

~ Georgia On My Mind ~

by Alex Tryst

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Disclaimers: These characters are of my own creation, except for one, Isaac Mizrahi. He is a real person, and I tried to keep him as true to himself as possible. No infringement was intended. This story is about two women (big surprise there) who are doing all right in their respective lives until they meet each other, and that's when mayhem ensues. I should mention as well that some of my old favorites make an appearance, so if you are a fan of "Love in Photographs", you will enjoy seeing Torrance, Helen, and company. If you have not had the pleasure of reading "Love in Photographs", just know that this book will definitely spoil that one, so you might want to read it first. However this is not a sequel by any means and can stand by itself. I just think you'll find more pleasure in the minor players in this work if you have read that one. As far as things to look out for, there is violence such as gay bashing and racist and homophobic remarks, so please be aware. And one last thing I should note. I tried to actually write out the southern accent the best I could, so please go lightly on commentary of the speech. This is my first attempt at affecting a drawl in dialogue.

Dedication: As always to my wife, you are my fondest wish. To the inspiration for the title I credit the song "Georgia on My Mind" sung by the one and only Ray Charles. This is a perfect title given my leading southern lady. Of course in my own way I also thank my blonde muse who has been the star of several books now and more to come I'm sure. Of course I cannot forget my beta reader who has kept me motivated on more than just this book.

Now on with the show.....

Dust whipped and whirled behind the convertible as it sped up the long dirt driveway toward the farmhouse. Blake was on her way to her late great aunt's place after spending the morning running errands in the small town not too far away. The Georgia summer sun beat down in torturous rays, but the thirty-seven year old hardly noticed. She was too involved with her blaring music and the scenery of the cotton and peach plantation to even note the heat. Farmhands were in the fields and waved at her as she passed on her way up to the house. Being the executor of her great aunt Millie's estate, the tall brunette attorney had stayed behind after the funeral services to take care of some last minute business, but finding the rural home relaxing, she decided to spend time there on a leisurely working vacation.

Pulling up in front of the house, Blake put her sunglasses on top of her head and grabbed the grocery bags sitting in the back seat. Running up the front steps, she consulted her watch, knowing she only had a few minutes before a phone conference with some of her fellow partners at the small firm she and a couple of friends had started. Quickly putting her things away, she grabbed a soda out of the fridge before taking to the makeshift office she had set up in the library to check her e-mail. Within moments her cell phone rang.

An hour later the tall woman was diligently discussing an upcoming case with her colleagues when there was a rap on the screen door of the house. Wondering who could be calling, she took the phone with her as she moved to the foyer. Seeing a little blonde woman standing on her porch, she approached cautiously as she told her partners to hold for a moment.

"Hi there. May I help you?" she inquired with a friendly smile at the petite woman in a sundress.

"Um, hi. My name is Georgia Carmichael." she introduced. "My mama, Cindy, used to look in on your great aunt everyday."

"Oh, yeah. I met her at the funeral. I'm Blake Erwin." Seeing that the blonde was holding something that appeared to be heavy, she opened the screen door. "Here. Let me help you with that." she offered. Speaking into her phone, she said, "Guys, I'm going to have to call you back in a little bit. Some business has just come up I need to take care of. Continue on without me." Closing her phone and clipping it onto her belt, she reached for the package Georgia was holding. "Come on in, Ms. Carmichael."

"This is from Mama. She thought you might need somethin' up here."

The brunette looked down at the basket full of an assortment of food, including her favorite, a homemade pie. "Well, you must thank your mother for me. This is quite a nice surprise. Could I get you something to drink?"

"Oh, no. I cain't stay. Mama just wanted me to drop that off while I was doin' errands. She wanted me to ask you though if you wanted to come to supper at our place tonight?"

Unsure of how to respond, Blake shrugged her shoulders. "I wouldn't want to impose on your mother's generosity. She's being too kind already."

"She insisted I make you say you would, so I cain't go until I get a yes outta you." the little woman teased lightly. "She's even askin' me to make another pie." she enticed.

"You made this pie?" Blake asked. "What kind is it?"

Georgia nodded. "Peach."

"Sweet Georgia peach. My favorite." the tall woman stated lowly as she met blue eyes. A slight blush rose to the chef's cheeks under the praise. "Well, Ms. Carmichael, I think I will have to accept then. Could I bring anything?"

"Just an appetite. My mama loves to feed people. Why don't I swing by on my way back from town and pick you up?"

"Sure. Do I need to call your mother and accept?"

"Nah. She knows you're comin'."

"That confident in your abilities, is she?" Blake joked.

The blonde shrugged. "I wouldn't have left 'til you said yes, so it's just better you gave in quickly. I should be back between 5:00 and 6:00. Is that okay for you?"

"Sure. I'll try to wrap up my business early."

"All right. I'll see in you in a bit then." Georgia said.

"Looking forward to it, Ms. Carmichael."

"Call me Georgia." the blonde insisted with a pretty smile as she backed out the screen door.

"Only if you call me Blake. See you later." Watching the pixie move down the stairs and to an old dirty truck, Blake wondered about her visitor. Georgia Carmichael was a vision and a welcome sight for her eyes. The attorney hadn't seen many attractive women, in her opinion, since she had come down to Stillwater, Georgia. Most of the women she had seen were poor farmers who had spent too much time in the sun, which had aged them before their time, but the little blonde was like fresh air among the dust. Her fair hair and skin gave her a glowing look, and blue eyes sparkled as she spoke. Shaking her head to clear her thoughts of the little angel, Blake moved back into the office to continue her business.

At 5:00 the tall woman was sitting on the front stoop talking on the cell phone with her on again off again girlfriend when she spotted the blonde's truck coming up the drive. "Hey, baby, I have to go. My chauffeur has just arrived. I'll talk to you later tonight though. Okay, Cara?"

"Where are you going?"

"One of the locals that used to look in on Aunt Millie invited me to dinner. I really have to get going." she said as Georgia gave a friendly honk of her horn. "We'll talk more tonight."

"I still want to come visit you down there, Blake." she insisted.

"I hear you. We'll pick a weekend, but right now I have to hang up." she said, her voice growing slightly irritated that the clinging woman wouldn't let her off the phone.

"All right. Fine. I'll call you later. Don't have too much fun without me though."

Standing and waving at the blonde as she got out of the truck, Blake tried to end the call yet again. "I won't. Talk to you later. Bye, Cara."

"Bye, Blake."

"Sorry about that, Georgia." the attorney apologized as she clipped her phone to her black belt.

"That's all right. You certainly wash up well. You're all dressed up and lookin' fancy."

The brunette looked over her own outfit. She was so used to wearing suits that she hardly even considered it being dressy, so she thought herself casual in the black slacks and royal blue dress shirt. Smiling at the little woman, she shrugged. "This is what I always wear. It's okay, isn't it?"

"Oh, yeah. You look fine. Everybody knows you are a city slicker anyway. You dressin' like us can't change that." Georgia teased. "Come on. Dinner should be 'bout ready, and Mama doesn't like people bein' late."

Joining Georgia in the truck, Blake looked at the passing scenery as they idly chatted about her great aunt. Ten minutes later they pulled up to a double wide trailer. Blake had never seen such a residence before, but she said nothing as she slid out of the passenger's side and followed the small blonde up to the door. As soon as they walked in, they heard a woman's voice call, "Georgia, is that you?"

"Yeah, Mama. It's me, and I've got Blake with me."

The older blonde popped her head around the corner and smiled. "Well, hey there, Blake. So glad you could make it."

"Thank you for inviting me, Mrs. Carmichael. This is an unexpected treat."

Gesturing to the living area, Georgia asked, "Blake, did you meet my daddy?"

The burly dark-haired man stood from his recliner and gave her a smile. "Hi. I'm Melvin Carmichael." he introduced.

"Blake Erwin." she replied extending her hand to him. She noticed him look at it before reluctantly shaking it.

"Well, take a seat. Georgia, why don't you go help your mama finish dinner?" His daughter nodded and left, leaving the two of them standing there. "Please sit." Melvin gestured to the dingy couch, and the brunette took the offered seat. "So, not to pry or anything, but whatcha gonna do with the farm?"

"I don't exactly know, Mr. Carmichael. I was thinking of selling it. No one in my family has the interest in taking it up as a full time residence, but it is a nice vacation house. My Aunt Millie cared a great deal about the place and the people that work there, so I need to consider them as well like she would want me to. I just don't know. I've been contacted by some interested parties about buying, but I'm not thoroughly convinced it's the right thing to do."

"Well, I personally think it's a shame that your daddy left you down here to deal with the problem all alone." he mentioned taking a sip of beer from the can that had been sitting on the side table. "Makes you wonder what kind of a man he is."

Blake mentally rolled her eyes. She was used to more progressive thinking, but deciding it would not be wise to insult her host, she answered, "Actually, Mr. Carmichael, my father has nothing to do with my great aunt's estate. Millie was my mother's aunt. Not only that I'm attorney in charge of her estate as well as being her financial advisor for the past ten years. My father wouldn't have even known where to begin on such a project as this. He's just a history professor at a small private college."

Georgia's father grunted in reply. "Still a real shame." he grumbled.

Unsure she would be able to carry on a conversation with the man in front of her, Blake stood. "I think I should probably offer my help in the kitchen. Excuse me."

Going into the kitchen area, she found mother and daughter both standing there in aprons putting the finishing touches on their meal. Looking up the younger blonde gave a little smile. "Whatcha you doin' in here, Blake? You need somethin'?" Georgia inquired.

"I was just wondering if you needed help. Is there something I can do?" the attorney inquired returning the grin. Georgia looked adorable to Blake standing there in her sundress and apron, her blonde hair pulled back off her face and blue eyes twinkling.

"We're just fine. In fact it's time to eat." Cindy said.

Blake picked up the mashed potatoes as the other women got the rest of the food and moved to the table. The four of them sat down to a traditional southern feast of fried chicken, mashed potatoes, biscuits, corn, and green beans. "This looks delicious, Mrs. Carmichael." complimented Blake.

"Thank you, Blake, but I want you to call me Cindy."

"Well, Cindy, I don't think I've had a meal that looked this good in ages."

"I figured as much bein' up there all alone at that house. You feel free to come to dinner over here any time, sugar. Any relative of Millie's is always welcome in this house."

"Thank you, Cindy. That's very kind of you."

As the meal began, Cindy inquired, "So, Millie used to tell me stories 'bout you. Is it true that you are an attorney in New York?"

"Yeah. A couple of friends and I started our own law firm a few years ago. I also am a CFP on the side. I do all right."

"What's a CFP?" Georgia asked curiously.

"That means Certified Financial Planner. Between financial planning and court cases, I stay

pretty busy. This has been the first time I've been away from New York for more than a week in years. Even though I'm still working, this seems like a vacation."

"Do you know what you're gonna do with the farm yet?"

"No. I was just telling your husband that I've had some offers to buy the place, but I'm not sure. I haven't gone threw the books completely yet to see what it would even be worth. It's up in the air for now. I do want to think about the people that have been working for my great aunt for years. I know she wouldn't want them to be without jobs after all this time, so I want to consider that as well."

"Millie used to tell me sometimes that she wanted to sell to the farmhands before she got too old to run it by herself. She always put those people first."

"What do you mean sell it to the farmhands? You mean like being partners?" Blake asked in interest.

"Yeah. She used to say that they could each buy a piece from her and that she would only keep enough to live off of. I think that's what she wanted, but she never got a chance to see it through."

"Do you know if she ever mentioned this to them?"

Cindy shrugged. "I don't really know."

"That's not a half bad idea." Blake stated taking a bite of her potatoes.

"She always had interesting ideas." Cindy said with a smile as if she was remembering Millie. "I always was concerned with her livin' up there by herself though. Never made good sense for an old woman to live alone in that house."

"Well, Aunt Millie was a tough one. She was fiercely independent. She never took my advice about getting a new place but at least she had Bruce for protection." she mentioned, referencing the great dane that was her great aunt's pet. "He misses her."

"I'm sure he does. He was the most loyal dog." Cindy stated. "He guarded her like she was the Queen of England."

Blake smiled. "Yeah, he did. He's a good dog. I don't really know what to do with him either. He's a little big for my place in New York, but he's a good dog. I'd like to see him have a good home. Maybe one of the farmhands will take him. There is really so much to do, but I'm also swamped with work from home. This is just going to take some time."

After dinner was over, Georgia suggested that Blake join her over at the local bar for drinks with some friends. Being that the tall woman had no other plans, she accepted the offer, so after profusely thanking Cindy for the dinner, she followed the little woman back out to the truck. As

soon as they had pulled out onto the main road, Georgia mentioned, "Most of my friends and I go up to the bar here on Friday nights. There's not a whole lot to do in this town as you've probably already realized."

"I noticed. You know, we never got a chance to talk about you over dinner. What do you do?"

"Oh, I'm an elementary school teacher, but since I'm on summer vacation now, I don't have much to do."

"Do you enjoy it? How long have you been teaching?"

"Just a few years. I like it all right."

"Just a few years? Could I be really intrusive and ask how old you are?"

"I'm twenty-five. Why? How old are you since you asked first?"

"I'm thirty-seven. I was just curious, because you seem so young yet mature at the same time. I couldn't quite figure you out. I had you in my head as your late twenties."

"No, not quite there yet." the blonde joked. A few minutes later they pulled up into a dirt parking lot. Blake looked at the building where loud music was blaring. The structure looked like a converted barn, and she wondered what type of people she would encounter in there. Following Georgia inside she heard the music die as soon as she cleared the doorway. All eyes seemed to fall on Georgia and her. "Everybody, this is Blake Erwin. She's Millie's great niece, so everyone be nice to her." Georgia introduced. Turning to Blake she asked, "You wanna a drink?"

"Yeah, sounds good. What do you want?" The two of them moved over to the bar. The attorney looked around cautiously as they waited for the bartender to come over to them. Knowing the size of the building and the size of the bar, Blake figured something else had to occupy the space as well, but there seemed to be only a small door just beyond the far side of the bar leading to the other side of the building. "What's back there?" she inquired curiously.

"Oh, there's a small restaurant that is a part of the bar, but I hardly ever go over there. You cain get everythin' over here that you cain there, but you don't have to sit down at a table if you don't want." she answered with a smile as the bartender finally came to them. Georgia ordered a beer and Blake a double shot of whiskey. After Blake had paid for both beverages, Georgia said, "Come on. Let me introduce you to some of my friends." They walked over to the pool table where a group of rowdy men and women were watching a game in progress. Quick introductions were made among the group before Georgia got pulled into a conversation with one of her girl friends, leaving Blake just standing by watch the pool game.

However within a few moments one of the men she had been introduced, Jack, asked her, "You play at all?"

"Sometimes. What about you?"

"Oh yeah. I'm the best player in here. No one cain beat me at pool."

"Well, I'd like to play you then, because none of my friends can beat me." Blake said with a smile.

"Let's do it then. It'll be good to have some new competition. I'll put us up on the board." he said moving to put their names on the list of players. When he came back, he inquired, "So, is it true what I hear around town? You're some sort of hot shot attorney from Yankee land?"

The tall woman laughed lightly. "Yeah, you could say that."

"And your Millie's great niece. She was nice woman. Sorry that she passed away."

"She was old and lived a long life. It was time." Blake stated with a shrug, trying to remain in composure in front of these strangers. She had always had a special relationship with her great aunt, so she was taking the loss particularly hard, but she didn't like showing her feelings to people she didn't know. Changing the subject she asked, "So, what do you do, Jack?"

"Not a whole lot other than own this hole in the ground. Most of the time I just enjoy lookin' at Georgia." he stated finishing off his beer.

Blake nodded as her eyes found the little woman too. "I take it you've known Georgia a long time?"

"Oh yeah. We played together as kids. Took me forever to convince her to marry me though." he mentioned.

"You and Georgia are married? She didn't mention that."

"Yeah, well, that's because she's grown into a selfish bitch that thinks she's too good for the likes of me." he snarled.

Blake looked back at the small woman. She couldn't imagine that attitude from the blonde from what she knew of her, but she wasn't truly sure given their short acquaintance. Finishing off her drink, she excused herself to get another one.

While she was gone, Georgia walked over to her husband, seeing that his eyes were on Blake as she made her way across the room. "Whatcha you thinkin'?" she asked looking at the tall woman as well.

He gruffly stated, "I was just thinking that you got yourself quite the city slicker boyfriend."

"What the hell are you talkin' 'bout, Jack?" she asked in annoyance.

"Oh, come on, Georgia. Look at her. She's dressed like a man for God's sake. She's got to be one

of them lesbians. What are you doin' runnin' 'round with her for? It's already bad enough for me to be known as the man whose wife ran out on him. Now people are going to think even worse with your hangin' 'round her."

"Jack, life isn't always about you. She's nice, and my mama likes her."

"And what about you, Georgia? You like her? You like her fancy clothes? You like that fancy car people have seen her drivin'? That's so like you, Georgia, wantin' things you cain't never have." he grumbled.

"I cain have them, Jack. It's you who cain't ever git them, because you are satisfied bein' the owner of some shit hole bar." she answered beginning to become angry with him as usual. He always had a way of grating on her nerves, and tonight was turning out to be no exception.

Blake noticed the conversation taking place as she waited on her drink to be made. She could tell just by looking at the blonde that she was unhappy with something Jack had said. She wondered what the story was between them to be married and yet seemingly not together. When they had walked in she noticed that Jack had been obviously involved with another woman, so her curiosity was peaked.

Going back to them with her whiskey, she asked, "What are you two so talkative about?"

"Um, Jack was just tellin' me that you played pool as well." Georgia lied pointing up to her name on the board.

"Yeah. Your husband here thinks he can beat me." she lightly taunted.

"Bet your bottom dollar I cain beat you, Yankee."

"You know, you're so confident, Jack, maybe we should both put money with our mouths are. What do you say? A little friendly wager?"

"Blake, he is pretty good." Georgia mentioned seeing that the brunette was reaching for her wallet.

"So am I, Georgia." she replied taking out a single bill. Tossing the one hundred casually on the table, she said challengingly, "Put up or shut up, Jack."

He looked at the money and then her. "Oh, this is too easy. Make it two hundred."

"What about three?" she asked putting two more hundreds down.

He smiled. "Three hundred. For one game?"

"One game, three games. Whatever you want. I'll win them all. Your choice."

"One game." he proposed pulling out his money as well.

"Fine. We'll lag for break."

Calling attention to everyone around the table, Jack announced, "Blake here has just put three hundred dollars on the table thinkin' she cain beat me. We're playin' next. I've got somethin' to teach the Yankee. Georgia, you hold the money."

Georgia did as what was requested of her, picking up the six hundred dollars for safekeeping and putting it in her pocket. She was anxious for her new friend, because she knew that Jack was a good player. Quietly she watched as the present game concluded and then Jack and Blake took the table. Standing next to each other, they lagged for the break. It was so close that a third party had to call it for them, determining that Jack had won it. He smiled in victory before asking, "Any last requests? What game do you want to play?"

"Let's play eight ball to make it more interesting." she said.

"Fraid I'm gonna run the table if we play nine ball?" he taunted.

"No. I just think this will be more a test of skill. Now stop stalling for time and break, Jack." she insisted, throwing his attitude right back at him.

Blake stood to the side as he began the game. He appeared to be a decent player, but the brunette was confident that she was better. She wanted to beat him, not for the money because that didn't matter to her, but she wanted to deflate that superior attitude he possessed. As the moments passed, he sunk several of his balls quickly but had left himself a difficult shot. Blake held her breath as he took his stroke. He cursed when he missed, because the cue ball was in a perfect position for Blake to take her first chance at the table.

Studying the table carefully for a few minutes, she planned out how she would proceed. Meticulously she moved around the table cautiously sinking all her balls. When she only had the eight ball left to shoot, she spared a glance at Georgia. Jack was hovered close to his wife mumbling something under his breath. Deciding to play it safe, Blake didn't show her usual cockiness and focused solely on her task at hand. Lining up to the ball, she eyed it painstakingly. One of Jack's was slightly in the way, making it more difficult, but Blake wanted it to be over, so she decided to go for it. Taking a deep breath, she took her shot. The eight ball bounced lightly between the two bumpers of the corner pocket before dropping.

"Dammit to hell!" Jack cursed throwing his stick on the floor.

Instead of flaunting her victory, Blake merely extended her hand to him in good sportsmanship. "Good game." she said.

"Double or nothing." he challenged, not accepting the defeat.

"I don't think so."

"Why not? Scared?" he pressed.

"No. I just don't want to take more of your money." she replied gesturing to Georgia for her winnings.

As the little blonde began to hand it over, Jack grabbed it from her. "Jack, give that back. Blake won that fair and square." Georgia protested.

"No! I demand a rematch!"

"You aren't getting one. Now hand over my money."

"No!" he yelled.

Shrugging her shoulders, Blake said, "All right. Keep it then. It's only money. I'll just file a report with the local authorities that you stole it. It's no big deal to me. Besides everyone here knows what you are if you keep that money." They held their stare for a moment before Blake turned around to head to the bar. Before she had even gotten two steps she felt a soft hand on her arm. She looked down into blue eyes.

"Here. Let me pay you." Georgia offered opening her purse.

"Forget about it, Georgia. You don't need to make up for his ignorance. You might be married to him, but he is his own man. You shouldn't have to clean up his messes. I'm just going to go get some air while he decides what he wants to do. Excuse me."

As soon as Blake was gone, Georgia turned to Jack. "Jack, how could you do that?"

"Do what?" he asked angrily.

"Steal her money, you fool! It's hers! She won it! Now give it back before you get into a whole mess of trouble!"

"No! She cheated!" he protested.

"Like hell she did! She beat you, Jack! Now give me the money! Don't be a prick!" the blonde screamed in fury.

Meanwhile Blake was outside looking up at the star-filled sky. She never saw stars in New York, so it was a rare treat to actually see the constellations of the night. Just then her phone rang interrupting her thoughts. "Blake Erwin." she greeted opening it.

"Hey, babe." Cara said. "Where are you? I just tried the number at the house."

"I'm still out. I'm at some white trash bar with my host's daughter. I just stepped outside for some

air. Man, I miss New York. It's so quiet here, and everyone is backwards." she complained.

"Then why don't you come home? It's been too long already. I'm missing you." her girlfriend purred seductively. "My bed is cold without you."

"My bed's been pretty cold too. Bruce is no replacement for your hot body." Blake replied in a whisper. "What I would love to be doing to you right now."

"Tell me."

"Oh, I'd love to have you stretched out on that rug of yours in your living room taking in the wonders of you body, your neck, your lips, your soft skin." she suggested.

"That sounds good, Blake. Then what?" Cara prompted.

Before Blake could answer though, she heard the door to the bar open emitting the noise from inside. Turning toward it she saw Georgia walking toward her. "Could you hold on for just a second, Cara? I need to take care of something. Be right back."

"Sure but know that I'm waiting."

Putting her hand over the receiver of her phone, she looked at Georgia questioningly. "What is it, Georgia?" Without a word she handed over Blake's money. "This isn't yours, is it? The money doesn't really mean anything to me."

"No. Jack lost, and he owes you. I finally got him to see reason. Sorry to interrupt your phone call. Just come get me when you're finished." she said before heading back inside.

Watching her go Blake wondered what Georgia had done to get her hands on the money. When she walked out, Jack was set on keeping it, so she hoped the little blonde hadn't acted foolishly on her behalf. Bringing the phone back up to her ear, she said, "Cara, listen. There is a problem I need to take care of. May I call you back in a little bit?"

"Blake, this is the second time you've done this to me today. What keeps being so important?"

"I think a fight is about to break out here, and I need to put a stop to it before it does. I'll call you when I get home."

"Well, I may or may not be here. I'm going out with friends."

"All right. If you aren't there, I'll call your cell. Please. I have to go now before this gets nasty."

"Okay. I'll talk to you later. Bye." Cara snipped hanging up without waiting for a response.

Heading back into the bar, Blake looked for Georgia. She saw her over in the corner with her husband. Jack had the little woman pinned against the wall as he freely touched the blonde in

intimate ways. Georgia's eyes caught hers from across the bar. It was clear to Blake that the petite woman was not a completely willing participant in the activity taking place. Suddenly the attorney realized what was going on. The blonde teacher had traded herself for the money. Anger moved Blake to action. Striding over to them, she pulled Jack away by the shoulder.

"Get off her!" she demanded.

He shot her a glare. "Don't tell me what to do with my own wife, Yankee!"

"Blake, what are you doin'?" questioned Georgia.

"Georgia, I told you the money didn't mean anything to me. It's not worth this." she explained pulling the bills out of her pocket. "Here, Jack. Here's your half back. Now you can leave Georgia alone." she said shoving it at him.

He sneered at her but snatched the three hundred from her. "Now get lost! This is between Georgia and me!" he yelled with a shove to her shoulder.

Seeing blue eyes showing fear, Blake didn't back away. "No, Jack. You might be married, but that doesn't give you the right to treat Georgia like a whore. I might be the only one here who gives a damn, but if you don't take your hands off her, I will hurt you." she announced boldly.

"Blake, don't do this." Georgia stated coming to stand between them. "I'm not worth a fight."

"Says who? Someone here needs to come to your defense. That's a husband's job, but if he's the one mistreating you, someone should step in. You deserve respect." she stated.

The blonde looked between the two tall bodies on either side of her. Jack was glaring at the brunette. Likewise Blake was treating Jack to a menacing stare. "You know what? I think we should call it a night. Come on, Blake. I'll take you home."

"Yeah. Take her home, Georgia, and then get your ass back here. We ain't finished." Jack growled.

With one last look at her husband, Georgia gently guided Blake out of the establishment. Both of them got into the truck in silence and rode that way for several minutes. "You know, not a lot of people have ever stood up to Jack." the blonde mentioned. "He's pissed."

"Well, he brought it on himself for being such an asshole. You don't actually love him, do you?"

"No, not any more. There was a time when I did, but that was a long time ago."

"How long have you two been married?"

"Eight years. We got married when I was seventeen. At the time it seemed like the right thing to do." she mumbled.

"Why so young?"

"Because I was pregnant." Georgia plainly stated.

"Oh. So, what happened with the kid?"

"I had a miscarriage after six months." she explained softly. "Things went downhill from there, and he never was quite the same."

"And yet you stay married? Do you still live together?"

"No. I live with my parents. What's the point in a divorce? I'll never find someone else in this town, and even if I did find a guy, he'd already know about what happened with Jack and me. No man wants someone else's wife. We just stay married, because it's cheaper than a divorce." Blake nodded in understanding. "What about you, Blake? Are you married? Do you have a boyfriend in New York?"

"No, I'm not married, no boyfriend either." she answered, deciding not to disclose her sexual orientation to her company. She still didn't know Georgia well, so she wasn't sure what her response might be to such a declaration.

"You're probably too busy for that anyway." Georgia commented.

"I am busy. I don't date much."

About ten minutes later they pulled to a stop in front of Blake's house. Bruce was sitting on the front porch eying the truck inquisitively. "Bruce is such a good dog. It's a shame you have to give him away."

"Yeah. He is a good dog. You want him?"

"I'll take him for you if that's what you want." Georgia answered.

"Maybe when I go back to New York. For now it's nice to have the company around this old house. He's a good watch dog."

"That he is. I'll see you 'round then."

"Yeah. Thanks for the interesting evening." Blake said opening the truck door.

Just as she was about to get out, Georgia touched her on the arm. "Blake, thanks for comin' to my defense. As I said no one has done that with Jack before."

"You're welcome. Someone needed to do it."

Giving a smile the blue-eyed blonde observed, "For a Yankee you certainly do have southern manners. I guess your mama taught you well."

Blake gave a little laugh. "I just know people deserve respect. Good night, Georgia."

"Night, Blake."

The attorney watched as the teacher pulled out of sight before going up to the porch. "How you doing, Bruce?" she greeted the dog, stroking the top of his head. "Let's go in."

The following Friday afternoon Blake headed into Atlanta to pick up Cara from the airport. The elegant brunette with the chocolate eyes smiled brightly at Blake when she saw her. They hugged tightly as Cara sneaked a kiss on her girlfriend's cheek. "I missed you, babe." she whispered. "I can't wait to get home and show you how much."

Blake grinned. "Sounds good. Let's get your stuff."

Quickly they gathered Cara's things and moved out to Blake's waiting convertible. "Wow. It's hot here." Cara mentioned.

"Yeah but you get used to it. Come on. It takes a couple of hours to get back to the house. I need to be back for a call at 4:00."

"I thought you weren't going to work while I was here." Cara pouted.

"This is the last call I have to take. No more after this one. I promise. We'll have the weekend to ourselves to do nothing, and I mean nothing. There truly is nothing to do here."

"Sounds perfect. That means there will be nothing to distract you." Cara replied slipping her hand onto Blake's thigh.

Blake shot her girlfriend a seductive smile. "Oh, I know there is plenty that we can come up with. I have quite the list already." she teased.

When they arrived back at the house, Blake had just enough time to put Cara's bags upstairs before getting on her call, leaving her girlfriend to her own devices. A few hours later Blake was finally finished for the weekend. Having heard the screen door earlier, she figured Cara had gone outside onto the porch. Stepping outside she called for her girlfriend. Cara responded that she was around the corner on the wrap around porch.

Walking around to where the suspended porch swing hung, Blake found the brunette sitting there in a light flowing skirt, cotton blouse, and sandals reading. "You look beautiful." Blake complimented stepping closer.

Cara blushed at the comment. "You are such a charmer. Are you finished now?"

The tall woman nodded as she came to take a seat. "So, what shall we do now?" she asked casually even though she knew the look Cara was giving her well. The smaller woman was interested in something intimate.

"Oh, I don't know. I have a few ideas." she stated pulling Blake in for a soft kiss that quickly turned passionate. "I missed you, Blake." Cara whispered as her girlfriend took to her neck.

"I missed you too, Cara." Blake answered as her hands came up to Cara's ample endowment on the outside of her blouse. After a few minutes, she suggested, "You want to go inside?"

"Let's stay here. We've never done it like this before." she responded starting on her girlfriend's shirt buttons. Blake reacted in kind beginning to lift Cara's top over her head. As her pale skin came into view, Blake devoured it with fervor, relishing the feel of the soft skin. She always loved the feel of the little woman's body. It was her favorite part about dating the smaller brunette, the benefits of being able to touch such a heavenly creature. Dipping her head lower, she teasingly circled the crest of Cara's left breast. Cara whimpered urgently pressing the attorney's head in deeper.

Georgia and her mother were driving home together after running errands in town. As they neared Blake's driveway, Cindy suggested that they stop to check in on the tall woman. Nodding in agreement Georgia turned their truck into the drive that led up to the house. She pulled the car to a stop a few moments later.

"Doesn't look like she's here." her mother mentioned.

"No. Her car is here. I'm going to go knock."

"If she is home, invite her over for dinner tonight. I'll just wait here." Cindy said deciding to stay in the car.

Georgia nodded before going up to the porch. The door was open, so she knocked on the frame of the screen. "Blake? Are you home?" she called. However there was no answer. Knocking a second time, she patiently waited on an answer, but when no one came to the door, curiosity got the better of her. She knew someone had to be there with the way the house was completely open. "Blake?" she called again moving around the porch, thinking that the woman might just be outside.

Suddenly she heard loud panting and moaning coming from the side porch. Drawn toward the noise, Georgia wondered what it was. However then she heard a female voice exclaim, "Oh, Blake! Right there! Oh, God! Fuck me, baby! I'm so close!" Rounding the corner, what Georgia saw made her freeze in complete shock. Blake was kneeling on the porch, her face buried in the chest of another woman, who had her legs wrapped tightly around the attorney's bare, muscular back. The porch swing creaked as the tall woman thrust in time with the brunette's hips. Both of them were heaving and groaning from the exertion.

"Cara." Blake moaned as her girlfriend began to climax around her.

"Blake." she replied. However a scream then escaped her, scaring Blake.

"Baby, are you all right? Did I hurt you?" she asked, but seeing Cara's gaze fixed over her shoulder, she turned to see the wide eyes of Georgia Carmichael. "Shit! Georgia!" Blake exclaimed in surprise trying to extract herself from her girlfriend's clutches.

Seeing Blake turn around and expose her bare torso brought Georgia out of her trance. "Oh my God. Oh my God." she stuttered turning immediately and running back for the truck.

Instantly Blake grabbed her shirt and took off after her. "Georgia, wait!" she screamed covering herself as she ran. She met up with the blonde as she was beginning to back the truck out of the driveway. "Georgia, stop the truck!" she pleaded grabbing onto the driver's side door, but the little woman refused.

"Sweetie, what's wrong?" Cindy asked at her daughter's peculiar behavior. However a movement on the porch caught her eyes, and she saw another woman standing there disheveled as Blake.

"Georgia, please, stop the truck. I can explain." Again Georgia said nothing but shook her head adamantly as she peeled out of the driveway. Standing there watching the dust flying up behind the truck, Blake cursed, "Fuck!"

"Who was that?" Cara asked as Blake made her way back to the house.

"Just one of the locals and her mother. They've been checking on me while I've been here. I didn't want them to find out about me this way though." she grumbled.

"Nothing that can be done about it now, Blake. It's done. Come on. Let's go inside." Cara enticed. The attorney agreed with a nod and took the outstretched hand of her girlfriend.

Georgia was shaking as she sped away from the house. "Sugar, what's wrong? What happened?" Cindy asked of her daughter.

"They were... they were..." she tried to start but her voice failed her.

"They were what, honey?"

"Havin' sex." Georgia managed to get out.

"Oh." Cindy stated in shock herself.

"I saw them havin' sex." the blonde mumbled with a shudder as tears began to stream down her cheeks.

"Are you all right to drive? You seem awfully upset."

"I saw them havin' sex." she stuttered again.

Cindy nodded. "Why are you upset by that? Is it because Blake was with another woman? Does that bother you, honey?" she asked reaching to tuck a piece of blonde hair behind her daughter's ear.

Turning to her mother, Georgia asked, "Don't you think it's weird?"

Cindy shrugged. "Well, I don't know. Millie told me 'bout Blake so long ago that I just kinda got used to the idea. In fact I never really thought about it until now."

"You knew? Why didn't you tell me? Jack was right!"

"What do you mean Jack was right? What was he right 'bout?"

"She's one of them lesbians! He tried to tell me, but I didn't believe him! I've never seen two women havin' sex!"

Cindy sighed. "Georgia, she's still the Blake I know you like. I could tell how curious you were about her last night. Nothin's changed."

"Nothin's changed? Everythin's changed! Oh, God. Was she hittin' on me at the bar when she stood up to Jack? He thought so!"

Seeing her daughter starting to become hysterical, Cindy put a consoling hand on her arm. "Calm down, Georgia. You just need to take some deep breaths. I'm sure Blake wasn't hittin' on you. If that woman was her girlfriend, then why would she have reason to hit on you? I'm sure she was just bein' nice."

Covering her forehead with her hand, the little blonde asked aloud, "And I just tore out of there. What am I gonna do? How cain I even look at her now after that?"

"Well, you'll think of somethin'. As far as I'm concerned, Blake is Millie's great niece, and I like her. She will still be welcome at our house, so you need to decide how you feel 'bout this."

"Mama, do you think it's okay for them to be together like that?" hesitantly Georgia inquired.

"It's not my place to say, sugar. I don't even give it thought."

The following morning Blake and Cara were up early to do errands in town. Their first stop was the grocery store to pick up some things for the next week. They were minding their own business when Blake heard Georgia's unmistakable voice. Within in moments the little blonde and her mother had turned down the same aisle they were on. Instantly their eyes met. Blake just stood there, unsure of what to do, but to her surprise Cindy moved toward them.

Smiling brightly she said, "Good mornin', Blake. How are you?"

"Good morning, Cindy, Georgia." When the older woman looked toward Cara, the tall woman said, "Cara, this is Cindy and Georgia Carmichael. Cindy, Georgia, this is Cara Lebowitz."

"So nice to meet you, Cara." Cindy said with a smile, but Georgia said nothing, instead breaking the gaze.

"Mama, I'm just gonna go pick up that milk for you." she said excusing herself.

All three of them watched her as she walked away. With a sad look, Cindy turned back toward the pair. "Georgia told me what she saw yesterday. You just need to give her some time, Blake. I think she'll come 'round once she gets used to the idea."

Nodding in understanding Blake feebly said, "I didn't mean to scare her. We weren't expecting company."

The older woman held up her hand to stop her. "No explanation is needed, Blake. It's your place. You have a right to do anythin' you choose there." Looking at Cara she continued, "I'm all about people bein' happy, regardless of where they find it as long as they aren't hurtin' others. You deserve happiness, Blake, where you cain get it. Now if you'll excuse me, I should check up on my daughter. Nice meetin' you, Cara."

"You too." she replied. When Cindy had turned out of the aisle, Cara mumbled, "Wow. She's progressive for such a tiny town."

"Yeah. I wonder why." Blake questioned. "Well, we should finish this shopping. We have some other things to do."

Georgia swiftly moved toward the dairy aisle in an effort to get away from Blake as quickly as possible. Seeing the tall woman stirred strange feelings within her about the previous afternoon. She was in utter shock when she had stumbled upon them, but now she couldn't stop thinking about it. Her head held vivid images of the two of them in the throes of passion and the sight of Blake standing there in front of her half naked.

It seemed quiet obvious that each of them was enjoying the activity tremendously. Cara's face contained absolute bliss at what Blake was doing, which left Georgia with mixed feelings. Having only been with Jack, she couldn't recall emotions that were even close to those displayed in front of her. Part of her felt jealous of the pleasure they seemed to have with each other, because she never had felt it in her life, but even more, there was a part of her mind that just instantly seemed to open at the sight of Blake on her knees feasting upon a soft delicate woman.

Never in her life had Georgia ever thought about the fact that two women could be together that way. It was never discussed among any of her peers, so she didn't really know that type of relationship existed. However seeing how sensual they were opened her eyes and thoughts to other possibilities, and it stirred a place within her that she never knew existed.

That night when she had gone to bed she thought of Blake, the way she looked standing there in only her slacks, glistening sweat gently rolling between small breasts and down a flat hard stomach. Georgia's thoughts strayed as she imaged that she had stumbled upon her friend without Cara there. Blake walked to her and embraced her. Her own hands slipped around the strong naked back as her breathing hitched, but just as she realized she was fantasizing about the tall attorney kissing her, Georgia forced the thoughts from her mind. She didn't want to go that far with her imagination, but it was already too late. Her body had responded to the vivid fantasy, her body heat rising and breath catching as an unfamiliar sensation struck the pit of her stomach and between her thighs.

For the first time in her life, she felt out of control as she instinctively felt the burning need to extinguish the fire that had begun to run rampant through her. Before she even realized it, her body overrode her nature as a hand probed the aching want all the while thinking of herself in Cara's place on the porch swing. Blake was kneeling in front of her giving her all she desired.

Now as she saw the brunette all the improper fantasies she had that night in her bed came rushing back to her, making her unable to even look at the woman who had given her more pleasure in her mind than Jack ever had in body. Suddenly a hand on her shoulder made her jump, and she screamed lightly in surprise, coming back to the present.

"Georgia, are you all right?" her mother asked in concern.

She nodded. "I'm fine."

"Are you sure? I mean this might take some time. It's okay."

"I'm fine, Mama, really. I just wasn't expectin' to see them here." she stuttered flustered.

Cindy studied her daughter carefully a moment. She could clearly see how uncomfortable Georgia was. "Sugar, Blake is just a person. Who she goes to bed with at night don't make her who she is."

"I know. I just..... I just don't want to talk about it." she quickly snapped ending the conversation.

The following Tuesday after Cara had gone back to New York Blake was out in the front yard early. There had been a terrible storm the night before that had taken down one of the large oak trees, so she decided to take it upon herself to clear it. Even though she didn't normally dress so casually, she opted for a pair of khaki shorts and a sleeveless t-shirt with a pair of work boots. Going out to the tool shed, she took out the chain saw and dragged it out to the old tree.

It was mindless work, but it gave the brunette time to think about what had happened over that past several days. She hadn't been able to have two minutes alone with Georgia since the blonde found her in the compromising position with Cara. She felt terrible for scaring the little woman, which was rare for her, because she normally didn't care about what anyone thought. However there was something in those blue eyes at the moment of discovery that struck a chord with Blake.

From the moment she had met the petite woman, she knew she was attracted to her physically. It wasn't often that she liked unsophisticated women, but there was something about Georgia's innocence and sweet smile that struck deeply within her libido. In fact there were many times that she allowed her mind to wander to the possible wonders of the school teacher's body. That day when she and Cara were out on the swing, Blake's thoughts were on Georgia instead of her girlfriend. It wasn't often she let her mind fantasize during sex, but it had that day, especially since Cara had dressed so much like Georgia with the light cotton skirt and top. The elegant Jewish theater director looked so much like a country girl that afternoon, only further fueling Blake's desires for the one she knew she couldn't have. When Georgia accidentally happened upon them, Blake felt completely exposed, almost as if she knew Georgia would be able to see in her eyes that her lust was for the blonde.

Now Georgia wouldn't even speak to her, and Blake didn't know what to do. As much as she wanted to let the whole thing slide off her back, she couldn't. Something in her wouldn't let Georgia Carmichael out of her idle thoughts. The blonde permeated her thoughts at almost every available opportunity, so the attorney wondered if she would ever be able to bring closure to the situation at hand in any way. She just wanted a chance to at least apologize to the little woman for scaring her, but she didn't think that chance would come.

That morning when Georgia awoke finally, she came to a decision that she would confront Blake. It had been several days since the incident, and even as disconcerted as she was about what had happened and the new feelings she was experiencing, the longing to see the tall woman outweighed her embarrassment, so after dressing for the day in a pair of jean shorts and thin white cotton midriff blouse, she headed out to Blake's farm.

As she drove up the driveway however, her breath caught in her throat. There was Blake with her back to the driveway intently working on a fallen oak. Georgia watched for a few minutes taking in the way the brunette's muscles worked, displaying her obvious strength. The older woman was sweating from the exertion in combination with heat and humidity, causing perspiration to trickle down her naked limbs, and the blonde could see the pattern of sweat as it collected in the material of her shirt. The soaked garment clung to the musculature of Blake's back, outlining all the hardness under her skin.

Georgia gulped as her own body responded with a quickening pulse, but it was too late to turn around. She was already there, so she took a calming breath before giving a friendly honk of the truck horn to alert Blake of her presence. The tall woman turned as the blonde slid out of the truck and issued a genuine smile as she cut off the chain saw.

Coming within a few feet of her, Georgia nervously greeted, "Hi."

"Hey. How are you? What brings you here?" casually Blake inquired fighting her own nervousness at Georgia's sudden arrival.

"I wanted to talk to you if you weren't busy." tentatively the blonde stated.

"Not at all. I was just trying to clear this. You want a drink or something?"

"No. I'm fine. Thanks."

"Have a seat." Blake suggested gesturing to the massive tree trunk as she leaned against it.

Georgia had to jump a little to get up onto the trunk but then settled herself. A quiet moment passed. Finally though she said, "Listen, Blake. I just wanted to apologize for actin' so weird the last few days. I didn't expect to see what I did, and it really threw me."

"Well, I'm sorry that I scared you." Blake offered in return in an effort to ease the other woman's discomfort.

Georgia nodded. "Are we okay?" she asked.

"I don't know. You tell me, Georgia."

Georgia shrugged. "Well, um, I guess."

"It's okay if you need time, Georgia. I'll understand."

"I don't need time. I just never thought... never imagined seein' what I did. Could I ask you somethin'?" Blake nodded. "How did you ever know you were that way?"

"What way is that?"

Georgia flushed in mild frustration and embarrassment. "You know, liked girls instead of boys?"

Blake shrugged as she cast her eyes off toward the cotton fields. "I don't know really. The first time I kissed a girl I was eight, and I never thought of anything different since then. You know, Georgia, I know this kind of thing isn't normal around here, but in New York it's a regular part of life. Just as you might think of this as strange, I think some of the things that happen around here are strange, like you remaining married to a man you obviously don't love. Nevertheless I'm not judging you, so I would hope you would extend me the same courtesy." she stated with a slight edge to her voice.

Even though Georgia she had no right be feel offended by Blake's speech given her behavior over the past few days, it did hurt her feelings a little to have the woman she was coming to know thinking less than positively of her. "I'm not judgin' you, Blake. I was just truly surprised, and I needed time to adjust, but I'm over it now."

"Are you sure?" the brunette inquired looking down at the blonde. Georgia nodded as she looked into dark eyes. "All right. If you say so."

"So, cain we go back to bein' friends 'gain?" the little woman asked tentatively.

"Of course." Blake replied with a sexy smile.

"Good. You want to come over for dinner tonight? My mama wanted you to come over the night we came by, but that slipped my mind then."

Cracking a grin with a little chuckle, the attorney suggested, "Why don't you come to dinner here tonight? Your mother has been quite gracious with her meals, but I can cook. Why don't you join me for dinner instead?"

"Okay. That sounds good. What time?"

"How about 7:30? That gives me time to do some business."

"All right. We cain go to the old drive-in afterwards. The summer season just opened."

"The drive-in? You mean like drive-in movies?"

"Yeah. It's so much fun. Have you ever been to one?"

"No, I haven't."

"Then we have to go. You'll have a great time."

"Okay. Dinner and the movies it is. Will I see you at 7:30?"

"I'll be here. I should let you get back to work now. Have a good day." she said taking to her feet again and absent-mindedly brushing debris from the seat of her shorts.

"You too, Georgia. See you tonight."

Blake watched the blonde make her way over to her truck and casually climb into the cab. She waved at her as Georgia started it and circled the vehicle in the small turn around area before heading away. Shaking her head, she tried to clear her head of the image of the petite woman in such a skimpy outfit. Now that they were going to be friends again, she wondered how to handle the attraction she was feeling for the younger woman. Deciding to just let nature take its course, she turned back to her work, but as she continued to work on the tree, Georgia persisted in her thoughts.

That evening Blake was just putting the finishing touches on dinner when she heard a knock on the screen door. Bruce ran into the foyer to investigate with her following close behind. The teacher was standing there wearing a feminine summer dress and soft smile as Blake came to open the screen. Smiling at her the tall woman greeted her softly. "Good evening."

"Hi, Blake. I thought you might like this." she stated holding up a pie for the brunette's approval.

"A pie. You certainly know the way into my heart. I love pies." Blake joked taking the dessert.

"Thanks."

"You're welcome." Georgia replied with a slight blush. "Hi, Bruce." she said stroking the great dane's head as he circled her.

"Come on in. I was just finishing dinner." Leading the way into the kitchen, Blake gestured to the table. "Have a seat. This will just take a few minutes."

"Do you need any help?"

"Nope. I have everything under control. Just sit. What can I get you to drink? How about some sweet tea? I know that's pretty popular around here."

"Sure. That sounds good."

Blake poured two glasses and brought them to the table. "It took me forever to figure out how you people made it so sweet. Finally realized it was because you put the sugar in when it was still hot." she mentioned with a smile.

"You mean you Yankees don't have tea like this?"

"No. Most people up where I live think of tea as a hot beverage, and people rarely add sugar. You can hardly find plain tea anywhere in New York anyway. Most of it is chai or some exotic flavor."

"What's chai?" curiously the blonde asked as she idly mixed her tea with the spoon provided.

"It's a special kind of tea from India, very popular at coffee shops and stuff."

"You mean like diners?"

"No. I mean coffee shops. I've noticed there aren't any here. You ever heard of a Starbucks?" Georgia shook her head. Blake laughed. "Well, it's a big chain of coffee shops. There is one practically on every corner in Manhattan."

"And that's all the sell? Coffee?"

"Coffee, tea, other beverages, small snacks. It's quite the lucrative operation."

Nodding her head, the blonde asked, "So, what did you make for dinner?"

"It's a surprise. You'll just have to wait and see. Here. Let's start with the first course." she said bringing two small salads to the table and taking her seat.

Georgia looked down at her plate. The salad in front of her was not typical of other salads she often ate. The lettuce was not iceberg, and there were not carrots or tomatoes in it. Instead the

greens were dark in color. Mixed in the lettuce were walnuts, mandarin orange pieces and some sort of cheese she had never seen before. The dressing that Blake had sat in front of her looked like simple oil and vinegar. Taking the attorney's lead, she poured some on, and then took a tentative bite. She was surprised at the pleasant taste. "Are these spinach leaves?" she inquired.

"Yeah."

"What kind of cheese is this?"

"Goat cheese. That was virtually impossible to find around here. There was only one person in the whole grocery store that had any idea what I was talking about when I asked for it. This isn't the freshest there is, but it was all they had. It's better when it's fresh."

Georgia tried the cheese. "It's not bad."

"It's not what you're used to I'm sure." mentioned Blake taking a sip of her tea.

The small woman shook her head. "It's good though."

"So, what movie is playing at the drive-in? Do you know?"

"Actually they always start their summer season with 'Grease'. That's a pretty good one, don't you think?"

"Yeah, it's cool. That should be fun. I had no idea there was a drive-in here. I've never seen it."

"It's not in town. We have to go over to the next town, so that's probably why you've never seen it. There's no real reason to go over there otherwise."

After finishing their salads, Blake brought the rest of the meal to the table. Georgia didn't recognize the dish that the attorney had made. The brunette served them both while she took in Georgia's features in amusement. "You're wondering what all this is?"

The blonde nodded. "Nothin's fried." she observed.

"Nope. I don't eat that way normally. We have chicken with mushrooms in a wine sauce, baked potatoes, and sautéed asparagus with lemon pepper and butter. They are all good. Trust me. This is one of my favorite meals, and I don't look like I'm starving, do I?" she teased.

Georgia looked at her hostess. She had thoughts about the way Blake looked that she didn't vocalize, instead answering, "No, you don't look like you're starvin'." Picking up her fork, the blonde followed her friend's lead and tried each item. Giving a nod she said, "This is good."

"I told you it was. I wouldn't have served you something terrible. Even Bruce has learned to like it." she said holding out a piece of asparagus to her dog.

Georgia smiled. "You've grown quite attached to Bruce, haven't you?"

"Yeah. It's a shame to think I can't take him back to New York with me, but I just don't have space."

"What about a friend of yours? Surely you cain find a place to put him."

"Well, I do have these friends that live on Long Island. Maybe I can ask them, but they just had a baby not too long ago. I'm not sure how they'd feel about having such a big dog. All my other friends live in the city. I don't know. I just hate the idea of leaving him behind here."

"Well, if you do have to leave him, I'll be happy to take him for you."

"I appreciate that, Georgia. I know he'll be in good hands then."

They ate a leisurely meal before Blake cleared the table. "How 'bout some dessert?" Georgia suggested. "You do have this pie sittin' here."

"Would you like some? I do have some ice cream we could put on it."

"Only if you do."

"Sure. Let's break into it. What kind did you make this time?"

"Apple. Do you have a knife? I'll cut it and serve it up while you're workin' on those dishes."

Quietly the two of them went about their respective chores, but within a few minutes the kitchen was clean, and they were seated once again at the table to enjoy their homemade dessert. "Um, this is fabulous." Blake moaned appreciatively as she dove in for a second bite.

The sensuous noise made Georgia's insides quiver. She had never heard something so animalistic be so sexual at the same time, and it left her with an instant pang between her thighs. Wondering if Blake would do it again, she took a bite of her slice. Giving a little moan of her own, she said, "This is a good one."

Hearing the small sound escape the blonde, Blake exhaled quickly. The little whimper immediately had the tall woman's mind reeling with thoughts of what Georgia might be like when impassioned. Knowing that she would never have knowledge of something so carnal however, Blake desperately tried to focus on her pie. A few minutes passed in silence as they both ate their dessert. When Blake was finished, she leaned back in her chair and stretched her long legs out under the table.

"Well, that was absolutely perfect as usual. Thanks, Georgia."

"You're welcome." the blonde answered mimicking Blake's posture. However as she stretched her legs out, they brushed against the tall woman's. Being that the older woman had opted for a

pair of pressed khaki shorts, Georgia's bare calf rubbed against Blake's shin accidentally. They looked at each other for a moment as Georgia whispered, "Sorry."

"No problem." Blake replied quietly as the touch seemed to affect her ability to speak. Neither woman moved their legs however, allowing the touch to continue. After a moment the attorney looked at her watch. "What time does this movie start? It's starting to get dark."

"Um, I think it starts at 9:15. We only need about twenty minutes to get there, but if we want to get one of the better spots, we need to leave earlier."

"Well, it's 8:45. I guess we should get going then."

"All right. I just need to use your bathroom if that's okay."

"Sure. It's in the hallway." While Georgia went into the bathroom, Blake rinsed the last of their dishes before waiting on her company in the foyer. A few minutes later the blonde reappeared. "Ready?" Blake asked picking up her keys from the foyer table.

"Yeah. Are you drivin'?"

"Sure. Why not? I want to take the truck out of the garage anyway. Let's take that."

"Are we takin' Bruce?" Georgia asked as the dog came to the door to watch them prepare to leave. "We cain you know. It is outside after all."

"Would you mind if we took him?" questioned Blake.

"Not at all."

Smiling down at her dog, the tall woman asked in excitement, "What do you say, Bruce? Want to go with us?" He responded with a bark. "Guess that settles that then." teased Blake. "Let's go."

Going out to the garage, Blake lowered the tailgate of the truck for Bruce, who jumped in immediately with his tail wagging quickly. Shutting the tailgate, the tall woman looked at Georgia and grinned. "Now if I open your door are you going to wag your tail even half as happily?" she teased.

The blonde blushed brightly, but she gamely replied, "You'll never know unless you do it."

Surprised by the comeback, Blake moved to the passenger's side door and yanked it open in challenge. Georgia gave a little smirk as she moved to get into the truck. As hoisted herself up into her seat, she gave Blake a little sashay of her hips as she smiled over her shoulder at the tall woman.

Blake laughed at the small woman's antics to offset the jump in her libido. "You wag your tail pretty well, but I think Bruce still wins." she joked closing the door. Going to the driver's side,

she slid in. Neither said anything for a moment as Blake pulled the old truck out of the garage. Driving to the end of the driveway, she asked, "Which way?" As predicted the drive only took about twenty minutes, but they had to wait in line to pay before they could find a place to park. "Well, this is quite the happening place." the brunette mentioned as they found a place for the movie.

"We should back in, so we cain lay down in the bed. It'll be more fun that way." Georgia suggested.

"All right. Whatever you say." Blake did as she was told backing the truck into the space. Once the truck was situated the way the blonde wanted, they both moved out of the cab. "Do you want anything from the concession stand?" Blake offered as she watched the little blonde hoist herself into the bed of the truck without even pulling down the gate. "I'm going to go grab a drink."

"Okay. A drink would be good. Let me give you some money." she said.

"No. My treat. You and Bruce keep my spot. Be right back."

Blake returned just as the screen came to life. Handing both beverages to her company, she climbed up into the back of the truck and settled herself, so Bruce was lying cozily between the two of them. Neither of them spoke as they watched the opening credits begin. The brunette began to relax as the movie started, and she forgot about her nerves about the blonde's company. As her mind got more involved in the film, she idly began to caress her dog's sleek coat as he put his head onto her thigh.

It was only when her hand brushed against another that she even realized that Georgia was also stroking the dog as she watched the movie. Their eyes met for a moment when their hands grazed. The blonde gave a smile, which Blake returned before moving her eyes back to the screen. Both women continued to rub Bruce in affection, but neither seemed to mind when their hands touched every so often.

About half way through the movie, Blake's attention strayed as she started to look around the drive-in. The place seemed like a popular hang out. People were milling about chatting, and she could even see that some of the movie goers were more interested in making out in their cars than the film itself, including the car that had parked next to the truck. Hearing a woman moaning, Blake started to giggle.

"What's so funny?" Georgia asked.

Blake gestured to the car next to them. "They're having sex."

"No they ain't."

"Are too." Blake insisted.

The blonde had to see for herself and leaned over Bruce to Blake's side of the truck. Putting one

of her hands down onto Blake's thighs for balance, the little woman leaned over her completely to see the other car. Sure enough the couple next to them was definitely intimately involved. Suddenly with that realization, Georgia became sexually aware of her closeness to Blake. The skin under her hand was heating as the seconds passed, filling her with a strange power she had never felt before. She turned her head to look at the tall woman. From the outside Blake looked unaffected by her being so close.

Seeing those blue eyes connect with her own, the older woman wanted to whimper. Georgia was so close to her that she barely had to reach out to touch her face, and the little woman's hand shot sparks through her. She wanted to touch the teacher so badly at the moment, but she knew she couldn't. Just because Georgia accepted her didn't mean the blonde wanted her, so Blake merely held the gaze. They stayed locked in their look for an extended time before Georgia slowly pulled away from the woman.

"Guess they are." she conceded.

"Told you as much." Blake teased.

"I guess that's not so uncommon. A lot of people make out here."

"Have you?" questioned the brunette curiously.

Georgia nodded. "Yeah. Jack and I used to when we were teenagers, but that was a long time ago."

"Well, I bet it's an experience. I've never even made out in public before, except at a club." Blake mentioned.

"Really? You strike me as the kind of girl that's wild. Am I wrong 'bout that?" Georgia asked.

Blake shrugged. "I don't know. New York isn't the safest place in the world, so you kind of have to be aware of your surroundings all the time. That doesn't leave much room for making out in public."

The blonde nodded. "So, where's the wildest place you've ever done it then?" inquisitively the teacher asked.

"Hum, that's kind of tough. I have to think about that a minute. Well, there was this party I went to one time at the mayor's house. Cara and I had sex on the second story balcony in the snow."

"Did you get caught?"

"No. Everyone else was downstairs at the time. We had sex once at my friends' house out on Long Island out on their beach, but we did get caught that time."

"Really? Were you embarrassed?" Georgia asked intrigued.

"A little. My buddy Torrance and I have known each other since college, so it wouldn't have been that big of a deal if it had been her, but it was her wife Helen instead. I don't know there was just something about her finding us that made me a little embarrassed."

"Maybe you have a crush on her." Georgia teased.

"Me have a crush on Helen? Who doesn't? She's one of the most beautiful women I've ever met, and she's so sweet. She looks even better now that she's had the baby. Torrance got really lucky on that one." Blake stated lightly.

"They had a baby? Together?" the blonde asked.

"Yeah, a little boy. I've never seen more doting parents. Do you think that's weird?" the attorney asked seeing the look on her companion's face.

Georgia shrugged. "I'm just not used to it. That's not the way it is here."

Going back to the original subject at hand, Blake inquired, "Your turn. Where the most outrageous place you've ever done it?"

"I've never done it in any outrageous places. I mean inside the house, in the car, on the beach once. I guess it would have to be on top of the washing machine. Tell me more about Cara. How long have you two been together?"

"We've known each other a few years. She was one of Torrance's conquests long before she met Helen and introduced us about four years ago. We were friends at first, but one night about two years ago things changed. We had gone to Torrance's for dinner, and that's actually the night I met Helen for the first time. Cara and I both got a little drunk, and we ended up back at her place. We had sex, and we've just been casually seeing each other ever since. I like her. She's a nice woman, but she's not what I'm looking for in a wife. She's a little too clingy for me. After that night she would call me almost every day and demand my time. It was pretty bad in the beginning, because I think she felt more for me than I did for her, but things are better. She's backed off a lot and just let me go at the pace I want, which has worked out well."

"But if she's not what you want, why are you with her?"

"I know this is going to sound awful when I say this, but try to understand that I live in a sometimes dangerous city. Cara is quite good at what I want her around for. It's safer for me to put up with her outside of bed and know that I'm with someone who is sexually clean than to be with a stranger. She and I are both clean, and we're monogamous when it comes to sex. We both see other people but only sleep with each other. That situation suites me just fine at the moment."

"What 'bout her? Do you think she's fine with that?"

"Not totally. I know she'd rather be Mrs. Blake Erwin, but I've made it clear to her that isn't an

option."

"Maybe she's just hopin' you change your mind." Georgia offered.

"Well, it's not going to happen. Cara is not the woman I'm going to marry."

"If not her, then who? What kind of woman do you want?"

"I don't know yet. I hope that I'll recognize her though when I meet her."

"Me too. You deserve someone that makes you truly happy."

"So do you, Georgia."

"Yeah, well, I spoiled my one chance at happiness. No one wants to marry Jack's has been wife." she mumbled.

"If you don't mind me saying, Georgia, you have a lot more going for you than all the other women I've seen around here."

Georgia blushed. "Thank you for thinkin' that, but even if that were true, no one would even try to get near me in fear of Jack's wrath. He's still very possessive over me even though we ain't really together any more."

"I think there is someone out there for you, Georgia. You just have to be open to the idea of love again. You never know."

"I don't know, but I'm learnin' to believe." the blonde replied softly looking back at the screen.

Sensing the younger woman getting a little emotional, Blake reached out and placed her hand on top of the blonde's. Georgia felt the heat instantly scorch her hand and up her arm. Her breath caught in her throat making it impossible to breathe for a moment. Casting a shy blue-eyed glance at its owner, Georgia allowed her feelings to show for a fleeting moment.

The sudden way the blonde was looking at her made Blake gulp. She swore she read lust in those eyes, but not knowing the blonde very well, she wasn't sure. Deciding to err on the side of caution, Blake slowly withdrew her hand and felt the loss immediately. Focusing on the large screen, the tall woman slipped into silence to regroup her thoughts.

The rest of the evening passed quietly between them. Once the movie was over, Blake drove them back to her farm. Shutting off the engine next to Georgia's truck, she risked a look at the blonde. "Well, that was a lot of fun." she stated.

"Yeah, it was. Thanks for dinner."

"Any time." Getting out of the truck, Blake went to lower the gate for Bruce, who jumped out

and scampered up to the porch. However the tall woman lingered by the small woman's truck. "Thanks for taking me to the drive-in."

Georgia nodded becoming shy as the brunette closed her distance to a few feet. "You're welcome."

Blake decided to test the waters with Georgia. Reaching for the little woman, she embraced her in a hug. She felt the younger woman tense and then relax into the touch. They stayed locked for several moments. When Blake finally pulled away, she whispered, "Drive safely."

"I will." Georgia whispered, her voice failing her as abrupt sensations that overtook her. "You know the county fair is openin' this weekend. You wanna go?"

"All right. Sounds like fun. Give me a call later this week."

Continued in Part 2

~ New York series ~
Love in Photographs
Georgia On My Mind
Stick to the Script
Vows of the Heart

Alex Tryst's Scrolls
The Athenaeum's Scroll Archive

~ Georgia On My Mind ~

by Alex Tryst
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Disclaimers: These characters are of my own creation, except for one, Isaac Mizrahi. He is a real person, and I tried to keep him as true to himself as possible. No infringement was intended. This story is about two women (big surprise there) who are doing all right in their respective lives until they meet each other, and that's when mayhem ensues. I should mention as well that some of my old favorites make an appearance, so if you are a fan of "Love in Photographs", you will enjoy seeing Torrance, Helen, and company. If you have not had the pleasure of reading "Love in Photographs", just know that this book will definitely spoil that one, so you might want to read it first. However this is not a sequel by any means and can stand by itself. I just think

you'll find more pleasure in the minor players in this work if you have read that one. As far as things to look out for, there is violence such as gay bashing and racist and homophobic remarks, so please be aware. And one last thing I should note. I tried to actually write out the southern accent the best I could, so please go lightly on commentary of the speech. This is my first attempt at affecting a drawl in dialogue.

Dedication: As always to my wife, you are my fondest wish. To the inspiration for the title I credit the song "Georgia on My Mind" sung by the one and only Ray Charles. This is a perfect title given my leading southern lady. Of course in my own way I also thank my blonde muse who has been the star of several books now and more to come I'm sure. Of course I cannot forget my beta reader who has kept me motivated on more than just this book.

Now on with the show.....

Part 2

Friday evening Blake drove up to Georgia's house twenty minutes before five. The blonde was standing outside next to her father, who was hovered over the engine of a car. When the teacher saw her truck though she smiled brightly and waved. Blake followed suit with a wave of her own as she swallowed hard. The little woman was wearing a skimpy outfit that day consisting of short jean shorts and a baby blue cotton midriff with a pair of brown sandals.

The attorney suddenly felt overdressed in her khaki pants and short sleeve white shirt, but she had debated a long time on her attire that evening. She wanted to look nice for the outing and yet appear that she hadn't put too much thought into her clothes. She still wanted to seem as if she was on friendly terms with the blonde even though her thoughts had become more intimate since their acquaintance.

Georgia didn't even wait for Blake to turn off the engine. She merely kissed her father on the cheek and then scurried to the truck. "Hi." she greeted cheerfully.

"Hi. How are you?"

"Great now. What about you?" she asked.

"I'm good."

"Excited about your first fair?"

"Actually, yes. This should be interesting." the tall woman stated backing the truck out of the driveway.

"I need to stop at the bank quickly if you don't mind." Georgia said.

"No problem." Blake answered.

Ten minutes later they pulled up in front of the bank. "I need you to go in with me." the blonde said slowly.

"Why?" curiously the brunette inquired.

"Because they won't allow me in there without supervision." she admitted in embarrassment.

"What? Are you serious? Why?" she asked as she got out of the truck to escort the small woman inside.

As they cleared the doorway, the security officer that was sitting on a stool near the door stood at attention and stared at Georgia sharply as they neared the teller. Reaching the teller Blake observed the way they warily watched as the teller filled out a check for cash. With hardly a word said, the female teller quickly gave her the cash before the two women were stared out of the building.

Going back to the truck, Georgia mumbled, "Sorry 'bout that."

"What was that about? My God. They looked at you like you were about to rob the place."

The petite woman shrugged. "Yeah, well, blow up the bank once, and they never forgive you."

With surprise and amusement the attorney asked with a laugh, "You blew up the bank? When?"

"Jack was twelve, and I was ten. A bunch of us kids were playin' with some dynamite they had left at a construction site not too far from town, and we had lit it and were playin' chicken, seeing who would hold it the longest. Of course bein' the youngest and the only girl, I wanted to beat the boys. I held it for a really long time, but I guess finally Jack realized the danger and grabbed it from me, throwin' it as far as he could away from us. It landed in front of the bank and exploded. To this day everyone still thinks it was my fault."

"You're kidding me, right?"

"No."

"Wow. You are one wild girl, blowing up a bank. That's unbelievable!" she stated laughing heartily.

"Yeah, well, you try to live with that all your life." the little woman mumbled.

Continuing to laugh at the thought of a young Georgia actually destroying the bank, she casually opened the blonde's door. "Remind me never to leave you alone with explosives." Blake jested.

Georgia rolled her eyes as the attorney closed her door. It was only when the tall woman had

moved around to go to her side that the blonde realized the subtle action of being assisted into the truck had taken place. Wondering if Blake was feeling like her, she decided to see if the older woman showed any other signs of being interested that night.

Upon reaching the fair grounds, Blake parked the truck in the large lot full of other old cars and trucks of all sizes. She thought it interesting that it was the preferred mode of transportation in the area, everyone seemingly having one, because she found it somewhat difficult to drive given its size. She was so used to her little BMW convertible that a truck more than twice its size was a challenge. Blake watched as Georgia primped in the passenger's side mirror for a moment, playing with her flowing blonde hair and then applying pink lipstick.

"Are you ready yet?" joked the tall woman.

"Hey. I have to look good."

"Better than you already do? Who are you trying to impress?" Blake questioned lightly poking the little woman in her bare side.

"You mean other than you?" Georgia replied testing the waters.

Blake hadn't expected such an answer, but she played along, replying, "But I already think you look perfect." She eyed herself in the rear view mirror and ran her hands through her short dark hair.

"And just who are you primpin' for, Blake?" Georgia inquired.

"Other than you?" the attorney questioned teasingly.

Looking at her for a prolonged moment, Georgia asked, "Why don't you wear makeup?"

"Do you think I need to? Is my smile not enough?" she asked flashing a cocky one-sided grin.

"Your smile is perfect. Come on. I just want to see what it would look like." she pressed extending the lipstick to her friend.

However Blake didn't take it. Instead she challenged, "You want to know, then you have to put it on me. I dare you."

"Okay I will." Georgia stated opening it and leaning over to apply it. However just before she got to Blake's mouth, the attorney leaned back out of the way. Georgia wouldn't be dissuaded though as she leaned farther over the seat until she had Blake pinned against her door. When her hand was within a few inches of its destination, the attorney lightly grabbed her by the wrist, pulling it away from her mouth and twisting it gently behind the blonde's back. Instantly the little woman changed hands and came in with her left, but Blake then grabbed the other wrist as well, pinning it too. The action threw Georgia off balance and she found herself leaning into the older woman's body just to steady herself. The arrogant smile of victory graced Blake's face.

"Well, it appears as if you don't have any more options. You might as well give up." the brunette suggested. "You'll never get lipstick on me."

Determined to get the brunette regardless of the cost, Georgia gave a little cunning grin herself before pressing her lips firmly against the attorney's in an unexpected move. Blake shifted in her seat, moaning in surrender as the small woman's body pushed against her. Deliberately Georgia smeared the lipstick she was wearing across Blake's mouth before pulling away. She grinned triumphantly. "I won." she announced. "However you look silly. You should take it off."

Blake released her and pulled down the driver's side mirror. Sure enough the frosted lipstick was covering her lips. Wiping it off with the back of her hand, she mumbled, "You are one sneaky woman."

Georgia laughed. "I just always wanna win. Come on now. There is fun to be had."

Blake gave a nod as the blonde got out of the truck. She had no idea what had just happened to her, but Georgia's mouth felt so good on hers, and she wanted more. Wondering what the petite teacher thought of the experience, Blake pondered making a move or not. She swore she felt a faint touch of the tip of Georgia's tongue against her lips when the little woman kissed her, but she wasn't totally sure. The whole thing had just taken her by complete surprise that she barely had time to even respond before it was over.

Georgia pretended that what had just transpired was nothing, but her insides were quaking with an excitement that she had never felt in her entire life. The groan that had escaped Blake fueled her passion, and she felt intimate power for the first time. She was reeling from the idea of being able to direct someone else's feelings with just a touch. Casting a subtle glance at the older woman, she knew it would only be a matter of time now before she would want to try it again, and the thought of Blake being the recipient of her inquisitive efforts sparked a flame within her.

Walking closely together, they made their way up to the gate. Blake bought two tickets even though Georgia protested, but the attorney just brushed off the objection. Instead she handed the blonde her ticket and curved an arm around her shoulders to direct her over to the fair entrance. Even though the teacher knew they were probably receiving looks, she didn't care at the moment as the heat of the attorney's strong body enveloped her. Once inside however Blake ended the contact and allowed Georgia to guide her around the fair grounds.

The smell of food filled the air. Blake however wasn't exactly sure what it was though except to realize it was making her extremely hungry as her stomach made its presence known. "You want to grab something to eat? I'm getting hungry." she mentioned.

"Of course. The food is best part 'bout the fair. What're you in the mood for? Somethin' sweet?"

"I'm always in the mood for something sweet." Blake growled sexily. "But I need something of substance first. What is there to eat?"

"How 'bout a corn dog or some fries? You cain have just about any kind of terrible junk food you want. You have to save room though for funnel cake."

"Well, I guess we should start with the corn dog then. Take me to them, woman." she demanded holding out her hand to be led.

Georgia took the opportunity and grabbed Blake's hand, pulling her off in the direction of food. However as they approached the stand where the corn dogs were, she dropped their link as she noticed several of her friends hovering around her mother's booth. "Hey, y'all." the blonde greeted. Blake greeted them similarly.

"Well, if it isn't Yankee? Georgia dragged you out, huh?" Jack stated.

"Yeah. How are you, Jack, everyone?"

Seeing Cindy Blake gave her a friendly smile. "Hi, Cindy. How are you tonight?"

"Blake, hey. What cain I get you, girls?"

Georgia answered for them though saying, "We need a couple of corn dogs and beer, Mama."

"Comin' right up." A few minutes later Cindy placed three corn dogs and two beers up on the counter. "There you go. One for Georgia and two for you, Blake. You have a big appetite after all."

"Thanks. How much do I owe you?" the attorney inquired digging into her pocket for her wallet.

"Nothin'. It's on me."

"No. I have to pay you something." she insisted.

"Buy me a funnel cake and bring it by later, and we'll call it even then." she suggested with a smile.

"All right. You've got a deal."

Cindy looked at her daughter, and seeing her engaged in conversation with her friends, she motioned Blake closer. Leaning over the counter, Blake was surprised when the older woman took a hold of her shirt collar to bring her into her personal space. Practically pressing her lips to Blake's ear, she whispered quietly, "I saw the way you walked over here. You two make a cute couple."

Taken back by the statement, Blake pulled away slightly to meet her eyes. Cindy gave a little nod and smile. The tall woman glanced over at Georgia and then back at Georgia's mother. "Do we?" she questioned quietly.

"I haven't seen her like this in a long time. It's okay with me, Blake. I just want her to be happy."

Not knowing what else to say, Blake just nodded. "Thanks." she mumbled.

About that time the blonde looked over at them. "Oh, great, food. Thanks, Mama." she said taking one of the corn dogs off the plate.

"You're welcome. Have a good time, you two."

Blake took one last look at Cindy before turning her attention to Georgia's friends. She actively listened to them gossip as she ate her meal and drank her beer. She found it interesting that Jack wasn't even trying to hide the fact that he had a date with him, as she clung to his waist as they all talked. She found the entire situation strange. She had no idea why the two of them just didn't get divorced since they obviously had no interest in a relationship any longer, but she knew it wasn't her business.

Almost an hour and several more beers passed before the blonde was ready to go explore the rest of the fair. Blake found it quite amusing to watch the little woman try to play games in her intoxicated state, but she wasn't much better. However she did manage to win a small stuffed animal at the basketball booth, which she gave to the teacher. Georgia held that animal the rest of the evening like it was her most prized possession. They ended up staying there until almost ten before calling it an evening. Throughout the night though, Blake began to see what Cindy had been referring to. Georgia started to become more obvious with her intentions the more she drank, so the tall woman wondered what was going to happen once they were alone again. Going back to the truck, she opened Georgia's door and assisted her into the cab since the small woman was having difficulties.

As soon as Blake pulled out onto the road leading back toward their town, Georgia reached across the bench seat and placed her hand on the attorney's thigh. "I'm not ready to go home, Blake. You wanna go to the drive-in? We could catch a late show."

"I've got a better idea. Why don't we go back to my place? We can watch a movie in the comfort of my living room. How does that sound?"

"Okay. Sounds good." she answered turning on the radio. The blonde played with the buttons for a few minutes to find the station that suited her before returning her hand to Blake's thigh.

"How'd you like the fair?"

"It was a lot of fun. I especially found the county beauty pageant interesting." she joked lightly.

"I'll have you know I won that pageant a few years back when I was in high school." Georgia mentioned.

"Really? Well, I didn't know I was in the company of a beauty queen." teased the older woman patting the hand that was resting on her thigh.

Silence lingered for a moment as each of them was off in thought about the possibilities of the night. The brunette tried to concentrate on her driving, but it was extremely difficult given the fact that the blonde's fingers were drumming in time with the country music high up on her leg. Blake made a conscious effort to breath normally even though she could barely control her urge to moan. Georgia was playing right into her desires, but she was still unsure what the teacher's feelings were even though the blonde's own mother condoned the idea of them together. They didn't end up speaking for the whole ride, the only sound being Georgia's off-key vocals to the songs and the sound of the radio.

Upon their arrival back to the farm, Blake shut off the engine in the driveway. "Well, here we are." she mentioned, but Georgia made no move to get out of the truck. Instead the blonde turned to her with a look in her eyes Blake didn't recognize.

"Yeah, here we are." she whispered suddenly throwing herself on Blake.

The tall woman barely had the wits about her to catch the blonde fireball coming toward her, but as their mouths connected solidly, she moaned as her arms came around the little woman. Their tongues met with a ferocity that relayed their anxiousness for each other. Georgia's hands worked quickly as she ripped into Blake's clothes. The older woman responded in kind, managing to pull the blonde's top over her head and unhook the bra that hid her treasures. Not even missing a second, she went back for the button and zipper to Georgia's tiny jean shorts. Slipping inside them, the brunette found myriad wonders to explore, but the blonde's body was compelling her to hurry. Allowing the tide of emotions to guide her, Blake ran her fingers through the little woman's wetness.

Georgia whimpered into the kiss. "Blake." she whined pressing her hips down against the touch.

"What, baby?" the tall woman whispered stirringly into the blonde's ear before taking in her neck with her lips.

"Take me, Blake." she demanded as their mouths met again.

Blake groaned. She wanted to do just that at the moment, but she figured it would be better to treat the small woman more delicately. "Why don't we go inside?" she whispered in suggestion.

"No. Here. Now." she instructed thrusting her breasts up toward the attorney's face.

That was all the encouragement Blake needed. Latching on to the crest of one, the brunette thrust up into her with all the leverage she could muster in her position. Georgia screamed out in rising need as Blake gave an animalistic growl. Wild unbridled ardor overtook them both as they ground together at a fevered pitch. It was obvious to Blake that Georgia was enjoying herself, but when she added her thumb on the outside to the fray, the little woman instantly peaked, shuddering with such an intensity that Blake could barely hold onto her as she spasmed in her arms and screamed the attorney's name repeatedly until she collapsed into Blake's body.

Silence filled the truck cab. Blake's hand was pinned inside the blonde, but she used her other to

stroke blonde hair soothingly as she simply reveled in the feeling of the contractions around her. She could feel Georgia's heart pounding erratically against her own as their bare forms pressed together. No words were spoken for a long time. However as minutes passed, the brunette realized that Georgia's weight was getting heavier.

"Georgia." she softly called. There was no reply. "Georgia." Blake gently sat upright and pulled out of the blonde. The small woman moaned but otherwise seemed to be sleeping. Her fair head drooped forward, her hair creating a curtain around her face. Brushing it back lightly, Blake realized that she was indeed asleep, probably lulled into unconsciousness from the strenuous activity and overindulgence in alcohol. Unsure of what to do, Blake just sat there holding the petite woman in her arms, but it appeared that the teacher was out for the night.

Thinking it would be best to take her home, Blake put Georgia back on her side of the truck and gently redressed her, taking great care not to wake her companion. Then she focused on putting herself back together. Blake then sat there for a moment looking at the teacher. Her fingers still held the residue of their passion. Curiousness getting the better of her, the brunette brought them to her mouth to clean them. The flavor of the little woman was divine, and Blake regretted that she wasn't able to taste her to her fill.

The ride back to Georgia's family's trailer was silent. The attorney kept looking over at the blonde, who was propped up against the door, snoring lightly. She wasn't sure what was going to happen with Georgia now. Furthermore she had broken her agreement to Cara that she would not have sex with other women. Not to mention she didn't even know anything about the younger woman's sexual history other than Jack. She had no idea if the small woman was clean. Blake had just been so caught up in the moment that she had been careless. Coming to a stop in the driveway, the tall woman went around to Georgia's side of the truck and scooped the little woman up into her arms to carry her up to the house.

Cindy answered the door when she knocked. "Blake, what happened?"

"Too much to drink I think." she responded. "Where is her bedroom?"

"I'll show you. This way."

Blake followed close behind down a narrow corridor to a small room. Delicately placing the sleeping blonde down on the bed, the brunette took great care in removing her sandals before pulling a blanket over her. Without thought she brushed some golden hair behind Georgia's ear before whispering good night. She then moved to the door where Cindy was watching. Blake closed the door behind them.

"Could I interest you in something to drink? Maybe some dessert?" the blonde's mother inquired.

"I'm fine, Cindy. Thanks anyway. Where's Melvin?"

"Out drinkin' with his buddies. What happened to you? Did you get bitten by a mosquito at the fair?" she inquired stepping closer to inspect a large red spot on Blake's neck. Looking closer she

noted that it wasn't a bug bite on the attorney's neck but a bite of a completely different sort. She looked at the tall woman inquisitively. "You were bitten all right, but that's too big for a mosquito, and it would have to have had teeth."

"It's nothing." Blake mumbled covering it with her hand. "Bruce and I were wrestling."

"Or it could have been Georgia." Cindy pressed. Blake merely shifted uncomfortably. "I knew it. It didn't take to long to figure out. She has an interest in you that way."

"Cindy, Georgia is married, and I have a girlfriend. It's nothing. Now I really should get going." she said moving toward the door.

"Blake, wait. If you want to deny it to me, that's fine. Just know that you two have to keep this well-hidden. People around here will hurt you if you're not careful. I don't wanna see that happen to my daughter or you. Okay?"

The brunette nodded. "Thanks, Cindy. I appreciate that. Good night."

"Night, Blake. Drive safely."

The following day Georgia awoke with a pounding headache. Even before she opened her eyes, the sun was shooting through her closed lids causing them pain. Slowly cracking one open, she noticed that she was at home in her own bed. She had no idea how she had even gotten there. Thinking back over the night, things seemed clear until they left the fair.

Her memory was somewhat fuzzy after that, but she thought she remembered kissing Blake finally and then sensed that a lot more transpired. Of course she wasn't sure. Gently rolling over onto her back, she immediately became aware of the soreness between her thighs. She felt bruised and stretched, confirming her suspicions that Blake had touched her. Georgia moaned uncomfortably as she lightly touched the area in question. She never had felt the smarting pain like she was feeling now, including when she had lost her virginity to Jack.

Desperately she tried to recall the events of the night. Slowly the images came to her mind, kissing Blake, the feeling of the attorney's body against her. She remembered the older woman's fire as hands and mouth scorched her skin. Then it came back to her, the hard pounding of Blake's power. The pleasure almost verged on pain as the tall woman filled her fuller and deeper than she had ever been. The blonde had felt out of control in the dark-haired woman's arms but blissfully so. She had loved every moment of their encounter, especially afterwards when she leaned her head into Blake's shoulder and listened to the older woman's heart as she basked in the afterglow of pleasure while the brunette continued to fill her, making their connection more than physical. She felt the gentle stroking of her hair that had eventually lulled her into sleep. However now she was in her room alone, making her wonder what had happened afterwards. She would have liked to have awakened to strong arms around her but such was not the case. Gradually she eased herself from her bed and made it into her bathroom. She took an extraordinary long time in the shower before dressing. Finally she made her way out into the kitchen. Her mother was standing in the kitchen drinking a cup of coffee.

"Well, look who is finally up." she softly stated.

Georgia moaned. "Mornin'."

"Have a good time with Blake last night?" her mother asked conversationally. The blonde nodded slowly. "Could I get you somethin' to eat? Would that help you?"

"No. I'll be sick." Georgia answered dropping into a kitchen chair. Her mother brought over a cup of coffee and some aspirin. "Thanks." she mumbled.

"So, what did you two do after you left the fair?"

"Nothin' really, just hung out at her house."

"When she brought you home, you were passed out. Too much activity?"

"I guess I just fell asleep. I wonder why she didn't just leave me there at her place though."

Cindy shrugged. "Don't know but I would've been concerned had you not come home at all." After a few minutes, Cindy took a seat next to her daughter. "Georgia, I wanna ask you somethin'." she hesitantly stated.

"What?" the blonde grumbled.

Trying to show understanding, she placed her hand over her daughter's. "Was she good to you? That's all I really care 'bout, your happiness."

Georgia met blue eyes so much like her own. Her mother gazed upon her with compassion instead of loathing. She wondered how her mother knew what had happened, for she felt fairly sure Blake wouldn't have said anything. "How did you know?" she inquired softly.

"Because I know you, and you haven't been like this since you and Jack got engaged. Are you fallin' in love with her?"

The blonde shrugged. "I don't know. I guess. She's just so amazin', Mama. She's everythin' I wish I was. I wish I was strong like her and independent. Bein' near her makes me feel so. Bein' close to her makes me feel lots of things." she admitted.

"I know, sugar, but what 'bout her girlfriend? What 'bout Jack?"

"This ain't got nothin' to do with Jack. He doesn't care."

"Then what 'bout Cara?"

"I don't know. I guess I oughta talk to Blake. I just don't know what to say."

"Start with the truth I guess." Cindy suggested.

The attorney was out in the field speaking with some of the farmhands that day about possibly buying her out when she saw Georgia's truck coming up her drive. She had been somewhat dreading what the blonde might say to her after their night out, so she was reluctant to return to the house. However she knew it would only be right to face whatever Georgia might want to say, so she left the men in the field with the promise to continue the talk before slowly walking back. Georgia was sitting on the stoop when she approached. The little woman wore a nervous countenance.

"Afternoon. Feeling better?" Blake tentatively inquired.

"I'm all right. You?" she asked taking her gaze up strong legs encased in a pair of casual gray slacks past the cotton knit shirt up to dark eyes.

"Just fine. Could I get you a drink?"

"No, thanks." Georgia's stomach churned anxiously, especially when the older woman merely stood there instead of taking a seat. In order to get them on the same eye level, the blonde patted the wooden porch. "Sit down."

Reluctantly Blake did as the little woman asked. She had been up most of the night wondering what to do about the situation she had created. She had no idea what the teacher might want now, but she felt fairly sure a relationship between them wouldn't work given their vastly different backgrounds. Unsure of how to begin the dialogue between them, Blake simply sat and propped her forearms up along her thighs. Her eyes stayed out over the field.

Seeing the distant demeanor, Georgia tentatively reached for the brunette's hand. The larger one was reluctant in enfolding her own. "Blake." Georgia whispered with a quavering voice that relayed her uncertainty.

The older woman sighed. Just by the sound of the blonde's voice, she knew that this conversation was going to be difficult for the younger woman. Pulling her hand away, Blake looked into blue eyes. "Georgia, last night something unexpected happened. I wasn't exactly prepared, and thinking back on it, I probably shouldn't have allowed it take place. Nevertheless it did happen, and I have to be enough of a woman to accept the consequences of my actions." she began.

"What are you talking 'bout? What consequences?" Georgia asked.

"I'm talking about the fact that I cheated on my girlfriend with a married woman. I had unprotected sex with a drunk woman I know nothing about and who is a curious straight girl twelve years my junior. I have to tell Cara what I did, and she's not going to like it. Even more I feel like I took advantage of the situation and you. I should have been stronger for your sake, Georgia, because I have no idea what you want from me. I only know I can give you nothing. There is nothing to base a relationship on being that you are married, and I'm at this point

involved, even though that might not be much longer. We come from entirely different places in life, and it's only a matter of time before I return to New York, and you will be here in this dead end town. There is nothing for us, and I feel I led you to believe otherwise by being with you."

"So, you're sayin' you regret what happened?" the petite woman inquired her voice trembling as tears came to her eyes.

"I do regret some things about the evening, yes. I regret taking you without thought as to what you wanted from me. I regret having the only experience we're ever going to have in a beat up old truck, and I regret not being able to give you what I would have wanted to under different circumstances. You deserved more than you got, Georgia. You deserve someone who can give you everything, and that person isn't me. At this point I would just like to move on and not discuss it any longer. There's nothing left to say." she stated coldly, going against her natural instincts of wanting to comfort the small woman, but she knew it would accomplish nothing to do so. She stood and brushed off her slacks in an effort to end the conversation.

However Georgia just sat there for a moment in shock that the woman who seemed to possess such tenderness could act so callously. "So, that's it?" she questioned as a river of tears flowed over her face.

"That's it, Georgia. You have caused me enough trouble, so I would prefer to leave it at that. Now if you'll excuse me, I have business to finish, so I can get back to New York as soon as possible."

Georgia watched as Blake headed back out into the field. As she walked away, the blonde felt her heart go with the tall woman. She hadn't known what to expect when she had come over, but she never thought Blake Erwin would treat her so terribly. The attorney was emotionless as she killed the blonde's hopes of a possible relationship with one speech. That was the only thing on her mind when she had arrived at the farm, getting the taller woman to agree to explore what might be happening between them, but now she knew Blake had no interest in that, and the rejection was painful to bear for the younger woman. Blake was the only other person she had ever been with outside of her husband, so to be so casually brushed aside after she was no longer needed tore her heart into a thousand pieces.

As Blake walked away from the blonde, she resisted the urge to look back. She knew that what she had just done had hurt the small woman, and she felt horrible for bringing her pain, but she also knew there was no way they could be together. She figured it would hurt less in the short run just to cut her off now than drag things along until she left to go home to New York with no intention of returning to Stillwater, Georgia in the near future. Her own heart hurt at the fact that she would never have a chance with the blonde, because she knew what she felt was more than friendly. In fact she thought it might be the first signs of love, but she figured the faster she went home, the easier it would be to forget the fair-headed southern beauty.

That night Blake felt restless as she lounged around her living room with Bruce. The tv did nothing to keep her mind off a certain teacher. Thinking that a change of scenery might do her good, she decided to go for a drive. However when she got out to her truck, there was really only

one place to go, so she figured the bar might take her mind off things.

Making her way over to Jack's bar, she heard the loud music before she even stepped through the door. However as soon as she went inside, all eyes turned to her, especially a pair of cold blue ones. Blake groaned to herself at the sight of Georgia being there with her friends. It was quite obvious that the blonde was intoxicated by the way she was hanging onto the pool table to support herself.

"Well, if it isn't, Yankee!" Georgia yelled over the noise.

Blake didn't respond to the slur though, figuring the small woman was just upset with her still. Instead she headed straight to the bar. Jack was behind it serving drinks when she approached. "Yankee, what cain I get you?" he asked.

"Just a beer and a shot of whiskey." she replied.

"Comin' right up." Jack answered casting a look over at Georgia before going to fix the drinks.

Blake turned her back to the pool table in hopes that Georgia would just leave her alone, but that wasn't the case. Instead the blonde got more vocal. "Hey, I'm talkin' to you, you damn Yankee!" she screamed coming toward her.

Looking over her shoulder, the attorney simply stated, "Well, I'm not talking to you, Georgia. I just want to drink my beer in peace."

"Oh, I see how it is! Pretending that you don't even know me now that I'm no used to you! Should've known!" When Blake offered no reply, Georgia announced loudly to the whole bar, "Guess what, everybody? This Yankee is nothin' but a dyke, and she put her hands on me!" Meeting the tall woman's eyes again, she questioned, "What do you have to say for yourself?" The attorney looked at all the eyes on her. The whole room had gone silent at Georgia's declaration, and they were all glaring at the older woman in hatred. "Blake Erwin practically raped me!" the teacher shouted. "Didn't you?" she accused poking the brunette sharply in the chest with her pool cue.

Blake looked down at the blue chalk that was left on her white shirt and tried to brush it off. Still not speaking to the blonde, she turned to Jack and inquired, "How much do I owe you?"

His eyes glared at her. "Is that true, Yankee? Did you touch my wife?"

She didn't answer the questions. Pulling out her wallet, she dropped a twenty on the bar. "That should more than cover it." She threw back the shot of whiskey, leaving the beer untouched. Then she directed her attention toward Georgia. Meeting her eyes she growled, "Fuck off, Georgia. It's over." Gazing around the bar, she stated, "Fuck you all. We, Yankees, are superior, you know. After all we beat your southern asses."

Grabbing her by the sleeve of her shirt, Jack demanded, "Get out of my bar."

"Gladly." she replied. Taking one last look at the teacher, she mumbled, "I hope you're happy with what you've done."

Later that night Blake was just starting to get tired when Bruce started barking hysterically. He trotted out to the foyer and kept barking at the screen door. "What is it, Bruce? What's out there?" the brunette inquired moving from the living room to the foyer herself. He insistently kept at it. "What's up, boy?" she questioned curiously opening the door and stepping onto the porch.

The sight that greeted her was enough to make anyone freeze in fear. Blake couldn't believe her eyes. She had read about the Ku Klux Klan in history books, but she thought it was only a southern Civil War convention that had long since passed to the wayside. However at the moment it was alive and well and standing in her front yard. Bruce growled ferociously at the three white cloaked and hooded figures standing a few feet from her stoop, but just then Blake noticed a fourth standing in the darkness on her porch with a shot gun pointed at her. The attorney had no idea what was about to happen as the four of them simply started at her for a moment in mortal silence, but she knew that she was in grave danger.

Trying to put on a brave front, Blake asked, "What can I do for you?"

"We gotta problem, Yankee." one of them stated. "Word has it you laid a hand on one of our women."

Blake said nothing at first as the man on the porch approached her. "Get down those stairs." he gruffly demanded.

"That's all right. I'm quite fine where I am." the tall woman answered. Before she could even flinch a shot rang out, and pain pierced through her leg that sent her to the ground. Blake howled in agony as the thigh wound squirted blood over the porch and down her slacks. As she fell she had let Bruce's collar go, and the dog attacked her assailant, but the man hit him upside the head with the butt of his gun, knocking him unconscious.

"Next one takes off your fuckin' head!" he yelled. Grabbing Blake by the shirt collar he dragged her face first down the three steps from the porch to the dirt and the feet of the other three. "Get up, Yankee!" the gunman instructed yanking her to her feet by her short dark hair.

The brunette could barely stand the pain in her leg was so bad, but she looked at her attackers defiantly as blood dripped out of the corner of her mouth from catching a nail head on her journey down the stairs. Angrily she spit on the closest one, spraying red all over the white robe. In retaliation she was punched across the face and sent flying into the dirt again. Before she could move though she was grabbed by two of the men, and they dragged her over to the porch railings, tying both wrists and leaving her defenseless.

"Yankee, you're an abomination, and you're gonna pay for whatcha did to Georgia Carmichael!"

"Fuck you!" Blake screamed. "Can't stand it that I fucked that girl? Had her screaming for more?" recalcitrantly she questioned trying in vain to free herself. "All of you can just go to hell!"

Without any further words, eight fists came at her at once. Unable to defend herself with her own hands, she tried her best to block the blows with her feet, but the gun shot to her thigh was smarting even more as the moments passed. As the beating continued, Blake started to lose consciousness from the pain, especially after the repeated blows to the head from the butt of the shot gun.

"Just remember, Yankee! You brought this on yourself!" one of them stated as they retreated a few steps. Blake couldn't even respond or see as her eyes were swollen almost completely shut from continuous pounding. However she became aware of something being slipped over her head and it beginning to tighten around her neck as her air supply began to decrease before blacking out completely.

Georgia was sitting at her kitchen table with her mother, trying desperately to fight the urge to wretch the following morning when there was a loud pounding on the door to the trailer. Cindy raced to answer the urgent knocking as Georgia looked up from her position. As Cindy flung open the door, Jack stood there with his clothes covered in dried blood. "Jack! My God! What happen to you?" Cindy inquired pulling him inside.

"I'm fine. It's not mine." he answered. "I gotta talk to you and Georgia."

"Well, come in, come in. Sit down. What happened?" anxiously the older blonde asked again with concern.

"Last night you made quite a nuisance of yourself, Georgia." he stated. "I got upset with what you said 'bout Yankee, so I went to see her after I closed down the bar, 'cause I heard some of the boys talkin' 'bout gonna pay her a visit."

"What happened? What'd she say?" Georgia inquired.

"She didn't say nothin', because she was practically dead when I got there!" he yelled dropping into a chair.

Instantly the blonde's eyes flew open wide. "What? What do you mean?"

"I mean the boys tried to hang her, Georgia! I've never seen anything like it! When I pulled up, I couldn't even believe it! There she was strung up like a scarecrow. There was so much blood and dirt that I couldn't even see her face except where tracks of tears had wiped her cheeks clean. There was noose around her neck, and it looked like they had tried to hang her from one of the rafters on the porch, but it broke under her weight. Looked like it had dry rotted, so it wouldn't hold her. As it was she had been shot in the leg and beaten so badly I hardly could recognize her." he explained softly, his voice trembling. "The dog was lyin' at her feet whimperin'. He looked like he had been injured too. She was unconscious but still alive. I cut her down and

rushed her to the hospital."

"Oh my God! That poor child!" Cindy exclaimed. "How did this happen, Jack? Who did this to her?"

Jack looked at Georgia. "Well, some of my Klan buddies were at the bar last night, Georgia. They heard you goin' on 'bout Blake. I guess they took it upon themselves to take matters in their own hands."

"Georgia, what did you say?" Cindy asked loudly.

"We just got in a fight, Mama. It was nothin'." Georgia tried to defend.

"Nothin'? Georgia, you almost got her killed!" Jack screamed. "Had I not come along, she might be dead right now! What the hell is the matter with you? How could you do that to the one you love?" Shocked at her husband's revelation, Georgia just sat there stunned a moment. "Look, Georgia. I don't like Yankee a whole lot, but you do! How could you kill her with your words?"

"I didn't! She hurt me! I had nothin' to do with them goin' over there!"

Rising from his chair with such anger, it tipped over backwards and slammed against the floor. Jack stared at her. "You know, Georgia, I want a divorce! I thought you were still a kind woman under it all, but you ain't nothin' but a cold-hearted bitch for doin' this! I can't love you any more!" Looking at Cindy he spoke more softly saying, "I took Yankee's dog to the vet. Maybe you could be kind 'nough to go by her house and try to find a phone number of someone to call. Right now I have to stop by the sheriff's office and tell them what I know."

When Blake came to, she had no idea where she was. Her body ached all over, but she fought the pain enough to try to look around. Taking in the room, she realized she was in a hospital and by her bedside sleeping in chairs were her parents. Looking down her body, Blake didn't see a place that wasn't bruised. Just then the door opened admitting a nurse.

"Well, look who's awake?" the nurse stated. "How you feeling, sugar?"

"Terrible." Blake whispered as her parents began to wake at the noise.

"Oh, Blake, baby!" her mother exclaimed.

"Girl, you had us scared!" her father mentioned.

"Ya got a visitor." the nurse stated. "Do you think you're up for it?"

"I guess."

"All right but only for a few minutes. Don't over do it."

A moment later Jack entered the room hesitantly. Blake was surprised by his presence but didn't have time to question it as her parents introduced themselves. Jack then requested he be allowed to speak to the attorney alone, so within a moment they were looking at each other silently.

"Why are you here, Jack? Haven't you done enough? Or are you just here to finish the job?"

"You think I did this? Yankee, it might be true that I don't like you much, but I know my right from wrong. God's the one you have to answer to so my opinion don't matter. I just happened to be the one to find you."

"But you probably know who did do it."

"I have an idea, and I already talked to the sheriff 'bout it. I just wanted to see how you were and tell you what was goin' on with Bruce."

"Bruce? He's okay, isn't he?"

Jack gave a nod. "He should be all right. He's still at the vet's. I took him over there after bringin' you here. If you feel half as much for your dog as I do mine, I couldn't have left him behind."

"Thanks." Blake whispered.

"Yeah, well, it was nothin'." After a brief, awkward pause, he stated, "Just so you know, I asked Georgia for a divorce."

"Why is that any of my business?"

"Just 'cause I know how she feels 'bout you, but I couldn't stand the fact that she could be so mean. I know the truth now, Yankee. She lied to everyone in that bar. Why didn't you say so?"

"Like any of you would've believed me over her? Besides it wasn't my place to expose her to all of you. I know how this town feels about me. I wouldn't have wanted that for her."

"You love her?" he questioned.

"How could I love anyone who did this to me?"

He gave a nod. "Well, I should get goin'. I'll tell your parents 'bout Bruce. I'll see you 'round."

"All right. Thanks again, Jack."

Later that afternoon while her parents had gone back to the house to get some much needed rest she had two other visitors. Unfortunately though Georgia was with Cindy. Nevertheless Blake greeted Cindy politely. "Hey there."

"Oh, Blake. Look at you. You poor girl."

"I'll be all right. I'm alive. I can be thankful for that." she answered. Looking at Georgia, she inquired, "Why are you here?"

"I just wanted to make sure you're all right." the younger blonde stated softly. She hadn't been prepared for what the tall woman might really look like. Jack had said she had been badly beaten, but that didn't do the damage justice. In fact she hardly knew the woman lying in front of her because of all the injury that had taken place. Blake's head was bandaged hiding what was left of her hair. She had huge black circles around her eyes, her nose was misshaped, and her face was swollen with angry dark welts. She had rope burn around her neck and wrists, and her left arm was in a cast along with one leg while the other was bandaged from her gunshot wound. Georgia's heart sunk at the sight of the woman she loved in spite of what had happened, and she felt tremendous guilt, knowing she had been the cause of Blake's current state. Bringing trembling hands up to her mouth, she held back a gasp as tears began to stream down her face.

However Blake only gave her a cold stare shortly asking, "You satisfied with the job your boys did on me?"

"Blake." the blonde uttered.

"How could you do this to me, Georgia? I never want to see you again! Do you hear me? Get out!" the brunette yelled.

"Blake, please. I'm so sorry."

"Get the fuck out before I get out of this bed and throw you out myself!" that attorney screamed as loud as she could.

Within seconds a nurse came rushing threw the door at the sound. "Is there a problem, honey?" she inquired looking back and forth between the three of them.

"Take the little girl out of here. Her mother can stay." Blake stated gruffly.

"Go on, Georgia. Wait outside for me. I'll just be a few minutes." Cindy requested.

Regretfully the teacher looked down at the woman who held her heart. "I'm sorry, Blake." she whispered as the nurse took her by the arm and escorted her from the room.

The brunette watched her go before looking at the older version of the teacher. "Cindy, it's nice to see you."

"Baby, I'm real sorry 'bout what happened to you." she said.

"Me too, Cindy, me too but I'll manage. As soon as I can I'm going to get out of here and go back to New York where it's a little safer for someone like me." she said, the irony not lost on her.

"I understand if you're mad at Georgia, but you have to know that she never meant for this to happen."

"Cindy, your daughter almost had me killed. It's because of her that I'm here. In her drunken stupor she told half the town that I raped her. I did no such thing."

"I know you didn't, Blake. I believe you."

"Cindy, I never want to see your daughter again. She might have well have killed me, because I'll never be the same. Now if you'll excuse me, I'm getting tired."

Cindy nodded. "Of course. For what it's worth, I'm truly sorry, Blake. I'll come see you later without Georgia."

"I'd like that."

"All right. Take care of yourself, sugar."

"I always do." Blake stated before Cindy walked out the door.

Blake looked out the window of her upper Manhattan office down toward Midtown. The Empire State Building stood proudly in the skyline on that bright summer day. In the further distance was the hole where the World Trade Center once stood, and she idly thought about having been in that building before it fell. It had seemed like such a long time ago already.

The attorney sighed. Only a few minutes ago she had received a phone call from the prosecuting attorney in Stillwater, Georgia, who was updating her on the case against the Klan members who had brutally beaten her six weeks prior. She still had her casts on her arm and leg, and she walked with a limp from the pain of the gun wound. The scars from her reconstructive facial surgery had faded, but it had taken her awhile to get used to her new face. She had a more angular nose and cheeks now giving her stronger and more serious looking features than what she once had. However there was one upside to the situation in as much as the facelift she had gotten out of the deal had magically removed the weary wrinkles of age and stress around her eyes, making her look almost ten years younger than she actually was.

The prosecuting attorney had just tried to convince her to come back to Georgia to testify in the case. It had received national attention thanks to her famous photographer friend Torrance Whitfield's bright idea. Blake and Torrance had gotten together, and the attorney had allowed her friend to photograph her right after she had returned to New York dressed in only in a rainbow flag. The pictures were haunting images that they truly displayed the horror of the destruction the Ku Klux Klan had inflicted on the respected attorney, and yet they showed the fearless strength of the woman who had stood defiantly in the face of the enemy.

With each of their prestige in the respective professions along with their money, they had

managed to get the pictures into every major national liberal political publication, and before either of them realized it, there was a sudden hailstorm of media attention surrounding the tiny town of Stillwater and the case. Political activists demanded justice, expediting the judicial process and forcing the conservative town to take the situation seriously and make the arrests, instead of simply sweeping the matter out of sight.

While Torrance had won accolades for the photographs to add to her collection of the many she already had, Blake had been pushed into a spot light she had never known. She was a national name in politics and media. However instead of shying away from the attention, she boldly stepped into the light, accepting numerous speaking engagements at many social-political functions and interviews with the press. Through it all she displayed the strength that had carried her through that fateful night and the events that followed.

However during that time since she had left Georgia, a certain manacle continued to torment her. It wasn't the Klan or the battering she received that plagued her slumber but the blue eyes of her real foe. The beauty queen that stirred her passions was constantly there in her dreams tempting Blake with her serpentine ways. Not a night went by that the brunette didn't see the blonde in her sleep, usually in the most provocative of ways, constantly reminding her of the desires she had that had put her into her current position. Georgia Carmichael was the devil in angel's robes, her gentle smile, fair hair, and sparkling eyes all catalysts of sweet deception, and Blake found herself still unable to resist the woman in her dreams. She took Georgia Carmichael with every emotion she felt. Sometimes it was sweet and soft, the way she would've have originally liked for their first encounter to be. Other times she forced herself of the blonde, doing the thing the blonde had accused her of, but Georgia never failed to reappear in the darkness of the night to lure her again just when Blake thought she had finally rid herself of the little woman. The tall woman felt helpless. Georgia was like the black widow spider, bringing suffering and death to those that ventured close enough to be bitten, but Blake never failed to be enticed into the blonde's web even knowing the certain mortal fate that awaited her. Every morning Blake swore she wouldn't dream of the small woman again, but inevitably Georgia was waiting whenever she closed her eyes.

Blake knew her feelings for the teacher from Stillwater ran deeper than they had for any one else, and in fact she had fallen hard for the demon that possessed her fantasies. The attorney detested to admit, even to herself, that the reason she hated the blonde so much was that she loved her with equal intensity, but she knew there would never be a time or place that she and Georgia could ever work out their differences. She doubted there would be a time that she would be able to forgive the young woman for practically having her killed even if it was unintentional. The horror of being accused of such horrendous crimes by the blue-eyed monster, even in a fit of anger, was more than Blake thought herself capable to forgive.

Just then her assistant and a junior attorney on staff buzzed her. "Blake, Torrance and Helen Whitfield are here for that lunch appointment." he stated.

"Thanks, Jeff. Tell Glenda to tell them I'll be right out."

"Sure. No problem."

Moving to her desk, Blake slipped on her suit jacket and pulled her wallet out of her brief case. She slowly made her way down the long corridor to the front lobby. However just before she entered it, Glenda, the front desk receptionist, pulled her aside. "Blake, there is a woman here to see you, but she doesn't have an appointment. I tried to get her to make one, but she refused to leave until she saw you."

"What's her name?"

"She said it was Cindy Carmichael. She's been here most of the morning. I put her in Conference Room A."

"All right. Thanks."

Going out into the lobby, she was greeted by her two friends and their baby. "Hi, Blake. How are you feeling?" Torrance asked patting her friend on the shoulder.

"Better and better every day, Tor. Thanks for asking." she replied hugging the photographer. Stepping to Helen, she embraced the attractive blonde and kissed her lightly on the cheek. "Helen, you look beautiful as usual. You tired of my old pal yet? Ready to run to me?" she asked teasingly.

"Not yet, Blake. Give me forty or fifty years before propositioning me again." Helen replied to the joke with a bright smile that set her green eyes a glow as she spoke of her beloved.

"Damn. You certainly got lucky, Tor. Wish I could." Blake mumbled in mock disappointment. "How's my favorite boy?" she inquired coming to the stroller and leaning down to pick up the infant. "How are you, John Thomas? Are you going to smile for your Auntie Blake?" The dark-haired green-eyed boy gave her a wide toothless grin as he saw her. He raised his small hand toward her face as she cradled him and offered his toy to her. Playfully Blake nibbled on it, making him squeal in delight. "Looks like your boy has a crush on me." the attorney joked smiling back at him.

"How could he not?" Helen answered touching Blake lightly on the arm before gazing down at her son as well.

"Listen, I was just told that I have an unexpected visitor. She's the one from Georgia I was telling you about. I have no idea why she's here, but I'd like to invite her to lunch with us if that's okay."

"That nasty one that almost got you killed?" Torrance inquired.

"No, not her, her mother. The really nice lady I told you about. Come on. Let's go ask her. She's in the conference room." Blake led the way to where Cindy was waiting. Opening the door she saw the blonde standing with her back to the door staring out the window. "Cindy, sorry to have kept you waiting. What brings you here?" Blake questioned brightly moving into the room. However as the blonde turned, the brunette felt her breath leave her, for it wasn't Cindy standing

there.

As Georgia's eyes met Blake's she felt a sudden lump form in her throat. The attorney was standing there with a baby in her arms, who was busy chewing on her jacket lapel. Two women stood just beyond her, one stunning blonde and the other an equally attractive tall brunette. "Blake, you look different." she mentioned taking in the attorney's features.

"Yeah. It's called reconstructive surgery, Georgia. You gave me this face. What the hell are you doing here, and why did you say you were your mother?" she sternly inquired. "I thought I made it clear I never wanted to see you again."

Helen moved forward and reached for her son. "Here. Torrance and I will just wait in the lobby for you." she offered.

"No. You and Tor stay here. After all I should have witnesses in case she wants to accuse me of raping her again." Blake growled shooting daggers at Georgia. "Now, tell me, Georgia. What are you doing here?" she asked again stepping closer to her nemesis.

"I wanted to see you, Blake. I couldn't stand the way things ended, and I wanted to see if you would talk to me. I said I was my mother, because I figured that would be the only way I could get you in here."

"I have nothing to say to you, Georgia, that I haven't already. When I said I didn't want to see you ever again, I meant it."

Georgia took a deep breath and stepped forward toward the woman who held her heart. "Blake, I'm truly sorry for what happened to you. It was never my intention for this to happen. That night we made love was nothin' like I ever experienced." she stated continuing to move slowly closer to the attorney. "I was hurt beyond words when you brushed me off the next day, but never in my worst thoughts of you did I want anyone to kill you or hurt you this way. You have to believe me, Blake. I had nothin' to do with those Klan members comin' to your house." she said coming to a stop a few feet from the tall woman.

Blake was mesmerized by the fact that Georgia looked exactly how she was in her dreams, soft and beautiful. There was no denying the physical attraction to the teacher, but when the blonde reached up to touch her cheek, Blake yanked back quickly, knowing if she allowed the little woman to touch her, she might not have the strength to fight her libido. "Georgia, your words at the bar that night destroyed me, and I'm not just talking about the fact that I was beaten within inches of my life. You told everyone in there that I raped you. You lied about something so intimate, and you made me out to be a monster. You intentionally degraded my integrity and honor. Not only that it was your words that fueled those men to their hate and made them come to the house to try to hang me. I could be dead, Georgia. It was chance that my life was spared."

"I know." the blonde whispered as tears came to her eyes. "I cain't think 'bout that. It breaks my heart to think of you that way. I just want to try to make things up to you, Blake. I want to see if we have somethin'. That's all I ever wanted."

"Then why did you tell everyone that I raped you? That's not the way to start a relationship."

"Because I was hurt that you'd rather be with Cara than me. I'll do anythin', Blake, if you just give me a chance."

"Forget it, Georgia! There is no way in hell I'd ever trust you again! Now just leave me the hell alone!" the tall woman screamed turning to leave. Brushing by Torrance and Helen, she softly said, "I just need to run to the restroom before we go."

With tears streaming down her face, Georgia watched Blake leave. A quiet moment passed before her eyes settled on two green sets that were looking at her. "I'm going to go check on Blake." Torrance announced, leaving the two blondes alone.

Georgia just looked at the woman holding the baby. She assumed this was the Helen that Blake had mentioned before by her stunning looks and child. "You probably hate me too." the younger blonde stated.

"I don't know you well enough to hate you." Helen answered. "Do you love Blake?"

"More than I've ever loved anyone." Georgia admitted. "I just don't know how to get through to her. I guess it's too late for apologizin'. She wants nothin' to do with me."

"You know, Georgia, ever since Blake mentioned you, I've always thought there was something there. Now that I've seen you together, my suspicions are confirmed. She cares for you."

"No, she doesn't. Didn't you hear her? She hates me."

"You can't hate someone so much without caring about them. She hates what's happened, and she hates that you did this to her, but I'm willing to bet she doesn't hate you even as much as she claims to. She's just using that as an excuse to hide her feelings. People make mistakes, and you've made a huge one here, but I think you can correct it."

"You think? How?" Georgia asked stepping closer to the mother.

"You have to somehow prove that you love her beyond a shadow of a doubt. You have to acknowledge your responsibility in what happened. I think those things might help. Blake's not an unreasonable person, Georgia. She's just hurting so deeply right now in more ways than physical. I think she loves you as well, and that's why this is so difficult for her." Georgia gave a nod. "Are you staying in town long?" Helen inquired switching John to her other hip.

The other blonde shrugged. "I don't know. I was kind of hopin' that Blake would be more responsive to me and that I'd have reason to stay."

"Maybe you should hang around for a few days. Maybe she'll come around if she sees your face every day."

"I don't know. I have no where to stay, and this town is pretty expensive and dangerous as I've already figured out on the taxi ride. It might just be best if I go back to Georgia."

"If you had a place to stay, would you?"

Georgia shrugged. "I guess. Why do you ask?"

"Come stay with Torrance and me. We have a place a few blocks from here in town. Torrance won't mind."

"Are you sure? I know she and Blake go way back. I'm sure she doesn't think too highly of me."

"Listen. If you tell me you're truly interested in reconciling with Blake, then that will be enough for her. Torrance wants Blake to be happy as much as I do, and I know Torrance believes there are feelings there too. It couldn't hurt anything."

"All right. Thank you. Here I thought all New Yorkers were rude, but you're very polite."

"Well, that's because I'm not a New Yorker. I'm a southern who just happened to migrate."

"Oh yeah? Where're you from?"

"Maryland."

"Well, that explains the southern manners." Georgia said with her first smile.

"Torrance is really nice too once you get past that protective exterior. I promise you. She's the most compassionate woman I know, so if you're serious, she'll be helpful too. Here. Take this. Meet us at our place tonight." she said taking a piece of paper from the diaper bag and scribbling down her information. She extended it to Georgia. "We'll be home after six."

"All right. Thank you again, Helen. This is unexpected."

"No sense in you being on the street. It's dangerous out there. See you tonight."

Several minutes later Blake and Torrance returned to find Helen alone with John. "Where did she go?" Blake questioned.

"She's gone." Helen said with a smile.

"Thank God."

"Oh come on, Blake. You like the girl. Admit. You want her. You're just upset over what has happened."

"Don't I have right to be?"

"Of course you do. That doesn't change the fact that you look at Georgia and feel something, does it?" she inquired.

"She feels something all right." crassly Torrance stated. "Like the urge to strangle her."

Helen glared at her wife. "I asked Blake, honey."

Blake shrugged. "Yeah, I guess."

"You guess? Blake, I know you. You probably look at a woman like Georgia and get hot just thinking about the possibilities of what you could do with a body like that. Come on. I've heard the stories about you."

"Have you now? From who?" Blake asked in interest.

"Well, when you were with Cara, she wasn't exactly withholding information, and Georgia was obviously moved if she came all the way up here to see you. Just admit that you at least find her attractive."

"All right. She's hot, but that doesn't change the fact she almost got me killed."

"Well, if that hadn't happened would you be interested in her?"

"She's married, Helen, to the man that actually saved my life. I couldn't do that to Jack. I owe him that much respect after what he did for me."

"But you already had sex with her." Torrance stated.

"Well, that's when I thought he was an asshole, but he saved my life even though he thought I had raped his wife. Turns out he wasn't as bad as I thought. Point is I need to leave Georgia Carmichael alone regardless of how I feel about her or her for me."

"Do you feel more for her than primal lust though?" Torrance asked as they made their way to the elevator.

"I don't want to." Blake confessed.

"But do you?" Helen pressed.

"I do, and I hate that fact." the attorney conceded.

Later that night Georgia arrived at the address Helen had written down for her. She didn't know quite what to expect when she arrived there, but she wasn't sure she had many options. She knew hotels in the city were expensive and staying in one would wipe out her savings. Knocking on

the door, she anxiously awaited for an answer.

Within moments Helen answered it with a friendly smile. "Hi, Georgia. Come on in. We were just waiting on you to start dinner."

"You didn't have to wait."

"It's fine. Just leave your bags here for now, and we'll get them upstairs later. You must be hungry after a whole day wandering the city. Sit and have something to eat."

Leading the way into the kitchen, Helen gestured to the table where Torrance already was trying to feed their son. The photographer looked up at their guest and gave a somewhat forced smile. "Hi, Georgia."

"Hi."

"Have a seat. Helen's made quite a meal for your arrival."

"Thank you. Y'all really didn't have to do such a thing. I know you're Blake's friends, so I'm still not quite sure what I'm doin' here."

"Helen says you don't want to hurt Blake, that you only want to make amends. She thinks you're all right, and I trust her judgment. Don't do anything that proves to the contrary, and you'll be welcome to stay here for awhile." Torrance stated.

Georgia gave a nod. "Thank you again."

Most of the meal passed with small talk, but Georgia was intrigued with the couple that had so graciously invited her into their home. Blake had spoken of Torrance and Helen in such a positive manner that Georgia had wondered what they were like. Now she was sitting in their loft witnessing their relationship. It was so obvious how much they adored each other and their child.

When Georgia first recognized her feelings for Blake, the idea of two women being together seemed so foreign to her. However now that she had experienced the pleasure of being with another and she saw how wonderful a relationship truly could be through her hostesses, the idea seemed perfectly natural. She wanted what Helen and Torrance had and hoped some day she would find that special someone, wondering if that person would ever be Blake Erwin.

The evening passed with Georgia being an observer with the way the couple related to their child. He was obviously the center of their existence outside of each other, and it created a pang for a child of her own. She often wondered what it would have been like had she not miscarried. She too would have a child. As unexpected as it was at the time, she had loved the life growing inside of her, and she had been just as devastated as Jack when she miscarried. It tore their marriage apart, because neither really knew how to handle the emotional pain. However seeing two doting parents made her long for another chance, and she mused if Blake ever wanted kids of her own.

Over the next week the blonde visited Blake's office every day in an effort to try to gain Blake's attention. However the brunette was resistant to her pleading. She was disheartened that she couldn't break through the hard cold exterior of the woman she cared about. Figuring things were not going to improve, she decided it would be best to go back to Stillwater with hopes that she might be able to get through to the attorney when she came down to the trial.

In August of that year Blake returned to Stillwater for the trial of her assailants. However she was not alone this time. Along with her came an entourage of family, friends, press, activists, and security that turned the rural town into a regular circus. The attorney wore a scowl every time she saw someone from town that scared most of the people from approaching her. Nevertheless there was one woman whom she eagerly embraced when she rushed to see her when she arrived at the plantation house.

"Cindy, always a pleasure to see you." Blake greeted with a genuine smile.

"Blake, sugar, how've you been?" she asked with a gentle hand to the tall brunette's cheek. "You look better than the last time I saw you."

"Yeah, time will do that, Cindy. Come in."

"Who are all these people?"

"Most of them are just here to sensationalize the trial. I do have some family and friends here though. I'll introduce you. They're all in the living room." Leading the way there, Blake announced, "Everyone, I'd like to introduce you to Cindy Carmichael. She's one of the sweetest women you'll find around here. Cindy, I believe you already know my parents."

"Of course. It's a pleasure to see you again. Sorry about the unfortunate circumstances though."

"Well, we just thank you for taking such good care of our little girl. She has always had just the best things to say about you."

Blake moved Cindy around the room quickly ending with her friends. "Cindy, these two lovely women are some of my best friends in the entire world. This is Torrance and Helen Whitfield and their son, John."

"Are you the one who took those pictures of Blake?" the blonde questioned as they shook hands.

"I am." Torrance answered.

Cindy shook her head sadly. "They made me weep. I saw Blake the day after it took place, but it just looked that more horrific in photograph. This poor sweet girl." she whispered touching the attorney compassionately on her face again. "Here. This is for you." she stated pressing a pie into

the brunette's hands.

"Did you make this?" Blake inquired smelling it.

"No. It's from Georgia."

"Well, thank you, but I wouldn't even feed this to Bruce. I don't want anything from Georgia." she stated as her dog came to her at the mention of his name. "There's probably arsenic in it anyway."

"Blake, please. Georgia is a mess over this. She's hurtin' so much over the fact that you won't even accept an apology. She loves you, Blake, and she'd do anythin' to have you forgive her."

"She doesn't love me, Cindy."

"She does. She's even testifyin' 'gainst her friends for you."

"She's testifying? Why?" Blake inquired in interest. She hadn't heard that news before even with all her conversations from the attorney in charge of the case.

"Because she wants to prove to you that she's sorry. The prosecutin' attorney thought it was a good idea to help your case."

"Well, I didn't know that, but it's going to take a little more than that to get me to forgive her."

"Maybe it'll be a start though. Well, I just wanted to stop by. I need to get goin'. I'll see you tomorrow at the trial. Be strong, Blake."

"Thanks. See you tomorrow."

As soon as she left, Torrance inquired, "That is Georgia's mother? She's really sweet. I can see where Georgia gets it."

"What are you talking about? You only saw her that one time at the office."

"Actually we spent some time with her while she was in New York. She's a nice girl that made a horrible mistake. She does feel terrible about it, Blake. I believe that she does." Torrance said.

"You think that too?" Blake asked Helen.

"Yes. I think that she is in love with you, Blake. She admitted that she was, and I think she would do anything to prove her love to you. She wants another chance."

"And you two think I should give her one?"

"Blake, I've never been in your shoes, so I don't know how I would feel if I were you. I only

know that when I look into her blues eyes as she talks about you, I can see the love there. Whether you can find it in your heart to accept her is your choice, and we're going to support you no matter what you do." Torrance answered.

"Helen?"

"Torrance is right, Blake. I believe it when she says she's in love with you. She's separated from Jack, and they're getting a divorce. She wants you, Blake. She wants to make it right with you."

The following morning Blake and her following arrived at the county courthouse early. The media was already stationed outside with live footage. Blake was asked for interviews but declined at the moment, instead heading straight inside with her family and friends. As she processed into the courtroom she saw Cindy and Georgia seated in the third row behind the prosecuting attorney. Georgia looked at Blake, but the tall attorney ignored her and took her own seat in the front row.

Promptly at nine the judge entered the courtroom and shortly there after opening remarks began. Blake sat silently observing. The prosecuting attorney seemed to be competent to try the case, but the brunette she would have handled it differently had she been the one to work it. As Cindy had mentioned the day before, Georgia was the first witness called the stand.

Blake chose to not look at the little woman as she was sworn in and took her seat. "Would you please state your name for the court please?"

"It's Georgia Smith, but most people call me by my maiden name Carmichael."

"All right. Miz Carmichael, could you please tell the court how long you have known the defendants?"

"I've known them all my whole life. We used to play together as children."

"And did you know that the four of them belonged to the Ku Klux Klan before this trial?"

"Yes but I never thought anything of it."

"All right. Tell me about your relationship to Blake Erwin. How long have you known her? Under what circumstances did you meet?"

"I met Blake in May just after her great aunt's funeral. We started a friendship."

"Would you say you are friends with Miz Erwin today?"

"No. I cain't say that we are."

"Why not?"

"She blames me for these four men tryin' to kill her."

"Why is that? Does she have a reason for believin' that?"

"The night that she was assaulted, she had come into my husband's bar. She and I had gotten into an argument earlier that day, and I was still upset with her. I said some things in my anger that I think caused my friends to try to kill her."

"Objection! Speculation!" the defending attorney yelled.

"Sustained. Miz Smith, please stick to the facts." the judge ordered.

"Yes, your honor." she answered.

"Miz Carmichael, what did you say at the bar that night?"

Georgia lowered her head in obvious shame. "I accused her of...of rapin' me."

"Did you use that exact word? Tell me exactly what you said."

"I said she was dyke and that she raped me." Georgia repeated her eyes beginning to tear as her lips started to quiver.

"Did Miz Erwin rape you, Miz Carmichael?"

"No."

"Did she ever touch you without your consent?"

"No, never." she answered softly.

"Then why did you accuse her of doin' such a thin'?"

"Because she hurt me, and I wanted to make her pay for it by humiliatin' her in front of everyone at the bar."

"How did she hurt you?"

"She refused my love."

"What do you mean by that?"

"I wanted her to love me, but she said she couldn't. She was involved with someone, and I was married. She said what had happened between us had been a mistake, and she wanted to forget it had ever happened."

"What did happen? What took place that made Blake Erwin give you such a speech?"

"The night before that Blake and I..." she began but her voice failed her for a moment. She looked around the courtroom at all the eyes on her. No one but she, Blake, and the attorney knew what had taken place that night, but she was about to confess to the whole crowd that she had been intimate with the New York attorney.

"Miz Carmichael." the attorney prompted.

Georgia looked at Blake, who was suddenly watching her. Locking eyes with her, the blonde stated clearly, "I had sex with Blake in her truck."

"You had consensual sexual relations with Blake Erwin?"

"Yes, it was consensual. It was more than that. I'm the one who even initiated it." she added.

"All right. The morning after though you two argued. She said she regretted it, that it had been a mistake, but you didn't share those feelings. Is that correct?"

"Yes. I wanted to pursue a relationship with her, but she wouldn't do it."

"And that upset you. That's why at the bar you told everybody she raped you, even though that was a lie?"

"Yes."

"Thank you, Miz Carmichael." the prosecuting attorney said before returning to his chair.

The defending attorney stepped forward and stared at her quietly for a moment. "Miz. Smith," he began with a patronizing tone. "You are married, correct?"

"Yes but my husband and I have been separated for a long time, and we're now gettin' a divorce."

"All right, but you are married, and you committed a horrendous crime against nature by havin' sexual relations with this woman."

"Objection!" the prosecuting attorney called out.

"Miz Smith is not on trial for her activities, counselor." warned the judge.

"Not yet." the attorney mumbled. "All right. Miz Smith, you say you've known the defendants all your life. Would you consider them your friends?"

"Up until now yes."

"Now that they are on trial for defendin' your honor?"

"I never asked them to hurt Blake. I never asked anyone to harm her. I was upset that night, and I let my temper get the better of me. I said things that were lies, and I did it intentionally to humiliate her, but I never intended for her to be beaten and almost killed for doin' exactly what I asked of her." the blonde answered confidently staring coldly at the attorney questioning her.

Blake watched on in intrigue as the meek southern belle transformed before her very eyes. As much as she was still angry at her, Blake silently cheered her on as she held her ground with the arrogant attorney set on degrading the little woman for her decision to be with the brunette.

"Miz Smith, how would you describe your relationship with Miz Erwin now?"

"There is no relationship. This is the first time I've seen her in months."

"Do you still have feelings for her though?"

Georgia met Blake's eyes again. "Yes, I do." she said without hesitation.

"Is that why you are here testifyin' on the prosecution's behalf? Hopin' to win her affections by sacrificin' your friends?"

The blonde met the defending attorney's eyes. "It might be true that I still love Blake, but she does not feel the same for me. She has made that clear, and I know that there will never be anythin' between us ever 'gain. I'm here, because it's the right thin' to do. I feel like I set this horrible event in motion by my inconsiderate lies, and I want to correct the record." she responded.

When Georgia was allowed to come off the stand, she walked back to her seat. She met the brunette's eyes again. "I'm sorry, Blake." she whispered before turning her head down and taking her seat on the bench next to her mother.

Jack was the next person to take the witness stand, but Blake's mind strayed from the testimony as she thought about the little blonde sitting two rows behind her. Never in her wildest imagination did she think Georgia would answer the questions with the confidence and strength she had displayed. Furthermore the blonde had opened herself up to discrimination just by virtue of admitting that she was intimate with the tall woman. She had indeed accomplished what she come to do. She had set the record straight about their relationship, and Blake felt her anger receding at the sacrifice the blonde had just made on her behalf.

The rest of the day passed in a blur to the attorney. She wasn't able to testify herself due to time constraints, so she was slated to take her turn the following day. Heading back to the farm with her family and friends, they all settled down with a large dinner. After their meal Torrance, Helen, and Blake spent the evening on the porch enjoying the stars and each others company as John slept comfortably in his blonde mother's arms while Bruce lay quietly at Blake's feet.

As the ten o'clock hour approached, Torrance and Helen excused themselves to bed since John

was going to wake up sometime during the night, leaving Blake alone on the porch swing. She was just thinking about the events of the day when she saw car lights coming up her driveway. Immediately Bruce sat to attention as they both stared intently into the dark trying to make out the vehicle. Unable to do so, the attorney moved closer to the door in case she needed to retreat quickly into the house, but as the driver stepped out, she sighed with relief, because it was only Georgia.

The blonde cautiously came up the stairs. As soon as she got into the light of the porch, Blake gasped at the sight of the beautiful woman's face marred by an angry red welt across her cheek. Forgetting herself, Blake immediately reached for the small woman as she asked in concern, "What happened to you?"

"My father." she whispered leaning into the caress Blake was bestowing on her cheek. "He hit me for what I said today. He's angry 'bout what I did."

"He's mad that you testified?"

The teacher shook her head. "He's mad that I told everyone 'bout what happened between us. He's upset that I'm in love with you." she admitted with a trembling voice.

"Oh."

"I had to get out of there, but I didn't know where I could go after today. I'm not sure who my friends are any more."

"It's all right. You'll be safe here. No one will hurt you." Blake assured her.

"Thank you."

"We should get ice on that. Come inside." the tall woman said curving a protective arm around the teacher and leading her into the house. They walked together into the kitchen. The house was quiet since they were the only two seemingly still awake. Georgia took a seat at the table while Blake made a makeshift ice pack with some ice cubes and a towel. "Here. This should help." she said coming to the table. Instinctively she held it up to the younger woman's face herself instead of just handing it to her. Neither spoke at first, their eyes conveying the vulnerability that each was feeling at the moment. The extended silence reigned for long minutes.

When the flaming pain began to recede in her face, Georgia gently pulled Blake's hand away and held it in her own. "Thank you. It feels better now."

Giving a nod the brunette went to the sink and threw away the ice cubes before putting the damp towel over the hand rail of the stove to dry. "You should probably stay away from home tonight to give your father time to settle down a little." The teacher nodded. "You can stay here." Blake offered.

"If you're sure that's okay." tentatively Georgia accepted.

"It's fine. Come upstairs with me. I'll get you something to sleep in." Quietly Blake locked up the house before leading Georgia up the creaky old staircase and down the corridor to one of the many guestrooms in the house. Blake knew there were no more rooms available for the blonde with all the people staying at the house, but she figured she could have hers for one night, and she would take the couch. Flipping on the lights as they entered the room, she stated, "You can stay in here. Just let me get you a change of clothes."

Georgia watched as Blake went to the dresser and began to rummage through the drawers. She took in the somewhat disarrayed bed and realized that the brunette was offering her the room she normally slept in for the night. "Blake, is this your room?" she inquired.

"Yeah."

"Well, I cain sleep somewhere else." she offered.

"It's fine. Here. Try this on. It'll probably be a little big on you still, but it's the smallest thing I have." She extended the thin white t-shirt to the blonde. "There is a bathroom right through there." Blake stated pointing to the closed door across the small room. "You're more than welcome to use any of my stuff."

"Thank you, Blake." she whispered.

"Thank you, Georgia, for what you did today. I'm sorry you got hurt for what you did on my behalf."

"I'd do it 'gain." the blonde replied softly before heading into the bathroom.

Georgia changed into the t-shirt Blake had provided her. It hung down almost to her knees but had seen better days as she could just make out her bare form underneath. Neatly folding her clothes, she splashed water on her face before using the attorney's mouth wash.

Stepping back into the room, she found the older woman standing at the dresser. Blake had changed as well, and she now wore a t-shirt herself and a pair of men's boxers as she put her clothes away for the night. "Um, did you want some bottoms to go with that?" the attorney asked quietly as she eyed the blonde's legs as the little woman shifted nervously on her bare feet.

"No. I'm all right."

"Okay." Blake mumbled as her eyes trailed up Georgia's body. She could see that the blonde was completely naked under her sleeping attire, all three of her intimate treasures outlined by the white cotton. "Good night then."

Seeing the reaction Blake was having to her form, Georgia decided to take a chance with her. Stepping over to her, the blonde reached for the muscular frame of her dreams, sliding one arm around the attorney's waist as the other went around her neck. The quick exhale assured her of

Blake's desire. Blue eyes met brown. Without wasting a moment, she leaned up toward the tall woman's lips, pulling the brunette's head down to her. Blake groaned deeply as their mouths came together, and the teacher felt the hardness of Blake's cast embrace her around the back while her good hand cupped the back of her fair head. The kiss was gentle at first but quickly fanned the flames of their underlying fire for each other until they threatened to blaze out of control and only the need for air forced them apart.

Looking up into the dark eyes, Georgia breathlessly whispered, "Don't go. Stay with me tonight."

"Georgia." the brunette uttered in uncertainty.

"Please, Blake. Don't talk. Don't think. Just love me." the blonde murmured bringing her hands to the hem of Blake's t-shirt. Slowly she lifted it over the attorney's head, leaving her only in her shorts. Georgia ran her hands up the older woman's torso, her fingers taking in the toned body before meeting brown eyes again. "You're so sexy, Blake. I've wanted to touch you for so long." the little woman admitted as she kissed the slope of the tall woman's left breast just over her heart. "Come to bed with me." The attorney's only response was to capture Georgia's lips again in a steamy kiss. Her hands quickly ripped the thread bare shirt from the blonde's back. The petite woman moaned as her form became exposed to the humid night air. Stepping backwards, she pulled the tall woman with her toward the bed. The only sounds in the room as they moved ever closer to their destination were erratic breathing and Blake's leg cast as it knocked the bed frame.

Georgia lost her balance as Blake lightly pushed on her, making her fall back onto the antique brass bed. The blonde wasted no time however, leaning in to kiss the hard stomach of the woman she loved, her tongue lightly rimming her navel erotically foretelling pleasure to come. Blake groaned pressing the fair head closer. The teacher slid her hands around the brunette's body again, grabbing hold of her firm backside. She began to knead it gently as her tongue licked lower and lower teasing the older woman in the most sensual of ways. Blake whimpered. Finally when Georgia felt she had tortured her lover enough, she freed her from the confines of her boxers, leaving them both completely naked to each other's eyes.

Blake looked down into the blue eyes she adored. Georgia was utterly exposed and open to her gaze. The sight of the blonde sitting there with her thighs wide enough to accommodate the brunette's body, left Blake with the need to possess the woman of her persistent fantasies. Leaning down she scooped up the blonde's legs and laid them out on the bed, and then slid onto it next to Georgia. She didn't linger long though before rolling on top of the smaller woman, who immediately made room for her in the cradle of her thighs. Georgia arched her back up into her, pressing their bodies even closer.

Blake took a moment to gaze at her lover's face. The fingers of her good hand lightly traced over fair brows and down her cheek before leaning to kiss her mouth again. The attorney leisurely explored the blonde this time. Her mouth meticulously investigated the fair body beneath her, but remembering her desires from their last encounter, she knew there was one thing she needed to do before they got too carried away. Working her way down Georgia's body, Blake eventually found herself between the blonde's legs, her mouth inches from her longing. Sparing a look up to

the teacher's face, she lowered herself to the pleasure she knew was waiting for her.

Georgia cried out at the first feel of Blake's tongue. It seared her wetness, sending sparks skittering throughout her body. The attorney groaned in approval at the taste of the blonde. It was even better than she had remembered, and she was all too happy at the chance to drown in it.

The petite woman had never felt such feelings running rampant through her. Even as much as she had enjoyed their first experience, it paled to what Blake was doing to her as the attorney's tongue slithered over every delicate crevice and curvature, seeking her entrance and filling her as far as she could. Her moans were constant as she gripped tighter to the dark hair of her lover. Georgia felt herself approaching the summit of pleasure under the ministrations. She screamed her release into the night as she clutched fiercely to Blake's head, pushing her face as deep as she could.

Blake moaned as she felt Georgia spasm against her, her delicate flesh quivering from the oral assault. The tall woman was far from sated though and waited only a few moments before making her way up the blonde's body. "Are you all right?" she whispered looking to the teacher's face as her hand came to take the place that her mouth had just occupied.

"Uh huh." Georgia muttered still floating the tide. However she gave a whimper when she felt Blake enter her.

"Is that too much?" the brunette asked in concern.

"No." the blonde panted meeting her lover's eyes. Curving her arms around strong shoulders she pulled the brunette down to her, so their bodies were touching skin to skin everywhere. Their mouths met softly at first and then with increasing fervor that matched Blake's strokes. The older woman pulled her lips away from the blonde's to take in her fair neck as she continued to thrust with rising tempo until they both were writhing, desperately straining to complete what they had begun. It wasn't long before Georgia's body reached the precipice, and she called her lover's name feverishly. Knowing how close the small woman was, Blake increased her efforts, pushing the teacher over the pinnacle of pleasure a second time before collapsing onto the smaller body under hers. Georgia trembled as strong arms held her. The contractions lasted long moments, but when they had subsided, Blake began to withdraw. Georgia whimpered in protest. "No." she objected grabbing Blake by the wrist. She pushed the older woman back into her. "Stay inside me forever." she murmured. The brunette complied with the little woman's wish, remaining inside her as they both drifted to sleep.

The following morning Blake awoke to the sound of knocking on her bedroom door. Sleepily she opened her eyes to find herself alone. Wondering where Georgia was, she called out, "Who is it?"

"It's Helen."

"Just a second." she responded. She rolled out of bed, noticing that she was still naked from the night before, but her night clothes had been put away. The bathroom door was open, revealing

that she was completely alone in the room. Grabbing her robe, she pulled it on. "Come on in." she said.

Her blonde friend opened the door and slowly stepped into the room. "Morning."

"Good morning. How are you? Sleep all right?"

Helen shrugged. "As well as one does with a baby around. John and I were up at about 5:00 when we ran into someone unexpected."

"Oh?"

"What was Georgia doing here at that hour?" she asked innocently.

Blake gave a chuckle at the blonde. "Well, she came by after you and Tor went to bed last night. She needed a place to crash, because she had gotten into a bad fight with her father."

"And you were more than happy to accommodate her? How sweet of you." the blonde teased. "Seriously, Blake, what's going on with the two of you now?"

The attorney shrugged. "I don't know. Last night was incredible." she confessed. "She was everything I ever wanted a woman to be. Did she say anything to you when she left?"

"Just to tell you good bye, and she wanted me to give you this note." she stated handing it over.

"Thanks."

"You're welcome. I'll leave you to get dressed now. Your mother has started on breakfast. She asked me to remind you that we had to leave here by 8:15."

"All right. Thanks, Helen."

Once her friend had closed the door, Blake looked down at the envelope in her hands. She had never seen Georgia's handwriting before, so she took a moment to study it, the soft, feminine nature of the curves, very much like their owner. Opening it Blake pulled out the paper and unfolded it. The letter began with the blonde thanking the attorney for giving her a place to stay the night, but then it moved on to express her sentiments of what they had shared. Blake's heart fluttered at the elegant words the little woman had chosen that were so befitting of their time together. Georgia laid bare all of her feelings that she had never been able to say, her love and devotion for the brunette. However as Blake read through it, she realized they were the words of a defeated woman as if Georgia had accepted her fate of never having a relationship with the attorney. The beauty queen thanked Blake for the opportunity to share her deepest emotions and that she would cherish their time together for the rest of her life. She closed it saying that Blake would always be in her heart and thoughts forever before signing her name. Blake gave a shaky sigh, finding it difficult to breathe. The blonde had just walked out on her with intentions of never returning. The tall woman reread the note several times, but it was even more obvious that

Georgia had no aim of having a relationship with her.

The brunette didn't know how to feel about the turn of events. She had wanted the blonde for so long, but now that she had her, she realized there was more to her desires. Georgia wasn't just an object of her lust any longer. She had somehow transformed her position in a matter of a day. The previous morning when Blake had entered the courtroom, she had still felt anger toward the teacher, but Georgia's bold declaration on the witness stand swayed the attorney's opinion, and once she had lowered her guard, the petite woman had slipped into a place in her soul without the older woman even realizing it until it was too late. Now she was left with a smarting pang of her heart leaving her.

Blake had no idea what she was going to do, but she knew she wanted to convince Georgia to give her a chance. However she knew there was no time to go to the blonde's house, because she was due to testify that day in court. Placing the note by her bed, she hurried into the bathroom to dress for the day.

The brunette expected to see Georgia at the courthouse that day, but both the blonde and her mother were missing. Nevertheless Blake went on the stand to tell of the brutal assault she had received at the hands of the defendants. It was difficult for her to describe the incident given her strong feelings about it, but she held her own with the defending attorney, not allowing him to belittle her as he had the blonde the previous day.

That evening though as court was adjourned for the day, Blake split up from her group, saying she had an errand to run and would catch up with them at the house. Climbing into her truck, she sped off in the direction of Georgia's house. The blonde's truck was in the driveway when she pulled up. The brunette went up to the door and knocked strongly. Only a moment passed before Melvin answered the door.

"What the hell do you want?" he sneered.

"I want to talk to Georgia." she stated.

"Hell no! She ain't allowed anywhere near you! I forbid it! Now get out of here!" he screamed slamming the door. However Blake wouldn't be dissuaded so easily and knocked a second time. Melvin opened the door once more. "I said get lost, Yankee! Don't make me hurt you!"

"I just want to talk to your daughter, Mr. Carmichael." she said but received a door in the face again. Knowing that Georgia was there, Blake decided to try another method. Circling the trailer to the blonde's bedroom, she noticed that the light was on but the window closed. Seeing some discarded cinder blocks lying haphazardly in the yard, the attorney carefully stacked a few of them on top of each other, and then stepped on them, so she could see into the little woman's room. Georgia was standing with her back to the window talking with her mother who was in the door way. The tall woman rapped lightly at the window. Both women quickly turned at the sound.

When Georgia saw who was at her window, her heart momentarily stopped. She had never seen

such an anxious expression on her beloved's face, and she felt bad for putting it there. Moving to the window, the blonde slid it open. "What are you doin' here, Blake?" she whispered quietly.

"I came to talk to you."

"You have to leave. You cain't be here. My daddy will kill you if he finds you."

"I don't care. I need to talk to you." The attorney looked at her lover's mother. "Cindy, help me out here."

The older blonde shook her head. "I wish I could, Blake, but Georgia's right. It ain't safe for you here any more. Melvin will hurt you. You best be gettin' gone."

The brunette gave a sigh. Seeing bags on Georgia's bed, she inquired, "Where are you going, Georgia?"

However before the teacher could answer, Blake heard a cocking of a shotgun behind her as it pressed into her lower back. "Yankee, I told you to get the hell off my land!" Melvin stated. "For the last time you leave my girl 'lone! She's goin' back where she belongs! She's goin' back to her husband, and you're goin' six feet into the ground if you don't get off my property by the count of ten!" he screamed.

Looking back at the blonde, Blake asked, "Georgia, is that true? Are you going back to Jack?" she asked with obvious confusion and hurt.

"One!" Melvin yelled in warning.

"Please go, Blake. I don't want to see you get hurt." she softly said.

"Two!"

"Georgia, don't do this." the attorney pleaded.

"Three!"

"I don't have a choice, Blake. Now go please." she pressed ardently.

"Four!"

"Georgia, I just want a chance to talk some sense into you."

"Five!"

"I cain't, Blake. You don't understand. Now leave before my daddy hurts you." she whispered touching her admirer's cheek sweetly.

"Six!"

Sighing in resignation the tall woman gave a nod. "All right. I'll go, but know this, Georgia. You can run, but you can't hide from the truth. I know you love me."

"Seven!"

Getting off the blocks, Blake began to walk away. As she turned the corner of the trailer, she heard Melvin reach ten just before a shot rang out and hit the tree that she had just passed. Quickly the brunette jumped into the truck in panic just as he came around the corner ready to fire a second time. His second shot came through the windshield on the passenger's side. Glass shattered around her as the attorney was backing out of the driveway.

Blake raced off, sending dust flying under her tires as she sped away for fear of her life. When she arrived back at her farmhouse and her family and friends saw the bullet hole through the glass on the truck, they immediately became concerned. "What happened to you?" Torrance inquired pulling her friend into her arms.

Blake was shaking as she replied, "She's going back to Jack."

"What? What are you talking about? I'm asking who shot at you, Blake."

"Oh. Her father because I wouldn't get off his property." she mumbled. Looking at Helen she muttered, "She's going back to Jack, Helen. How could she do this to me? Did she tell you this today when you saw her?"

Helen looked at her own wife and then Blake. Putting her arms around the attorney, she pulled her tightly against her in a consoling embrace. "I don't know why she's doing this, Blake. All I know is that sometimes people run from the ones they love, because they're scared." she said touching her beloved photographer in sympathy as she remembered what she had done to their relationship before they had given it a second chance. "If you love her, she's worth fighting for even if it means fighting her."

"I don't understand why he would take her back. He's the one that asked for their divorce. He knows she feels something for me. Why would Jack do this?"

"Maybe you don't know all the facts, Blake." Torrance proposed. "Did she give you an answer when you asked why she was going back?"

"No. Her father was counting rather quickly. I had to get out of there before he got to ten."

"Well, then maybe she will explain it to you. You can't jump to conclusions until you talk to her. You have to give her a chance to explain herself." Torrance said.

"I guess. That's just the last thing I ever expected when I went over there." Blake admitted. "I knew Melvin was going to be hostile, but I thought I'd at least be able to talk to her. Maybe I

should go over to the bar and talk to Jack." she pondered aloud.

"We could do that." the photographer answered.

"No. I can't put you in jeopardy like that, Tor. You stay here. These people have guns. You've come close enough to death already in your lifetime. I wouldn't be able to live with it on my conscience if something happened to you."

"Don't worry about that, Blake. I have a much more powerful weapon than a gun. It's called a camera. Now why don't we have some dinner, and you can settle down a bit. Then we'll head over to this bar and see what we can find out. All right?"

A couple of hours later after their meal and Torrance helped Helen with John's bath, the two brunette friends prepared to go to Jack's bar. Helen stood on the porch with her son in her arms watching the two. Torrance looked at her wife in adoration as she slipped her camera around her neck. "We'll be back soon." she said.

"Come back alive, Torrance. You too, Blake." she stated in obvious concern.

"We will. I promise." the photographer answered pulling the blonde in for a hug.

"Last time you promised me something like that, I thought you were dead for a day before you found your way home. Don't do that to me again." Helen whispered.

"I won't. We'll be back in about an hour or so, just in time for John to go to bed." Torrance replied, kissing her son on the top of his dark head before kissing her wife as well for good measure.

"Man, what I would give for a kiss from a good woman right about now." Blake teased. "What do you say, Helen? One for the road just in case." she jested.

The blonde slowly pulled the attorney into her arms. "You're a crazy woman, Blake Erwin. Be careful out there. This town doesn't like you, and I don't want to see either of you get hurt."

"We'll be fine. I promise. Now do I get that kiss or not?" she joked.

With a smile, the blonde leaned up and planted a delicate kiss at the corner's of the brunette's lips. "That's a close as you'll ever get." she playfully said, her green eyes sparkling in jest. "Now go."

As the two tall brunettes made their way out to the truck, Blake stated, "You have quite a woman there, Tor."

"Don't I know it." Torrance agreed with a smile.

Quietly the women made their way over to Jack's bar. As usual the place seemed to be packed

with people, so Blake hoped that meant Jack would be around. Cautiously the friends made their way to the door and slowly pulled it open, unsure of what they might find on the other side.

As expected as soon as they cleared the doorway, the music from the old jukebox went quiet as did the crowd. No one said a word for a moment as they all stared in the New Yorkers' direction. However Jack, who was standing at the pool table, came meandering over to them. "What do you want, Yankee?" he questioned taking a sip of his beer casually.

"I want to talk to you."

"Well, here I am."

Blake cast her gaze around the room noticing that everyone was still observing the interchange. "I had hoped we could do this in private." she mentioned.

"Whatever you have to say, you cain say to me here. Now what do you want?" gruffly he asked again.

"I wanted to talk to you about Georgia. I went by her parents' place and found out she's moving back in with you."

"So what? She's my wife after all. She belongs at home with me." he answered. "What business of that is yours?"

"I thought you were getting a divorce. That's what you both said."

"Well, it ain't true, Yankee. Georgia's my wife, and I aim to keep her, so you just leave her the hell alone."

"How could you do this, Jack? You know she loves me, not you."

"Listen, Yankee. I don't know what she might've told you in a moment of fuckin', but I'm gonna set the record straight right now. Georgia is movin' back in with me, because she's mine, always has been, always will be. We've had our problems, but she ain't gettin' a divorce from me. Now you better just stay the hell away from my woman, or else I'll be forced to send my brothers 'round 'gain to take care of you permanently. You lay another hand on her, and I'll make sure my Klan brothers put you in the ground next time. Are we clear on that, Yankee?"

Stunned by the declaration she had just received, Blake merely nodded at first. "We're clear, Jack." she softly answered.

"Good." Jack then grabbed her unexpectedly by the front of the shirt. "Now you and your dyke friend get the hell out of my bar!" he demanded. However under his breath so only the attorney could hear, he whispered, "I'm sorry, Blake."

Not another word was uttered as the two friends made their way back to their vehicle. Blake sat

there for a moment after she had slid into the driver's seat and just stared at the bar. "That was definitely not what I expected." she mentioned.

"Me neither. Man, this town really does dislike you, Blake."

"I know, but Jack doesn't."

"What do you mean? It was quite obvious he hates you with the way he acted just now."

"He only wanted it to look that way. He whispered that he was sorry when he grabbed me. I wonder what he's up to. What is he doing? Why is he taking Georgia back? He knows she doesn't love him."

"I don't know what to tell you. We better get out of here though. I promised Helen to come back in one piece." Torrance stated.

Blake backed the truck out onto the road as she continued to think about the situation. "Did you notice the way he said his brothers? He's a member of the Klan, but then why did he save my life?"

"I have no idea. He seems to be quite the enigma. Come on. You're not going to get anywhere until you talk to Georgia I guess. We might as well just wait until she comes to you."

Going back to the house, they were greeted by anxious family and friends. Helen seemed the most relieved that they had returned so quickly and safely, but Blake knew it was because of the trauma Torrance and the blonde had already gone through in their relationship. Unsure of how to feel about all the things that had transpired in the last few days, Blake retreated to the library for introspective time. She heard the rest of the house retire as the evening wore on, but around eleven that night she noticed some lights coming up the driveway. Hoping that it was Georgia, Blake quickly came to the door. However it wasn't the blonde. As Jack got out of his truck, the attorney wondered what was about to happen. Cautiously she stepped out onto the porch to greet him.

"Yankee, I need to talk to you." he said without pretense.

"What do you want, Jack?"

"I need to talk to you 'bout Georgia."

"I think you covered everything already."

"No, I didn't. You don't understand." he replied.

"What's there to understand? You're one of them. You're a member of the Klan, Jack."

"Yes, I am but so is every other man in this town. You need to listen to me, Yankee."

"How can I believe anything you say? I don't even know if you're a friend or enemy."

"I'm neither, Yankee, but I do have somethin' to tell you."

"What is that?" Blake inquired crossing her arms across her chest.

"Georgia and I are gettin' a divorce. She does love you, Yankee. I know that. You know that, and she knows that."

"Then I'm really confused. Why did she move back in with you?"

"Yankee, I do care about Georgia. We've grown apart, but that doesn't stop me from loving her still. I just know we cain't be married any more. I'm still her husband, and you once said it's a husband's job to protect his wife. Well, that's what I'm doin'. She needs it now more than ever, Yankee. If you haven't realized, Melvin is a Klan member, one of the more superior ones around here at that, and he will kill Georgia for what she's done. The only way for that not to happen was to supposedly change her ways and come back to me. He wouldn't take her out and shoot her like he would you, but he will beat her up and make her life miserable, and he wouldn't try to stop it if the Klan boys decided to teach her a lesson of her own. She's not safe there any more. She's not safe anywhere except with me, and I'm not sure that will even last long. I turned on my brothers. I testified 'gainst them just like Georgia did, and I know it's only time before they decide to come after me for betrayin' our oath of brotherhood."

"Brotherhood? It's hate, Jack. They terrorize and kill all in the name of hate." she scoffed. "Of course they would turn on you."

"I know. Georgia is only safe temporarily. I'm makin' plans to leave here, because it's only time before I'm the one hangin' from a tree for what I've done, and they'd hang Georgia right 'long with me. I don't want that to happen, Yankee. We've only got as long as this trial is in the press. Once you and your group leave here, we're both dead. I've already gotten harassin' calls 'bout it. It's only a matter of time. That's why we both have to leave this place."

"Well, if that's what you have to do to stay safe, then you should do it."

"I will, but that's where Georgia comes in. I want you to take her back to New York with you."

"What?" Blake asked in surprise.

"Yeah. We'll keep up the show as long as you're here, but when you're ready to leave, we all leave the same day, and you take Georgia. She wants to go with you, Yankee. If you don't take her, she'll be killed."

"Why can't she go with you?"

"It wouldn't be right to keep her from you. She wants to be with you, Yankee, and I want her to

be happy. Promise me you'll take her."

Blake pondered what Jack was asking of her for a moment. "All right. I'll take her back to New York if that'll keep her safe, but I want you to understand that this in no way says anything about my relationship with her. I can't promise her anything by doing this."

"I know, and I'll tell her that, but she has to go somewhere. The Klan will follow her anywhere up to the Mason-Dixon. North of that she's safe"

"All right." Blake stated. "Where are you going to go, Jack?"

"West. I'm heading to Texas. The Klan isn't as big out there in the big cities. Only Georgia will know exactly how to find me."

After a moment she mentioned, "You know, Jack, you are quite the paradox. I just don't know how to read you."

He shrugged. "Sometimes doin' what is right and what is expected are different. This whole town is in the Klan, Yankee. It's family tradition, but that don't make it right. You know, even most of the jury has connections to the Klan. You ain't gettin' a fair trial here. I cain promise you that."

"That doesn't matter so much to me. It's the press more than anything. Could I see Georgia? Would you let me come over to your house?"

"That probably ain't a good idea. I'll tell her to come 'round here though. I know she wants to see you. You want to tell her the plan, or do you want me to?"

"She'll probably take it better from you, Jack. When she comes by here, I'll talk to her about it."

"All right. Well, I better get goin'. She ain't really safe there at the house 'lone. I shouldn't leave her there long by herself. Just know that we've gotta act one way in public and another when it's just us. It ain't personal."

"I understand. Thank you for protecting Georgia, Jack."

"She deserves it for doin' right." he stated.

"Yes, she does, and I'll do my best to do my part."

"All right. That's all I need to hear. I'll see you 'round."

The following afternoon Blake was at the house sitting on the porch with Helen, Torrance, and John when she saw Georgia's familiar truck coming up the drive. The attorney had been discussing her conversation with Jack with them, and the three of them were trying to come up with a suitable plan for what exactly to do with the southern belle when they took her to New York.

When Georgia stepped out of her truck, she wasn't sure what to expect. The three women were looking at her expectantly, but her stomach trembled in nervousness. When Jack had gotten home the night before and explained what was going to happen, the blonde understood the reasoning for why Jack had asked for Blake's assistance, but she wasn't sure if she felt good about returning with the brunette to New York when they were on uncertain terms.

Taking the steps slowly, Georgia gave them a tentative smile. "Hey." she said.

"Hi. Come sit down. We were just talking about you." Blake stated gesturing to one of the gliders near the porch swing that Torrance and Helen occupied. When the blonde was settled, the brunette asked, "Did Jack talk to you?"

"Yeah. He told me what you two decided. That's what I came by to talk to you 'bout."

"All right."

"I don't want to go with you, Blake." she began.

"What? Why not? Jack tells me that if you stay here you're going to be lynched. Neither of us want that to happen to you. Let me tell you that you don't want to feel a noose around your neck, Georgia. It doesn't feel good. Jack's getting the hell out of this place as soon as he can, and you need to do the same. He swears to me that the Klan will come after you unless I take you north. I guess the Klan doesn't come into Yankee territory."

"Blake, you don't need to care for me. I'm a grown woman, and I've made my choices. I'll deal with this 'lone."

"Georgia, this is no time for bravery. Jack told me that your father was one of the higher ups of the Klan in this area, and you're not even safe in your parents' home any longer. You don't have many choices. You either leave with us, go with Jack, or meet a fate that no one should. You can't outrun the Klan without help."

"That doesn't mean I need yours, Blake. I know that there is nothin' for us, so I might as well just leave you 'lone. I appreciate your concern, but I'll be fine on my own. I'm gonna go now. Thanks anyway. Good bye." she said before turning around.

Blake looked at her friends helplessly. She thought for sure the teacher would want assistance, so she was floored that her offer had just been refused. "Let me try. Here. Hold John." Helen said to them passing her son to her wife. She went after Georgia, meeting up with her at her truck. Helen slid into the passenger's seat as Georgia got into the driver's side. "Georgia, wait a minute." she called.

"Helen, you've been very nice to me, but please don't get involved."

"I am involved. Listen, Blake's really concerned about your safety and with reason."

"I know, and it's real nice that she's tryin' to help me out, but I've already caused her 'nough trouble. I don't want to get in between Cara and her 'gain."

"She and Cara aren't together any more." Helen informed her. "Didn't you know that?"

"No. No one told me. Is she seein' anyone else?"

"No. The only one she wants is you, Georgia. Will you at least listen to what we've come up with before turning us down?"

"All right." the younger blonde conceded.

"Good. Now the plan so far is for you to go home with us when we head back to New York. Torrance and I offered to let you live at our loft for awhile since you're not going to have a job or anything when you get there. You can stay there for as long as it takes to get you on your feet. We already have a few job ideas, but they aren't in teaching. If you want to go back to that, you'll have to do that on your own, but we have a few prospects to keep you busy until you decide what you want and to cover some expenses. Torrance and I aren't going to charge you rent or anything, but you'll still have some living expenses like food and commuting. You'll be safe and can start over. Meanwhile you and Blake can see if there is anything to your relationship. We'll watch out for you and introduce you to our group of friends, so you won't be lonely. This will be a chance for you to make something of your life that you can't do here, especially after what has happened. If you find that you really hate New York, you're free to go at any time."

"Where are you and Torrance gonna live if I'm at your place?"

"We actually live on Long Island most of the time, so you're not even posing an inconvenience. You're actually helping us, because Torrance doesn't like the loft being empty so much."

Georgia looked up to the porch where the two dark-haired women were sitting watching the two blondes. "Why are you doin' this, Helen?"

"Because you deserve a chance at happiness and you deserve safety that you can't get here. Torrance and I know that Blake feels more for you than she ever has for any other woman, and we want to be able to see that flourish if that's meant to happen. She loves you, Georgia."

"I love her." she confessed.

"Then why don't you give this a try? It wouldn't hurt anything."

"I guess it wouldn't."

"So, does that mean you'll come with us?" Helen hopefully asked.

"Yeah, I guess so. Are you sure this is what Blake wants? I don't want to force her."

"She wants you safe, and she wants you in ways she's never wanted anyone else. Blake can be hard-headed sometimes, but she knows this is the only thing that will save you as well as the rest of us. She wants you to do this."

"Okay then. I'll do it. Thank you, Helen. I don't know what I would do without Torrance's and your kindness."

"We're glad to help. Now come on. Let's go up there and tell them the news. I know they are both anxious about what we're saying. Just look at them." teased Helen.

They both looked up at the tall women standing there looking nervously at the truck. Georgia cracked a smile. "They are quite a pair, aren't they?" she asked.

"They sure are. Come on."

Continued in Part 3

~ New York series ~
Love in Photographs
Georgia On My Mind
Stick to the Script
Vows of the Heart

Alex Tryst's Scrolls
The Athenaeum's Scroll Archive

~ Georgia On My Mind ~

by Alex Tryst
Copyright © January 2003

Disclaimers: These characters are of my own creation, except for one, Isaac Mizrahi. He is a real person, and I tried to keep him as true to himself as possible. No infringement was intended. This story is about two women (big surprise there) who are doing all right in their respective lives until they meet each other, and that's when mayhem ensues. I should mention as well that some of my old favorites make an appearance, so if you are a fan of "Love in Photographs", you will enjoy seeing Torrance, Helen, and company. If you have not had the pleasure of reading

"Love in Photographs", just know that this book will definitely spoil that one, so you might want to read it first. However this is not a sequel by any means and can stand by itself. I just think you'll find more pleasure in the minor players in this work if you have read that one. As far as things to look out for, there is violence such as gay bashing and racist and homophobic remarks, so please be aware. And one last thing I should note. I tried to actually write out the southern accent the best I could, so please go lightly on commentary of the speech. This is my first attempt at affecting a drawl in dialogue.

Dedication: As always to my wife, you are my fondest wish. To the inspiration for the title I credit the song "Georgia on My Mind" sung by the one and only Ray Charles. This is a perfect title given my leading southern lady. Of course in my own way I also thank my blonde muse who has been the star of several books now and more to come I'm sure. Of course I cannot forget my beta reader who has kept me motivated on more than just this book.

Now on with the show.....

Part 3

Two weeks later Blake and her entourage left for New York after closing arguments in the case. As soon as the recess was called for jury deliberation, they all went back to the farmhouse to pack up the last of their things. Jack had stopped by with his truck full of his most precious belongings and his dog as his passenger. The attorney watched on from the porch as Georgia said good bye to her soon to be ex-husband and lifelong friend. It was obvious to her that the two shared deep feelings of affection for each other regardless of the fact that they no longer had a marriage. He waved to Blake and then departed.

As for Blake's group, they all drove to Atlanta and spent the night there before getting on a plane early the next day. Even though the brunette and blonde shared a hotel suite, they slept separately that night while Bruce guarded their door from their common area. Upon arriving at JFK airport, Torrance, Helen, and John parted ways with them, leaving Blake with the key to the loft and heading back to their home on Long Island.

Blake escorted Georgia to the loft to help her with her things. After it had all been brought up to the apartment, Blake hovered in the doorway with Bruce. "Well, I guess I should just let you get settled in then." she mentioned.

Georgia nodded. "Do you have plans the rest of the evenin'?" she inquired.

"I'm just going to go back to my place. I have lots of business to catch up on from being gone so long."

"Oh right. Of course." the blonde stated. "I shouldn't keep you then."

Looking around the foyer of the loft, Blake hesitated another moment. "You know, there

probably isn't any food here. Maybe I should take you to dinner and then to the local store to get you some staples."

"That would be nice."

"All right. Let's leave Bruce here for now. There's this great Chinese place nearby. Do you like Chinese?"

"I've never had it." the teacher admitted.

"Well, you must try it. It's one of my favorites. Come on. I need to call ahead and make a reservation." the attorney mentioned flipping open her phone to do just that. After a moment of speaking with the restaurant, Blake ended the call. "They can take us in half an hour. That gives us plenty of time to walk there. Are you ready?"

"Yeah, sure." the blonde replied picking up her purse and the key to the loft off the foyer table.

Quietly the couple left the building and made their way leisurely to the restaurant. Neither spoke much, the main sound surrounding them were taxis and the clunk of Blake's cast against the concrete. Several minutes passed before Georgia tentatively inquired, "So where do you live, Blake?"

"Not far from the restaurant actually. I go there a lot, because I don't have much time to cook. I'll take you by after we eat. Just to prepare you though. It's nothing as grand as Tor and Helen's place."

"They do have a nice place." the small woman agreed.

"Yeah. Well, it's easy to have such fine things when you come from money." she jested.

"Is Torrance rich? She seems like it."

Blake nodded. "Torrance and Helen Whitfield are well off even though most of it is Tor's. She's made quite a career out of photography."

"How much money do you think they have?" curiously Georgia asked.

"You wouldn't believe it if I told you."

"What? A million?"

Blake laughed. "A million? You've way underestimated them. The Whitfield family is one of the wealthiest families in New York. They are estimated to be worth about one hundred million."

"A hundred million dollars?" Georgia exclaimed. "Torrance is worth that much?"

"No. Tor probably only has about twenty five to thirty million herself I bet. At least that's what the papers say. Her father is a retired senator and her mother a retired actress. Her father's side of the family are mostly politicians and businessmen, all of which are very successful. Her mother's side owns a vineyard in Italy and are all mostly foreign actors, highly popular in Europe at least. Tor is an only child and stands to inherit quite an estate."

"Wow. Helen is certainly a lucky woman."

"Well, money isn't everything, Georgia."

"I know, but I've never even imagined that much money in my life."

"Pretty wild, isn't it?"

"Well, you must do pretty well yourself to live in the same neighborhood." the little woman mentioned.

"I do all right." answered Blake not divulging any financial information. She didn't want to overwhelm the woman with that until they were more serious. A few minutes later the tall woman stated, "The restaurant is on the next block."

When they arrived the host greeted the attorney warmly with the familiarity of a regular visitor before immediately showing them to a secluded table. Promptly they were waited upon and had ordered within a few minutes, leaving them alone. Georgia looked at her company. Blake looked slightly nervous. Smiling softly the blonde reached for her beloved's hand across the table. The tall woman let her enfold it in her own.

"Thank you for stickin' 'round a little while longer tonight. I'm a little anxious about bein' left 'lone."

"You'll be fine. It just takes some getting used to. New York is a fun city once you learn how to survive it. Do you know what your plan is after you've settled a little?"

"Start lookin' for a job. The school year has probably already started for the year here, so I might not get a full time teachin' job, but I cain probably sub at least."

"Have you ever thought about a career other than teaching?"

"Not really. That was always just kinda what was expected of me."

"But now you have your own life. You can do anything you want. Are there other things that interest you?"

Georgia shrugged. "I don't know. I've always been interested in writin'. When I was in high school and college I wrote for the school papers. I used to have my own columns. That was always so much fun. I'd love to be able to do that again. My professors used to tell me I was a

good writer."

"I could see it now. You writing a column for the New York Times. That could be amusing. You could write about a southern belle being transplanted into Yankee land, a southern lady's view of the Big Apple. You should write some samples. I know the president of the Times. I could at least get you an interview if you're serious."

"You could?"

"Sure."

"Wow. Thanks, Blake. I'll work on some articles."

"No problem. I want to read them though first."

"You want to make sure I'm good enough?" the blonde teased.

"Well, it's not everyday that I ask my clients for favors. I want to make them count."

"I understand, and I appreciate it all the same."

"All right. That's the writing bit. What else do you like?"

"Well, my columns used to be 'bout fashion. I like that a lot."

"You've definitely come to the right city for that then. Tor's mother knows all the most influential designers. Tor knows quite a few herself. What about it interests you? Would you like to design yourself?"

"Maybe but I really like writin' 'bout it."

"Well, maybe the Times is the wrong place for you then. Maybe you should write for a magazine like Vogue or Cosmopolitan. Tor photographs for lots of fashion magazines. I bet she has contacts. I'll ask her."

"You're bein' too kind to me, Blake. Thank you for all your help."

"You're welcome, Georgia. I want you to be happy here."

Stroking Blake's hand with her own, the blonde met the attorney's brown eyes. "I am happy just being here with you, and I'm glad that we finally have a chance to be together."

Instead of responding directly to the statement, Blake inquired, "What's going on with the divorce proceedings between you and Jack now? Where are you in the process?"

"We filed right after you left Stillwater the first time, but we had to stop it, because we had used

a Klan member attorney that we knew, and when the case came up, we thought it's best to go somewhere else. We need to find another attorney that's not associated with the Klan to help us out. We both figured you might know of someone." she hopefully suggested.

Blake nodded. "I know several people, and they could make it quick and painless if that's what you two want."

"I want it over as soon as possible."

"Fine. I'll have one of my associates take care of it."

"We don't have a lot of money though." hesitantly Georgia added. "Jack and I can't afford a fancy lawyer like you."

"First of all, I'm not drawing up your divorce even though I could. I think it's a conflict of interest. One of my associates will handle it. Don't worry about the cost. I'll take care of that."

"You can't pay for my divorce, Blake."

"I'm not going to. I'll work it out with Jeff some other way. He won't mind. I'll make him an offer he can't refuse. Don't worry about it."

"There you again, bein' too good to me."

Once their meal was over, Georgia reminded the brunette of her promise to show her where she lived, so the attorney reluctantly escorted the small woman back to her place. "Remember now that this is nothing like where you're staying." she stated as she opened the door to her one story open loft. Georgia cautiously stepped inside as Blake flipped on the lights to illuminate the space. The spacious loft had a modern, industrial look about it with the exposed steel beams across the ceiling and sporadically placed columns of steel seemingly holding the structure together. Blake's kitchen was a galley style facing into her casual living area and was full of stainless steel appliances further accenting the loft's natural style. The brunette's furniture matched as well with its contemporary lines and colors. "Through here is my office and den. I spend most of my time in there." Blake said gesturing to the first doorway off the kitchen. Georgia peeked into the space that was only separated by a solid partition. The large office held a substantial desk and entertainment center with leather furniture. "This next room is my guestroom, not that people really stay over." she noted. "It has its own bathroom, and then this last room is the master bedroom."

The petite woman walked into Blake's bedroom. One wall was all windows that faced Central Park. Across from the doorway was a king-sized bed flanked by matching night stands and lamps. Walking further into the room, the younger woman noticed the small dressing area off the room that led into the bathroom. Curiously she walked through the open closet that held all Blake's suits and business attire into the bath area. It shared many of the same elements as the kitchen with its stainless steel fixtures, but Georgia was struck in awe at the large glass double shower. Against the back wall of it was a waterfall cascading down the pane of glass down into

small stones that created the soft sound of babbling water.

"This is the most beautiful bathroom I've ever seen." Georgia mentioned.

"I like it a lot too. That's why I actually bought the place. Otherwise it's not really my style, but that waterfall is so calming to me after a long day. Just relaxing in the tub and listening to it relieves stress so well for me."

"You have a neat place, Blake. Yes, it's different from Torrance and Helen's, but I like this a lot. There is something nice about all the openness. Their place has so much furniture in it."

Blake checked her watch after a moment. "Perhaps we should go the store quickly. It's beginning to get late, and I'm sure you want to do some unpacking."

"Yeah. It is gettin' late." agreed Georgia looking at her own watch.

Leading the way down to the local store, Blake bought the blonde some food for the loft before taking her home. Together they put it all away while Bruce merely looked on. However once that task was complete, the brunette asked, "Would you like some help taking your stuff upstairs?"

"Can you make it up the stairs with your cast?" Georgia inquired in concern. "I don't want you to hurt yourself."

"I'll be fine." Picking up two bags, Blake started up the spiral staircase. "Where are you staying? The master bedroom right?"

"I don't know if I should."

"Of course you should. That's a great room. I would love to live here." Blake said taking the blonde's things in there and putting them down on the bed.

Georgia followed suit before going to the closet and opening the door. Flipping on the light, she noticed that it was mostly full of Helen and Torrance's things, but she managed to squeeze enough space out of their clothes to make room for her own. As she began to put her own away, she noticed a stunning black dress. Curiously she pulled it out to look at it. "Wow. Look at this dress, Blake."

"It's beautiful." the attorney replied seeing Georgia hold it up. "I bet you'd look fabulous in that."

"I probably wouldn't be able to fit into it. Helen's smaller than I am."

"I don't know about that. Try it on."

"No. I shouldn't. It wouldn't be right." the blonde stated.

"She wouldn't mind you trying it on. Go ahead." pressed the tall woman.

Knowing that she really wanted to, the small woman slipped the dress off the hanger and took it into the bathroom. A few minutes later the door opened. "Well, the size is okay, but she's much taller than me, so it's too long," the teacher mentioned stepping from the bathroom.

Blake's breath caught as she saw the little woman in the elegant evening dress. The blonde was holding her hair up, exposing her bare shoulders. Even though the black sequins pooled around her feet in extra material, the sensuous slit up the side showed off her leg up to her thigh. "You look so amazing," the tall woman confessed softly. "That dress is beautiful on you."

Georgia blushed at the compliment and the way the attorney was looking at her. "Thanks but I should take it off. This is a real Isaac Mizrahi. This dress costs more than I've made in my whole life. Would you unzip me? I had a hard time gettin' the zipper up," she asked turning her back to the older woman.

Blake stepped toward her to assist with the zipper. However as she gently lowered it, she was drawn to the blonde's soft bare shoulders and upper back. Delicately she kissed along the contours as her hands fumbled with the zipper. Blake's lips followed its path, placing gentle kisses down the blonde's spine as she easily peeled the dress off her lover's body. As it pooled onto the floor, the brunette remained kneeling and touched the blonde's hips, turning her around slowly. She looked up the petite frame she adored, clad only in blue silk undergarments that perfectly matched Georgia's eyes. The blonde threaded her hands through the attorney's dark hair and just awaited her next move. The tall woman leaned in and kissed her lover's hips a moment with tenderness.

Georgia could feel the fire begin within her at the feelings of Blake's mouth on her. She knew exactly how to stir the blonde's passions. However the little woman pulled her lover's head away and tilted it back, so she could see into dark eyes. "I thought you said you had work to do at home," she mentioned softly.

Blake groaned as she leaned her forehead into Georgia's flat stomach. "I do, but it's just so much nicer being with you. I'd much rather stay here."

The blonde nodded. "I know, but you should go. It's gettin' late, and I'm gonna worry 'bout you gettin' home."

"I can't have that now. Maybe I should just stay here to put your mind at ease," Blake suggested rising to her feet as her mouth trailed up the blonde's torso, lingering at the teacher's neck as her hands massaged Georgia's lower back. Her fingers lightly ran up the blonde's back to the clasp of the silk and lace bra. It was only moments before it was open and the attorney's hands were full of soft femininity.

Georgia whimpered as her body responded to the touch, her back arcing toward the caress. "If you stay then I won't be able to unpack," she feebly stated. "And you'll be even further behind in work. I couldn't have that on my conscience."

Slowly pulling back the tall woman looked down at the blonde. "Are you trying to get rid of me, Georgia?"

The blonde shrugged. "It's just gettin' late, and we both have lots to do that's not gonna get done if you stay. We both know that."

"I don't care." confessed Blake trying to wrap her arms tighter around the blonde, but the small woman held her at bay.

"You have to get Bruce home, Blake."

Getting the distinct feeling that her attention was unwanted at the moment, the attorney sighed. "All right. I know when to take a hint. I'll leave you alone. I do have things to do before work tomorrow anyway." she said pulling away completely. She averted her eyes as Georgia refastened her bra and made a quick retreat into the bathroom. The petite woman hadn't refused her before, so Blake wondered if something was wrong, but she decided not to ask at the moment, figuring maybe Georgia just needed time to adjust to her new environment.

The following morning Georgia was up unpacking when there was a knock at the door. Since she wasn't expecting anyone, she cautiously went to answer it. However Helen's friendly smile greeted her. "Good morning. I'm sorry to just drop by without calling first, but we were in the neighborhood, and I remembered that I hadn't cleaned out the closet for you." she explained.

"That's all right. It's your place. Come on in." the smaller blonde stated.

Gesturing to the stunning exotic woman next to her Helen introduced, "Georgia, this is Torrance's mother, Maria Whitfield. Maria, this is a friend of ours that is staying here for awhile, Georgia Carmichael."

The older woman extended her hand. "Pleasure to meet you, Georgia."

"You too, Mrs. Whitfield."

"Oh, it's Maria. Mrs. Whitfield makes me sound old." she said as she switched her grandson from one hip to the other.

As the three women came into the house, Helen inquired in interest, "So where is Blake this morning?"

Georgia shrugged. "I don't actually know. I assume she's at work. I haven't seen her since last night."

"Really? I would've have thought she would have stayed here on your first night at least." the tall blonde mentioned.

The shorter one shrugged uncomfortably. "It just wasn't a good idea. She had Bruce, and she said

she had work to do. I knew it wouldn't get done if she had stayed."

"Oh, are you seeing Blake Erwin?"

"I don't know if I could really say that or not." Georgia confessed. "It's a complicated story."

"Blake is in love with Georgia. I can assure you of that." Helen declared.

Maria smiled. "Blake is such a darling. She and Torrance have been friends since college. She's always been such a caring person. She deserves to be happy, and I'm glad to see that she has apparently found someone. She had been dating one of Torrance's ex-girlfriends, but I could see there wasn't chemistry between them, and then she had quite a problem with a woman she had met in Georgia I believe it was. I'm glad to see she's back to her old ways. Enough about how wonderful she is though. I'm sure you already know that. Where are you from, Georgia? How long are you planning on staying in town?"

"I'm from Georgia, and as far as how long I'm stayin', I guess that depends on Blake."

"Maria, Georgia is the woman from Georgia, but thank goodness she and Blake have made amends."

"Well, that certainly is good news." the dark-haired woman stated with a smile. "I want Blake to be happy, and if it is with you, Georgia, I'm pleased."

"I should get upstairs to the closet." Helen mentioned.

"All right. John and I are just going to stay here and play in the living room. Care to join us, Georgia?"

"Sure. Could I get either of you a drink?"

As Georgia and Maria moved into the living room, Helen made her way upstairs. The older woman took a seat on the couch and looked down at her sleeping grandson in obvious affection. "Isn't he just perfect?" she questioned.

The blonde nodded as she took a seat in a nearby chair. "He certainly is. Torrance and Helen are lucky. I hope someday that I can have children too."

"I'm sure you will, Georgia. Blake wants children, so if you stay together, there is a good chance you'll have an opportunity."

"I'm not sure if Blake and I are meant to be. It's still early in our relationship."

"You moved all the way from Georgia to New York for her, did you not?"

"Well, it's more complicated than that. I do care about her very much, but there are other things

that forced me out of my home."

"Parents that didn't accept you?" Maria guessed.

"In a way but it was more like my whole town."

"Well, some times people have a hard time with things that are different. I'm pleased that you've decided to pursue Blake anyway. It's always best to be true to your feelings regardless of what others think."

A little while later Helen came downstairs again. "Well, I put most of our clothes in John's closet, so you'll have more room, Georgia."

"Okay. That's fine."

"What is your plan for the day? Would you like to join us? We're going to go shopping and then out to lunch. We're both looking for new dresses for Torrance's and my anniversary party."

"Your anniversary is coming up? How long have you two been married?" the small blonde asked.

"This will be our first anniversary." Helen replied with a glowing smile. "We're having a party at our house with all our friends. You're invited of course. I have your invitation in my purse. I hope that you will be able to make it."

"When is it?"

"This coming Friday night. So, would you like to join us for shopping?"

"Sure. I don't really have anything else to do right now. Just let me get ready."

"Great. I'll call the restaurant and let them know that one more will be joining us. You'll get a chance to meet my friend Vera Wang." Maria stated pulling out her cell phone from her purse. "She's lovely."

"Vera Wang?" Georgia questioned quietly in Helen's direction. "The Vera Wang?"

"Don't worry. You'll get used to it." Helen answered. "Go on. Get ready. We have to visit Isaac Mizrahi before lunch."

"Oh goodness. What am I gettin' into?"

Helen smiled. "Don't worry, Georgia. They'll love you. With Isaac's help we're going to make you over into a princess that Blake will be helpless to resist."

That day Georgia accompanied Helen and Maria on their shopping trip. Their first stop was to

see their friend Isaac Mizrahi, and the moment he laid his eyes on Georgia, he was smitten with her. He showered her with all kinds of attention and made her try on all his favorite dresses. Georgia played along even though she knew she would never be able to afford any of the clothes. However in an unexpected twist, Maria convinced the designer to at least loan Georgia the dress for the anniversary party. Georgia was dumbfounded that he immediately agreed to the idea and stated he couldn't wait to see it on her there.

As the three women and John left to meet Vera Wang for lunch, the southern belle mentioned, "I think I've died and gone to heaven. I've never had so much fun shoppin' before. This dress is amazin'."

"Yes, it really looks beautiful on you, Georgia. Blake is going to love it. I assure you she will not be able to keep her eyes or hands off you all evening wearing that." Maria teased lightly.

"It does look great on you, Georgia. Now we just need to get your hair done and make you over, and you'll be the belle of the ball." Helen mentioned. "What do you think about cutting your hair shorter?"

The younger woman instinctively touched her golden tresses that went past her mid back. "Cut my hair?"

"Yeah. I bet you'll look older and more sophisticated with a shorter do. What do you think? Blake likes those kinds of women, and I know you have it in you to be one if you wanted. I mean you do want to win her affections once and for all, don't you?"

"Yeah, of course."

"Then take the chance. I'll make an appointment for you at my stylist for Friday, and she can do your hair and make up for the party. My treat and then you can surprise Blake."

"Okay. Thanks, Helen."

The blonde smiled at her friend, wrapping an arm around the smaller woman's shoulders. "When we get through with you, Blake won't know what hit her. Before you know it, you won't have to be borrowing these clothes. You'll have the most influential female attorney in New York to buy them for you." she teased.

"Blake cain afford clothes like these?" Georgia asked in interest.

"Without a second thought. She's quite successful, Georgia. Did you not realize that?"

She shrugged. "I'll admit when I saw her place I thought maybe she had money, but I hadn't really thought 'bout it too much."

"The woman has money and no one to share it with. It might as well be you. You have taken her off the most eligible lesbian list. She used to rank up there with Torrance when she was single as

far as influence in the city. Now Blake holds that first spot. Ask her about it. She'll tell you. The local gay paper did an article about six months ago about her as the most available woman in the city."

"Really? I'd love to see that article."

"Well, I think Torrance has that stashed somewhere at the loft, but it just basically says how wonderful she is. It gives all sorts of personal information."

"Like what?"

"Her education background. Her professional experience. How much she makes. Her hobbies. The type of woman she wants. It's probably hiding in Torrance's dark room at the loft. That's where she stashes stuff like that."

"It says how much she makes?" asked Georgia.

"Yeah. It said she actually brings in over two million a year in income. She doesn't do poorly by any standard. She's a top notch attorney, and she has the respect of this city."

"Wow. That's incredible."

"She's looking for a woman like you, Georgia. You just have to know how to play your cards to snag her, and Torrance and I are going to help you."

Over the next week Blake and Georgia saw each other most evenings for dinner, but the attorney seemed incredibly busy trying to catch up on work, leaving the blonde alone after merely an hour or two of company. During that time neither of them pressed the other for anything physical, making Georgia wonder if Blake had lost interest in her, because she hardly even got a kiss at the end of the night.

On Friday evening Blake showed up to Torrance and Helen's majestic estate alone. When she had invited Georgia to accompany her, the blonde had declined, saying she had other plans. The tall woman tried to not let it get to her, but she wondered in slight jealousy what plans would be so important as to keep them apart on an momentous night. Stepping out of her black BMW, she greeted the valet politely before heading up to the house. She straightened out her suit jacket and ran her hands through her dark hair before making her entrance. Since she knew the majority of people that were supposed to attend, she greeted all the familiar faces as she looked for Helen and Torrance. She found them after a few minutes speaking with members of both their families. Coming up to them, she slid an arm around Helen's waist and planted a kiss on the blonde's cheek. "Good evening, gorgeous. Hi, Torrance." she joked patting her friend on the shoulder. "Congratulations on making it a year."

"Glad you could make it. It wouldn't be a party without you, Blake. It's too bad Georgia didn't come with you." Torrance mentioned with a smile as her son gave the attorney an excited coo at her appearance.

"I know. She said she had another engagement, but I don't know what it is. It kind of irritates me actually." she admitted. "And how is my favorite man?" she questioned taking John from Torrance. She tossed him playfully in the air making him laugh. Just as she was about to do it a second time something caught her attention.

Across the room speaking to Morgan, a close friend of Torrance's, was a stunning blonde in a royal blue sequined dress. Blake could only see the back of her from where she was, but her body responded to the sight of the slight woman with the shoulder length hair, the golden skin of her back exposed by the low cut of the dress. The formalwear accentuated the woman's petite form and the gentle curves of her hips.

"Is that Morgan's date?" she asked. "She's learned how to pick them, hasn't she? That woman is incredible."

Helen smiled at her. "She is pretty, isn't she?"

"Who is she?"

"A friend of ours. Why don't you go introduce yourself? She's just your type."

"She didn't come with Morgan?"

"No. I think she came alone, but that doesn't mean she has to leave alone, Blake." Helen fibbed, trying to get the attorney to go introduce herself.

The tall woman gave a small smile. "I wish I could take her home, but I have someone else to think about now. However there is nothing wrong with enjoying the view. Excuse me. I want to meet her."

Making her way over to Morgan, Blake smiled brightly. "Morgan, it's been awhile." she greeted politely.

"Blake, hey. How are you these days?"

"I'm good. I just came over to see how you were and ask you to introduce me to this beautiful woman you seem to be monopolizing." she teased turning to look at the blonde for the first time. Meeting familiar blue eyes, she felt her breath leave her. "Georgia?" she whispered.

The blonde smiled pleasantly at Blake. "Good evenin', Blake."

"Looks like you already know each other, Blake." Morgan joked taking John from the attorney.

"I thought you said you had other plans."

"I did. I already had been asked by someone else. I never said I wasn't comin' at all."

"I see. What did you do to your hair? It's gone!" she exclaimed reaching for the blonde's back to where her hair once was. Her fingers grazed bare skin though instead of gold tresses. Both of them shivered slightly at the contact.

"Do you not like it?" Georgia tentatively inquired.

"No, I love it. It's just such a shock. And this dress! Where in the world did you get this? It's absolutely beautiful."

The small woman blushed modestly. "Thank you. Actually Isaac let me borrow it from his collection."

"Well, it's perfect. Where's your date? I'd like to meet them."

Georgia looked around the room a moment. "He's over there." she pointed.

"He?" Blake questioned in alarm trying to figure out who Georgia was referring to across the room.

"Isaac Mizrahi. Have you never met him?"

"Isaac Mizrahi is your date tonight? You do know that is about the gayest man in New York?"

"So? He's a gentleman, and I like his company. He was nice enough to loan me this dress in exchange for an escort. I thought it was more than a fair trade. Now if you'll excuse me, I must get back to him. He wanted to introduce me to some people. Nice meetin' you, Morgan." she said with a smile. "Bye, Blake."

As the brunette watched her glide across the room, she sighed. Georgia was more beautiful than she had ever seen her, and it made her ache with want. However the dismissive attitude the blonde was showing her made her jealous streak appear. She wanted Georgia to be hers alone and not accepting dates from others, regardless of who they were or whether or not they were serious.

"She's some woman." Morgan mentioned. "An ex of yours?"

"Not if I have anything to do with it. I'm not letting this one go without a fight." she replied, her eyes following the blonde.

Later that evening as everyone was seated for the lavish formal dinner, Blake noticed that she was seated at the same table, albeit not next to, Georgia. Instead the blonde and her date sat directly across from her, giving the attorney an unobstructed view of the small woman. Georgia beamed under all Isaac's attention as he introduced her to people, but when he had the audacity to present the blonde to Blake as if they were mere strangers, he was greeted with a terse response before the tall woman excused herself from the table for a moment. She stalked over to the bar to

get herself a scotch. Torrance's father and mother were standing there getting beverages as well when she approached.

"Blake, it's so good to see you, darling." Maria said with a smile leaning to kiss the taller woman on both cheeks.

"Maria." she replied responding in kind before turning to the retired senator. "Thomas, it's good to see you too."

"Good to see you as well, Blake. How have you been?" he inquired placing a hand on her shoulder.

"I'm doing better. As you can see I'm almost fully recovered. My casts come off next week, and it will all be a faint nightmare."

Maria cupped the attorney's cheek in affection. "Oh, Blake. I'm terribly sorry for what has happened, but I suppose some good may have come from this. You've met yourself an incredible lady. What is that saying about women from Georgia?"

Smirking as she took a sip of her drink, Blake replied, "Sweet as a Georgia peach."

"Yes, that's the one. She truly is, Blake."

"I take it you two have met then. Should I assume you are responsible for introducing her to Isaac?"

The older woman nodded. "She went shopping with Helen and me last week. Isaac took a real shine to her."

"So I see." the younger woman mumbled.

"Darling, you aren't jealous that she's making friends, are you?"

"No. It's just that she won't give me the time of day. She won't even look at me."

"Then you might just need to find a way to gain her attention, Blake. If you are interested in this lady, you should make it known. I know for a fact that she's unsure of your intentions."

"Did she say that to you?"

"She made it clear that she doesn't know where she stands. You can't blame her for deciding to have a life without you. I know you're used to women waiting for you, but this one is different. I think she's stronger than the women you are used to, Blake. If you don't jump on her, I know lots of Torrance's and your friends that will. You don't want that to happen, do you?"

Blake shrugged looking at the table where the blonde was seated. "Maria, I don't know why I

even try. It's because of her that I've been through such hell these last few months. However as much as I try to resist, I can't stay away from her."

"It's because you're in love, Blake. Don't let it slip away now that you found it. Hold onto it with all you have." Maria stated.

Blake grinned. "Well, please excuse me. I think I should go supervise Isaac. I know he only likes men, but with Georgia around that may change." she teased. "Save me a dance for later, Maria?"

"With pleasure." her friend's mother answered.

"What about you, Thomas?" she jested.

"Only if we can agree on who's going to lead first." he teased in reply.

"I think I can acquiesce this once and let you lead."

"Then it would be a pleasure. We'll make the best looking couple in suits." he quipped. "Go on back to your lady love now before Isaac puts his manicured nails into her any further."

Moving back to the table, Blake looked at Georgia. The blonde gave her a pretty smile but didn't keep eye contact long. The attorney decided that she could play the dismissive game as well, and immediately turned to the company beside her to strike up conversation.

After dinner the dance floor was opened and mingling commenced again. Instead of asking the blonde to dance at first though, Blake made her way over to Maria to collect the older woman for her promised dance. Several songs passed before Blake moved on, seeking out several women and taking turns with each other them. She spent almost the entire rest of the evening dancing with all the available women, but finally she got Helen away from Torrance long enough for a dance as well.

Enfolding the beautiful woman in her arms, Blake smiled down at green eyes. "Helen, you and Maria have created quite a problem for me. Did you realize this when you introduced Georgia to Isaac?"

"Blake, it's harmless. He's gay."

"He hasn't let her go two feet from him the entire night." she grumbled.

"He's enamored with her. It's hard not to be. Just look at her. She's beautiful, and not only that, she's a sweet, intelligent woman."

"I'm looking, and I don't like what I'm seeing." she stated.

"You mean you don't like the way she looks tonight?" innocently Helen inquired.

"You know that's not what I mean. I can't get her alone. Everyone is hovering around my girlfriend vying for her attention, but she won't even give me a moment. I don't like it, Helen."

"Well, get used to it, Blake. She's the latest thing in our circle, and you haven't made it clear that she's yours. You haven't staked that claim. Since when do you consider her your girlfriend anyway? She would like to be with you, Blake, but she's not pining away for you. She's not like Cara that way. It isn't her every wish to be yours and yours alone. She's a realist. Georgia's accepted the fact that you won't commit, so why should she?"

"You mean to tell me that she's been dating since she's been here?"

"No, not that I know of, but that doesn't mean she won't be in the near future. I've already had many women approach me tonight asking about her. It's only a matter of time until one of them has enough courage to ask her out, and why should she decline? These high society women can offer her the world as well as you can. What does she have to stop her from enjoying their attention?"

"Helen, you know how I feel about her. She can't just go around dating my friends."

"I know how you feel, but does she? Have you told her, Blake? As far as she knows, you only see her as a convenient lay. That's all you've shown her so far. If you feel more, you need to let her know. What are you afraid of?"

Blake looked across the dance floor where Torrance led Georgia around the floor. She knew she was afraid of being hurt by the younger woman and more than just physically. The hellish torture she had endured for the blonde's affection had almost killed her the first time and yet that wasn't what kept the brunette away. In fact Blake hardly even thought of the nightmare she had lived during her time in Stillwater, and when she did all it would take was one smile from the little woman to erase the horror from her mind to be replaced with loving thoughts of the one who had transformed her entire life.

It wasn't the suffering Georgia had caused that frightened her. It was the potential pain the little woman had the ability to inflict on her vulnerable heart that made the attorney unable to commit herself. She felt incapable of giving Georgia everything she might want, and yet she couldn't let her go to give her the chance to find happiness on her own. Blake wanted to be the one to provide for the small woman but only from afar at an emotionally safe distance.

Several songs passed before Torrance asked to cut in and dance with her wife again, leaving Georgia and Blake standing together on the dance floor. "Would you like to dance?" the attorney inquired extending her hand. The blonde accepted the hand and moved closer to the tall woman as she began to lead them around the floor. "This has been quite a night, hasn't it?" the brunette mentioned.

"Yes. It certainly has. I'm havin' such a great time with Isaac. He's introduced me to so many amazin' people."

"That's good. I'm glad you are making friends."

"There are so many cute women here too. It's so strange. A year ago I never would've even thought about a woman in a way other than friendly, but now that my eyes have been opened, I can see why they are so wonderful. I know I'll never go back to men."

Idly Blake nodded in agreement. "Women are wonderful." she conceded.

"I'll tell you. I never knew you and Torrance had such powerful friends. Helen told me that some of these women are New York's most eligible."

"That's true." Blake affirmed.

"And they've been so nice to me. Here I thought all New Yorkers were rude."

"They're being nice to you, because they want to sleep with you, Georgia. I hope you know that." Blake snipped.

The younger woman shrugged slightly. She could hear the jealousy in the taller woman's voice, making her wonder if all the attention she was receiving was bothering the woman she loved.

"That's okay. I don't mind. It's nice to be obviously desired. No one's ever been that way toward me." she stated hoping that her statement would be enough incentive to get a declaration of longing from the brunette.

"I guess it is." Blake replied quietly, unsure of how to respond. Deciding to change the subject, she asked, "So what do you think of this house?"

"It's the biggest one I've ever seen. I couldn't even imagine livin' here. I wish I could get a tour."

"Well, I'll take you on one. Tor and Helen won't mind."

"Are you sure?"

"Yeah. Come on. I'll show you all the hot spots." the older woman joked taking Georgia's hand. She had wanted to get the blonde alone the entire night, and now that an opportunity had presented itself, she wasn't about to let it go. Leaving the party Blake took Georgia around the first floor before taking the private back staircase up to the second and then third levels. As they came to Torrance and Helen's bedroom, they stepped cautiously inside. The room had been decorated intimately, making it obvious that their hostesses had other plans once their party was over for the night.

"We shouldn't be in here." Georgia mentioned hesitantly as Blake pulled her further into the room.

"It's fine. Don't worry. Come here. Look at this view."

Moving over to the double doors that led to the balcony, Georgia looked out at the dark ocean. The pathway leading down to the water was illuminated with small lamps. "It's beautiful," the blonde stated quietly. Just then she felt arms encircle her waist from behind as the heat of the body behind her enveloped her. Feeling the firmness of the attorney press into her back, the blonde's heart jumped in anticipation.

"It certainly is," the brunette mumbled as her lips found the blonde's neck. "You're beautiful, Georgia."

The southern belle whimpered as the hypnotic mouth kissed her and possessive hands found their way between the two high slits on either side of the dress to her bare thighs. Blake was surprised when her hands met skin instead of hosiery, but as she pressed closer to her desire, she realized there was only a thin piece of silk that kept her from her destination.

Georgia knew if she allowed Blake to continue that she would not be able to stop the older woman from taking what she wanted, because her own soul yearned for the caress Blake was seeking to give. Nevertheless she gave a weak protest. "Blake, stop," she half-heartedly requested placing her hand on top of the attorney's from the outside of her dress.

"Why?" the tall woman whispered, not heading the direction.

"Because...we...shouldn't be in here," breathlessly the petite woman managed to reply. Instinctively her right hand found its way up to the back of the dark head and cradled it closer as her left reached for the door handle for balance.

"No one will ever know," huskily Blake responded as she pushed her way through to her goal. She found the younger woman was more than ready for her, but she lingered on the outside for a few moments in case Georgia really wanted her to stop.

The blonde couldn't even protest again. Instead her breathing became more labored and she whimpered in need as her body trembled in wanton fervor. "Blake," she whined.

"Yes, beloved?" the brunette uttered quietly, unaware that she had even used such an endearment, as she gently stroked the length of her lover's heat.

"Please," Georgia begged in surrender. Immediately she was rewarded with the exquisite feeling of Blake possessing her.

No words were spoken as their bodies moved against each other in urgency. The glass balcony doors rattled with each of Blake's thrusts as Georgia held on to them tightly. It was only a few minutes before scorching heat enveloped the blonde's whole body and the tide of her climax crashed over her. Her legs gave way, but strong arms held her close, keeping her on her feet. All was silent for a moment as Blake simply lingered inside her until the contractions began to subside.

However just as she was about to pull out a knock on the open bedroom door broke their reverie.

Both of them jumped, startled by the intrusion and quickly turned toward the noise to find Torrance standing there wearing a playful smirk with two police officers just behind her. "You could've used the bed you know." she teased. "Then maybe you wouldn't have set off the alarm on those doors." Turning to the officers, she stated, "Sorry about this. Everything is fine."

"We're just doing our duty, Ms. Whitfield. However there is the matter of the fine for a false alarm."

"It's my fault. I'll pay it." Blake stated stepping toward them. "Give me the ticket."

"It's no big deal, Blake. I'll just pay it. Helen and I have set off the alarm on accident more times than I can count. I pay these fines all the time."

"Then let me pick up this one. After all I'm the one who set it off." she argued as one of the officers wrote Torrance a ticket for the alarm. When it was finished, they merely extended it between the both of them, and Blake snatched it before Torrance could.

"All right. Let me walk you two gentlemen out. Again I'm sorry for the inconvenience." Torrance apologized as they turned to leave. Looking at Blake she gestured back toward the doors where Georgia still was.

Georgia was looking out at the dark night as she listened to the conversation taking place. Now that she had a few minutes to recover her wits, she wondered why she had allowed Blake to persuade her to be intimate again. As much as she longed to feel the attorney that way, she was determined not to let Blake use her that way any more without a commitment from her, and she had failed herself miserably. All it had taken was one touch, and Georgia was too weak to resist. Her longing for the brunette was just too overwhelming to ignore, but she knew she wanted everything from the woman who held her heart, not just frenzied passion whenever Blake felt the need. When she felt arms embrace her, Georgia shrugged out of them and turned toward the tall woman.

Seeing the perplexed countenance on the small woman, Blake inquired softly, "What's wrong, Georgia?"

"I need to get back downstairs to Isaac." she stated unable to meet the dark eyes.

Knowing the blonde's statement was a lie, the attorney wanted to know why the blonde was being so distant, but it was obvious she didn't want to talk about what was bothering her. "All right. Could I take you home tonight?"

"I shouldn't. After all I came with Isaac. I should let him take me home."

Blake nodded. "Well, would you like it if I came over tonight?" she inquired gently, trying not to sound desperate even though one touch of the blonde had made her so as she longed to take her time in loving the little woman.

Georgia risked a look up into the tall woman's eyes. "I don't think that's a good idea. Now excuse me."

Blake watched as Georgia made her way from the room without even looking back. The brunette was confused as to what had just taken place. They had been so close only a few minutes before, but now the blonde was acting cold to her again. Lingered in the bedroom a few minutes, she contemplated what she would have to do to get Georgia's attention for more than fleeting moments. She had no idea what she could do though to have the little woman from Stillwater on her own terms.

Fall came and went in the city of New York and with the change of the seasons came a transformation in Georgia as well. Ever since Helen and Torrance's anniversary party, she had kept her contact with Blake to a minimum and almost always public. It was difficult for her at first, because her heart was so enamored with the stunning attorney, but she knew it was best not to try to force Blake into a relationship if she didn't want one. She had seen what had happened when Cara had tried to do so, and she was determined not to meet the same fate. However she still longed for the tall woman in the emptiness of her new one bedroom apartment.

Over the course of the past few months, Helen and Torrance had taken the small blonde under their wings, and it was only a matter of time before she had settled into her own place with a writing position at Vanity Fair magazine. She had the exciting pleasure of attending all the fashion shows in New York, and with the help from Torrance's mother, the designers had embraced the little blonde as one of their own. Her new life seemed ideal in every aspect with the exception of her lonely heart.

She missed the intimacy she had with Blake desperately, but she knew she would rather be without a girlfriend than only be half of one. Ironically she found herself missing Jack as well. Her husband and best friend for so long had all but disappeared from her life. She often looked out of her kitchen window and idly thought about what he was doing, if he was safe, and if he had met someone else that could make him happy. Since their departure from Stillwater they had spoken a handful of times on the phone, so she only could imagine that he had found happiness in his new home.

As Georgia dressed that winter day, she wondered what might happen that afternoon. She had agreed to lunch with Blake and was supposed to be meeting her down at her office. She had an article to finish before then though, so after getting ready, she moved to her kitchen table that often doubled as her desk and opened her laptop to complete her latest project.

Blake was diligently at work that day trying to wrap up some preparation for upcoming cases, so she hardly had time to think of the illusive blonde. Her concentration was broken though by the receptionist buzzing her. "Blake, you have a call on one." Glenda announced.

"Who is it?"

"He said his name was Detective Johnson. He was actually looking for Jeff, but he's in court right now. The detective asked if there was someone else he could speak to."

"Yeah, okay. I'll take it. Thanks, Glenda." Once the receptionist had hung up, Blake took a moment to clear her throat before picking up the line. "Blake Erwin." she announced.

"Miz Erwin, this is Detective Matt Johnson with the Dallas Police Department. I was actually lookin' for Jeffrey Delgatto, but I was told he's unavailable. I hope you might be able to help me." a man with a thick southern drawl stated.

"I hope so too. What can I do for you, Detective Johnson?" she questioned, her stomach suddenly churning uneasily, because there was only one person she knew who lived in Dallas, Texas.

"Miz Erwin, I'm currently investigatin' an attempted murder case here in Dallas, and it seems as if the victim is a client of your firm."

"Jack Smith." Blake uttered.

"Yes, ma'am, Jack Smith. Do you know Mr. Smith?"

"We're acquaintances."

"Well, I'm sorry to be the one to inform you then that Mr. Smith is in critical condition and in Parkland Hospital here in Dallas. He had been shot in his apartment this mornin'. While investigatin' the crime scene, we came 'ross some divorce papers from your firm. We're tryin' to locate his wife and wondered if you might be of assistance."

"Well, Detective Johnson, I do know the whereabouts of Mrs. Smith, but I'm not at liberty to disclose that at this time. Mr. Smith made it clear to me that under no circumstances was I to release his wife's location to anyone for any reason."

"Why is that, Miz Erwin?"

"Jack had reason to fear for his wife's life as well as his own, so he made me promise to hide her. I can pass a message to her if you'd like."

"Did he tell you why?"

"It's a long story, Detective Johnson, but it had to do with the fact that he and Georgia both testified against the Ku Klux Klan in Georgia not too far back. They swore to come after them both, and I believe they will. Now if you'd like to tell me what room he's in at the hospital, I'll give the information to Georgia, so she can check on him."

"Well, he's in room 220. Tell Miz Smith that we'd like to question her about her whereabouts and give her my number." He rattled off the phone number before asking, "Miz Erwin, do you know

the names of those members of the Klan by chance? We'd like to question them too."

Blake told the detective and then the call ended shortly there after. However as she put the phone back in its cradle, something didn't sit well with her. Picking it up again, she called information. "Dallas, Texas, please. Parkland Hospital." she announced when the operator asked what number she wanted. When she was connected, she asked for Jack Smith's room but was told there wasn't a patient there by that name. After having the receptionist double check, she decided to call another place. Going back to directory assistance, she asked for the number to the Dallas Police Department where she had them check for an officer by the name of Matt Johnson. She wasn't surprised when they couldn't a record of one. Immediately she realized whom she had just spoken to and quickly called Jack.

He answered sleepily as if she had gotten him out of bed. "Jack, this is Blake. You've got to get out of Dallas. They know you're there. They've been in your place." she quickly said.

"What are you talkin' about? No one knows I'm here."

"They know, Jack. I don't know how, but they do. They just called here pretending to be the police and were asking all sorts of questions about Georgia. Somehow they found out you two are getting a divorce. I'm telling you, Jack. They are coming after you. You have to leave."

"Yankee, you're overreactin'." Just then there was a strong knock on the front door of the apartment. "Hold on. Someone's at my door."

"Jack, don't answer it!" she implored, but she was ignored. She heard him put down the phone and move to the door. Blake heard Jack say his visitor's name in surprise, confirming that is one a Klansman before a shot rang out. As much as Bake wanted to scream, she was deathly silent, not wanting to alert the intruder to her presence on the phone. Instead she merely put her end of the phone on mute and continued to listen as Jack's place was trashed. On her cell phone she called the Dallas Police again and informed them of what was happening. Then she stayed on the line until she heard the police and emergency crew reach Jack.

Satisfied that he was being taken care of, she buzzed Glenda at the front desk. "Glenda, get me on the earliest flight to Dallas that you can." she stated. "And call Georgia for me and tell her I can't make it for lunch. I'm going back to my apartment to pack a few things. Call me on my cell when you have a flight."

"Sure, Blake. Is everything all right?"

"No but I'm going to make it right. Also when Jeff gets back tell him to make an announcement to the whole office not to give out any information to anyone about Georgia. I don't care who they are, police or not. No information is given out about her."

"Of course. I'll cancel all your appointments too."

"Thank you, Glenda, and when you talk to Georgia, don't tell her I went to Dallas."

"All right."

That evening Blake rushed straight to the hospital when she reached Dallas. When she arrived the police were with Jack, questioning him about the incident. He gave the tall woman a weak smile when he saw her walk in. Everyone turned toward her as she made her entrance. "Who are you?" one of the officers inquired gruffly.

"She's all right. She's my attorney and friend." Jack answered for her.

"That's right. I'm Blake Erwin. I was on the phone with Jack when the shooter came to the door."

"I thought you said that woman was in New York, Mr. Smith?" the officer asked.

"I was. I came down as soon as I could. I have to protect my client."

"Well, we'll want to talk to you too."

"Of course. I figured you would." she replied.

A few hours passed before they were left alone. Looking down at him, she sighed in relief that he was still alive. "That was too close, Jack." she mentioned.

"You were right, Yankee."

"I know, but don't worry. I'm not leaving you here. I'm taking you back to New York. That's the only place you'll be safe. As soon as you can get out of here, we're grabbing your things and getting the hell out of the south."

He nodded slightly. "Thanks for comin', Yankee. Does Georgia know 'bout this?"

"No. I didn't even tell her I was coming down here. I didn't want her to worry or try to come herself. It's too dangerous. They know you're here, and they probably know that I'm here now if they've been lurking around the hospital. I couldn't risk having Georgia here as well."

"Good thinkin'." he whispered as he winced in pain. "Where's my dog? Where's Bear?"

"The police gave him to your neighbors. Don't worry about him. He's fine. Rest now, Jack. I'll stay with you."

Two days of vigil over her beloved's husband later, Jack was well enough to be discharged from the hospital. Blake immediately took him to a hotel where he could keep a low profile and arranged for his belongings to be packed and shipped to her place in New York. Then she went to collect his dog. For safety reasons she opted to share a room with him at the hotel for a night before they traveled back to New York City. As the two of them sat in relative silence on the couch watching television and eating room service, he looked over at her and softly said, "I

really appreciate you comin', Yankee."

"Jack, you once saved my life even though you were upset with me at the time, and you are still the husband of the woman I love. Georgia still cares for you as a friend, so how could I not come?" she questioned quietly patting his hound dog on the head.

"Do you think they'll come to New York?" he asked.

"You'd know better than I would. You said they don't go north of the Mason-Dixon. If that's true, they won't come to New York City, but I think they know that all three of us are going to be there. Fortunately that city is large enough that you and Georgia can go undetected without a lot of effort."

"What 'bout you?"

She shrugged. "They know the name of my firm, because they called me today. They know where I work. All they would have to do is follow me home to know where I live, but there is tight security at my building and at work, so I'm not too concerned."

"Where am I gonna stay, once we get there? Don't you think we should have a plan?"

"Well, I figured you could just stay with me for awhile. I have the space, and we'll make a plan from there. That is if you don't mind." she mentioned.

He shook his head. "I don't mind. That's nice of you. Are you gonna tell Georgia I'm there?"

"Do you want me to?"

"I think she should know."

"Well then after we get you settled in I'll tell her. You should probably try to get some sleep. Tomorrow is going to be a long day."

He nodded in agreement. "All right. Sleep well, Yankee. See you in the mornin'."

"Good night, Jack."

The next evening as they got back to Blake's the attorney helped Jack settle into the guest room with his things. "You have a nice place here." he mentioned in obvious awe.

"It's all right. This is going to be your room. There's a bathroom for you too. My housekeeper should have stocked it for you with whatever amenities you might need, but if you're missing anything let me know, and the concierge will get it for you."

"All right. Thanks." he replied as Bruce came to investigate the two new arrivals.

The dogs eyed each other cautiously for a few minutes. Both Jack and Blake laughed at the antics. "Is that what we did when we met?" Blake joked.

"I think so." he answered.

"Well, hopefully they'll learn to get along in this place. It's not big enough for two big dogs who don't like each other."

"They'll be fine once they've worked out their differences." Jack stated with a smirk.

"I suppose they will." the brunette added with a smile of her own. "Well, let's get your clothes put away at least. The rest of your belongings should be arriving in a few days." Together they moved into the guest room. Seeing that Jack was struggling with his belongings in his weak condition, the attorney gently brushed him aside. "I'll do it. You just sit down. You need rest." He conceded with a nod and made his way over to the beside chair. Silence filled the room as Blake quickly put his clothes into the dresser. When she had finished, she stowed his bags in the closet. "Well, I guess I should go take the dogs on a walk in the park. I know Bear had quite a ride today and could use the exercise."

"I'll go with you." he suggested.

"Why don't you stay here? You've had enough excitement for the day. You can call Georgia and tell her you're here."

"Okay." he replied. As Blake moved to leave he said, "Blake."

"Yeah?" she asked looking back. It was the first time he had ever used her real name, and it took her by surprise.

"You're all right, Blake. Not everyone would come to the rescue of the husband of their lover. I can see why she loves you."

"Georgia and I aren't lovers, only friends."

"But she loves you and you love her." he stated.

"I know, but we still aren't together. I'm going to get going. I don't want to be out there after dark. Central Park isn't the safest place in the world at night. I'll be back in a bit."

Georgia was just lounging on her couch after a quiet dinner at home. She had been thinking about Blake ever since the older woman had canceled on her a few days ago. The blonde feared that something was wrong, because Blake hadn't even called herself, but the receptionist didn't divulge any information, only saying that the attorney was called out of town on urgent business. She had left several messages that went unreturned on all of the brunette's phones, so she resolved herself not to call again until Blake did. Idly flipping the channels on her tv, she wondered if that call would ever come.

She had just turned the tv off to start on her next article for work when the phone rang. Looking at the caller id and seeing Blake's home number, she composed herself a moment before answering softly, "Hi, Blake."

The line was silent a moment before a male voice said, "Georgia?"

"Jack?" she questioned looking at the id again. It was Blake's number.

"Yeah, hi. How are you?"

"Jack, what are you doin' at Blake's? Why are you in town? Is somethin' wrong?" quickly she inquired.

"Well, somethin' unexpected happened. Cain you come over? This would be easier in person."

"I'll be there in twenty minutes." she replied hanging up the phone without even saying good bye. Georgia raced around her apartment to dress in winter clothes. Figuring it would be faster, she hailed a cab. Half an hour later she ran into Blake's building. Not even bothering to wait on the elevator, she took the stairs to her apartment and knocked frantically.

Within moments Jack answered the door. Georgia could immediately sense something was wrong by the way he winced as she hugged him. "It's good to see you, Georgia." he stated.

"What happened, Jack? How did you get here?"

"Come in. Sit down."

"Where's Blake?"

"She went to walk the dogs. Come sit. There's somethin' I need to tell you." he suggested a second time gesturing to the couch. They both moved across the room and took tentative seats. He reached for her hand and held it for a moment in his. "You know, I've missed you. It's been hard not seein' you."

"I've missed you too, Jack. Now what's goin' on?"

"A few days ago the Georgia Klan came to my place in Dallas. Somehow they found me, and they shot me, Georgia."

"Oh my God! Where?"

"In the chest." he answered opening his shirt enough to show her the bandage.

"How in the world did you survive?"

"Yankee saved my life. Somehow she knew they were comin' and called to warn me. I was on the phone with her when they got there. She called the police and an ambulance. Then she flew down to brin' me back here."

"She did? Why?"

He shrugged. "She said it was because she loved you and that I had saved her life. I wouldn't be alive if it weren't for her, Georgia." he said softly.

"Oh, Jack." she whispered in tears as she went to embrace him. He wrapped her tightly within his arms and held her as she cried. "What's gonna happen now?"

"I don't know. I can't go back. Yankee wants me to stay here."

"You should. You'll be safe here, Jack. You can stay with me if you want."

He shook his head. "I don't think that's a good idea. I respect Blake, so I don't want to make it seem like I'm takin' advantage of her kindness by movin' in with you. The divorce isn't final yet, and I don't want her to think we're reconcilin'. It would hurt her, and I don't want to do that after what she's done for me. I'm gonna stay with her for awhile. Bear and I'll be fine here."

"Are you sure? You know Blake and I ain't together."

"I know that. She told me. Why though? You love her, and she told me that she loved you."

"She really said that?"

"Yeah."

"She's never told me that." Georgia mumbled.

"Well, she does. Why else would she go all the way down to Texas and drag me back here? We ain't that good of friends. She did it for you, Georgia. Don't you see that?"

"Whatever the reason I'm just glad you're all right." she stated snuggling back into his shoulder in relief.

When Blake returned to her loft, she was surprised to find Jack and Georgia cuddled together on the couch. Apparently neither of them heard her, because they didn't move. Going over to the sofa, the attorney noticed that both of them were asleep, wrapped up in each other's arms. She stood there a moment just taking in the situation as her heart pounded in jealousy at the sight of them content together. It pained her that Jack had an intimacy with the beauty queen that she didn't. Not bothering to even announce her presence, she made her way to her office with Bruce and Bear following her. Settling down at her desk, she dove into work she had left behind that she needed to complete.

When Georgia opened her eyes, it took her a moment to remember where she was. After a moment though, she realized that she and Jack were still on the couch and an hour had passed. Wondering if the brunette was home yet, she looked over the couch to see a light on in the office. Gently she shook Jack by the shoulder to wake him. He mumbled in his sleep.

"Jack, come on. Let me help you to bed." she whispered. Helping him to his feet, they slowly made their way to his room.

As the blonde eased him down onto the bed, he looked up at her with sleepy eyes. "Georgia." he murmured.

"What, Jack?"

"Stay here tonight." he suggested.

The little woman's heart froze for a moment at the idea. "Jack, I cain't." she answered trying to let him down gently.

"No, not with me. Stay here tonight with Blake." he clarified. "She loves you, Georgia, but maybe you just have to say it first. The thank you she deserves is somethin' only you cain provide. She risked her life 'gain to save mine, and she did it all for you."

"I know, but I swore I wouldn't be intimate with her unless she committed."

"Then just be with her. She's committed to you. It doesn't take words to know that."

Ending the discussion the blonde said, "Good night, Jack. Sleep well."

"Good night, Georgia."

Blake heard Jack's door close from her office. Knowing that Georgia was with him made her blindly envious, but she remained in her seat. However she looked up when she saw the petite woman standing in her office doorway. "Georgia." she mumbled.

"Hi, Blake. May I come in?"

"Yeah, sure."

"What are you doin'?"

"Just catching up on work. Here. These are for you." she stated tossing a set of papers onto the nearby sofa.

Georgia moved to see what they were. "The divorce papers." she muttered. She noticed that Jack had already signed them in the appropriate places.

"Jack gave them to me yesterday. All you have to do is sign them, and it'll be over." she stated unemotionally not making eye contact.

The writer looked down at the papers and then over at the woman who held her heart. It was obvious that something was bothering the tall woman. "Blake, are you okay?" she questioned.

"I'm fine. Why do you ask?" she asked shortly.

"You just don't seem like yourself is all." The brunette only shrugged in response, not wanting to admit what was bothering her. She had her doubts that Georgia would be eager to sign the papers after the earlier display. "Will you give me a pen?" the blonde requested.

Slowly Blake reached into her desk and pulled a few from her drawer. Laying them out in front of the younger woman, she waited to see what Georgia would do. The blonde placed the papers on the desk and picked up a pen. Without a word to each other, she signed her marriage to her first love away and then extended the packet back to her current one. The attorney took them, stowing them in her briefcase. "I'll give these to Jeff tomorrow, and he'll file them. You'll be officially divorced then."

The small woman nodded. After an awkward pause, she said, "Blake, you'll never know what it means to me that you did this for Jack. I still consider him to be my best friend."

"I know you still care about him." she mentioned.

"Blake, may I ask why you did this?"

"Because I owed him. He saved my life, and I had a chance to do the same."

"Is that the only reason?" she questioned coming around the desk and taking a seat on top of it next to the tall woman.

Blake shrugged uncomfortably. "I wanted to spare you the pain of something happening to him."

Georgia nodded, knowing that those words were as close as Blake was going to come to confessing feelings for her. "Well, thank you for what you did."

"You're welcome, Georgia." she answered looking down into the book that she had been reading when the younger woman had come in.

A moment passed quietly. "You know, it's gettin' kinda late. Would you mind if I stayed here tonight?"

"Suit yourself. This is Jack's place now too. You don't have to ask me to stay the night with him. I'll give you some pajamas if you want."

"Blake, why would I want to stay with Jack? I just divorced him."

"Well, I don't know. You could've meant as a friend." the attorney defended curtly, unable to express her displeasure at the idea of them being so close.

"True he's my friend, but he's my ex-husband and a man. I don't want to share a bed with him."

"Well, I didn't know. You can stay in my room. I'll take the couch." she stated burrowing deeper into her reading.

Georgia reached for the book and took it out of her lover's hands. Tossing it on the desk, she then gently removed Blake's reading glasses and placed them delicately down on top of it. The attorney just stared at her quizzically. "That's not quite what I had in mind." she stated. Taking a deep breath to gather her courage, Georgia confessed, "Blake, I love you, and furthermore whether you say the words or not, I know you love me. It couldn't be more obvious with what you've done." Seeing the surprise and anxiousness on her beloved's face, she quickly assured, "Now I don't say this to scare you or force you into somethin'. I thought you didn't want to commit, because you didn't love me, but now I know differently. It's okay to be scared, Blake. I'm scared." Slowly Georgia moved off the desk and into Blake's lap. "We'll take it as slowly as you need if you just tell me that you're willin' to try."

Looking into the blue eyes she adored, Blake sighed. Georgia was asking for a commitment from her, but for the first time in her life, she didn't think she had the strength to run away from the prospect. "I've never done this." the brunette admitted. "I don't know how."

"Neither do I but we'll learn together. I just want to be close to you, Blake. What do you say?" she whispered leaning toward the tall woman's lips. She lingered there momentarily, hovering dangerously close to her goal.

"Okay." Blake answered, crumbling to the blonde's allure.

"Good. I think you'll be happy with that decision. Now could I ask somethin' of you?"

"Sure. What?" the older woman asked trying to kiss the pink lips she desired, but Georgia kept her at bay for a moment.

"Take me to bed." she demanded.

Blake looked at the little woman's blue eyes. The entreaty was so simple and open that she knew she wanted nothing more than to comply with her lover's wishes. Leaning to kiss her lips gently, the attorney whispered, "With pleasure." Effortlessly she stood with the blonde within her arms and took them back to the master bedroom. She sat Georgia down softly at the foot of the bed and the leisurely began to undress her with the tenderness that she had always wanted to show her.

The small woman responded in kind, beginning to methodically undo the tall woman's shirt. Neither said a word for several moments as they both focused on the task at hand. They weren't

hurried in the revelation of each other's bodies, instead seeming almost bashful like a first encounter with the gentle nature of the exploration.

Georgia took a deep calming breath as her lover's body came into full view. Although she had seen it before, she knew this time was going to be different, because she was determined to render adoration upon the frame she had known truly only in her dreams. The few times they had been intimate Blake had not allowed the petite woman the opportunity to investigate her body to its fullest. In fact she often shied away from more aggressive touches, but the writer had come to realize that it was truly due to the attorney's fear of emotion that could be attached with such contact. She had figured out that as long as Blake could keep their sex only physical, the tall woman felt safe, but Georgia was resolved to make this time different. When Blake touched her after they were completely bare to each other, the little woman reached back actively, taking the older woman by surprise.

"Georgia." she stated as the blonde's hands ran up her torso and lingered on her breasts.

"What?" sweetly she inquired, not heading the unspoken request that she stop even though Blake's voice clearly displayed her anxiety.

"I thought you wanted me to..." she stuttered as Georgia's mouth joined the action. Instinctively the tall woman's hands threaded through golden hair to keep her balance.

The younger woman moaned lightly at the reaction she was getting. As much as Blake was fighting it with her words, her body was responding as her breathing began to become more shallow. "Oh, I do want you to, Blake." she murmured. "But after I'm finished with you. I've wanted this chance for such a long time. Please, Blake. Please let me satisfy you. I want to brin' you as much pleasure as I know you're gonna brin' me. Let me appease you. I want to give you a thank you like you've never known." she requested all the while keeping her hands moving enticingly over the strong body in front of her.

Blake could hardly think with the way small hands mapped her form, stroking, squeezing, and kneading the firm muscles. The blonde's mouth continued it's assault, slowly moving up her chest over one shoulder before taking in her neck. "Georgia." she muttered, unable to complete any other words.

The little woman smiled in her success. It appeared as if Blake was on the edge of surrender. Settled to have her way, she maneuvered the tall woman down onto the bed. Blake's body began to tense, and she started to protest, but the blonde only smiled. She reached down between their frames and gathered her own wetness on her fingers before holding it to the older woman's lips. Eagerly Blake took the offering. "I'll tell you what, Blake. You be a good girl now, and you cain have as much of this as you want later." she promised as the older woman ardently sucked the petite manicured fingers clean.

Brown eyes met blue. In a moment Blake knew her decision would forever effect their relationship, because she saw the need in the writer's eyes. It was the same need she had to truly be one with her but doing that required total submission. Georgia already had her heart, but now

she wanted the rest. The fleeting moments seemed an eternity to both of them. Swallowing her nerves, the attorney stated softly, "You can have whatever you want, Georgia. All that I have is yours."

The simple sentiment almost brought tears to the blonde's eyes. She hadn't expected Blake to give in so gracefully. The great predator had willingly succumbed to her prey, and it elated the small woman that the brunette was so willing to risk for the sake of their relationship. In that moment she felt closer to the attorney than she ever had. "I promise you won't be disappointed." Georgia stated confidently, knowing what ever she lacked in experience could easily be overcome in fervor.

As soon as the blonde's fair head dipped down into her neck, Blake closed her eyes. It wasn't often that she had allowed women to treat her this way, but she was determined to do it for Georgia if it meant bringing them closer together. Trying to relax she let the blonde set the pace, and it was clear the writer wanted to move slowly and enjoy every inch of her frame. At first it made her anxious, but as the moments faded one to another, a strange tide of emotion overtook her. She had never lowered her guard this much, so she had no idea what lay on the other side of intimacy. The younger woman's touch was bewitching. Blake could feel every light caress and yet they began to blend into one swell of emotion. It didn't take long until she felt on fire. What had begun as a gesture to placate the petite woman had turned into a burning need, a need like she had never known in her entire life. She knew that she was approaching the climatic edge, and she felt as if she had to be possessed right then by the enchantress in her bed. Without even realizing her actions, she began to beg for the imminent pinnacle.

Georgia paused for only a moment when she heard the demanding pleas spilling out of her lover's mouth. She had never known the woman to be this way, but she was pleased that she was able to render the older woman just as helpless with her touch as the brunette often did to her. Inspired even more by the urgency in her lover's voice, Georgia made every effort to bring Blake to the summit as quickly as she wanted.

Both of them jolted in surprise at the intensity that struck Blake. Her eyes opened as she let out a piercing scream of relief. Her body trembled ferociously as she grabbed the small woman tightly. In fact it took several minutes before the brunette could even breath normally again, and when she was finally able to process what had just happened, she had no words for the first time in her life. Nothing she could possibly say would be a prefect summation what had just taken place, because she had no experiences that had ever even come close to what the little woman had just done for her.

Not knowing what else to do, she merely muttered the first thing that came to her mind. "Thank you, Georgia." she sighed with a raw voice.

"You're welcome, love." Georgia replied feeling safe to use such an endearment after what had just transpired.

Silence prevailed for several minutes as Georgia laid curled up on top of Blake. The tall woman lazily ran her hands through the golden hair of her lover as she tried to collect herself. She knew

once she had regained her strength, she wanted to reciprocate the wonderful feeling Georgia had bestowed upon her more than she had ever wanted to do anything. For the first time the passion that possessed her to have the smaller woman was not based on her sheer need to feel the power of taking the blonde to physical release, but rather give her something that had more depth of emotion than she had ever accorded anyone.

After several minutes the intensity of the older woman's caress began to change. Her fingers began to press harder, digging into the blonde's muscles and eliciting a satisfied moan at the motion. Methodically they took in the small woman's frame, running the length of her back and over the two mounds of tight flesh which she squeezed firmly. Georgia squirmed against the touch as the strong hands continued down further still and slipped between her slightly staggered legs. Long fingers traced over her wetness, but the older woman was just out of reach of her entrance from the position in which they were lying. Nevertheless she persisted in her slow fondle of the apex of the blonde's thighs. Georgia moved against the body under hers as the leisurely tease began to stoke her passion again. Unable to resist, the writer inched her own body up Blake's making it easier for the brunette to access the place they both wanted most, but the brunette didn't. Instead the attorney kept her pace, stroking up and down in an unhurried fashion, every once in awhile circling the center of the blonde's pleasure teasingly. Only when Georgia's breathing hitched did Blake make any move toward slipping inside, and then it was for a mere moment.

"Blake." she grumbled in urgency. "What are you tryin' to do? Kill me?"

The form under hers erupted in a deep chuckle. "It's my turn." she replied. "You promised."

Georgia lifted her head off her girlfriend's shoulder to meet dark eyes. They were shining with mirth and something more than the little woman had never seen. There was an open adoration in lover's gaze that struck a chord deep within her. Knowing whatever Blake had in mind would be wonderful, she just gave a small smile as she leaned to kiss the lips that she craved.

Blake responded as the blonde's tongue pierced passed her lips. Bringing her left hand up to the back of the fair head, the attorney pressed harder, letting their tongues duel lightly. She moaned as the petite woman slowly circled the tip of her tongue with her own before taking as much of it as she could back into her own mouth. Wild ideas flooded Blake's mind of the possibilities of what her lover's mouth could do that she had yet to even know as Georgia continued to display her talents.

Knowing that she had quite a few of her own though, the older woman began to take charge of the situation again, thrusting into the snug heat that was anxious for her and effectively breaking their kiss as Georgia pulled away to emit a moan of rising need. After a couple of plunges, each deeper in tensity, she pulled out again torturously. When Georgia groaned again anxiously, the older woman decided to take pity on her, and pushed the smaller frame off her own down onto the mattress. She propped up on her arm and just looked at Georgia for a moment. She had never had the opportunity to really see the woman she loved, but now in the soft glow of the bedside lamp, all was laid bare. The blonde's golden skin glistened with light perspiration. The rapid cadence of her pulse pounded in her neck, clearly displaying the escalated fervor that matched

her breathing. Lightly Blake reached for her neck, her fingers lightly tracing over the elegant counter before descending to her chest. The pale rose-colored peaks had grown taut in the anticipation of her touch. Gently she circled each one in turn enjoying the response it had on her lover as Georgia's back arched against her exploring. She lingered only a few minutes before moving south again over the blonde's bare abdomen. She felt the quivering of the younger woman's stomach as she traced around her navel teasingly before proceeding to her right hip.

The southern belle differed from the other women Blake had dated in this physical aspect. Where as she was used to slim, slight ladies in the hips, the writer possessed the curves of a real woman as they flared in the most alluring of ways. Her fingers traced over the contours for several moments taking in the feel of the soft skin over such a sexy curve. As much as she wanted to dawdle on what she considered the most fetching attribute the blonde exhibited, she knew she had other exciting places to explore, and her right hand skimmed over the little woman's right thigh before coming back up the left and settling on top blonde curls.

Without even thinking about how it might sound, Blake whispered, "You really are the most beautiful woman I've ever seen." Georgia couldn't even respond to the statement. It overwhelmed her so completely that she barely could hold back tears at such emotion from the attorney. Instead she just met and held her lover's gaze for a long moment speaking words of their hearts that had yet to be vocalized. "You know, I've always wanted to see you like this, Georgia. From almost the first moment we touched, I've wanted to know what it was like to have you laid out this way, completely open to my eyes, but even in my wildest fantasies did I ever imagine you looking this way. I just can't stop staring. You're spellbinding." The writer wasn't able to hold back her emotions when the tall woman continued her words. Tears slipped from her blue eyes and trailed over her cheeks. Seeing the reaction the blonde had to her words, Blake reached up to her angel's face, cupping it lightly, so she could gaze deeply in the eyes that had captured her soul. Leaning in she delicately kissed each trail of tears before meeting Georgia's lips.

The small woman pulled her lover in closer and moaned as she felt Blake inside her again. Her hips rocked instinctively with the rhythm of Blake's ministrations. Slowly but surely the older woman sunk deeper into the depths of her beloved, reveling in the closeness they were sharing. Words were unnecessary then, their bodies speaking for them as they clung to each other in need. As Georgia climbed higher, Blake held her even closer, wrapping her left arm around the little woman's back and pulling her more firmly against her with each plunge. The blonde responded to the small action with a rising moan each time the brunette did it until they had moved beyond murmurs to cries. Attaching on to the younger woman's neck, the attorney added her mouth to the experience. As much as she loved the idea of watching Georgia move to climax, she knew it would bring her lover more pleasure to use all her resources. Adjusting her position, Blake slid her entire body between the blonde's legs. Eagerly the writer's thighs strained against the older woman's hips with each stroke.

The moment was nothing like either of them had ever experienced. For Georgia, whose history only included her ex-husband and a few stolen moments with the attorney, she had never known love making to be so gentle. She felt bound to the brunette in a way that she had never felt with anyone else. As Blake moved her whole body in time with Georgia's, she felt in perfect unison with her lover. She hadn't ever had this pleasure before, even with the little blonde, and she didn't

want the moment to end. She wanted the slow deep pace to continue indefinitely, so she could see the glint of blue eyes as they gazed at her in such longing.

However the delight they both felt couldn't be sustained. All at once Georgia felt herself at the precipice, and as much as she wanted the moment to endure, her body would not allow it. She gave a strangled cry as her body began to contract around Blake. It was heaven to be this close to the attorney, and she pulled the form on top of hers as close as she could as she rode wave after wave. The spasms seemed never ending as she trembled in the embrace of the woman she loved.

Blake held Georgia as close as she could without hurting the younger woman, but it didn't seem to be close enough. She couldn't be close enough if she had crawled all the way inside her and stayed forever. Unable to break the contact, the brunette stayed where she was, relishing the feeling of her beloved under her body. Within a few minutes all had grown quiet. The blonde's body had stopped tensing sporadically, leaving Blake resting inside a snug heat that molded to her perfectly. She felt the writer playing with her dark hair idly.

Wanting to make sure Georgia was all right, the older woman looked up to her face. Blue eyes were dilated but content. "Are you okay?" Blake asked softly.

Georgia gave a lazy nod. "More than okay." she mumbled.

"I didn't hurt you then? You are just so small." she inquired in obvious concern. "I'm always afraid I'm being too rough on you."

"You didn't hurt me." she answered cupping her lover's face lightly with one hand.

Ignoring the statement, Blake stated with a soft grin, "Because if I did, I know of a sure method to kiss away the aches."

Knowing to what the brunette was referring to, the writer gave a smile of her own. "Maybe you'd like to show me just for future reference." she suggested.

Blake chuckled. "I'd be glad to." she answered.

Maneuvering her own body down the blonde's, she took her time kissing the hips she adored. Then she slowly licked a path across the flat stomach before dipping her mouth lower. Even after the incredible peak she had just reached, Georgia's hips still responded to the strong tongue as it inched to its destination. Within moments she was riding the plateau again, teetering on the verge of climax with each tender stroke. No crevice was left unexplored, but it was clear Blake was on a mission to taste all the blonde had to offer as she tidied up the pool of excitement that she had created. However that only served to spring forth another flood, which she gladly consumed as well. Each time she thought she had tired the southern beauty queen out completely, she was surprised to find a little more energy in the young body. Determined to wring every last ounce of pleasure out for her lover, Blake kept pace past her own exhaustion until it was clear Georgia could go no further. Slipping off the blonde's body and snuggling into her side, Blake encircled her in protective arms. Reflexively Georgia moved in closer, spooning

up against the strong body behind her own.

Neither spoke. As much as Georgia wanted to claim her absolute love for the attorney, she withheld. Blake had given her more in one night than anyone ever had in her entire life, and she didn't want to push the woman who had finally agreed to at least attempt a real relationship with her. Instead she simply closed her eyes and enjoyed the comforting embrace, knowing that words could never capture what had just happened.

Even though Blake was physically exhausted, her mind was too active trying to process what had taken place to drift into dreams. She laid awake just staring at the woman in her arms, taking in all the features. She knew she enjoyed the blonde's body tremendously, but tonight was the first time she had found deeper joy in making love. Thinking back over what had just transpired between them, she realized it was because she had remained open and vulnerable to whatever might have happened. Never had she been so close to anyone that way, but she was glad that she had taken the chance with the southern belle.

"Georgia?" she whispered. The blonde mumbled incoherently, making the older woman think that she had fallen asleep. "I love you, Georgia Carmichael." she confessed, saying those words for the first time ever to any woman that she had dated.

The blonde stirred at the words, but said nothing. She had awakened enough when Blake had called her name the first time to hear the admission, but when the attorney had actually made it, the small woman was too immobilized in shock to give a reply. Instead she just let the avowal wash over her, bringing closure to what had started hours ago in the attorney's office.

The following morning Georgia awoke to an empty bed. The sun was shining in Blake's bedroom windows, but the loft was silent. Checking the bedside clock, she realized that the attorney had probably already gone to work since it was after nine. She rolled over onto her back at the same time stretching. Her body was sore after the previous night's activities, but she hardly paid attention to her stiff back. Her only thoughts were of the brunette and the three words she had said before slipping into sleep.

Georgia had been so startled at the sudden declaration that she stayed awake long after the older woman had started to dream. The blonde spent long hours simply gazing at the woman who had changed her life. So many things had happened since they had met seven months ago. The writer reminisced over the first time she had kissed the older woman in the truck at the fair. She had no idea what would unfold by giving in to her fantasies. It grieved her still that she had caused the attorney so much pain, emotionally and physically. However it was clear that the older woman had moved beyond that hurt. Georgia never truly thought she would ever have a chance with Blake after what she had done to the woman, and yet the brunette had found it someplace within her to love her in spite of all the problems she had caused. Even more the tall woman had started to trust her by allowing herself to be unprotected in intimacy. The woman that had opened her eyes to life loved her. Blake had saved her in more ways than one, and she knew she would be forever grateful for the chance to know love the way it was meant to be.

Slowly rising from bed, Georgia made her way into the bathroom. She saw a toothbrush on the

counter with a note next to it. It simply read that Blake had to go to work early for a meeting and to feel free to use whatever the blonde wanted. Deciding to hold off on a shower until she returned home, Georgia used the toothbrush. However once she had finished, she contemplated what to do with it. She saw Blake's toothbrush standing alone in a silver cup next to the facet. Curiously she put hers beside it and then stood back to reflect on the picture it created.

Two toothbrushes, one dark and one light, very much like their owners stood closely together. Georgia decided to leave hers with Blake's, figuring if the older woman didn't like it there that she would move it. However until such time, the writer would be content in knowing that a part of her was always at the loft, even when she was away. Moving back into the bedroom, she slipped on her clothes from the previous night before making the bed for the attorney.

She looked thoughtfully at it for a few moments before opening the bedroom door to leave. Immediately she was greeted by two large dogs, who wagged their tails happily at her appearance. She smiled and patted each of them as she moved into the kitchen area to find Jack sitting on a bar stool reading the paper quietly.

"Mornin', Georgia." he said taking a sip of his coffee.

"Good mornin' Jack. How are you feelin' today?"

He shrugged. "Well, I had just started to drift off last night when I heard some ruckus goin' on next door. Thought somethin' might be wrong." he stated. "Took a minute to realize that you two were just otherwise engaged."

Georgia turned crimson at the idea of her ex-husband and friend hearing Blake and her together. "Oh, Jack, I'm so sorry." she apologized.

He shook his head. "Don't be, Georgia. Obviously Yankee knows her stuff. I never was able to that to you. I just want you to be happy. Know I know you are."

"We were just kids then, Jack. We didn't really know what love was. I never knew different until I met Blake."

Jack shrugged. Changing the subject he mentioned, "Yankee left me a note saying she wouldn't be back until late. I guess that means I'm on my own today unless you have plans."

"I have to work actually."

"Oh? And exactly are you doin' these days?"

"I write fashion columns for Vanity Fair magazine."

"Wow. Your mama would be proud if she could see you. Ain't that her favorite magazine?"

Georgia nodded. "I like to think that she's readin' my columns. I miss her, Jack."

"I'm sure she misses you too, Georgia. Cindy was always such a nice woman, a much better mama than my own."

"She does have a way with people. I wish I could see her."

"Well, talk to Yankee 'bout it. Maybe she can set it up so you cain."

"Someday I will. I don't think enough time had passed yet to feel safe. I know she's not gonna do anything to hurt Blake, but I don't want my daddy findin' out where any of us are. He'd try to hurt her, and I ain't gonna let that happen 'gain." He gave a nod in understanding. "Well, I have to get goin'. I'm meetin' some friends for lunch today, and I have an article to work on before then. You want to join us for lunch though?"

"Yeah. Sure. I ain't doin' anythin' else."

"All right. I'll call you later."

Blake was just finishing up a meeting that day when Glenda buzzed her to let her know Torrance was there to meet her for lunch. Knowing she had to share her newfound experience with one of her best friends, she hurriedly stowed her important papers in her desk and rushed to the lobby to greet her.

"Well, look at you. What happened?" Torrance inquired seeing a difference in her friend's countenance.

"I'll tell you about it in the cab." she stated ushering the photographer toward the elevator. As soon as the doors closed, she gave a beaming smile. "Tor, you'll never believe this, but I think I'm in love."

"Think? No, you are, my friend. Helen and I have known that for awhile now. I'm glad you've realized it. Have you told Georgia?"

She shook her head. "I can't. Not yet anyway. I just need more time. I mean last night I said it to her, but she was asleep at the time, so that doesn't really count."

Torrance laughed. "But the fact that you even said it at all is a big step. So to what do you owe this revelation?"

Blake shrugged. "Oh, I don't know. Her ex was in some trouble, and I bailed him out. I guess she took that as a sign that I cared about her, and she told me how she felt. It was strange, Tor. Women have said that they loved me before, it never affected me at all, but last night when Georgia told me that she loved me, something happened. I couldn't just ignore the statement. It moved me so much, and I just had to show her how I felt. I couldn't say it, but I just had to do something to let her know I felt the same."

"Did you succeed? I guess that's what really matters."

"I think so. I hope so, Tor. Last night was like nothing I'd ever experienced. I mean in the past sex was just that, sex. Women came and went from my bed, and I really never gave it much thought other than where I would find the next one. Then Georgia came, and I want her to stay, Tor. She's everything I've ever really wanted in a woman. She's smart and sexy. She's caring. I could just stare into those blue eyes and sweet face forever."

"But she's also hurt you so deeply, Blake. Are you over that?"

"Helen hurt you, and you still loved her." the attorney pointed out.

"Yes but Helen didn't almost get me killed even though I felt like I was dying at the time. Georgia is the reason for what happened to you. She's responsible for that, Blake. Have you truly forgiven her?"

Blake nodded. "Tor, I know this might be hard to believe, but I forgave her the day she admitted in court what had happened between us and acknowledged her responsibility in the incident. It takes someone truly sorry to do what she did. She knew she could have ended up like me by openly saying she had relations with me with all those Klansmen in the room, especially when they were the ones that had supposedly come to her defense and were on trial for theoretically protecting her. She risked her life in an act of penitence, and I found it impossible not to forgive her for being such a strong woman. Trusting her again has taken a lot longer, but I trust her now, because I know that she loves me. I believed it when she said it, and I believe it now."

"Wow. You really have come a long way in such a short time. I'm impressed. If she's what you want, then I'm happy for you. I've also hoped that you would find a woman that could tame you. It's good to see that one actually exists." she joked as they hailed a cab.

Blake gave the driver directions to the restaurant before asking, "So, what is Helen doing today?"

"Actually, she's supposed to be having lunch with my mother and Georgia. It'll be interesting to see what her take on things is. I'm sure Helen will get the juicy tidbits. She and Georgia seem to share that kind of information. Kind of makes me feel weird actually. I hear all these things about you that I never necessarily wanted to know, so I can't help but wonder what Georgia knows about me that I rather she didn't." the photographer teased lightly.

"Women. They are such gossips." Blake quipped.

That evening when Blake returned home from work she found Georgia and Jack making dinner while the two dogs sat attentively near them watching the activities. "Hey, Yankee." Jack greeted.

"Jack, Georgia, how are you?"

"We're good. How was your day?" Georgia replied.

"Long. I had lunch with Tor though. She said you were supposed to go out with Helen and Maria."

"Yeah. Jack and I met them for lunch."

"Oh really? What did you think of Maria, Jack?" she asked in interest as she sat her briefcase on the bar.

"She's very nice."

The blonde laughed lightly. "You should've seen it, Blake. Maria was so taken with his charm. If she weren't already married, I would think she was interested."

The tall woman chuckled lightly. "Well, she's always liked younger men and women for that matter. She loves hanging out with the younger crowd. She's the perfect example of the adage that you are only as old as you feel. She's quite the looker for a woman in her sixties, huh Jack? Very Sophia Loren."

He gave a nod as he took a sip of her drink. "She is attractive." he conceded.

Changing the subject the attorney inquired, "So, what are you two up to now?"

"Well, I thought it would be nice to make you dinner, because I figured you'd be tired. Jack was just kind enough to help." Georgia answered. "Then I thought after that you and I could take the dogs on a walk in the park while Jack gets some rest. He's been movin' 'round more than he should."

"That sounds good. About how much longer do you think dinner's going to take? Do I have time to take a shower and change?"

"Sure. It won't be ready for another half hour or so."

"All right. I'll be right back then." she replied moving toward her office. She tossed her briefcase down onto the sofa in there before heading to the bedroom.

As soon as the door was closed, Jack looked at Georgia. "What kind of greetin' was that? You don't kiss her when you see her?" he asked.

"I didn't want to make her uncomfortable. It's kinda weird you know. You're livin' with her, but you're my ex-husband. I don't think she wants to do that in front of you."

"Well, why don't you go tell her hello now? I'll watch dinner. Go on. Here. Take this." he stated grabbing a wine glass and filling it up half way. "She looks like she needs it."

Going into the master bedroom, Georgia heard the whirlpool running. Gently she knocked on the

bathroom door before tentatively sliding it open. Blake was lounging in the tub with her eyes closed. Her arms were propped up on the sides and her head tilted back. The blonde simply stood there a moment looking at the scene. The tall woman's body was on clear display, and suddenly the last thing on Georgia's mind was dinner. Since the brunette didn't open her eyes, the little woman assumed that she didn't hear the first knock and proceeded to do it again. This time dark eyes opened to mere slits.

"I thought you might like this." Georgia stated nervously as she stepped to the tub. She sat down on the edge and looked at her girlfriend. Softly she reached out and pushed dark disheveled hair back away from her lover's face. "Bad day?" she questioned.

"Just really long. Didn't get much sleep last night and only took a break when I went to lunch with Tor but even then it was mostly business. I'm just looking forward to relaxing and maybe going to bed early. I have to get up early tomorrow morning for a massage. My shoulders have been so tight lately, and I haven't been able to get rid of it myself. Finally had to break down and get an appointment with Helen's masseuse to see if she can get it out."

"Let me see. Sit up for me." Georgia instructed as she handed the wine over to her girlfriend.

Blake took the glass and did as she was told. Soft hands touched her bare shoulders and gently began to kneed them. Silence prevailed as the writer massaged the shoulders for long minutes until she felt them relax. "You're really tight." she mentioned. "This would be better if you were lying down. I could get a better angle. Maybe after we walk to dogs I'll do some more." she suggested tracing over the attorney's ear in affection.

Blake nodded in agreement. "That would be great. It already feels a little better." she said.

"Good. Well, you drink this and relax for a little while. Come out to dinner when you're ready." she stated meeting brown eyes. Quickly she pecked the attorney's lips. "Welcome home." she whispered rising from her position and leaving Blake in peace.

Watching the small woman leave, that older woman thought about how nice it was to have Georgia there when she had arrived. The thoughtful things like dinner, glass of wine, and impromptu shoulder rub all were pleasant surprises, and it made her wonder what it might be like to come home to the pixie every night. She had never considered living with a woman before, but now the idea didn't seem as scary as it used to.

Half an hour later she returned to the kitchen to find her company setting the table. The three of them sat down to their meal and amiably chatted while they ate. When it was over, Jack shooed them out the door with the dogs, saying he would take care of the dishes, so the two of the wrapped up in their winter wear and headed to Central Park with the hound and great dane in tow.

Snow was falling lightly as they crossed the street to the park. Blake handled both dogs with one hand as she held tightly to Georgia's gloved hand with the other. The blonde looked adorable in her black coat and black and white knit cap. Her smile brightened when the attorney broke their

clasp to curve her arm around her shoulders. Together they strolled unhurriedly through the park while people rushed by around them. Normally Blake would have been in as much of a rush as the strangers, but tonight she hardly even noticed the inclement weather. The only thing she really saw was a pair of blue eyes and beaming smile.

As both dogs came to a stop in order to investigate something at a nearby tree, Blake turned to her little girlfriend. Both of her arms found their way around the petite form. Instantly Georgia moved into her, snuggling close to the warm hard body. Blake sighed in contentment. She had never known joy the way she felt it at that moment, standing in the snow, holding the woman she loved. She knew in that instant that Georgia was not just an attempt at a relationship. Now that she had given her very soul to the woman she held, she knew she didn't want to take it back. It was forever gone to the blonde, and it no longer frightened her. In fact she felt comfort in knowing that Georgia was the one that held it.

"Georgia." she whispered.

"Yeah, Blake?" the writer inquired looking up at her lover's face.

The attorney swallowed hard, but she drowned in blue eyes. Unable to stop herself and not wanting to, she proclaimed, "I love you, Georgia."

A small gasp escaped the blonde at the pronouncement. She knew it was true, but she had never truly expected Blake to say it. A trembling smile transformed her face as her eyes teared. "I know." she whispered. "I love you too, Blake."

Leaning down the tall woman kissed her girlfriend tenderly. It would have gone on for several minutes had the dogs decided to take off, practically jerking Blake along with them. However she was able to get them both under control. Looking back at the blonde, both of them laughed lightly in amusement of the situation. "I have an idea. You want to go ice skating?" Blake asked.

"Now?"

"Sure. Why not?"

Georgia shrugged. "I've never been."

"I'll teach you. I promise to hold you up the whole time if you need it. Come on. It'll be fun."

"What 'bout the dogs?"

"They can come too. What do you say?"

"Okay. As long as you promise not to let me fall."

Taking the younger woman's hand, she pledged, "If I let you fall, you have permission to drag me down with you. Come on. It's only a short walk from here."

When they arrived at the ice rink, the crowd was thin, being that it was the middle of the week and still early in the evening. Blake rented two pairs of skates for them and then came over to where Georgia was sitting with the dogs. Both of them slipped them on before the attorney secured the dogs to the bench, so they wouldn't run off but had the freedom to roam as far as their leashes would allow. Extending her hand to the blonde, she helped her to her feet.

Georgia wobbled slightly as she tried to get used to the skates. However Blake held her securely as they made their way over to the ice. "You first." she insisted when they got to the edge.

Blake gave a little laugh as she stepped out onto the ice alone. She skated a few yards before making a flourishing spin and heading back. "See. It's easy once you get used to it. Come on. I'll even skate backwards if that will help you." she offered extending both her hands. The little woman tentatively took them and let Blake pull her out onto the ice. Her legs trembled slightly as she tried to hold her balance. "All right. You ready?" the brunette inquired. Georgia gave a timid nod. Skating backwards so they could face each other, Blake held tightly to her girlfriend and maneuvered them around the rink several times. The longer the blonde was up, the easier it began to feel. Seeing the more confident look on the writer's face, the attorney inquired, "You ready to try it yourself?"

Georgia nodded. "Don't leave me though." she insisted.

"Never." Blake growled sexily letting the blonde free. The younger woman tried to move herself a few yards. She seemed to be doing all right until she had to make the turn and began to wobble precariously. However just as she was about to fall, strong arms swept her up. Blake laughed a little. "That was close." she teased.

Georgia laughed too. "Yeah, it was." she answered.

"You're doing well though. Try it again."

The petite woman let go of her girlfriend for a second attempt. This time she focused solely on staying on her feet, and after successfully making a lap, smiled up at her companion in achievement. "I did it." she stated proudly.

Blake grinned softly. "You certainly did, Georgia." she replied linking hands with the little woman again. They skated for a long time holding hands and leisurely talking. Hours passed, but neither wanted to leave. It was the first time since the Blake's initial visit to Stillwater that they were able to hold a real conversation with each other. Even though the sexual tension was still obvious between them, each of them seemed more relaxed. Penitently they decided that they had to get the dogs home and headed back through the park toward the loft.

Upon arriving it was obvious that Jack had retired for the evening. Taking their coats Blake hung them up to dry on the coat rack and then moved to the kitchen to put on a tea kettle of hot water. Meanwhile the blonde went to the living area and started the gas fireplace. A few minutes later Blake joined her with two cups of tea and some cookies. Together they stretched out on the rug

in front of the fire. The dogs joined them as well, and the foursome quietly stared into the flames and cuddled into each other.

The rest of the evening passed that way. However Georgia finally succumbed to a yawn as the night got later. She checked her watch, noting that it was already passed eleven. "It's gettin' late." she whispered, snuggling closer to her girlfriend.

Blake responded by holding her tighter. "Yeah, it is. So much for going to bed early." she joked lightly.

"I should probably get goin'." regretfully she stated not making a move to stand.

"Do you have to? Would you like to stay here?" the brunette asked softly, hopefully.

Looking at her the writer saw that the invitation was genuine. "Do you want me to?" she clarified. Blake nodded. "All right. Then I will. I wasn't really lookin' forward to goin' back out in that weather anyway."

The attorney nodded in agreement. "Come on. There's a warm bed waiting for us. Why don't you go ahead? I'm just going to straighten up a bit first."

"All right but don't be too long." Georgia replied kissing her quickly before heading back to the bedroom. She immediately went in the dresser to pull some pajamas out for herself before going into the bathroom to change. She noticed that her toothbrush was exactly where she had left it that morning making her smile. Doing her nightly routine, she settled herself in bed and waited for her companion. When Blake came to bed, she pulled the blonde into her arms and kissed her deeply. The little woman responded with a moan, but as the kiss continued, it became clear that the attorney wasn't trying to initiate something more. Instead she just kissed her to her fill before settling down to sleep.

Putting her head on the pillow, Blake curved protective arms around her lover. "Good night, Georgia." she whispered.

"Night, Blake. Sweet dreams." the younger woman responded relaxing in the embrace and falling asleep.

A few weeks passed in similar fashion with Georgia spending an extended time with both Jack and Blake at the attorney's loft in between her work schedule. The living situation began to feel less bizarre as Jack and Blake seemed to actually get to know one another, and the writer was glad that her ex and current loves were getting along so well.

However one Saturday morning after Georgia had gone back to her place, the two of them sat at the kitchen table discussing Jack's future in New York. Jack seemed pensive, so the attorney tried to get him to open up about what was on his mind. "What's going on in that head of yours, Jack?" she inquired casually as she skimmed the paper.

"I'm just tryin' to figure out how to buy this place that I want. I've been out of work too long, and I wanted to buy another bar or restaurant. I've seen some up for sale, but New York is expensive, Yankee. I'm havin' a hard time figurin' out if I can afford the risk of puttin' all my assets into somethin' and then gonna the bank for more."

"Well, do you have a place in mind for sure already?"

"I've looked at a few businesses. Most of which are all right, but I'd want to change it up and make it my own if I bought it. It might be better just to start from scratch, but I'm havin' a difficult time with the bank about it."

"They won't give you as much as you want?"

He shook his head. "I was thinkin' about askin' Georgia, but I cain't do it. I know she'd want to help, but I don't want to burden her that way. Besides she doesn't have the resources that I need."

"Sounds like you need a business partner to help you finance the thing."

"Yeah. Between what I have now and what I can borrow, I think I can only come up with half of what I need."

"How much do you need?"

"I'm lookin' at about four to five hundred thousand more to do what I really want. I want it to be upscale, not like that hole in the ground I used to own. I know how to run it well, but I need the money up front to get it started. Do you know anyone who might be interested in investin'?"

She shrugged. "I don't know. Maybe. Did you run numbers on everything?"

"Yeah. Let me get them." He returned a few minutes later and spread them out over the table. Together they went through them line by line as Jack discussed his vision for the place.

Several hours later after exhausting the extensive plans he had, Blake sighed. "Sounds like you have everything planned out the way you want it. Your proposal is great. The bank wouldn't give you any more than three hundred thousand?"

"No. It's not like bein' at home where everyone at the bank knows me. These people don't know me from anyone on the street. They aren't impressed by fancy proposals and what not. I mean I can still sell my house in Stillwater for another hundred thousand probably. I just don't know. What do you think, Yankee?"

"Well, I can think of a few people off the top of my head that might be interested. However having a partner poses special problems like possibly compromising your plans. Can you deal with that?"

"It depends on what it is they want changed."

She nodded. "What if I invested in the place with you? Do you think you'd be amiable to having me as a business partner?"

"Maybe. Did you have some changes in mind to the place?"

"A few. Nothing major though. I like your ideas, and you seem quite capable of the project. If I go in with you on this though, I'd only do this if we can be one of the top restaurants in the city. I think I have the contacts to make that happen, but it's probably going to cost more capital, which I'd be prepared to pay. I'm thinking that an extra three hundred thousand on top of an initial five hundred would probably accomplish what I want, but that tips the scales a bit as far as ownership. On the flip side, I'm willing to be a silent partner after the place is operational and let you buy me out until we are fifty fifty again if you're interested."

"Tell me what you have in mind." he responded in interest.

Later that afternoon after an extended discussion the two of them went out to see the site that Jack had in mind for the establishment. Pleased with the location, Blake and he settled on an agreement on what each of them wanted to do and planned to formalize their agreement in contract before going any further with it. Of course both of them agreed not to tell Georgia about what was taking place, deciding it would be better to leave the little woman out of the loop for the time being.

That night when the writer came by as she usually did, Jack made the announcement to her that he would be moving out of Blake's and into his own place. Georgia was taken by surprise, because she hadn't thought of the fact that he might actually leave the loft. Curiously she inquired how he had managed to find a place to live and work which made it possible, but as agreed upon with Blake, he merely answered that he was starting his own business again, not going into great detail about what was happening. Nevertheless Georgia was thrilled to learn that he had plans to stay in New York permanently by opening another restaurant and bar.

Continued in Part 4 (Conclusion)

**~ New York series ~
Love in Photographs
Georgia On My Mind
Stick to the Script
Vows of the Heart**

~ Georgia On My Mind ~

by Alex Tryst

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Disclaimers: These characters are of my own creation, except for one, Isaac Mizrahi. He is a real person, and I tried to keep him as true to himself as possible. No infringement was intended. This story is about two women (big surprise there) who are doing all right in their respective lives until they meet each other, and that's when mayhem ensues. I should mention as well that some of my old favorites make an appearance, so if you are a fan of "Love in Photographs", you will enjoy seeing Torrance, Helen, and company. If you have not had the pleasure of reading "Love in Photographs", just know that this book will definitely spoil that one, so you might want to read it first. However this is not a sequel by any means and can stand by itself. I just think you'll find more pleasure in the minor players in this work if you have read that one. As far as things to look out for, there is violence such as gay bashing and racist and homophobic remarks, so please be aware. And one last thing I should note. I tried to actually write out the southern accent the best I could, so please go lightly on commentary of the speech. This is my first attempt at affecting a drawl in dialogue.

Dedication: As always to my wife, you are my fondest wish. To the inspiration for the title I credit the song "Georgia on My Mind" sung by the one and only Ray Charles. This is a perfect title given my leading southern lady. Of course in my own way I also thank my blonde muse who has been the star of several books now and more to come I'm sure. Of course I cannot forget my beta reader who has kept me motivated on more than just this book.

Now on with the show.....

Part 4 (Conclusion)

As spring came alive in the thriving city, construction of the new restaurant was well underway. Blake had used some of their financial resources to promote the place, so a buzz had taken high society well before its grand opening scheduled for May. In the mean time Jack and she spent long hours together when she wasn't at the law firm, planning the perfect launch party. Using all her contacts as well as relying heavily on Torrance and Maria's, they formed a guest list that would make any celebrity envious to be ignored. However everyone tiptoed around Georgia about it as much as they could, knowing that both Jack and Blake wanted to surprise the blonde with their creation.

After Jack had moved out of the loft, the blonde continued to frequent it. Over the course of the

past few months, her things had begun to migrate as well, and it wasn't long before the attorney's home office had become a second office for her and her clothes took up half of the master closet. In fact she saw more of the tall woman's home than her own, making her wonder if it was time to discuss the need to keeping two residences with the attorney. She knew that would be a difficult discussion to have with the woman she loved, because Blake had been slow to commit in the first place, so she decided to ponder how to approach it with her lover.

One night as they lay quietly in bed after a strenuous evening of love making, she decided to break her silence on the subject. "Blake." she said turning over to face the older woman.

"What?" she asked with a smile tucking some of her girlfriend's blonde hair behind her ear. Seeing the trepidation of Georgia's face she grew concerned. "Love, what is it?" she inquired.

"You know, I spend a lot of time here, Blake, most of my time in fact."

"I know. It's nice having you around."

"What if I spent all my time here? Would it still be nice?" hesitantly she questioned.

"What do you mean? Like if you lived here permanently?" Blake asked for clarification. Suddenly her heart pounded in anxiety at the proposition. She had done so well so far, but bringing up the next step set off warning alarms in her head.

"What if I moved in, Blake? I mean I practically live here already. I couldn't even tell you the last time I slept in my own bed or had a meal in my apartment. There is nothin' in the refrigerator and hardly anythin' in the closet. My apartment is a glorified office, and even then I hardly use it. I'm usually just usin' yours instead. All my things are here, Blake. It makes me wonder why I'm not here. I mean do you think 'bout makin' that next step together?" she inquired.

However Blake's only reply was asking, "You want to move in with me?"

By the tone of her lover's voice, Georgia could tell that she had pressed the woman past what was probably wise, but since it was already out there, she decided not to take it back. She wanted to know where she stood with the attorney after all the time they had spent together. "I think it's worth thinkin' 'bout, Blake. I mean you're thirty-eight years old. Don't you think it's time to decide what you really want? I mean I'm twenty-six, and I've already decided what I want out of life and a wife and what I want is you, Blake. If I can't have you, then it's pointless for me to stay in a relationship that's not goin' anywhere."

"Whoa. Wait a minute. First it's that you want to move in. Now it's you want to get married?" the attorney asked in panic pulling away from the woman she loved and staring at her quizzically.

"Blake, I just think it's time that you know where I stand on our future. I've known you for almost a year and loved you most of that time. I know what I want. I want to be with you and have a life with you. Someday soon I'd like to be married and have children with you. I just need to know if it's possible to get what I want, and I'm not sayin' this to corner you into commitment.

You've been doin' so well with what we have, but I'm ready to move on to the next level. I just want to know if I'm hopin' in vain for somethin' that's never gonna happen."

"You want to have kids with me?" the tall woman mumbled. Her mind found it difficult to process the whole idea of what Georgia had proposed. She hadn't thought beyond what they presently had, being perfectly content to stay where they were, but she knew the blonde had valid points. She deserved to know where she stood.

When Cara had been in her life, Blake had made it clear to her what would and would not happen in their relationship, but she hadn't given the writer the same regard. However it wasn't due to her lack of respect for the younger woman, because she did hold tremendous admiration for what she had accomplished. She just truly didn't know what lie beyond where they were in their relationship. The unknown scared her more than she cared to admit.

Seeing her girlfriend's face, Georgia realized that she had steamrolled the woman. Not knowing how to make it right though, she slid out of bed and headed over to the dresser. She pulled out the first clothes she came to and threw them on over her naked body as she tried to keep her composure long enough to make an exit.

"What are you doing?" Blake inquired seeing the little woman slipping on her sandals. "Where are you going?"

"Home." she replied sparing a sad smile at the woman still lying in bed. "I'm sorry, Blake. I see that I just totally overwhelmed you with what I said, and I apologize for that. This is just somethin' I've been thinkin' 'bout for 'while. I guess you weren't ready to hear it though. I wish I could take it back, but I can't, because it's all true. Maybe you just need some time to process it. Maybe we both do."

"Georgia, wait. Don't leave." Blake said rising from bed as the blonde made her out of the bedroom. She was ignored though as the shorter woman made her way toward the front door. "Georgia." the older woman called following.

The blonde turned when she had reached the door. Blake was right behind her, her naked body dangerously close. However she managed to look up into the attorney's eyes. "Good night, Blake. Thanks for the nice evenin'." she stated cupping her girlfriend's cheek and leaning up to kiss her. "I'll see you tomorrow."

Blake stood at her door just staring at it for long moments after the writer was gone. She felt as if she had just been swept up in a tornado, being thrown off balance unexpectedly and abruptly deposited somewhere else. It took her a minute to find her bearings and realize what had just taken place. Georgia had just laid bare all she ever felt, all her hopes and dreams for them, and Blake had failed to give the blonde any sort of reassurance. She hadn't acted quickly enough to save the small woman from feeling poorly for expressing her deepest emotions. However as she shuffled back to bed, she realized she had more serious problems to contend with, because Georgia wanted answers. Knowing the blonde deserved them as well, Blake knew she had to figure out exactly where she stood on their relationship.

The next day even though Georgia had said she would come by, she didn't. She merely left a message on Blake's voice mail that she had too much going on for their usual dinner, leaving the older woman to wonder why things were starting to fall apart so suddenly. Needing company that evening, she invited herself out to Torrance and Helen's place for dinner unsure if they would even be there.

The drive out to Long Island helped to clear her mind a little and by the time she had pulled into the long winding driveway, her mood had brightened somewhat. Parking her BMW in front of the house in the circle drive, she made her way to the door with the bottle of wine she had brought along for intruding without a phone call.

A few moments passed before Helen came to the door. "Blake, hi. What are you doing here? Come on in." she greeted leaning to hug her friend.

"Hey, Helen. Sorry to drop by unannounced. I just needed to get out of the city for awhile."

"Well, you're just in time for dinner. Maria and Thomas are here. Come join us." She followed the blonde back to the informal dinning room. "Look who decided to drop in." Helen announced.

"Hi." Blake collectively greeted them all.

"Why don't you take a seat there next to Maria, Blake? I'll let the chef know we have one more person."

"Thanks, Helen. You are a perfect hostess."

"So, what brings you to the Island?" Thomas asked casually.

"Just wanted to get out of New York for awhile and clear my head. All that pollution makes it hard to think sometimes." she joked.

"Well, where's your lovely counterpart tonight?" Maria inquired.

"I have no idea where Georgia is." she answered quickly, so hastily that it was easily understood she was the reason for Blake's sudden departure.

"What happened?" Torrance asked carefully.

Blake shrugged. "Same old stuff. It's nothing really." she replied smiling at John. He reached for her, so she took him out of Maria's embrace. As she played with him, her thoughts began to drift to Georgia. The many times she had seen her with John, there was a radiance about her. It was obvious that the younger woman would be a doting parent and that motherhood would suit her, but she had doubts about her own abilities.

Through out dinner she remained fairly quiet as she contemplated her future with the younger

woman. If anyone at the table noticed her solemn demeanor, no one mentioned it, going about their lively conversation. However when it was over though and Torrance was going up to give her son his bath, she invited the attorney to join her.

As soon as they were alone in the bathroom, Torrance inquired, "What's wrong, Blake?"

"Tor, I envy you sometimes. You have never been scared of committing. When you found Helen, you jumped in with her, never looking back. Sometimes I wish I could be like that."

"What happened with Georgia, Blake?"

"Last night she told me that she wanted to know where we stood as a couple. She made her desires known, and I didn't answer them in the way she had hoped I guess. She left my place late last night, and I haven't seen her since."

"So you got in a fight?"

"No. It wasn't a fight. There were no harsh words or anything. She just said that maybe we both needed time to think about things."

"What did she say she wanted?" Torrance inquired gently lowering John into the warm water to start her task.

"Well, it started out as her wanting to move in with me and ended up with us married with kids. I guess once she started talking she just let it all out. Georgia wants to be my wife, Tor. She wants to be the mother of my children."

"Wow. That's quite an admission. What did you say?"

"I didn't say anything of consequence. I didn't know what to say, Tor. I panicked. I don't know what to do."

"Well, what do you want? You've known her for eleven months, as a more than a friend for seven, and then dated her officially for four. Surely you have some inclination of where this is going. I mean you and Jack decided to name the restaurant after her. That's a real commitment, naming your business after your lover."

"I know where this is going, Tor, but I'm scared to death of the idea. I do want to be all that Georgia needs, and I know that means taking her down the aisle. I just don't know if I'm ready for marriage, Tor. How did you know?"

The photographer shrugged. "There was a moment when it became obvious that I couldn't live without Helen. She just looked at me and said she wanted to have my children, and I was so moved by the sentiment that I knew she was the one. The very next day I bought her a ring. Now Georgia has made the same declaration. How did she say it?"

"Well, it wasn't exactly romantic, more matter of fact actually. It was almost as if she just wanted to put it out there to see how I would respond."

"Do you think she really means it?"

"I know she does. I could tell by the way she said it that she meant every word."

"Do you want to be with her for the rest of your life, Blake? That's what this is really about. Do you want to have children with this woman? Do you want her to be the last person you see when you go to bed at night, the only woman to ever be in your bed again? Do you want her to be the last face you see when you close your eyes for the last time? I want Helen to be all those things for me. Do you want Georgia to be them for you?" rhetorically she inquired as she tenderly soaped her son's dark head.

Blake looked down at John a moment as she contemplated the questions. She knew in the depths of her heart that no one else would ever do in her life or bed than Georgia Carmichael. The woman held her a willing captive, but she was slow to vocalize her feelings. "I don't want to be with anyone else but Georgia," she admitted. "I don't think I could ever walk away from her bed, Tor. She's too enticing, but it's more than her sex. It's good, the best I've ever had, but it's her essence that holds me. She's just as enchanting out of bed. I get great pleasure of just talking to her or holding her hand as we take Bruce on a walk in the park. She's smart and sweet. Her smile never fails to brighten a bad day, and those blue eyes of hers sparkle whenever they look at me. She's everything I ever wanted."

"Do you want to have kids with her?"

"She glows whenever she's around John. It's beautiful to see. The idea of giving her that pleasure makes me ache. I want to give her that, but am I a suitable parent? I know she is, but do I have what it takes to be a provider for a helpless child? I've always been self-involved, and I can't be with a wife and child. Do I have what it takes to make a spouse? I mean it's more than just sleeping next to her and helping her zip up her dresses."

"Yes, it is. It takes work. You have to really want it."

"I don't want her to leave, Tor. I don't think I would ever get over it if she left me now. I have to take the chance in order to keep her. I have to push away that fear and just take the plunge."

"If that's that you feel you need to do," her friend answered.

"Well, it took me a long time to try a real relationship, but once I got into it, I can't believe I didn't do it sooner. I've been missing out on so much by never truly getting involved. The first time I actually told her I loved her I was scared, but when she returned it, it was like a calming wave washing over me. Knowing I had her heart and that she had mine put me at a peace I've never known. As frightened as I am of what this will mean, I think once I do it, I won't be nearly as scared. I know I want to be with her, and I know that I want to have kids with her. My fear isn't in her. It's in me, Tor, but I think she'll be able to help me through it."

"Sounds to me as if you know what you want. Now the hard part is telling her. Maybe the opening of Georgia's couldn't come at a better time for you. I mean you named a restaurant after her, and as soon as she sees it, she's going to know how you feel. You might as well be brave enough to tell her in words." Blake nodded in agreement as Torrance rinsed John carefully before lifting him out of the water. She handed him off to Blake, who was holding a towel. "Can you imagine holding one of these knowing it's your own? A cute little blue-eyed blonde baby that looks just like Georgia?"

"It would be wonderful." softly the attorney replied with smile.

Torrance put a hand on her friend's shoulder. "Blake, ask the girl to marry you. I know that's what you want. Whether you think you're ready or not, Helen and I know you are, so just go for it. You'll be glad you did when she says yes."

Over the next few weeks Blake and Jack were busy with the final preparations for the restaurant opening. The attorney hadn't had much free time to spend with Georgia, but after that night she had decided to take things in small steps, asking the woman to move in with her. The request seemed more than enough to please the little woman, so she brought the rest of her belongings over during those few weeks.

On the evening of the launch party, Georgia still had no idea where they were going that night. Blake had only told her that there was a business party they needed to attend and that it was a formal affair. Around seven that evening, Blake returned from work to find Georgia already getting dressed for the night. Rushing into the bedroom, Blake tore off her clothes in a hurry. She was running late that day, and she had surprises for the little blonde before they went to the party.

"You look great, beautiful." she complimented as she raced into the shower. "Are you going to be ready in half an hour?"

"Yeah. Will you?"

"Yeah. It doesn't take me very long to dress. I'll be right with you. We have two errands to run before the party. Of all days to be running behind."

"Don't worry about it, honey. We'll be fashionably late. That'll be okay. Take your time."

Knowing that the little woman had no idea what was coming, Blake just ignored her advice and continued to hurry. Twenty minutes later she stepped out of the bathroom dressed in a clean new suit ready for the evening. She admired Georgia for a moment as the little woman stood at the window looking out over the city. "You look like an angel. One of Isaac's dresses?"

"Donatella Versace." the blonde answered turning to her girlfriend.

"Well, whoever it belongs to, it's just perfect for you. I love everything about it." she mentioned

moving closer. She leaned down and softly kissed her bare shoulder.

"And who dressed you tonight?" the writer teased. "Let me guess." Blake stood back to let her look. "Ralph Lauren?"

"The one and only. How'd you know that?"

Georgia smiled. "I'm paid to know. Ralph Lauren always looks so good on you, so sexy." she stated sliding her hands up the lapels of the attorney's suit black pinstripe jacket.

"Well, we should go. There are a couple of things we need to do first."

Leaving the building Georgia was confused when Blake directed her over towards the park. However she simply let the tall woman escort her over to the carriages. The blonde gave the older woman a quizzical look when the attorney said they were going on a ride through Central Park. Blake assisted her up into the carriage before climbing in herself.

"You're bein' quite mysterious this evenin'." she mentioned.

"I just wanted some time to unwind with you before tonight. I wanted to take you on a ride for awhile now, but we've just never gotten around to it. It's fun and a good way to have some alone time." she stated. Reaching under the seat, she pulled out a bottle of champagne and two glasses.

"You come prepared." the blonde teased. "Something tells me this was planned. I don't think all of these carriages comes equipped with champagne."

"Well, can't I do something romantic for a change?"

"I didn't say I minded." she answered with a smile as Blake handed her a glass. Trying to remain calm, the attorney decided to just let Georgia talk for awhile, by asking her what was going on with work. The blonde was none the wiser at first as she chatted away, but the whole time the older woman tried to get her thoughts in order for what she was going to say. Finally after more than half an hour the writer realized that her girlfriend wasn't really there with her in the moment. "Blake, where are you?" she inquired seriously.

"What do you mean?" nervously the attorney asked.

"You haven't been listenin' to a word I've said."

"You're right. I haven't." she admitted.

"Then why did you ask if you weren't interested?" the little woman sulked.

"I was stalling for time." the brunette uneasily replied.

The answer caught the blonde off guard. "What are you stallin' for?"

With a fidgety smile, Blake pulled a small box from her pocket. "I was trying to work up my nerve to give you this." she honestly said, opening the box and turning it toward the little woman.

Instantly Georgia's breath caught at what was inside. A large diamond with two smaller ones to set it off sat perched on top of a platinum band. "Oh my God." she breathed.

"Georgia, about a month ago you asked me where this relationship is going, and I just wanted you to know my answer. My entire life I've been scared of settling down. I was essentially alone for thirty-eight years, and then my Great Aunt Millie died. That brought me to Stillwater and to you, Georgia, and I haven't been the same since. From the day you walked into my life, I knew there was something wonderful about you. I can honestly say that I was smitten with your cute smile and bubbly personality. We were friends suddenly and then just as suddenly we were more. From that night at the fair, I've never been able to rid myself of the feeling of you. The first time you kissed me, you branded me, Georgia. You left a mark on my soul. I moved through many emotions regarding you, but there was one that always remained. Under everything else I knew that I loved you in a way and in a depth that I have never felt for anyone else. I've been scared my whole life of commitment, but with you commitment is all I want. I know that there will never be another woman to ever grace my life the way you have. When I think about my future, you're in it. More than that children are in it too. Georgia, I want to make this relationship more than long-term. I want it to be permanent." Sliding off the seat down onto her knee, she continued, "Georgia Carmichael, I want you to be my wife and the mother of my children. There is nothing else in this world that would make me happier than to take you as my bride. Will you give me the greatest honor of my life by accepting this ring as a promise to someday take that journey with me? Will you marry me, Georgia?"

"Oh, Blake. I never imagined this would come from my little huff. I had no idea you really felt this way. I'm speechless. This is all I've ever dreamed about since I moved here." she confessed as tears began to stream down her face. "I want to marry you more than anythin' else in this world." With a confident smile, Blake pulled the ring from its box and slipped it on Georgia's left hand. "This is a beautiful ring, Blake. I love you so much." she stated pulling her fiancée up for a deep kiss.

"I love you too, Georgia." she confessed.

When the carriage ride was over, Blake took them back to her building where a limousine was awaiting their arrival. "Where are we goin' now?" the blonde asked curiously.

"It's a surprise, love. Trust me. You'll love it." she answered as the driver opened the door for them. The ride was quiet until they pulled up to the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel. Taking Georgia by the hand, Blake led her over to the elevators. Neither said a word, even though the blonde was immensely curious as to what was going to happen next. Arriving at the tenth floor, they walked down to the end of the hall where Blake knocked casually.

Within moments the door opened, and Georgia screamed in surprise as her mother stood there

looking elegant in an evening dress. "Mama!" she exclaimed hugging her tightly.

"Georgia! How are you, baby girl?" she asked cupping her daughter's face with both hands.

"I've never been happier in my whole life, Mama." the blonde cried.

Cindy looked at Blake and smiled. "I take it she said yes, sugar?"

"She did, Cindy. You don't mind having me for an in-law, do you?" the tall woman teased lightly.

"I couldn't be prouder, Blake." she answered pulling away from her daughter long enough to hug the attorney.

After a moment the brunette mentioned, "We should get going. We have that party to go to."

Georgia nodded. "Right. I almost forgot with all that's happened. Just let me use Mama's bathroom for a minute. I bet my make up is a mess." she stated. "You don't mind, do you, Mama?"

"Not at all. Take your time."

A few minutes later the blonde reappeared. "Are we all ready?" the attorney asked casually. "Cindy, do you have everything you need?"

"Yes, I'm ready."

Casting her fiancée a confused glance, Georgia asked "I thought you said this was a business party."

"It is, but your mother is coming with us. I figured you would want to spend time with her. That's why I got her an evening dress. Shall we go now, ladies?" she inquired extending an arm to each of them.

The ride to the restaurant didn't take very long. Georgia was so caught up in catching up with her mother that she hardly noticed that they had arrived until the driver had opened their door, and she noticed flashing cameras illuminating the darkness. With a proud smile, Blake helped her from the car. Escorting both women toward the door, Blake smiled and waved at the paparazzi. The writer was so overwhelmed with all the attention that missed the awning with her name across it. However as they got to the door, she saw the word "Georgia's" etched in glass in her own distinct handwriting. She looked up at the attorney in confusion, but Blake said nothing instead proceeding through the entrance.

As soon as they cleared the doorway, they were greeted by the sight of Jack standing there in a tuxedo watching the crowd. When he saw them, he smiled brightly. He reached out toward Blake when she came close enough. "We did it, Yankee!" he said happily clutching her into a hug.

"We certainly did, Jack." she answered pleased with the heavy gathering. "How long is the wait?"

"There's always a table for you, partner." he stated. Turning to the blondes with the attorney he greeted them as well. "Miz Erwin, how are you this evenin'?" he inquired with a grin as he leaned in to kiss her on the cheek affectionately.

"I'm fabulous, Jack. How are you?" Georgia said with a beaming smile. He looked dapper in his suit and stood proud amongst the crowd of aristocrats. In fact had she not known him as a child, she would have never guessed that he was just a poor boy from Georgia. He looked as if he belonged with the rest of New York society.

"I couldn't be better. My dream of this place has become reality thanks to your fiancée, and my best friend had gotten engaged. Life couldn't be better right now, Georgia." He smiled at Cindy. "Cindy, it's good to see you in New York." he greeted her with a kiss to the back of her hand.

"It's good to be here, Jack. You look good."

Jack smiled at Blake. "I had a little help cleanin' up. Turns out we, southerners, don't have the monopoly on manners after all. Well, let me show you to a table. Blake, if you could help me by makin' some rounds that would be great." he said moving them through the crowd.

"Of course. I'll meet and greet. After all I'm the one who invited everyone. I should at least play hostess." she replied. Sitting the two blondes, Blake excused herself to talk to people.

When Georgia and her mother were alone, the writer asked, "Did you know 'bout all this?"

She nodded. "Surprised?"

"I had no idea any of this way comin'. Blake's totally blown me away tonight. She and Jack own this place?"

"Yeah and they named it after you."

"I can't believe that they kept this a secret from me the whole time. I knew Jack was workin' on this, but I had no idea Blake was involved."

"She wanted it to be a surprise. She told me that she and Jack are business partners now and wanted to make this one of the best restaurants in the city. I'd say they were well on their way."

"They certainly are." Georgia agreed. "I really should talk to people too a little, Mama. After all I do know most everyone in here as well." she said as she waved at yet another acquaintance.

"Then go ahead. You and Blake have fun. I'm enjoyin' just watchin' you together."

Leaving her mother at the table, Georgia said hello to people as she searched for Blake in the crowd. She found her talking with Maria and Thomas. "Thomas, Maria, hi." the blonde said with a smile as she hugged Maria.

"Blake was just telling us the good news. Congratulations." Thomas said putting his hand on the attorney's shoulder. "We thought the day would never come when this one settled down."

"Well, it just took the right woman to do it." Blake answered.

"You simply must let me help you with some of the details, Georgia. I know lots of people." Maria mentioned.

"I know you do, and I'm sure Blake and I would be grateful for any assistance you could give us. Where are Helen and Torrance tonight? I haven't seen them."

"Oh, unfortunately they couldn't be here. John is sick. They told me to send their condolences though."

"Oh poor baby. At least he's got two dotin' parents to care for him."

"Tell me, Georgia. Who was that on Blake's arm when you came in? She looks just like you."

"That's my mama. You should come meet her."

"I'd be delighted." Maria said. "Excuse us."

Once the two women were gone, Thomas grinned at Blake. "You've really gone and done it, huh? She's the one?"

"Yeah, she's the one, Thomas. Hard to believe, isn't it?"

"I'm glad that you have finally found her. I know Torrance and Helen will be disappointed that they weren't here to share in this night."

"It's all right. If they haven't heard about it by the morning, I'm going to call and tell them."

"Listen, I've been wanting to talk to you about something, but there just hasn't been a good time. The Democratic party has asked me to consider running for governor in the next election. I've been out of politics for awhile, but I'm still very involved in the party. I lobby heavily on a state and national level, so my name is still out there even though I'm not tied to any office right now. Basically they want me to come out of retirement though to campaign. We're trying to move the party as a whole in New York in a more liberal direction, and they think I'm the man to do that."

"Are you going to do it?"

"I'm seriously considering it, but they want a younger person on the ticket with me, someone

with great potential and liberal popularity. Blake, I'd like to put you on the short list I present to them as potential running mates. Granted you don't have the political experience that some of the others on the list do, but you have something that they can't bring to the table. Your popularity as a social activist far outweighs your lack of experience as a politician, and you are about as far left as they come. At the very least, even if you don't make the ticket, I'd like to see you on my staff. Would you consider stepping into politics?"

"Are you sure I'm the woman you want?"

"Well, you'd only be the second woman on the list. I've known you for almost half your life, Blake. I know your work history and your ethics. I wouldn't ask you if I didn't think you could do it, but politics is a way of life, not a job. It would mean changes for you and Georgia. I mean even if I put you on the list that doesn't guarantee that you'll run with me, but I would like to put as many qualified candidates up for discussion as possible. What do you say?"

"Thomas, it would be an honor to be considered, so how could I refuse such an offer? I appreciate the gesture."

"So, is that a yes?"

"Yes, most definitely. It would be an experience like no other to work with you."

"Great. I'm pleased to hear that." After a momentary lull in conversation while they both looked around at the crowd, he stated, "You know it's so interesting to see how children grow. I still remember you when you were just a twenty year old misfit that I thought was a horrible influence on my daughter." he said with a laugh. "It took a long time for me to realize that you were in fact one of the few better influences she had back then."

"Yeah, well, I wouldn't say our first meeting was a positive first impression." she joked.

"I'd say not. I remember that like it was yesterday actually, surprising Torrance at school and finding the two of you. Were you just stoned or drunk too?"

"Both I think." she replied.

"Well, you looked it, and you two were quite busy entertaining those other two women. Boy were you two surprised to see me standing in your dorm room doorway. I remember you had all those black lights and the loud music going, and that marijuana smoke was so thick when I opened your door that it came flooding out into the hallway."

Blake gave a embarrassed laugh. "Yeah, well, I remember looking up from the bed and seeing you standing there like God in the second coming. You were larger than life, and I was scared out of my wits."

"Well, I can't believe that was almost twenty years ago. Now here you are having finally decided to settle down. I couldn't be prouder if I was your own father, Blake. I hope you know that." he

said.

"I do, Thomas, and I feel as if you've always been my second father."

"Tell me more about this new business partner of yours. Who is Jack Smith really? How come we've never met him before?"

"He's Georgia's ex-husband actually and the one that saved my life in Stillwater when the Klan tried to kill me. A few months ago I had the opportunity to return the favor for him. We started out kind of rocky. After all he and Georgia were still married when I met them, but he and I have come a long way with each other. Under it all, he's a good guy, Thomas. He had some issues to deal with regarding Georgia and me, but I'm happy to saw that he has moved beyond them. I think he's just as thrilled actually that Georgia and I are engaged."

"Well, were they really supposed to be together? I mean it seems to me that his interest really isn't in women at all." Thomas observed.

"What are you talking about?"

"Look at him over there with Isaac." he stated.

Blake looked across the room to see Jack talking to the flamboyant designer. Seeing the smile that graced the southerner's face, her eyes opened a little wider. She had never seem him be so attentive with anyone before. The way he was leaning toward the designer, seemingly hanging on his every word took Blake by surprise. "I've never seem him like that before. I've only known the strong, angry masculine man. I've never seen this side of him. Maybe he's just practicing the new manners I taught him about being attentive to guests." she teased.

"If you say so. Still my theory lies elsewhere." Thomas said. "Not that it matters of course."

"Well, I really should go attend to some other people, Thomas. Excuse me."

"No problem. You've done well here, Blake, with the restaurant and with Georgia. You should be proud."

"I am. Thanks, Thomas." Going about her business of meeting almost everyone that had come to the party, the attorney kept her eyes on her business partner. Now that Thomas had mentioned the way he was with Isaac, she saw something different in him. However he wasn't just that way with Isaac. Several other male designers that were there that evening seemed to capture Jack's attention and vice versa, making the tall woman curious.

Georgia and Blake didn't arrive back to their loft until extremely late that night. After they had left the party, they took Cindy back to the hotel and stayed up for hours talking. However as they settled themselves for sleep, the brunette decided to probe about Georgia's former marriage for the first time.

Sliding into bed next to the blonde, Blake wrapped her in strong arms. Immediately the little woman kissed her passionately. Georgia felt she was going to burst the entire night, because she had not been able to give the woman she loved a sufficient expression of how she was feeling about what had taken place. "Blake, you are incredible. I can't believe all that you've done for me. I love you so much." she whispered slipping her hands under the t-shirt the older woman was wearing a quickly pulling it off her body. The cotton pajama pants were next as she began to kiss her fiancée's neck enticingly.

Blake groaned at the feeling of the small woman's weight on top of her own. Jack was temporarily forgotten as the attorney settled herself comfortably on her back and maneuvered the blonde across her hips. Eagerly Georgia took the position and sat up. The writer made a show of peeling off her long night shirt. Blake smiled as her hands went to bare hips. "Mrs. Erwin, you are so beautiful." she confessed.

Georgia smiled. "I love that name. Say it again." she demanded.

"Mrs. Erwin, I love you, and I want to make love to you tonight and show you things you've never known." she sexily murmured sitting up and letting her mouth run up the blonde's neck. She kissed the pink ear as her tongue lightly traced its curvature. Georgia's hands slithered through her lover's dark hair, pulling her closer as the attorney continued to kiss her fair skin teasingly. "I'll give you whatever you want, Georgia. Just tell me how I can please you."

"Blake, please touch me." she pleaded.

The older woman growled in response pulling the petite frame closer and taking in the sweet mouth of her fiancée. Quickly her hands worked, sliding between the blonde's thighs. She was greeted by flooding anticipation. "You feel so good, Georgia." she whispered sensuously letting her fingers tease her lover slowly.

"Blake." Georgia called rocking her hips down against the touch.

The brunette took the unspoken direction and made their connection complete. Both of them moaned in satisfaction. "I love you, Georgia Erwin." the tall woman confessed as she led the smaller woman through their intimate dance.

"I love you too, Blake, so much." The writer replied breathlessly as held tighter to her lover. Blake never failed to touch her in just the right places to take her to the brink of pleasure in mere moments. Trembling lightly she climaxed at the tender exploration. Blake held the younger woman lovingly as she stroked the blonde's hair in affection. When Georgia had recovered enough, she gave the attorney a sexy grin as she pushed her onto her back. "Your turn, wife of mine." she said. Blake gave a little laugh as the blonde launched herself into her task. However it was only a few minutes before she was begging for the release only Georgia was able to provide.

When they had both settled, Blake pulled Georgia into her arms. They held each other and lazily caressed whatever skin was within reach. The brunette whispered her fiancée's name.

"What is it, Blake?"

"Could I ask you something personal? It's about Jack." tentatively she said.

"What do you want to know?"

"When you two were married, did he seem happy with you? I mean you were his only girlfriend, weren't you? Were you two really in love with each other when you married, or was it more out of necessity with the baby?"

"We did love each other, but it was nothin' like I feel for you, honey. The baby was the primary reason we got married. I don't know if Jack was really happy, but he did what he thought was right. Why do you ask?"

"Someone asked me tonight if Jack was gay."

"Jack gay? That's crazy." she answered. "I think he would've told me."

"Well, at first I thought it was ridiculous too, but now I'm not so sure. I saw him tonight with the gay patrons. Whether he knew it or not, he was overly friendly with them. I'm not so sure of his sexuality after tonight. I don't think he would tell us if he was though, Georgia, unless we brought it up to him."

"But we've shared everythin', a life, a marriage, a bed. I think I would know."

"The way you knew about yourself?" the attorney countered.

"But he's so masculine." the blonde defended.

"I know, but that doesn't mean anything. I think it's possible that maybe he's coming to know himself now more than he ever did. I'm not saying for sure that he is gay. I'm just saying maybe that he's opened his mind more to the possibilities."

Georgia shook her head. "I won't believe it until he tells me." she stated definitively.

"Well, I think we'd be the last to know quite frankly. When he first had problems with me, it was for being gay. I know that for a fact, so for him to admit that he was too to me would be difficult for him I think."

"I just cain't believe that, Blake. Jack likes women and only women." Georgia pressed.

"All right. I'm not trying to pick a fight with you, baby. I was just wondering what you thought, because someone had asked me. No need to get defensive, love." she said pulling Georgia onto her back. "If you say he's straight, then that's what I'll believe. It doesn't matter to me one way or the other. I really don't care that much. All I care about is you, Georgia Erwin, and the fact that you have hooked me for life. I'm going to do everything in my power to make you happy."

Georgia gave a soft smile. "You already have made me happy, Blake." she answered leaning up for a kiss. When it ended she inquired, "Where do you want to get married?"

"I don't really know. I've never thought about it actually. I never thought this day would come. Do you have any ideas?"

She shrugged. "When Jack and I got married, it was at city hall, and the reception was at our new house. I kinda want this one to be different."

Blake smiled. "I think I can afford to give you anything you want. This is the last time you'll be doing this after all. I might as well doing it right for you."

"I want to be married outside in the evenin'. I want large tents with soft white lights, somewhere with a lot of space. I want to invite everyone we know." excitedly she stated.

"All right. That narrows the places down considerably. I only know of a few places to put a few hundred people at once. You know there will be a big fight though of over who gets to design your dress. Are you prepared for that?" she joked.

"I already know who's gonna do that. Isaac deserves it for bein' the first designer to really give me a chance. I'm gonna ask him. You want him to do your suit as well?"

"If that's what you want, that would be fine."

"Great. He'll be thrilled. So, what places can you think of to put that many people?"

"Well, there are two places locally off the top of my head, one of which I favor more than the other."

"Well, what are they?"

"Tor and Helen's place on Long Island or Thomas and Maria's place out there. I don't mind asking either one of them actually, but I think Tor and Helen have a place more in line with our personalities."

"Oh, I love their house. I'd love to live in that neighborhood. Do you think they'd do it?"

"I have no doubt. It would serve its purpose if you are set on inviting everyone we know. Do you realize how many people I really know?"

Georgia nodded. "Yeah and I love it. I love that everyone knows my Blake."

The attorney laughed. "All right. I draw the line at exs though, Jack excluded of course. After all he is my business partner now."

"About that, I can't believe you and Jack named the restaurant 'Georgia's'. You two are just too much for words."

"Well, we both feel strongly about you, Georgia. You are the most important woman in both our lives, and we felt you deserved the recognition. The name and southern food are all in your honor. I even put peach pie on the menu for you made with peaches from the best farm in Georgia, my own."

"I thought you sold the farm already?"

"I sold off most of it to the workers, but I still own a quarter of it, and I still have the house."

Georgia shook her head. "This is all too unbelievable. I still can't take it in. And this ring... it's just perfect." she stated holding her hand up to admire it.

"You're perfect, Georgia, and you're worth all of it." Blake stated seriously.

Cupping her fiancée's face, the blonde smiled. "I promise to give you everythin' you ever wanted, Blake. I'm gonna make you proud to have me for a wife."

"Including having a bunch of kids that all look exactly like you?" she questioned.

"As many as you want."

"Well, I always thought ten was a nice number." she teased.

Georgia laughed. "We better start now if that's the case." she replied in jest.

"Seriously I would like a few children. I've always wanted a big family."

"Me too. I have always imagined four or five kids at the least."

"That sounds about right. We'll definitely need to move out of here though." she stated.

Georgia nodded. "There's time for all that though. I'm not even pregnant yet."

"I hope to soon rectify that situation." Blake growled attacking her lover's neck with a barrage of kisses as her hand slipped between her legs. "I'm not getting any younger after all."

The writer giggled. "I wish you could get me pregnant, Blake." she said. "I would love that."

"I'm going to. Just you wait and see." promised the older woman. "I might need a little help from technology, but I'll give you a baby."

"I can't wait." the blonde whispered before kissing her fiancée with renewed passion. Pulling the strong body down between her legs, Georgia gave herself over to more blissful love making.

The following morning Blake lingered around the loft instead of heading to work. She made breakfast for her sleeping lover while she called her best friends to tell them the news. When Torrance groggily answered the phone, Blake greeted, "Good morning, Tor. Time to get up and jump into this beautiful day."

"Blake, what time is it? Why are you calling so early?"

"It's almost nine, Tor."

"John kept Helen and me up all night. We're exhausted. What do you want?" she asked.

"Hey. That's some way to talk to your best friend who's getting married." she joked.

Instantly Torrance's voice seemed more alert. "What did you just say?"

"I said I'm getting married, Tor. I proposed to Georgia last night, and she said yes."

"Oh, congratulations, Blake! That's great!" she exclaimed. In the background the attorney heard Torrance waking Helen and telling her the news.

Hearing Helen's sleepily voice come on in the line as well, she greeted, "Morning, beautiful. Sorry to wake you from your beauty sleep."

"Oh, Blake, I'm so excited for you! I had hoped you would do this."

"Well, you can thank your wife for giving me the courage."

"How did you ask her?" Helen inquired.

"We took a carriage ride through Central Park at sunset before went to the restaurant opening. I decided it wouldn't hurt to try to be romantic."

"You old dog. I never knew you had it in you to have any romantic notions." Torrance teased.

"I'm sure Georgia loved it. We're sorry we weren't able to be there last night to share it with you. Had we known we would've tried a little harder to get John feeling well enough to stay with someone." Helen stated.

"It's all right. We didn't make an announcement or anything. Your parents know, Tor, Georgia's mother knows, and Jack knows, but that's about all. I still have to tell my parents."

"Do you have any wedding ideas yet?" the blonde asked.

"A few. Georgia wants to invite everyone we know. I don't really think she comprehends the fact that I know well over a thousand people easily. There is no way we can pull this off without

downscaling. She wants something lavish, and I want to give her that, but there is a grand affair and then there is a gaudy affair. There has to be a happy medium."

"God Lord. We didn't even have that many people at our wedding. We maxed out our list at three hundred, and even then we had to make some tough choices. I have no idea where you would even be able to hold that many people in one place. Not only that you would never be able to make the rounds to talk to everyone."

"I know, and she wants it to be outside too, which poses another problem."

"Sounds like you need to sit the Mrs. down and tell her how it is, Blake." Torrance teased. "You let her run this thing, and you've lost all your voting power for the rest of your marriage."

"You're one to talk, Tor." she replied. "I know who really wears the pants over at your house." she joked.

"Yeah, well, I gladly relinquished my power for a happy bed. You know how it is." she jested. "I know you would agree with me."

Helen laughed on the line. "Don't listen to her, Blake. That's not the way to handle this. You give Georgia everything she wants. She'll remember it for the rest of her life."

"Helen, she's already given her a restaurant. The blonde can compromise on the wedding."

"Technically I haven't given her my share of the restaurant yet. She doesn't know it's hers. She's still trying to get used to the idea of it at all. I didn't want to totally overwhelm her with gifts last night."

"What's the ring look like?" Torrance inquired. "Your standard huge rock?"

"It's about four karats in all. It's three diamonds, one larger with two on either side on a platinum band. You'll see it." Just then she heard John in the background start to cry.

"Oh, John, not again." Helen mumbled.

"Do you need to go?"

"No. John's just hungry. Helen will take care of it." Torrance replied.

"Say, Tor, I've got something else to run by you. I talked to your father last night, and you'll never believe what he told me. He's thinking about running for governor."

"Yeah, I know."

"Well, did you know that he wants to consider me for a running mate?"

"You're kidding! He asked you to run with him?" she asked in surprise.

"Well, he asked if he could put me on the short list of candidates. I don't think I'll be chosen if he lets the party influence his discussion, but still he said at the very least he's like me on his staff. Talk about an opportunity of a lifetime."

"No joke. My God, Blake. You can't get much better than something like that. If he asks you to run with him, would you do it?"

"I don't know. I need to talk to Georgia about it. It would mean we would have to make some changes in our lives, but there's no sense in discussing it in detail until he decides what he wants."

"True." Torrance answered.

Hearing the bedroom door open, Blake turned to see her fiancée sleepily make her way from their room wearing only a content smile. "Look, Tor. I need to go. I was making breakfast in bed for Georgia, but she seems to have beaten me by getting up early. I'll talk to you later."

"All right. Put Georgia on for a minute. I want to congratulate her."

Blake did what her friend requested. As the blonde took the phone, the tall wrapped her arms around the writer's naked body, pulling it against her before leaning down to the back of her neck. Lightly dusting it with kisses, she just listened to the one side of conversation and patiently waited until they were finished. However after just a few minutes, Blake could tell Helen was now on the phone again too by the change in her lover's voice and topic.

"Get off the phone." Blake growled sexily as her hands moved up Georgia's bare sides to her generous femininity. The little woman's body responded to the touch by instinctively arching further toward it, but she didn't stop talking at first. Blake laughed under her breath at the obvious challenge. Deciding to play along, her fingers began to teasingly stroke the crests of both breasts. The writer's head immediately dropped back against her lover's frame, but she still continued her conversation. The tall woman lightly nipped the blonde's ear as her right hand scorched down Georgia's stomach toward its destination. Hips thrust intuitively, but the little woman was silent as she attentively listened to Helen. "Come on, baby. Hang up." Blake insisted softly. "It's time for breakfast, and I can't wait to have you right here on the counter. I can't wait to make you scream as I let my tongue bring you all the way to climax over and over again."

Georgia couldn't withhold her moan that time as she suddenly found it hard to breathe normally. "Helen, I have to go now." she panted.

"Sounds that way. We'll talk more later. Congratulations again. I'm so happy for the both of you."

"Thanks." the writer managed to reply as her lover entered her naughtily before withdrawing teasingly. "Bye." Before she even heard Helen answer her, she clicked off the phone and dropped

it. The plastic casing broke against the stone floor, but neither of them noticed as they hungrily claimed each other's mouths.

After several minutes of ravaging each other's lips, Blake lightened the intensity and began to pull away. "So, what's our plan for today?" she inquired. "I'm not going into work today, because I thought we'd want to visit with your mother. We also have to call my parents and let them know the big news."

"That's fine, but there's somethin' you're supposed to be doin' now." Georgia whined. "You promised to have me for breakfast."

The tall woman laughed. "All right. A promise is a promise I guess. I think we have enough time for that." she joked lifting the blonde up onto the counter.

Later that morning after they had dressed for the day, Blake went into her office to call her parents while Georgia quickly finished the column she was working on for her newest assignment. Of course the attorney's parents were thrilled to hear the news and had to talk to the little woman who had won their daughter's heart for a long time as well. Finally though they were able to go to the hotel to see Cindy.

When they arrived the older blonde was just simply reading and waiting on them. "Well, the two of you don't look like you're very well rested." she teased. "Not enough sleep last night?"

Georgia flushed slightly, but Blake laughed lightly. "Well, there was a lot going on, Cindy."

She nodded. "There certainly was. Have you two managed to talk at all about the wedding?"

"A little. We've decided on something outside, so that narrows the time of year quite a bit. Spring or fall is best with the weather around here." Blake said.

Cindy nodded. "Fall sounds wonderful. Are you gonna try for this one or wait until next?"

"The sooner I can get a ring on her finger the better. I don't want her changin' her mind now." the writer replied.

"Well, I guess that answers that question." Blake said. "This fall it is. We have a lot to do before then."

"We're gonna need a weddin' planner. Who did Helen and Torrance use?"

"I don't remember. I'll have to ask. Their wedding was beautiful though, very elegant. I'm sure whoever did theirs would do ours well too."

"Then I'll ask Helen. Oh, this is so excitin'." the small woman stated hugging her betrothed.

Cindy looked at Blake. Both women knew that Cindy had something serious to discuss with

them, because she had talked to the attorney about it before she had even come to New York, but she didn't want to damper her daughter's spirits. Nevertheless she knew the longer she put it off, the harder it was going to be to tell her why she was really in New York. "Georgia, I hate to burst your bubble here, but I need to talk to you about somethin' important." she tentatively began.

"What is it, Mama?"

Cindy glanced at the brunette and received a reassuring nod. "Sugar, come here. Sit down." she suggested gesturing to the sitting area.

All three of them took seats. "Mama, what's wrong?" Georgia asked in concern.

The older woman looked around the room nervously for a moment before focusing on her child again. "Georgia, I love you. You're my only child, and I've missed you terribly. However I've had to make a choice between you and your father. Originally you and Blake made it for me, by cuttin' me out of your life. As much as that hurt, I know that you had to do it for your safety, but Blake has been gracious enough to invite me back into it. If I take her up on that offer, I have to leave your father for good, and if I stay with him, I have to turn my back on my baby. I've talked at length with Blake 'bout it, and I've made up my mind as to what I need to do." She paused a moment. "Georgia, I ain't goin' back. When I left to come up here, I didn't even tell Melvin where I was goin'. I just left after he went to work without a note or nothin'. There's no way I can ever return."

"Oh, Mama." the younger blonde stated moving to hug her mother. "I'll take care of you, Mama. Don't worry."

Cindy sighed. "I'm not worried, sugar. You have the most wonderful fiancée in the world that has already helped me get here."

"Everything's already been arranged, Georgia. Jack and I have made plans for your mother to own part of the restaurant and work there. She is after all an expert in our style cuisine. I'm looking for an appropriate apartment for her as we speak as well."

"Oh, Blake. You are too good to me." Georgia exclaimed going back to her fiancée and kissing her thoroughly. "I love you so much."

"I love you too, Georgia. I couldn't leave your mother behind, especially after all she's done for me."

"Blake's helped me find an attorney to file for divorce. Soon Stillwater will be only a faint memory for us all." Cindy said caressing her daughter's hair in affection.

"I'm glad for that. Thank you, Blake." the writer whispered as tears came to her eyes. She didn't know how to express how she was feeling at the moment. The woman she loved had done more for her in days than anyone else had in her entire life. She had fulfilled her dreams and even managed to give her the one thing she thought she would never have again, a relationship with

her mother.

"You're welcome, Georgia." Blake replied, knowing further words weren't necessary.

It took several minutes before the younger woman was composed again. "I guess this means Isaac has another dress to design, huh?" she joked trying to lighten the mood.

"You have to decide who you want for bridesmaids as well." Blake mentioned.

"I think that's an easy one too. Helen will be my matron of honor of course."

"Well, I was thinking that Torrance would be one of the participants as well, and of course we can't forget Jack. I think it would only be right to include him somewhere."

The blonde nodded in agreement. "Those three are the only ones that stand out in my mind though. I mean I could think of more, but I don't need any more than that. Do you want anyone else?"

"Not necessarily."

"Well, that makes an imbalance though. We'd have to figure out where to actually put Jack."

"He can escort your mother. Both my parents will be there. Let him walk in with her, and that will leave only Torrance and Helen up there with us. That's a perfect balance. You two beautiful, petite towheads on one side and us tall, dark devils on the other." she teased.

Georgia laughed at the description. "You two are devils. It's hard to imagine how much trouble the two of you got into in college." she mentioned off-handedly.

"There are loads of stories that don't need to be retold." Blake said.

The wedding was scheduled for mid-September of that year. Given the short period, both Georgia and Blake were swamped with their regular work as well as planning their big day. More often than not it was Georgia and her mother that made most of the decisions due to Blake's extended work hours trying to prepare for her long expected absence during their honeymoon. However between the three of them, things ran smoothly, even with the major discussions about the guest list. In the end the attorney had finally convinced her bride-to-be that the scaled back approach would be better in terms of how many people should be invited, and of course Torrance and Helen were more than thrilled to provide their home for the location of the special day.

Two weeks before the wedding Blake and Georgia were having a rare quiet evening at home. When the brunette had arrived after a stressful day of work, the little woman was there with a candle light dinner for just the two of them. As they sat at their tiny kitchen table enjoying the

meal and each other, they talked about the last minute preparations that needed to take place.

"I have to go over to Isaac's tomorrow morning to pick up my suit. He has finished the alterations finally but is too busy to swing by the office. I swear that man can be so frustrating sometimes. Instead of finding time to come to me, he's making me go all the way to his house at eight in the morning to pick it up." Blake complained taking a sip of her wine. "He said this was the only time I could come get it, because he's not even going to be in his office the rest of the week."

"I'm sorry, baby, but if it's any consolation, I'm sure it's beautiful. He hasn't let me see it yet, sayin' he wanted to surprise both of us."

"Well, it is great. I'll give him that much. Even the first time I put it on when it was too large, I could still tell how wonderful it truly was. You'll like it."

"What color is it? He wouldn't even tell me that much. Your basic black?"

"Most of it but there is some off-white, cream color to it as well on the jacket. I asked him about that, because I don't think that goes with a white dress at all, but he just said trust him."

Georgia smiled. "Well, I'll let you in on a little secret to make you feel better. My dress isn't white."

"What do you mean? All brides wear white."

"I know, but this is the second time I'm a bride. Virginal white is hardly befitting'. This cream, off-white color on your suit matches my dress, and besides this color will look better with my skin tone. Pure white washes me out, because my hair is so light, and this color will look good with my newly acquired tan."

"Tan? What tan? You aren't tan."

"I know, but I will be. Isaac thinks I should use a tanning lotion to improve the evenness of my skin tone, and that way I look like I've been tanning without it bringing out the freckles on my nose." she mentioned.

Blake grinned. "But I like the freckles on your nose." she stated dropping a kiss on the body part in discussion. "They're cute."

"Yes, well, maybe to you but not when I'm gettin' married and havin' photos taken."

Blake nodded in understanding. "How are you going to wear your hair?" she inquired.

"I'm not tellin' you. It's all supposed to be a surprise. Remember?"

"I know, but I'm curious. Please tell me." the older woman playfully whined.

"No. You'll just have to wait and see."

"Fine. Will you at least tell me about Helen's dress?"

"It's blue. I wanted her to be in green, because she looks so good in the pale greens, but you can't do that color green in the fall. It's just not fashionable. We found a blue dark enough to be seasonal and yet light enough to match her skin tone too. We're a lot alike in that way. We look better in the pastel colors, but they aren't always right given the season that we're in. And of course I couldn't put her in black, because that's just a big fashion no-no at a wedding even if it is evening. Bridal parties shouldn't wear black."

"Well, you are the fashion expert. I'm sure you know what you are doing."

"What about Torrance's suit? What did you two decide upon?"

"Oh, she's already has this black Armani that looks great on her, and we thought it looked good with mine, so she's going to wear that. Isaac gave us the approval, so we know that it's okay."

"Good. As long as Isaac said okay then I feel better." the blonde teased.

Blake consulted her watch. It was close to ten already. "I really should be getting ready for bed. I have so much to do tomorrow, and we both have our respective parties to go to. I have no idea what Tor has in store for me for my bachelorette party. If it's anything like the one I helped Morgan plan for hers, then I'm scared." she joked. "What goes around comes around, and based on what we did to her, I'm sure she is going to take it out on me."

"What did you and Morgan do?"

"Oh, we hired a couple of strippers, one of which took too much of a liking to Tor. We actually got her into a lot of trouble with Helen. I only found out how much way after the fact."

"How much trouble?"

Blake shrugged. "Too much." she stated vaguely.

"Well, what do you mean too much? They didn't break up because of it, did they?"

"Almost. They got in a big fight, and Tor told me that when she had stormed out of the room after it, she wasn't sure if there was even going to be a wedding. That's why I say too much."

"Well, Jack's gonna be there, so I'm not too worried. It's hard to be bad when your future wife's best friend and ex-husband is around."

The attorney laughed. "That much is true. What is Helen doing for you?"

"I don't know really. With her being pregnant and all, she doesn't want to go drinkin' at bars or

anythin'. That's not really our style anyway."

"What?" the brunette quickly inquired. "Helen's pregnant? When did you find that out? Tor didn't tell me that."

"Well, let me rephrase that. She thinks she is but doesn't know for sure. She's supposed to find out tomorrow actually when she goes to the doctor."

"Oh, my. Well, I guess I knew they always wanted more, but I didn't think it would happen so soon. John's not even two."

"They know what they want I guess. Speakin' of which, I was wonderin' if we could talk 'bout that."

"About what?"

"Us, you know, gettin' pregnant. I said I didn't want to do it before the weddin', but I never said I was opposed to it right after."

"You want to get pregnant right away?"

She shrugged. "You're the one who said you weren't gettin' any younger, Blake. I have lots of time, but I want our children to know you. For me waitin' five or ten years isn't that big of a deal, but it means a lot to you. You're almost forty."

The attorney rolled her eyes and groaned playfully. "Don't remind me. I still have a year and a half before then remember."

"My point is that I think it would be best to start as soon as we can while you still have the ability to spilt time between them and your work. The older you get, the harder that is gonna be. Torrance is younger than you and on her second. I think it's time to start."

"You make me sound ancient." the brunette stated in jest. "I'm just not sure yet, Georgia. I mean if I work with Thomas like we discussed, it's not going to be conducive to young children. It's not a good idea for me to be Lieutenant Governor and have a baby. I just don't see how's going to fit."

"I know, Blake. That's why I think we need to make a decision 'bout what we really want. Whether it be to campaign with Thomas and maybe winning, and therefore havin' to move to Albany, or stayin' here in New York where we already have lives and careers and start our family." she stated. "Both of our careers are on the table, Blake. Both of our lives are gonna be influenced by this."

Blake nodded. "I know, but this is a real opportunity, Georgia, that just doesn't come everyday. This is a once in a lifetime chance, and I need to be sure before accepting or refusing it."

The blonde nodded in agreement. "I know that, Blake, but you also need to think about the fact that this decision will have a great impact on the rest of our lives. Doin' this will have definite consequences, and we need to decide if we can handle them." she stressed, her voice growing in intensity.

"That's why I'm taking my time with it, Georgia! I don't want to make the wrong choice!" she snapped shortly at her fiancée. Even though the blonde had never directly said it, she gathered from their previous conversations that the younger woman was against the idea of running with Thomas while she was leaning towards it.

The small woman shook her head and sighed. "You know, let's just stop talkin' 'bout it for now. I don't want to fight with you, Blake. We have time before this decision has to be made. We'll talk 'bout more after the weddin'. Okay, honey?"

"All right, Georgia. Come on. Let's get these dishes put away and go to bed where I can prove to you that my mouth is better suited for things other than fighting." she seductively suggested kissing her lover's neck as they rose from the table.

Georgia giggled. "I think I like the sound of that."

The next morning Blake left before Georgia even arose. She had a lot on her agenda that day for work, but her first stop was Isaac's to pick up her suit. She had never been to the designer's place before, so she had no idea what to expect when she arrived. Fifteen minutes before eight her cab pulled up in front of his building. Taking the elevator up to his floor, she made her way down to his door. When she got close to it though, she saw that it was already open, and the designer was thoroughly involved in kissing and gratuitously groping a half dressed blonde in the doorway. Arriving at the door, she realized that the blonde was someone she knew.

Trying to not startle them, the attorney softly greeted, "Good morning, Isaac, Jack."

Instantly Jack pulled away in panic. Quickly he began to button his dress shirt as he said gruffly, "I thought you said she would be by after eight."

"She's early, honey."

"I'm sorry, Jack. I didn't know you'd be here." Blake tried to apologize to her friend. She could see how distressed he was by being caught in such a position. There was no denying by his disheveled hair and day old stubble that he had stayed the night with the designer.

"Well, you're here now. Come on in." Isaac instructed. Turning to Jack he demanded, "Don't leave yet, honey. I'm not finished with you."

Jack huffed but followed Blake into the apartment. Isaac went to retrieve the attorney's suit, leaving the two of them alone. "Why didn't you tell me, Jack? It's not that big of a deal."

"It's nothin', Blake. Okay? There is nothin' goin' on between Isaac and me."

"I beg to differ. I just saw the two of you kissing."

"So? Cain't I get laid without it meanin' anythin'?"

"Well, of course but even if you just were in it for a fuck, Jack, you still slept with Isaac. In case you've already forgotten, he's a man even if he doesn't act like one. You can't tell me that you are that desperate after all the people we've introduced you to that you would have sex with Isaac unless you wanted to. Just admit that you're gay, Jack. It doesn't matter to me or Georgia."

Grabbing her by the lapels of her jacket, he growled, "I'm not a fag, Yankee, like..."

She cut him off quickly before he could even finish his statement. "Like who, Jack? Like me and Isaac or Georgia and Helen and Torrance. We're all fags, Jack, and we're not ashamed of it. It doesn't make you any less of a man."

"Just shut up, Yankee! You don't know what you're talkin' 'bout! I fucked him! Okay? That's it! That's all it was, and it's over! And if you ever tell Georgia 'bout this, I swear I'll break your face!" he threatened shaking her for emphasis

Anger getting the better of her, Blake pushed back, shoving him off of her and back several steps. "Let me tell you something, Jack! Georgia is my wife, not yours! If I want to tell her, I'm going to, because it's my right as her spouse! Just because you're upset that I caught you getting a hand job from Isaac in the doorway, doesn't give you the right to be mad at me! You should be a man about this, Jack, not a coward!"

Without warning the blonde took a swing at her in his anger. Blake didn't see it coming and therefore wasn't able to deflect it in time as it connected squarely with her jaw and knocked her back a step. In reaction she threw a punch herself without even thinking about the consequences. It landed right in his nose. Blood squirted everywhere as it cracked under the pressure. Suddenly fists were flying from both of them until Isaac's screaming broke them apart.

"What is going on here?" he asked indignantly placing his hands on his hips. "You two are supposed to be friends and business partners, not enemies."

They looked at each other in silence. Blake dabbed at the blood dripping from the corner of her mouth with the back of her hand as she looked at the damage she had inflicted on her friend's face. One of Jack's eyes was swollen along with his nose, and blood was seeping out of it. She could feel the smarting pain in her jaw and stomach where he had landed several of his blows. Neither said anything for a moment.

When Isaac reached for Jack, the blonde yanked back. "Don't touch me." he grumbled.

"You feel more manly now, Jack? Did beating me up make you feel better?" Blake inquired angrily. "Have you reaffirmed your manhood?"

"Fuck you, Blake!" he yelled starting for the door.

"Honey." Isaac called after him as he followed.

"Don't honey me! I don't like it! Now leave me alone! Both of you just leave me the hell alone!" he screamed slamming the door behind him.

Coming back to the attorney, Isaac said, "I didn't realize he hadn't told you and Georgia about us. We had talked about how to tell you before, so I thought he had done it."

"It's okay. How long has this been going on?"

"Since May when we met at the restaurant opening."

"So this is not just a sex thing? You two are in a relationship?"

"I would like to think so even though he doesn't." the designer answered quietly.

"Well I'm sorry that I screwed things up between you. I hope I haven't done permanent damage."

"It's not your fault. Come on. Let's see what this suit looks like on you." he said changing the subject.

That evening when Blake returned home from work, Georgia was there preparing to leave. She took one look at her lover and saw the distress in her eyes. "What's wrong, honey?" the blonde inquired coming to embrace her fiancée.

"Nothing. I just had a bad day." Blake answered.

"What happened to your jaw? It looks swollen."

"It's nothing" she mumbled.

"It doesn't look like nothin'."

"Georgia, I don't want to discuss it with you."

"Why not? What are you hidin' from me, Blake Erwin? Tell me." she demanded staring at the tall woman sternly.

Seeing blue eyes expectantly waiting for an answer, the attorney broke down and answered, "I got in a fight."

"With who?"

"Jack." she replied quietly.

"What? How could that happen? You two were gettin' so close. How could you end up in a fight?" the blonde asked in confusion.

Blake shrugged. "It's between Jack and me, Georgia. I respect him enough not to tell you. It's our problem. You're his best friend and my wife. Neither of us wants you involved, because we don't want you to have to choose sides. We'll get over it. I promise. It's just going to take time."

"What does he look like, Blake? As bad as you?"

"I broke his nose I think." she admitted.

"This close to the weddin'? Blake, how could you do that?" the little woman questioned. "He's gonna look terrible for the pictures."

"I'm sorry. I lost my temper. He hit me first, Georgia. Hopefully the swelling will go down by then. It didn't look crooked when he left."

"Left? Left where? Where did this happen?"

Blake stalled in her answer. She didn't want to admit to her fiancée that she had seen Jack at Isaac's. "It doesn't matter where I saw him. The only thing that matters is that we got into a fight."

"Bout what, Blake?"

"I can't tell you, Georgia. I wish I could, but it wouldn't be right coming from me. If Jack wants to tell you, then he will." Just then there was a knock on the door. "I'll get that." Blake stated.

Going to their door, she opened to see Helen standing there. "Hi, Blake. Is Georgia ready to go?"

"Yeah. She just was finishing. You look nice tonight. You're glowing."

"Yeah, well, being pregnant has a way of doing that to me." she said with a smile.

"Oh, congratulations! That's wonderful." the brunette stated hugging her friend. "Tor is thrilled I bet."

"Of course." Looking at her friend more closely, she inquired, "What happened to you? You look like someone hit you in the jaw."

"I got in a fight. It's nothing."

"With who?"

"Jack. It's no big deal. So, what are your big plans for the night?"

"There's too much to tell. Georgia will just have to fill you in tomorrow. Right now there is a limo full of women downstairs waiting to give her the party of her life."

"Well, do you know what Tor has planned for me?"

The blonde smiled. "Yes but I'm not telling. She should be by a little later to get you."

Just then Georgia appeared from the bedroom. "Take care of yourself, Blake. Don't get into too much trouble." she teased.

"I won't. You ladies have a good time. See you tomorrow morning."

Half an hour later another knock on the door alerted Blake to Torrance's arrival. Heading out the door with her friend, they went downstairs to the waiting limousine filled full of their mutual friends. However there was one person notably absent from the group. "Where's Jack?" the attorney inquired curiously.

"Oh, he called me earlier today and said he couldn't make it. Something apparently had come up at the restaurant or something. He didn't really give me any details."

"Oh. I see." Blake replied. She knew the real reason he wasn't there. He wasn't over their earlier fight, and it saddened her that she had messed up her relationship with him. They had started to really trust each other and enjoy the other's company. However she had alienated him by being so harsh with her words. "So, where are we going?" she asked.

Torrance just smiled. "You'll see. Just relax and enjoy." she said handing the attorney a bottle of scotch from the bar.

The first stop on the agenda was dinner. Torrance had arranged a table for them at one of the nicest places in the city, and Blake tried to forget about her fight with Jack and savor the night, but she couldn't help but wonder about him. Even as much fun as others were having around her, she couldn't shake the thought of him being angry with her still.

After dinner the party moved on. Just as Blake suspected, strippers became a part of the night as they went to a strip club. However as they walked in, the attorney noticed the predominantly female audience. The place was packed with women, some at tables others hovered around a stage ogling the dancer of the moment. Quickly the photographer shuffled them all over to a large table just off the side of the stage. Blake was given the best seat that had a perfect view of everything that was going on. Within in a few minutes a waitress came over, dressed in such a way her twin assets were on perfect display and near Blake's face as she leaned in to take drink orders over the music.

Unable to resist the temptation, the tall brunette eyed the waitress in interest. She looked completely delectable even though she could tell the woman's breasts were fake by the way the sat. Nevertheless the attorney could feel herself responding to the visual stimulus. She was so

preoccupied by the studying her that she missed the fact that the waitress had asked what the special occasion was.

"Oh, Blake's getting married two weeks from tomorrow." Torrance replied.

"Well, are congratulations are condolences in order, gorgeous?" the woman inquired teasingly as she let her nails trail lightly over the attorney's shoulder and behind her neck.

"Congratulations." Blake managed to squeak.

The waitress leaned in so her mouth was hovered close to Blake's ear. Of course that pressed her body even nearer to her as well. "Too bad for me then. Wish I had met you sooner." she whispered.

"What's your name?" Blake asked curiously.

"Everybody calls me Red." she answered.

"Why?"

"Because of my hair." nonchalantly she stated. Blake looked up at the woman in confusion. She was obviously a dark brunette in the light. "You're looking too far north there, honey. Not that hair." she teased. Instinctively Blake's eyes dropped to the place they were speaking of that was covered by only a microscopic skirt. "You want to see for yourself?" she inquired seductively.

"Um, thank you but I believe you." the attorney answered.

"Maybe later then." the waitress said with a smile and wink before retreating over to the bar. Several minutes passed before she returned with their drinks. Placing Blake's down on the table, she gave another grin. "This one is on me, sexy."

The attorney smiled graciously in return. "Thanks, Red." she answered.

"You're welcome. You just let me know whatever you might need. I'll take care of you."

Blake watched her turn to go to another table. The brunette sashayed her hips lightly as she walked away. The attorney kept her eyes on her though as she waited on other customers. The waitress met her eyes again and winked seductively.

"I think you have an admirer." Torrance joked hitting her friend in the arm. "She's hot."

"Yeah, she is." Blake conceded.

"Maybe I need to arrange for a little private dance for you. I think she would like to get a little closer to you than you are letting her." the photographer threatened teasingly.

Blake shook her head. "That's all right. It's not necessary."

"I think it is." Torrance answered getting up from the table. Blake watched as her friend went over to the waitress and begin talking to her. She knew that Torrance would indeed get the woman to agree to whatever she wanted, even though she really didn't want to be alone with the attractive waitress. A few minutes later Torrance returned to the table with a smug grin on her face.

"What did you do?" Blake inquired.

"You'll see in time. Don't worry. You'll enjoy it."

The rowdy group watched the show for awhile. Most of their party was thoroughly enjoying the girls, but Blake could tell Torrance's mind was elsewhere. Leaning over to her, she asked, "What are you thinking about?"

"Helen."

Blake smiled. "Let me guess. Thinking about the new baby?"

"Yeah. Did she tell you?"

"Yes. I think that's great, Tor."

"Me too. You know you and Georgia should have some kids soon. I want our children to be able to grow up together."

The attorney laughed. "You sound like her. She wants to get pregnant right away. I just don't know if that's a good idea given what your dad has offered me. I don't think I'm cut out to be Lieutenant Governor and a mother at the same time."

"Did my father make you an offer, or this still just a discussion?"

"It's still a discussion. He hasn't asked me officially or anything, but we've been talking about it depth. I want to have decided by the time return from our honeymoon, because I know he has other people he's considering as well. It's only fair to give him an answer as soon as I can, so he can make plans."

"True. What does Georgia think about all this?"

"To be truthful, I don't think she's thrilled with the idea. She hasn't said that, but she's giving me the impression that she'd rather I not run with him. She wants to stay in New York and have babies."

The photographer laughed lightly. "Sounds like another woman I know. Are we sure Helen and Georgia aren't related?" she joked taking a sip of her drink.

Before their conversation could go any further, the music and lights changed signaling a new dancer. Blake looked over toward the stage and her eyes grew more interested as she saw their waitress slinking into the lights dressed in a nurse's uniform. Blake's eyes never left the stage, drawn into the sultry moves of the slowly disrobing dancer. When their waitress was only down to a thong and heels, she made eye contact with the attorney and stalked her way over to the table. Without an invitation she unceremoniously straddled the brunette's legs and began an agonizing grind into her. As Blake felt her breasts rubbing enticingly into her chest, she had to look down at them. As soon as she dropped her gaze though, she was surprised that the dancer grabbed her by the back of the neck, cramming her head into her femininity. The attorney groaned against her better judgement. The waitress smelled incredible, like sweat, sex, and roses. Instinctively her arms found their way around the gyrating body. The dancer had other ideas though as she moved Blake's hands down to her bare posterior. Blake moaned at the combination of stimuli. Every inch of the dancer was meeting her own frame. Just when the attorney thought she couldn't take it any more, the woman leaned down to her ear.

"You make me so hot, Blake." she groaned. "I want you to fuck me. Make me come all over you."

Instantly Blake yanked her head back from the mounds that had captivated her up to wild dilated eyes. They said more than words could at the moment. Quickly the dancer swooped in a harshly claimed the attorney's mouth in a fiery kiss. Dumbfounded Blake just allowed the brunette to do as she pleased for a moment before slowly pulling back. After a second of just looking at each other, the dancer dismounted and moved on to her next victim, leaving a thoroughly aroused and frustrated attorney behind.

When the song ended and she had vanished behind the curtain again, Blake gave a shaky sigh. She looked over at her friend and saw Torrance laughing in amusement. "You think that's funny?" she questioned.

Torrance nodded. "Man, she was good. What did she say to you?"

"Nothing."

"Liar. She said something that made you jump." she pushed. Blake just shrugged. "All right. Fine. Don't tell me. Come on. There's somewhere you are supposed to be."

"Where are we going?" the attorney inquired as they both took to their feet.

"You'll see. Follow me." They moved back to a private area of the club to a marked door. "Here. Have fun." Torrance stated handing her a wad of bills.

"I'm not going in there." Blake stated.

"Oh yes you are. She's waiting for you. Now go." Torrance insisted pushing her friend through the door.

Blake took a deep breath for a moment, wondering if she should turn around, but she knew Torrance would notice that she had not stayed where she was supposed to. Knowing that her friend expected her to enjoy herself, she made her way over to the velvet couch in the center of the darkened room. Taking a seat she wondered what was about to happen. She had an inclination of who was coming in there, but Blake wasn't sure what the dancer was going to do. The minutes passed slowly as the attorney just sat in the darkness. However when the sultry music began, she took a calming breath. She heard a door open behind her, but she didn't turn, instead focusing on the door from which she came. After a moment hands touched her shoulders, squeezing them lightly.

An hour later Blake left the private room and headed back to her table. Torrance was sitting there looking at her expectantly. "Well, you were gone long enough. I thought I only paid for half an hour of torture." she teased.

"Yeah, well..." the attorney mumbled. "I need a drink."

Looking at her friend closely, she noticed that Blake was shifting uncomfortably as she took her seat. "Are you all right, Blake? You know that was only supposed to be a joke at your expense." she said.

"Yeah, I know." she answered. "And I guess I deserved it for doing it to you."

"Then what's the problem?"

"Nothing."

"I don't believe you."

"Well, tough." she grumbled. Just then their waitress came back to the table. Everyone in the party had realized by her hour long absence that she and the attorney had been together in privacy, but Blake was now acting strangely. The dancer gently placed a beverage down in front of the attorney and planted a soft kiss to her cheek before turning to go. Blake watched her leave as she sighed.

"Blake, did something happen in there?" Torrance inquired. "You didn't do something with her, did you?"

"What do you think?" she inquired.

Torrance looked at her contemplatively. "I think you did. Did you have sex with her?"

"Tor, I'm getting married. Do you think I would actually cheat on Georgia two weeks before our wedding?"

"Prove it then. Let me see your hands." she insisted grabbing for them.

"No." Blake resisted.

Nevertheless Torrance seized them both. Blake hadn't bothered to clean up at all after her little rendezvous in the back room, so she knew Torrance would be able to tell something had indeed happened. "Looks like something happened to me."

"I didn't lay a hand on her." the attorney stressed. "I wouldn't do that to Georgia."

"All right. I believe you." the photographer answered, but Blake could tell she really didn't.

"Torrance Whitfield, I didn't have sex with her." she stated.

"Fine, Blake. If you say that's the truth, then it is."

"I'll prove it to you." she stated. Signaling their waitress over, she said, "Red, my friend wants to know if I had sex with you. Tell her the truth. She won't believe me."

The dancer smiled. Looking at Torrance she said, "She was incredible." Blake gasped in shock. However the waitress then laughed. "Incredibly faithful that is." she teased cupping the attorney's face in her hand. "A perfect gem. Kept her hands to herself the whole time."

"Thank you, Red." Blake said with a satisfied smile.

"You're welcome, honey. That wife of yours is lucky."

"Now do you believe me?" the attorney questioned when the waitress left their table again.

"I don't get it. You had sex with someone back there. She was the only person with you. If not her, then who?"

"She wasn't the only one in that room, Tor. I was there." Blake smirked as she saw her friend's mind at work.

"You dirty dog." Tor quipped. "Get those hands away from me." she joked when she realized the only person the attorney had touched was herself.

Blake laughed. "It's your fault for sending me back there you know."

Torrance laughed as well. "I guess I deserved that for torturing you."

The following morning Georgia arrived back at the loft early. She could smell smoke as she entered, making her wonder where the attorney had gone the night before. Moving toward the bedroom, she opened the door to see her fiancée passed out on top of the bed sideways and still in her clothes. The blonde smiled at the scene. She had never seen Blake so out of sorts. Going over to the bed, the small woman slipped onto it, letting her hand trail up her lover's back to her

hair to wake her gently. Blake moaned in her sleep and rolled over.

"Morin', sexy." Georgia whispered.

"Morning." the brunette replied cracking her eyes open slightly. The sun coming in their window was wreaking havoc on her head.

The fair-headed angel gave a soft grin as she began to unbutton her lover's shirt. "You smell terrible, like alcohol and cigarettes."

"You look beautiful." Blake stated raising her hand to her fiancée's cheek. "I love you, Georgia."

The little woman giggled. "I love you too, drunk woman." she replied smelling the alcohol coating her lover.

"I've wanted you all night." Blake whispered pulling the petite frame up onto her own.

"Well, here I am." Georgia said sitting up. She kept eye contact with her fiancée as she slowly removed her own blue blouse. As the older woman's arms slipped around her back, she inquired, "So what did you do last night?"

"Thought about making love to you." Blake murmured in Georgia's ear as her hands began to freely roam. "What did you do?"

"Same thing." she answered shakily. "I missed you. Torrance and Helen's guest bed was way too big and cold without you."

"I missed you too."

Later that morning after the two of them had taken a nap, Blake said she had to run by the restaurant on some business, saying she would meet up with Georgia and the wedding planner later to discuss last minute details. Heading down to Georgia's, she unlocked the restaurant with her keys and went inside. She knew Jack was supposed to be there, so she wandered back toward his office. Sure enough she heard the sounds of music alerting her to his presence.

Getting to the open door, she gave a soft knock. He looked up immediately. "I thought I heard the alarm." he said gruffly. "Thought you were Cindy though."

"I wanted to talk to you, Jack. I feel terrible about yesterday." she began coming into the office. She took a seat across from him at the desk. "I missed you at the party last night. It was a good one." He only nodded but didn't comment. "Look, Jack. I'm sorry that I called you a coward. It wasn't right of me. It's truly not any of my business who you sleep with or how you define your sexuality. I never should have been so insensitive. Coming to know yourself sexually can be hard, and I only made it worse by not supporting you. For that I apologize. If it makes you feel any better, I didn't tell Georgia, and I won't unless you want me to."

"Thank you." he answered. "I'm sorry I hit you, Blake. I lost my temper."

"I lost mine too. I'm sorry I broke your nose."

After a pause he said, "I just wasn't ready for you and Georgia to know 'bout this. I've never done anythin' like this before, so it has been difficult for me. Isaac and I met at the restaurant openin', and we seemed to hit it off real well. He's very funny and attentive. He started comin' in the restaurant almost every day, and we sort of began a friendship. I knew he was gay. I mean who doesn't know Isaac Mizrahi is gay. I just wanted to broaden my horizon by havin' a gay friend. I've never had one, so we started bein' friends, but then it changed. He had taken me to this gay club, and men were lookin' at me the way women do, and it was strange and yet excitin' at the same time I guess. I danced with a man for the first time in my life that night, and I also danced with Isaac. There was just somethin' 'bout the way we touched when we danced. I got... you know."

"Aroused." Blake supplied.

"Yeah." he stuttered. "I guess Isaac could tell, because next thing I knew, his hand was down there gropin' me. It was so weird and yet I couldn't stop him for some reason. It just felt so good but different than with a woman. Everythin' 'bout it was different. He kissed me on the dance floor. It was bizarre, the strength of him versus a woman, but I guess my body just overrode my brain. He took me into the bathroom and finished what he'd started. It's never been that good with a woman." he admitted. "I had no idea anyone could do what he did with his tongue. I went home with him that night. All it took was that one blow job, and I was insatiable to know everythin' else he could do. I had to know what he was like. I wanted to fuck him, and I did."

"And you're continuing to do so?" He nodded. "So, is this just a physical thing, or do you have feelings for him?"

"It started as only physical, but now he's more than a good lay. I don't know what's gonna happen though."

"Do you think you're gay, Jack?"

He shrugged. "I don't know. I still like women, but Isaac is just so much better at everythin' than any woman I've ever been with in and out of bed. I care for him, Yankee, in a way I've never cared for another man. I don't know what that means though."

The attorney shrugged. "It doesn't have to mean anything unless you want it to. It's your life, Jack, and you don't have to answer to anyone."

"I'm scared of the label, Blake." he confessed. "Where I come from we hate fags. You of all people should know that. We humiliate and beat them. They are almost as bad as blacks in Stillwater. It's just the way I was raised even if it is wrong."

"But you were so supportive of Georgia."

"I know. I don't believe in what that community teaches, Yankee. I really don't, but when you live with it your entire life, it affects the way you think 'bout the world. It's hard for me to stand up 'gainst my heritage."

"But you're in New York now, Jack. This isn't Stillwater, Georgia. You're never going to go back there. You should embrace your true self if you want, whatever it might be. There are people here that will support you. Georgia and I will always be behind you, Jack, regardless."

"I know, but it's so hard to imagine tellin' Georgia that I'm gay, Blake. I married her. We were supposed to be together forever, and had you not come along, we'd still be married. We'd be miserable, but we'd be married. It's hard for me to tell her that it was all a sham."

"It wasn't a sham, Jack. When you two got married, you cared about each other. You loved each other. Maybe not the way husbands and wives traditionally do, but you loved her enough to marry her when she was pregnant with your baby. That's commitment, so there's no way you can say that was a farce. You planned to be with her for the rest of your life, and it was only me that made you two divorce. There's no way that was a sham. You were committed to each other in your own way. She just wants you to be happy, Jack. She really does, and I think if this is what makes you so, she would be happy for you."

"I'm just not ready to tell her. I will someday but not soon. Promise me you still won't say anythin'?"

"I won't tell her, Jack. It's your story to tell, not mine. I'll keep your confidence."

"Thanks."

Blake gave him a smile. Standing up she rounded the desk as she inquired, "So, can we stop being mad at each other now and make up?" He stood and nodded as they embraced in a hug. "All right. I have to get going now. I'm supposed to meet Georgia in a bit. I'm glad we got this squared away. I didn't want things to be awkward at the wedding."

"Me neither. Thanks for understandin', Yankee."

For the rehearsal dinner Blake and Georgia had decided upon only having their families and those people involved in the wedding in attendance making it a much smaller affair than the wedding itself. Nevertheless the intimate gathering proved to be just right for them as Blake's parents got a real chance to visit with Cindy for the first time since their initial meetings in Stillwater. However when the dinner was over, Helen insisted that Georgia return home with she and Torrance out of the tradition of not being able to see the bride before the wedding. Even though Blake didn't like the idea, she reluctantly agreed to let her fiancée spend the night with them, leaving her alone at the loft with her parents.

It was late by the time Blake and her parents arrived back at her place, but even after they had retired for the night, the attorney was up just thinking about what was to take place the following

evening. She stood at her bedroom window looking out over the park in silent contemplation of how her world would be changing when she took Georgia's hand. Just then the phone interrupted her thoughts.

"Hi." her lover's voice greeted.

"Hey. Missing me already?" Blake asked lightly.

"Yeah. I don't like sleepin' without you, honey."

"Well, the feeling is mutual."

"What are you doin' right now?" the writer inquired.

"Just looking out over Central Park and thinking about tomorrow."

"Haven't changed your mind, have you?" the blonde teased.

"Not at all. I was just thinking about how many changes were going to take place after tomorrow. We'll be married, Georgia, and starting a family soon. It's kind of overwhelming all of a sudden, but I love the idea of being with you forever."

"Oh, Blake. You're so sweet. I thought we had agreed to wait on the children decision though until we decided about Thomas's offer."

"Well, I've made up my mind, Georgia. I know we weren't supposed to talk about this until after the wedding, but I've decided what I want."

"What's that?" she asked hesitantly.

"I have to turn him down."

"Turn him down? You're gonna say no?"

"Yeah. I'm going to say no, Georgia, because it's not conducive to the life that you want, and I want to give you everything you want. I want to give you children, baby, and I can't do that as the Lieutenant Governor. I'd hardly be home. Not only that you already have career that means a lot to you here in New York and moving to Albany would take that from you. I know you love your job, and I want you to continue to be happy with it, but you would have to stay here for that to happen. There's no way that I want us living apart either. I won't stand for being away from you for business like that, not when I have enough work here in New York to keep me busy from now until forever. Thomas offered me something rare, but I'd rather be with you, living here in New York, making babies, and enjoying our life together as newlyweds. It was a chance that was unexpected, but I didn't have aspirations of being a political figure. I'm enough of one already with my social work, and that's enough for me. I can help the party in other ways. I'd much rather just stay here with you."

"Oh, Blake, thank you. I had hoped you would feel that way, but I didn't want to stifle you if it's what you really wanted."

"You're what I really want, baby, and tomorrow I'm going to make that official. You're what I need, Georgia, more than anything else, and I want us to start having kids as soon as we can. I know that's what you want, and I can't wait to have some children that look just like you, beautiful."

"I love you, Blake. You know that? You are too good to me."

"I love you too, Georgia Erwin." Consulting her watch, she noted the late hour. "It's getting late. I should probably let you get your beauty sleep. I can't wait to see you tomorrow. I just know you're going to look like such an angel."

The blonde giggled. "I hope to for you. I can't believe this day is already here, honey. This is the moment I've dreamed of for so long. Good night, Blake."

"Good night, Miss Carmichael. See you tomorrow. I'll be the one down front anxiously awaiting you."

"I can't wait. See you then."

Hanging up the phone, Georgia sighed in contentment. The woman she loved truly had given her everything she had ever wanted, and the next day all her dreams were going to come true. She looked at herself in the mirror as she changed for bed. In only a few hours, she would cease to be Miss Georgia Carmichael. She would Mrs. Georgia Erwin, the wife of the most powerful, influential female attorney in New York. The little woman smiled. She had completed the mission that had begun a year and a half ago, the first time she had felt Blake's touch. She knew then in her heart that the tall woman was the one she wanted to spend the rest of her life with, and tomorrow they would link themselves to each other forever. She would have all she ever wanted and more. Her adolescent dreams of marrying wealthy and living life like royalty were surprisingly coming to fruition, but somewhere in the midst of truly falling in love, those superficial ideals had fallen to the wayside. She knew she would have loved Blake whether she be who she was or a poor farmer from her home town. There was just something in the older woman that called to her, and she knew there was no way she could ever deny her soul's longing for the tall woman who held mysterious power over her.

The next day Blake and her parents hung around the loft most of the day. The attorney slept in later than usual, knowing that she had to be her best for not only the wedding and reception but the private party she and Georgia would be having afterwards. She expected Jack to be coming by and riding with them out to the service, so the three of them just relaxed. However when the time came, the attorney began to leisurely dress for the big occasion, because she knew they had to leave at five to get there on time. Around four thirty there was a knock on the door. Anticipating it to be Jack, Blake casually strolled to open it as she played with the cuff links.

However she was taken off guard when two hands grabbed her by the shirt forcefully as soon as she opened the door. "Where the hell are they, Yankee?" Melvin screamed pushing her roughly into the loft.

"Melvin, what a surprise. You are the last person I expected to see in my house."

"Yankee, I've had 'bout 'nough of this shit! First my daughter! Now my wife! I want them both back now!" he yelled grabbing her again.

"Hey! What is going on? Take your hands off my daughter!" her father insisted coming out of the guest room. Seeing his daughter being threatened, he tried to step in, only to be pushed aside by an angry bulk of a man.

"Where are they? You tell me now!" Melvin demanded.

"I'll do no such thing, Melvin. They aren't your concern any longer. Now get out of my house." she stated taking her own push at the large man.

He retaliated with a shove of his own before whipping a pistol out from behind his back. "I've had it with you, damn Yankee! You've caused 'nough trouble. You took Georgia! You took Cindy! And you even saved that scum Jack from the fate he deserved! You all deserve to be hangin' from the trees for what you've done, but no one can seem to do the job right! Now it's my turn to finish this! Now you tell me where they are or die!"

"Blake, just tell him what he wants to know." her mother stated.

"No. If he kills me, he won't accomplish what he came here to do. He can't kill me, because I'm the only one who knows exactly where Georgia and Cindy are." she stated with more confidence than she felt. She knew for a fact that Melvin was not afraid to pull the trigger against her, having experienced his fire once before.

"Maybe you're right, Yankee. But that won't stop me from takin' out other people in this room." he mentioned moving his aim from the attorney to her mother. "Now tell me!"

Seeing the situation was starting to get out of her control, she contemplated her options a moment. "Wait, Melvin. This is between you and me. There is no need to get my parents involved in this. I'll tell you where they are."

"Where?"

"They're on Long Island getting ready for a wedding."

"Take me to them!"

"No."

A shot rang out suddenly, and a bullet drilled through her hard wood floor near her foot. "Take me to them, Yankee! You know I ain't 'fraid to put the next one in your head!"

"Fine. I'll take you to them. Just a second. Let me get my keys." Disappearing into her room, she grabbed her jacket, wallet, and car keys. Coming back into the room, she moved to her mother to hug her. Leaning down to her ear, she whispered, "Call Tor's house and have them get the police there right away. I'm going to take care of this once and for all." Then she moved to hug her father as well. When she was finished, she looked at Melvin. "Let's go."

Blake took the longest route she knew of to get to Torrance and Helen's house. The whole ride was quiet between them, but talk wasn't necessary. The only thing that mattered was the barrel of a gun was pointed at her through the entire ride. An hour later they pulled into the estate driveway. Cars were already being valet parked for guests, so nonchalantly Blake handed over her own keys and motioned for Melvin to follow her into the house.

Torrance was there to greet them at the front door. The two friends exchanged stares, so Blake knew the police had arrived, and the photographer knew what was going on. "If you'll come with me, Mr. Carmichael, Cindy and Georgia are in the library." Torrance said.

The two brunette women walked ahead of him slowly making their way down the hall to the room where Torrance had said the two blondes were. However when she opened the door, only Cindy was there flanked by two police officers. Both Torrance and Blake moved near the officers as well, leaving him alone on one side of the room.

"Melvin, what are you doin' here?" Cindy inquired as evenly as possible. They all knew he had a gun even though it was hidden at the moment.

"I came to talk some sense into you! Now where's Georgia?"

"Oh, um, I guess she's still upstairs getting ready for the wedding. She'll be down in a moment." Torrance answered.

"Wedding? She's gettin' married? To who?"

"To me." Blake replied stepping in front of her future mother-in-law to shield her from harm.

"Why you damn Yankee! I'm gonna kill you!" Melvin screamed.

Blake saw the flash of his gun as he whipped out from behind his back. Instinctively she closed her eyes and waited for the pain to pierce her body as a shot filled the air, but it never came. Instead she heard a loud thud and opened her eyes. Melvin's body lay on the ground, blood pooling around him. She could tell that he was still alive but having difficulty breathing. Behind her Cindy was screaming. Turning around she saw that both officers had their side arms drawn, one covering Melvin as the other called for the EMTs that were backing them up on the radio. It was only a moment before the emergency crew rushed to the man lying there.

Blake put her arms around the older version of her fiancée. Cindy was hysterical as she watched the crew anxiously working to revive her husband. As they rushed him from the room on a stretcher, she asked in a trembling voice, "He's not dead, is he?"

"No, he's not. He just received a wound to the chest. They are taking him to the hospital to stabilize him. I'm sorry, but I had to do it. He was going to shoot." one of the officers stated. "Now we're going to need statements from you."

"Of course." Blake replied. "But we're having a wedding here that's supposed to take place in under an hour. Can't this wait until tomorrow?"

"I supposed you all could do this tomorrow. Let me just get everyone's information, and we can contact you then." they agreed.

When they were gone, Torrance went to check to make sure no one had heard the commotion inside, leaving Cindy and Blake alone for a minute. "Are you all right, Cindy?"

"They shot him, Blake. They shot Melvin." she stated.

"I know, and I'm sorry. That's not what I meant to happen. I just want them to arrest him, but he was going to shoot. They had no choice."

"I know. I just wish he had left us alone."

"I think he will after this. I don't foresee Melvin ever coming back. You don't have to worry. It's over now."

"I'm sorry that he tried to shoot you, Blake." she said.

"It's all right. I knew he was going to, but I had hoped for a better resolution. I didn't want anyone to get hurt. I just wanted him to leave all of us alone for good. Nevertheless he won't come back now." The older woman nodded. With a smile Blake said, "Now it's time for me to go marry your daughter. Are you going to be all right?"

Cindy gave a tentative nod. "I'll be fine. I just need a moment."

"All right. You take your time. I need to go make sure my parents know I'm okay too. I'll see you out there. I love you, Cindy." she said gently.

"I love you too, Blake, as if you were my own. Go on now." Georgia's mother said patting Blake's cheek in affection. "It's time."

Several minutes later the wedding procession was about to begin. Blake anxiously hovered around the living room and looked outside at the large gathering in her friends' back yard. The sun was just starting to wane casting a lovely glow across the water in the distance.

"Are you all right?" Torrance inquired putting a hand on her shoulder.

"I'm fine. Just anxious for this to start. How does Georgia look? Have you seen her?"

"She's gorgeous, Blake. You're going to be impressed. Both our women do us proud today." she teased. "Are you and Bruce ready to go down that aisle?"

Blake looked down at her dog, who was seated next to her. His dark groomed coat was set off by a doggie bowtie. "We're ready."

"Well, Georgia and I will see you down there then." Torrance replied patting her friend on the shoulder and then leaving to retrieve the writer.

As planned Blake's parents processed first followed by Jack escorting Cindy. However after the four of them were seated, she and Bruce took their turn. The attorney smiled brightly at all the friends she passed as her dog kept pace with her perfectly down the aisle. When she got to the end, she turned to look back, and Bruce obediently sat by her side. Helen was the next to come in. She looked stunning as she glided down the aisle to take her place. She and Blake exchanged smiles before both of them awaited the big moment. There was a dramatic pause in the music before the bride's cue to life via the orchestra. When the doors opened and Georgia stepped out on Torrance's arm, Blake felt herself growing weak. She had never seen the little woman look as amazing as she did floating slowly down the aisle. Her dress was satin and off-white. Mentally the attorney noted that Isaac had been right in choosing the color, because it simply looked radiant on the little woman, illuminating her completely. It was conservatively cut on top but fit the woman impeccably, exhibiting all her assets in a modest elegance. Over the course of the spring and summer, the writer had grown out her hair again and was wearing it in loose curls, part of it swept back and up making a perfect perch for the classic veil. Her blue eyes sparkled as she stared at Blake the whole time.

Georgia was mesmerized by the sight of the attorney standing proudly waiting on her. The tall brunette had on a pressed shirt the same color as her dress. Her jacket was black that went all the way down to her knees accentuating her height and strong build, and black pants rounded out the outfit. The blonde thought she looked stunning.

As they arrived at the end of the aisle, Torrance smiled at her friend as she presented her bride to her. Blake eagerly took Georgia's hand. The photographer sneaked a peck onto the little woman's cheek before moving to the side and taking Bruce's leash from Blake.

"You're beautiful." Blake whispered.

"So are you." Georgia answered with a nervous smile.

"Shall we?" The blonde nodded, so Blake stepped them forward to the female minister in charge of the service.

She smiled at the couple before looking toward the audience. "Who gives these women to be

joined today?" she inquired. As agreed Cindy and both Blake's parents answered the question. The couple smiled in nervous happiness at each other as their parents spoke on their behalf.

Once that formality had been taken care of, the minister turned her attention solely to them. "Georgia and Blake, you two have come together to make a commitment to each other in front of your friends and family. I know that each of you has prepared your own vows for this moment, so Georgia, please if you would, tell Blake what you wish."

The blonde turned fully to the woman she loved to take both of her hands and looked up at her with adoring eyes. "Blake Erwin, from the moment you entered my life, you have stirred somethin' in me that no one else ever has. You opened my eyes to a new world and a new life with new opportunities. I thank you so much for givin' me the chance to love you. I promise to forever hold you close in my heart. I will love you and be there for you through the best and worst days. You will always have me as your comforter and supporter. I look forward to spendin' the rest of my days wakin' next to you and raisin' children with you. I am forever yours, Blake, my life, my love, my savior. I will make you proud to call me your wife. I love you." she stated as evenly as she could even though her voice began to crack seeing tears in her lover's eyes. She had never seen the attorney cry before, so the tears moved her more than she ever thought possible.

"Blake, now if you would like to recite your vow to Georgia."

The tall woman took a deep breath trying to regain her composure. Breaking their hands, she opted to slide her arms completely around the blonde's waist and brought her closer. "Georgia, I love and adore you. The day I met you I knew my life would forever be changed. The day you came calling on my porch, I immediately sensed something special in you. From that moment you have captivated me, and I know that feeling will never change. Through all we've been through, one thing has always remained. Your hold on my heart is enduring and ever-lasting. I promise to forever hold you close and protect you. I am eternally your shoulder, your strength, your rock. I will take care of you until the end of our time, and I will lovingly raise our children with you. You are my life, Georgia, and I will strive everyday to make you proud to have chosen me as your partner for life."

The petite woman wept openly at her lover's words. "I love you, Blake." she whispered.

"I love you too, Georgia. I always will." she replied softly.

"Blake, now that you have made your vow to Georgia, take this ring and place it on her finger as a symbol of your relationship. Then repeat after me." Blake took the ring from the minister and took the writer's left hand. "Georgia, with this ring I thee wed. I promise to love, comfort, and protect you for better or worse, through sickness and health to the end of our days."

With trembling hands and voice, Blake repeated, "Georgia, with this ring I thee wed. I promise to love, comfort, and protect you for better or worse, through sickness and health to the end of our days."

"Now Georgia, please take this ring and place it on Blake's hand as symbol of your relationship. Then repeat after me. Blake, with this ring I thee wed. I promise to love, comfort, and protect you for better or worse, through sickness and health to the end of our days."

The blonde did as she was told taking the ring and slipping it on the large hand of her lover. Both of them were shaking lightly, but Georgia found strange comfort in Blake's emotions. Confidently she looked up at the dark eyes and stated, "Blake, with this ring I thee wed. I promise to love, comfort, and protect you for better or worse, through sickness and health to the end of our days."

"Now that the two of you have made this commitment here today, these rings will forever be a sign of your relationship, and may you be known by all as life partners. You may kiss." the minister announced. Both women smiled brightly at each other as they embraced. Leaning to each other they kissed gently. When they were finished, the minister turned them toward the congregation. "May I present Blake and Georgia Erwin."

Epilogue

Fifteen months later Blake and Georgia sat around a large table at Georgia's having dinner with family and friends. Torrance and Helen sat to their left with John and their newest family addition, a towheaded little girl named Marta. Across from them was Cindy and an empty chair that they were expecting Jack to fill at any moment when he had a chance to take a break from talking to restaurant guests.

However when Jack came over, he happily stated, "The governor-elect is here. We need more chairs."

Thomas and Maria Whitfield waved from the doorway and made their way toward the table. "Well, if it isn't our favorite children." Thomas said with a smile.

"Nonna, Nonno." John stated excitedly rushing for his grandparents. Maria swept him up into her arms. She kissed him on the cheeks before he reached for his grandfather.

"How are you, little John?"

"John, come sit back down in your chair now and eat something." Helen softly instructed as she rocked Marta. He scampered back to his seat obediently earning a ruffle of the hair from Torrance.

"How are you holding up, Helen?" Maria inquired as she and her husband both came to look upon their sleeping granddaughter in her mother's arms. Both of them kissed her lightly on the head.

"I'm fine."

"And what about our newest additions?" Thomas asked moving to stand between Georgia and Blake. "How are prince and princess Erwin this evening?" he asked in jest looking at the twins, one of which was being held by each parent.

"You and Georgia looked tired, Blake." Maria said reaching for the little boy Blake was holding.

"No one ever said being a parent was going to be this hard." the attorney joked as Thomas took the little girl from Georgia.

"It's so amazing how each one of them looks so much like one each one of you." Maria commented. "Luke, aren't you just the most handsome thing? With that blonde hair and those blue eyes, you are going to be a heartbreaker. I just know it." she said, cooing at him lightly.

"And you, Miss Lana, men will find heaven in those dark eyes some day." Thomas mentioned rubbing her brown hair lightly. "Of course, maybe women will find heaven too. You just never know with this crew." he joked earning laughs from the table.

"Thomas, Maria, would you care to join us for dinner?" Blake asked.

"It would be a pleasure if you don't mind." she answered.

"Not at all. I think Jack went to get some more chairs. That man needs to sit down and enjoy his own meal though. Oh, here he is now. Jack, take a seat. We came to have dinner with you, not watch you run around the whole time." the attorney said.

"All right. All right. Just let me get the waiter over here to get everyone's orders, and we'll be set." he said signaling someone over. Thomas and Maria took their seats, still holding the Erwin twins as they decided on their meal.

"So, Jack, I hear that you're back with Isaac." Georgia mentioned with a smile. "Is that just a rumor?"

"No, it's not a rumor. I gave up on the boy of the month club." he replied teasingly.

"I'm glad that you seemed to have found someone, Jack. We've all be hopin' you would." the writer said with a supportive smile.

"Me too."

"Glad the election is over, Thomas?" Blake inquired once they had all gotten their beverages.

"Yes. It was a dog fight. You were much better off staying out of it, Blake. I think you made the right choice." he answered looking down at the baby in his arms. "It's hard to beat pleasure like a family."

"I know that now." she answered with a smile, looking fondly in her wife's direction.

Seeing that everyone had a drink, Blake raised her glass. "I'd like to make a toast. To my wife, Georgia, who has graciously put up with me for the last fifteen months and given me the two most beautiful children in the world. And to my friends, whom I would have never gotten this far without."

"To family and friends." Thomas seconded.

Torrance chimed in, "To family and friends."

Meeting glasses in the middle of the table, they all toasted their good fortune and future. "I love you all." Blake stated. "And I especially love you." she whispered dropping a kiss on her wife's nose.

"I love you too, Blake, always."

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