to Adelbert.

Smiling, she walked away from the desk to look at a display of ski hats. At that moment, she heard the door open. Heart racing, her head shot up, thinking it might be Terry; maybe he was coming to work early, maybe he’d heard she was in town, maybe....

But it wasn’t Terry. Instead, it was the flight attendant. And he was walking her way, carrying a pair of skis over his shoulder. *What a hunk*. Turning away, she picked up the nearest hat and was putting it on her head, when he said, “excuse me,” Elke pretended to be preoccupied, and again felt her face heat. She hoped the blush did not show.

“Excuse me,” he repeated. She bit her lower lip to control herself and turned her head, an eyebrow raised.

“You were on the plane last evening, right?” he said. “One of my passengers?”

Eyebrow still raised, Elke said nothing.

“I want to apologize,” he told her. “For my comment at baggage claim. About how we’ve never lost anyone’s luggage. It was presumptuous.” His smile lit up the room.

Elke continued to say nothing and realized her jaw was hanging open. She closed it by faking a cough.

“Are you OK?”

She smiled, “Yes, I’m fine.”

He put down his skis, took off his gloves, and patted her back.

“Thank you.”

“Again, I’m sorry. I shouldn’t have said that to you. I was tired from four flights in a row. I got caught up in the excitement of being off work. I wasn’t thinking. Happens a lot to me—the not thinking.”

He smiled, green eyes crinkling, and Elke realized she was smiling back.

“Friends?” he said, extending his hand.

Elke took off her glove and sensed an electrical charge as she shook his hand. “Of course. My name is Elke Schmidt-Andersen.”

“And I am Caspar Schmidt!” He bowed from the waist, clicked his heels, raised her proffered hand to his lips, and kissed it.

She raised her free hand to her lips and quivered. Stuttering, she joked, “So perhaps we are distant cousins?”

“Perhaps. My family is from Switzerland? And yours?”

“They emigrated from Bavaria. I guess there are lots of Schmidts all over the world.”

“So we are, as you Americans say, no more than ‘kissing cousins.’ You look like you are in search of a ski instructor or a ski partner. New to the slopes?”

“Not at all. I’ve been skiing for many years. I just want a brush up on my technique, and I signed up with an instructor I know.”

“Well, I will detain you no longer *gnädige frau* and wish you a very pleasant day on the slopes. Perhaps our paths will cross again sometime.” With that, he saluted, picked up his skis and walked away.

She watched his high and tight posterior as he walked into the hotel lobby, the door opening and closing. Before she could even process the encounter, she heard a booming voice envelop her, “Elke? Elke Schmidt, is that you?”

She whirled. She’d have recognized Terry’s voice anywhere. And there he was: as tall and broad shouldered as she’d remembered. His sandy blond hair hadn’t lost its glow; the light blue eyes still welcomed her into his embrace. There were new lines around his eyes, but happy lines. *He’s glad to see me.* Elke couldn’t believe how handsome he looked and how fast her heart was beating.

He raced across the room, grabbed her in his arms, and lifted her off her feet as if she weighed nothing. “My God, woman, it’s been years! How have you been?”

Placing her gently back on the floor, he held her at arms’ length, appraising her. “You haven’t changed a bit,” he said. “Same blond hair. Bette Davis eyes. The works. What are you doing here? Vacation? More ski lessons?”

She knew she had blushed, and he laughed.

“Seriously,” he said. “It’s so wonderful to see you.”

Dropping her gaze, she said. “It’s good to see you, as well. And, yes, I booked you for a lesson this afternoon.”

“And afterward?” he asked playfully.

Elke shifted her feet and whispered, “I’m here with my husband.”

Terry winked. "I don't have a problem with that."

He leaned down, kissed her cheek, and hurried off to the booking counter, leaving Elke standing there in the middle of the hat display to wonder what any of it meant. *Bette Davis eyes? He remembered. That's what it meant. He remembered. But did he still want her? And what did he mean: he didn't have a problem with that? A problem with what?*

Elke paced the hotel room, waiting for Robert to return from his lesson. She couldn't get her mind to quiet. Terry had remembered her; he'd hugged her, lifted her high in the air, and flirted. Yes, he'd definitely been flirting. The mention of Bette Davis eyes. And that flight attendant, Caspar, he was flirting with her as well. She hummed "Bette Davis Eyes" to herself. When Robert entered the room, she rushed to him, threw her arms around him, and whispered.

"Honey, let's do it, okay? Right here. Right now. Just screw my brains out."

"Screw your brains out?" he pushed her away from him and looked with a questioning face. "You don't talk like that."

"Make love then. Honey, I need you. Right away. That's all I'm saying. My entire body needs you. There's not a place on it or in it that doesn't need you. Please, honey, please. Take me. Please." She wrapped herself around Robert and jumped on his hip.

Robert dropped her off his side and disentangled her arms. "Elke. What's got into you? Give me a minute; I just got back from skiing, and I'm all sweaty. I need to clean up first."

Robert disappeared into the bathroom, and Elke flung herself on the bed, fully clothed. When she heard him start a shower, she slid out of bed and undressed, padded across the floor to the bathroom. She'd surprise him, climb into the shower with him, soap him up one side and down the other. It had been years since they enjoyed an intimate shower.

She turned the knob, but he'd locked the door. Why should that surprise her? Robert had always been prudish that way. Still, it was their second honeymoon, their thirtieth anniversary. Elke slunk back to the bed and lay there, eyes closed, tears starting, when she heard the bathroom door open. She waited for his touch and clenched her teeth as she felt Robert lay on the far side of the bed.

She rolled towards him. Perhaps she could salvage this yet. She kissed him and moved her fingers over his body. Feeling no response, she used all the techniques Terry had taught her so many years ago, including that little thing with her index finger; she tried to bring Robert to the level of excitement she and Terry had so easily achieved. Finally Robert reacted, and she visualized it was Terry. She was amazed how fast she satisfied herself and how she still wanted more. She wanted Terry, and she was going to see him this afternoon. Elke continued enjoying the moment, lost to her body, unsure of how many times she'd responded.

Robert grunted and she knew he was spent. Elke smiled and wondered if Robert had noticed she wasn't thinking of him. She rolled away onto her back. She saw Robert turn away onto his side, and immediately begin to snore.

Elke got up from the bed and walked over to the mirror on the back of the bathroom door. She scanned her face. Some lines, some wrinkles, but not bad for someone in her fifties. Still got what it takes to attract younger and hot men to boot. One hand smoothed the skin under her chin

and down to folds in her neck. *The years have changed a lot. But then, what did you expect?* She appraised her tummy—still reasonably tight. No kids after all. *My body.* She turned sidewise and saw her ample yet well-smoothed *derrière.* *Not quite like a young girl but it's all yours Terry.* Looking down at her legs, she smiled and thought she would show them off tonight with those black high heels she bought for the trip.

She glanced at Robert sound asleep on the bed and went into the bathroom, singing to herself: “She’ll tease you, she’ll unease you...she’s got Bette Davis eyes.”

At three o’clock, Elke met Terry for the refresher lesson. The brisk air froze her exposed skin as they shushed downward on immaculately groomed trails through the pines decorated with hoar frost. Elke took in the crisp cold air and snuck glances at *GaëlleBerg*, crowning the horizon at over 10,000 feet. The valley below was covered in pristine white snow punctuated by the frozen blue water of Lake Adelbert.

During the lesson, Elke studied Terry. He was joyous, funny, and attentive, but focused more on his skiing than on her. She worried she’d misread the situation that morning and felt embarrassed, nearly humiliated that she’d thought he still had feelings for her. She flushed, remembering her interlude with Robert and how she’d pretended it was Terry touching her, satisfying her.

Terry motioned to her to stop at the next rest area, where they huddled beneath a building open on all four sides. Elke was chilled but exhilarated by the workout, emboldened to bring up the past.

“We certainly had a wonderful time all those years ago, didn’t we?” she ventured, head down but peeking up at her former lover.

Terry threw back his head and laughed. “If by wonderful, you mean the best sex and skiing I’ve had in my life, then yes, we had a *wonderful* time all those years ago.”

He put his arms around her, pulling her close and snuggling the top of her head with his chin. “We could have it again.”

Elke’s heart leaped. *He does have feelings for me.* Then she thought of Robert back at the hotel, so oblivious. The years they’d been together had not been bad ones. How could she even think about throwing them away. They’d built a life together. Her friends and colleagues. What would they think? How would they even know? It wasn’t their business. It would be so easy. She saw a fantasy; herself skiing all day, just as she’d done so many years ago, then falling into bed. So easy. So...so magnificent. Like before. But then she thought of Robert back at the hotel.

He deserves better.

“I’m married,” she whispered.

He smiled at her. “Doesn’t matter to me.”

“I’m here on my wedding anniversary. My thirtieth.”

“A cause for celebration. You should do something special.”

Elke nodded. *It was a cause for celebration.*

“Let me take the two of you to dinner,” Terry said. “Tonight. DaVittorio? You do still like Italian, don’t you?”

“That’s a bad idea, Terry. We’re on our second honeymoon.” *Last thing I want is a threesome for dinner.*

“All the more reason to let me take you out. My treat.”

“I couldn’t do that.”

“As friends, Elke,” he said. “Old friends.”

Still, she hesitated.

“I promise, I’ll do nothing to make you uncomfortable.”

She smiled tentatively. “I don’t know. It sounds awkward, Terry.”

“You know me. I won’t make it awkward. It’ll be fun, Elke. Trust me.”

“Okay, I suppose. However, you do not need to treat us. Robert and I are perfectly capable of paying for our own anniversary dinner.”

Terry’s booming laugh should have been infectious, but her stomach tensed, as he took her hand, leading her back to the slopes.

She could have sworn he was humming “Bette Davis Eyes.”

The moment they arrived, the *maitre d’* seated Elke and Robert at a table in the corner against the windows with a premium view of Lake Adelbert.

Robert pulled out her chair and reached for her napkin to place it on her lap. Elke slapped his hands away.

“I’m not a child, Robert. I can take care of a napkin or two.”

Robert’s eyebrows shot up.

“I’m sorry,” Elke said. “It’s been a long day.” *And this is going to be a bit awkward.*

He smiled and took the chair across from hers, looking out the window.

“Beautiful,” he said.

Beautiful? Does he not know any other adjective? Beautiful. What about romantic? Gorgeous. Anything but the same old beautiful.

Elke scanned the room for Terry. Instead, on the far side of the restaurant, closest to the kitchen, she spotted Caspar, the flight attendant. *If I was a cougar, what I could do with him. Like that time...* She glanced back at Robert, who was busy rearranging his place setting, moving his water glass closer to the plate, the wine glass farther; and moving his salad fork, so it was at the top of his plate instead of to the side. For thirty years, he’d been rearranging his place setting, wherever they went. “Making it right,” he said. *But why now? Why tonight? Couldn’t he just be less anal?*

Elke noticed Robert’s eyes flickering up and to her left, and heard Terry’s voice:

“There they are. The newlyweds.”

Elke’s heart rate increased and she tried to suppress a blush.

Robert stood, extending his hand, as Terry approached the table; they shook. Terry grinned, as he sat.

“You must be Robert,” he said. “Elke spared no detail in describing you, and I must say she did you justice. I’d know you anywhere.”

Terry turned then to Elke. “He’s every bit as handsome as you said.”

Elke stuttered, but no words came out of her mouth. *What an ass I am.*

Robert smiled. "I'm afraid Elke told me nothing about you."

"Really," Terry said, his eyes back on Robert.

To Elke, it looked as if Terry were appraising her husband, his gaze moving appreciatively from Robert's face to his hands. Terry turned his attention to Elke.

"You told your husband nothing about us?"

Elke's stomach knotted, as Terry once again turned to Robert.

"I was her first."

Elke felt the wind leave her chest empty.

Terry laughed, "Her first ski instructor. Years ago."

Elke's head swam as she struggled to regain her composure.

"I detect an accent?" Robert said. "American?"

"Idaho. Elke said you were from Boston? A professor now in Heidelberg?"

Robert nodded and picked up the menu.

"And do you enjoy it?" Terry asked.

Robert laid the menu down. "Enjoy it? I've never considered doing anything else, so, yes, I suppose I do enjoy it." He smiled at Terry. "And I expect you enjoy what you do?"

"Wouldn't do anything else. Had the opportunity to take over my dad's ranch, but I turned him down. I prefer the slopes to branding cattle."

These two guys are really hitting it off. I might as well be in another room. At least we've gotten off my past experiences with Terry. "How about we order?" she said to the two men.

"Absolutely," Terry said. "And the check's on me."

Robert and Elke both started to object.

"I insist," Terry said. "You are my guests. It's the least I can do for your anniversary, seeing Elke again, and meeting you, Robert. May I recommend the baby octopus in green sauce with the Bergamo-style polenta? DaVittorio is known for it."

"No, I think I'll stick with some *schnitzel* and *spätzle*."

Elke ordered the specialty of the house, as Terry suggested.

They enjoyed their food and two bottles of wine. Over *crêpes suzette* and Amaretto, Terry leaned back into his chair, clearly feeling the liquor, and looked at Robert with narrowly squinted eyes. "Robert, I think Elke and I owe you an explanation."

"No," Elke said, shaking her head vigorously.

Robert's eyes twinkled. "That you were lovers?" He leaned towards Terry and placed his hand on the other man's. "I'd already surmised that."

Elke felt as if she'd been caught naked in the middle of the street.

"Ahh," Terry said, "then it makes what I'm about to say all the easier. I still find her very attractive."

"Yes?" Robert said.

"Terry," Elke said.

“But, Robert, I find you at least as attractive, if not more. And you are such an intellectual, an academic. A real challenge to me. A change of pace from the standard athletic types that haunt these slopes.”

Elke glared at Terry and spurted, “I’m an intellectual.”

Robert smiled at Terry. “I find you attractive, as well.”

“Robert?” Elke’s voice rose an octave.

Terry smiled merrily. “What are we to do with such a predicament? Or should I call it an opportunity?”

“Robert,” Elke said. Neither man responded.

“Robert,” her voice raised to almost a shout. She saw nearby diners take note of the conversation and move close together and whisper.

“Robert, this is not an *opportunity*. This is not anything. Stop it.”

Robert turned to her. “Darling, surely you’ve suspected or at least wondered. You’re an intelligent, beautiful woman. Sexy. Have you never asked yourself why we are intimate so infrequently and why it takes me so long to be satisfied?”

Elke again felt the air rush out of her lungs. For a moment, she thought she might faint. Had their marriage, their entire relationship, been nothing but pretense?

“Elke, you must have known,” Robert inquired.

“No,” she said and glowered at her husband. “I don’t know.”

“Does it matter?” Terry asked.

Elke whirled to face him. “That my husband’s gay and my entire life’s been a lie? Yes, it matters. What in the hell’s wrong with both of you?”

Robert got to his feet. “I see no reason to make a scene, Elke. This changes nothing. I still love you.”

Elke stared at her husband in amazement. *Who was this man?* She watched as Robert helped Terry to his feet and said, “Beautiful.”

Terry glanced at her. “Why don’t you join us?”

“Join you?” Elke shrieked. “I’m not joining you. Not now. Not ever. Jesus.”

Elke glared at the two men walking off together across the restaurant, Robert’s hand resting on Terry’s ass. *Great second honeymoon.* Robert was right. How could she have not known? Her hands covered her face, and she shrank back into her seat. All those graduate students over the years. Always male. The field trips. The choir practice. *I was an idiot.* No, she wasn’t. Robert was the idiot for not being honest with her.

She got to her feet, planning. First things first, she’d get a separate hotel room, a flight home in the morning; she’d move Robert’s possessions into the spare bedroom. She should demand he leave, but perhaps her own apartment would be better.

The waiter approached, bearing a leather wallet with green tassels. He handed the folder to her. *They’d stuck her with the bill?* She sat back down, began rummaging through her purse for a credit card. *Could this possibly get any worse?* Then she checked the total of the bill. *Three bottles of wine? The amaretto? The octopus? What had she been thinking?* She settled the bill

and headed out of the restaurant, but at the entrance, hesitated. She turned...awareness a bit foggy from the wine.

Caspar was still at his table, alone.

What do I have to lose?

Elke slinked across the room. She saw him watching her and wondered if he had seen the scene with Terry and Robert. She didn't care.

Caspar rose and pulled out a chair. *Guten abendgnädige frau.*

As she sat, she extended her fingers to the top of his forearm, and growled like a cougar.

“Kissing cousins it is then.”