

# ~ Love in Photographs ~

by Alex Tryst

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This book contains original characters of my own creation. In fact this whole idea came to life from a photograph I have of a woman that came from a magazine. There was just something about it that struck me, and I found myself wondering who she was and who might have taken the picture. Suddenly there was a story unfolding in my mind that I had to put on paper. I have borrowed some names of famous people as well as locations, but infringement is not intended. Also there are three languages in this book, English, French, and Italian. You multi-linguists must excuse me if you find some of my grammar is incorrect. I speak and write English better than French, and French better than Italian. For convenience I have put translations in parentheses. As always, comments and feedback is welcome at alextryst@hotmail.com. Enjoy!

**Dedication:** I have to dedicate it to the mystery woman that spurred this story in the first place. Whoever and wherever you are, thanks for sparking my imagination.

Now on with the show .....

“Look, people. We don’t have all day.” Torrance mentioned fiddling with her camera a little more. Her patience was beginning to wane as she waited on the last model to appear before she could call it a day. Propping one foot up on the stool on which she was sitting, her black cowboy boot kept time with the beat of the old Janet Jackson music that was blaring from somewhere overhead. Rubbing her hands along her faded tight jeans, she took a deep breath before her temper got the better of her.

It had been a tremendously long day, and she had gotten stuck on a job that she would normally consider less than worthy of her talents, but she had filled in for another photographer as a favor and was now regretting that decision. Standing up she left her camera on the stool and began to pace. Pushing fingers through her dark short hair, she growled when she noted that the model she was scheduled to shoot was still nowhere to be seen. She was tired, hungry, and she was beginning to feel overheated in her black silk shirt. Meanwhile people around her were scurrying about trying to put the finishing touches on the set and adjust the lights. Turning at the sound of her name, she saw Morgan, the makeup artist, a woman Torrance had come to know well in her years of photography coming her way. “This better be the most gorgeous woman I’ve ever seen, or else I’m going to be irritated for the hold up. What’s wrong now?”

Morgan cracked a smile. “Get ready to eat those words, Torrance.” she teased, knowing Torrance’s adoration of the female form. “She’s ready. Here you might need this.” she remarked handing the tall woman a towel.

Casting her a curious glance she asked, “What’s this for?”

“To catch the drool that’s going to be coming out of your mouth when I bring her out here.” she

joked as she turned to retrieve the woman Torrance had been anxious for. After a minute Morgan returned followed by a slim blonde who was looking decisively nervous. "Torrance, this is Helen Melbourne. Helen, Torrance Whitfield." Morgan introduced nudging the blonde forward.

Torrance smiled in spite of herself as she forgot that she had been upset at the blonde for the holdup. "Well, you were definitely worth the wait, Helen." she stated with a audacious grin extending her hand.

Helen blushed slightly at the way the famous tall, dark-haired woman was eying her as she shook her hand. She often received compliments on her looks, which is why she had gone into modeling in the first place, but to be appreciated by one of the most well-known photographers in the business took her by surprise. She hadn't imagined she would be in the company of anyone like Torrance, being that she hadn't been as successful in her career as the men and women Torrance normally photographed. "Sorry for the wait." she stated.

"What wait?" Torrance jested, trying to make the woman more comfortable. She knew for the shoot to go well, the young woman was going to have to relax. "Time is nonexistent in those green eyes. My only regret is that I couldn't see them sooner." she said softly.

Helen flushed again. She knew Torrance's reputation as a notorious flirt on set from other people she had worked with, but to experience it first hand was something she hadn't considered. "So, where do you want me?" she asked, trying to divert the sexy photographer from her less than professional remarks.

Torrance grinned as outrageous lines popped into her head, but she opted not to respond, sensing that Helen might not like them. Taking the blonde gently by the arm, she led her toward the set. "You know, Helen, that blush of yours gives you an innocence I haven't seen in any of my models in years. That's probably one of your biggest assets." she mentioned. "Why don't you just make yourself comfortable over here? I don't know who you've worked with before, but let me tell you a little bit about the way I do things. This shoot isn't the type of stuff I normally do, so I'm not sure what you're used to. However we're going to do things my way. I'm trying to achieve a sensual undertone to our shoot, but I think that innocence of yours will add quite nicely to the mix I've already taken today. I want to try to capitalize on that, so if you can try to get into that frame of mind, that would work well. I thought this music might help a bit, sort of delicate yet sensuous at the same time. Can we do that?"

Helen nodded. "Of course." she answered taking a tentative seat on the stool on the set.

Without even asking Torrance, moved her hand to Helen's cheek, titling her head upward slightly. With the other hand, she tucked some hair behind the blonde's tiny ear. "There. Now you're perfect." she softly stated before turning to retrieve her equipment.

Torrance didn't even realize how much time was passing as she photographed the woman before her. As she looked through her lens, she idly pondered how to spend more time with the blonde. Being single Torrance was always looking for Ms. Right, and Helen was definitely the type of woman she found attractive. Even though she was not the most beautiful she had ever had the

pleasure of photographing, there was something about the way those green eyes pierced through her lens that moved her. Wondering if Helen would even entertain spending more time with her, she clicked through several rolls.

Finally Torrance called a stop to the shoot. Immediately Helen stood up and began to head back toward the dressing area, but Torrance followed her. "Helen, that was great work today." she said trying to grab the blonde's attention.

"Thanks. That means a lot coming from you."

"Listen. I was wondering if you would want to sit for me again sometime. I'm working on a book right now, and I think you would fit in well. What do you think?" she inquired taking a seat on the couch as Helen moved to get her things.

"What kind of book?" Helen asked in interest.

"Photography obviously. I'm doing the second in a series on women. I don't know if you've ever seen the first on. It's called 'Women at Work.' I'm doing one now about women at leisure."

"That could be interesting."

"Then give me your agent's number. I'm serious about including you. You're very natural." Helen handed Torrance one of her agent's cards before picking up her clothes to change. "Hey, just a second. I wanted to know something else." Torrance said. Helen looked at her questioningly.

"Are you from around here? Do you live in the area?"

"No. Why do you ask?"

"Well, I was having a little get together tonight at my place, and I thought if you weren't otherwise engaged, you might like to join us. It's nothing fancy, just a few of my friends. We're just going to have some wine and conversation, and I'm going to make some of my great Thai. What do you say? Morgan will be there."

"Well, that's very nice of you, Torrance. It just so happens that my train isn't until the morning. That sounds like fun."

"Great. Let me give you my address and number." Torrance scribbled the information on a slip of paper and handed it to her. "Everybody's coming about eight."

"Okay. What should I wear?"

"Nothing fancy. We're a casual group. It would surprise me if I even changed." Torrance stood and made her way towards the door, knowing that Helen was waiting on her to leave to change clothes.

“All right. I guess I’ll see you at eight then?”

Torrance nodded. “Look forward to it.” Going back out to the set, she saw Morgan still there talking with some other people. Taking her aside, she said, “Hey, Morgan, don’t forget eight o’clock tonight.”

“I won’t. Is it okay that I’m bringing a date?”

“Is that date female?”

“Of course.” Morgan answered.

“Then of course it’s fine. Helen’s coming too.”

“You invited Helen? Does she know it’s all lesbians?”

“I didn’t mention that part. Should I have? You don’t think anyone is going to misbehave, do you?”

Morgan shook her head. “They’re going to take one look at you and realize that a claim on Helen has already been staked. Too bad Helen is out of the loop, though.”

“Morgan, don’t read into this. I invited her over for drinks and dinner. It’s not that big of a deal. I’ve got to get going. It still haven’t gotten all the stuff I need for dinner. I’ll see you at eight.”

When Helen arrived at Torrance’s apartment building, she paid the cab driver and then stepped out onto the street. The doorman greeted her politely as she made her way inside. As she waited on the elevator, she thought about the possibilities of the night. When she accepted the invitation, she knew that Torrance was a lesbian, but she hadn’t thought about the other company that would be attending. She pondered if Morgan was also gay and what kind of people she might encounter. She wasn’t close-minded by any means being in the modeling business, but she had never really spent extended time in the company of lesbians before, so she was a little nervous about what to expect. When Helen got off the elevator, she slowly made her way down to Torrance’s apartment as she looked over her outfit. She had dressed in black slacks and a cornflower blue blouse even though Torrance said it was casual, having decided that she’d rather be slightly overdressed than under.

Torrance was just chatting with her other friends that had already arrived as she prepared their meal when she heard her doorbell. Since everyone was already there except for Helen, Torrance smiled at Morgan before asking her to take over the cooking duties while she answered the door. As she moved through the living room, she took a look at herself to make sure she was presentable. Even though she had denied her interest to her friends when Morgan had brought Helen up earlier in conversation, they all knew that Torrance was attracted to the new visitor to their group. Taking a quick look in the mirror to straighten out her dark locks, Torrance opened the door with a smile that only brightened when she saw how fabulous Helen looked.

“Hey. So glad you made it. Come on in.” she greeted gesturing her into the loft. “Here. Let me take your purse.” Stowing it in the closet, she escorted Helen back toward the kitchen.

“This is a great space you have, Torrance.”

“Thanks. I like it. Maybe later I’ll give you the grand tour.” Moving into the kitchen, Torrance dutifully made introductions to the other guests before asking, “Would you like a glass of wine?”

“That would be great. Thanks.” Helen took a spot near the end of the bar and joined in the conversation that was already taking place as Torrance put her drink next to her.

Relieving Morgan of her duties, Torrance took over the cooking as the six women chatted. As Torrance continued to make dinner, she subtly eyed Helen whenever she could. The young blonde appeared to be having a good time, but since she didn’t really know her, she couldn’t be for sure. Helen was a little more reserved than the rest of the group but still actively participated.

As Helen listened to the conversation at hand, she took in the women before her. It was becoming obvious that all of them were lovers of women, but she was relieved that none of them had inquired about her sexuality. She didn’t want to have to admit to the whole group that she identified herself as heterosexual, finding it easier just to let them all believe that she was one of them if they wanted. She looked over at her hostess to find her glancing at her. They exchanged smiles. Even though Helen was different from them as far as love was concerned, she found it easy to like Torrance’s friends and was glad that she had attended.

After dinner Torrance took Helen on a tour of her place while the other women started on the dishes. Once they had covered both floors, they proceeded onto the balcony. “You have a fantastic place, Torrance. If I were going to live in the city, this is exactly the kind of place I’d want. It’s so spacious, and you have all these great views. The windows here are incredible.”

“Yeah. I’m lucky I guess.”

“If you don’t mind me asking, how much does a loft like this go for?”

Torrance shrugged. “I don’t know. I don’t pay rent.”

“What do you mean? Do you own it?”

“My family owns the building. I just stay here to watch out over it.” Helen nodded taking the information in as she took the last sip of her wine from her glass. “Uh oh. You’re on empty. Let me fill that up for you.” Torrance suggested trying to take the glass from Helen’s hand.

“That’s okay. I can do it. Would you like more while I’m inside?”

“Sure. Bring out a bottle, would you?”

Helen nodded before going inside. As she passed through the living room into the kitchen, she noted that the group had broken down into twosomes for more intimate conversations, so she decided it would be best to rejoin Torrance on the balcony. When she returned she mentioned, "Looks like the party has quieted down a bit. Everybody has broken off into couples."

"Oh." Torrance said. When Helen didn't say anything more on the subject, she felt the need to address the issue. "About that Helen. It never really occurred me to mention to you that it would be all women here tonight."

"Why should it have?"

Torrance shrugged. "Well because we're all lesbians and you're not. I guess I just wanted you to know that I didn't mean for it to look so couplish, and by inviting you I only served to heighten that feeling. I never thought it might make you uncomfortable."

"It doesn't. I'm having a good time. How did you know I wasn't gay?" she asked curiously.

"It's obvious even though it's a real shame." she remarked teasingly.

Helen chuckled. "Are you always this flirtatious with straight women?"

"Yeah, pretty much. I'll flirt with just about anyone if I'm in the mood. I'm harmless though."

"I know. Why aren't you with anyone? You seem like a prime pick to me, looks, fame, money. Why aren't the women flocking to you?"

"Because believe it or not, all those things work to my disadvantage most of the time. It's a rarity to find a woman just interested in me."

"I guess I could understand that." Helen mumbled.

"What about you? Are you seeing someone?"

"No, no time really. My real job keeps me busy, and with modeling jobs on the side, I just don't have the time to get serious about someone. Most guys have a problem with a woman who works more than they do."

"What's your real job?"

"I'm a high school math teacher."

"Really? That's quite admirable. Why don't you do modeling full time? You're a great looking woman, and you have the right elements."

"Except for one. My height has really held me back, but that's okay. I'm over my adolescent dreams of becoming a supermodel. Now I realize that even if I could, I wouldn't want to do this

full time. This is just a summer thing for me, so I can travel and make some extra money. Three months of this is about all I can handle during the year.”

Torrance nodded. “I never asked you where you were from.”

“I live in Philly now, but I grew up in Maryland.”

“Oh. My family has a house up in the Poconos. It’s a great getaway from the city at times. There are time when New York just gets to be too much for me.”

“I can see that. I don’t really like being here for extended periods of time. About a week is all I can handle. I never get any sleep here either with all the noise. It’s funny, because I never actually heard any noise in your place except now that we’re out here.”

“Nice, isn’t it? It’s the soundproof glass we use for the windows. Blocks out the noise. I’m sure my neighbors pay a high price for that.”

“I’m sure they do.”

That night Helen was the last to leave. As Torrance walked her down to the lobby, they talked more about Torrance’s book project. Going out onto the street, Torrance greeted the doorman politely before asking that he hail a cab. When one pulled to the curb, Torrance opened the back door for Helen. “Well, thanks for coming tonight, Helen. I hope you had a good time.”

“I had a wonderful time. Thanks for inviting me. Your friends are great.”

“I’m glad you think so. Maybe we’ll have a chance to get together again soon if you’re in town.” Torrance proposed hopefully.

Helen gave the tall woman a smile. “I’d like that.”

“Good. You have my number. Call me anytime. In the meantime I’ll contact your agent about the book.”

“Sounds good.” There was a moment of silence as they looked at each other. Even though it hadn’t felt awkward the whole evening, their moment of parting felt very much like a date suddenly. “Well, I better go.” Helen stated.

“Yeah.” Torrance replied leaning to give her a hug. They embraced for a second, exchanging kisses on the cheek before Helen got into the cab, and Torrance shut the door. Torrance stood on the sidewalk until the cab was out of sight.

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A few weeks later Torrance was in Philadelphia to shoot Helen for her book. When she arrived at the model’s apartment, she knocked lightly due to the hour. The door came open slowly, and

when Torrance caught a glance at who it was, she was momentarily mute.

“Can I help you?” the man inquired curiously.

“I’m sorry. I’m Torrance Whitfield, and I’m looking for Helen Melbourne. Do I have the right place?” cautiously she asked.

“Oh yeah. Come on in.” he replied letting her inside. “She’s still asleep right now. Do you want me to go get her?”

“In a minute. I’m here to do a shoot of her, but she doesn’t have to get up just yet. Are you her roommate?”

“One of them. I’m Mark.”

Just then a auburn hair woman came into the living room. “I thought I heard the door.” she mentioned looking at Torrance inquisitively.

“Hi. I’m Torrance. I’m here to photograph Helen.”

“Oh. Yeah, she mentioned that to me. I’m Kelly. She’s still sleeping. Did she know you were coming this early?”

“I’m early for a reason. Her agent knows. I was hoping to catch her asleep. I wanted to get some pictures of her that way for the book.”

“Oh. Well, in that case, her room is the last door on the right.” Kelly said.

“Thanks. Is she a light sleeper?”

“Not at all. She can sleep through anything. She probably won’t even know you’re there.”

Torrance nodded before moving quietly down the hall and cracking open the door as silently as possible. The room was fairly bright with morning light as the blonde slept peacefully. Torrance tiptoed over to the bed. Helen was lying facing the door, one arm and leg on top of her white comforter. Her short blonde hair was strewn over the white pillow case. Torrance’s eyes drifted over her bare shoulder down her arm before taking in her bare leg. Helen’s sleeping attire consisted of only a navy tank top and white cotton bikinis. Torrance smiled at the vision before her. Helen looked so much like an angel at rest. Torrance completed a roll of film of just her sleeping without Helen even stirring. Deciding to wait for her to rise, she left the room as she had found it and went back into the den.

Kelly and Mark were sitting there having breakfast. “You were right. She didn’t even move.” Torrance said with a laugh.

“Could I get you anything while you wait? Would you like me to wake her for you?” Kelly



inquired.

“I’m fine. Thanks. I think she should be up any time now. I looked at her alarm clock, and it was set for 9:30, so I only have another ten minutes.”

Half an hour later the three of them were still sitting in the den waiting for Helen to make an appearance when they heard her door open. Helen sleepily padded out in a robe and slippers as she rubbed her eyes. “Morning,” she mumbled without even a look at them. However when Torrance answered the salutation, Helen’s green eyes snapped open. “Torrance? What are you doing here? You weren’t supposed to be here for another half hour.”

“I couldn’t wait to get started. Besides had I come later, I wouldn’t have been able to get pictures of you sleeping.”

“You did?” Torrance nodded. “Well, at least I was wearing something. I bet I looked a mess.” she said running her hands through her hair.

“You looked like the angel you are.” Torrance replied snapping a picture of her just standing there.

Helen noted the odd looks on the faces of her roommates at Torrance’s mild flirtation. Even though it didn’t normally phase her, the way they were looking at her made her uncomfortable. She knew it was just apart of Torrance’s act, but knowing that they were unaware of why she had said it, Helen shifted uneasily instead of gracing Torrance with a smile for the comment.

Torrance noticed immediately that she didn’t get her usual response. “What’s wrong, cutie? Wake up on the wrong side of the bed?” she joked trying to lighten the mood.

Holding a hand up to shield her face from any more potential photos, Helen grumbled, “I just don’t feel like having any pictures taken right now. Just give me five minutes, will you?” Heading back toward her bedroom, she shut the door behind her. Helen went back to her bed and collapsed onto it. She thought of her surprise to see Torrance already in her living room when she came in. The photographer was looking much different than from the evening she had spent with her. Torrance had opted to wear a white t-shirt, khaki shorts, and sandals with a backwards cap, making her look the part of a lesbian more so than Helen had seen her, and yet to Helen she looked just as fascinating as the day they met.

Over the past few weeks, Helen had thought a lot about the dark haired woman, wanting to call her but choosing not to. Something in her always kept her from dialing the phone number she had held in her hand many times. When Torrance had told her to call, Helen wondered if it was genuine and had been hesitant to intrude on the older woman’s life. Nevertheless her thoughts had been with Torrance numerous times over their brief separation, and now that she was sitting in Helen’s den, Helen was suddenly stuck with a bashfulness of being in front of the woman’s camera, because she felt too exposed. Modeling on a set was much different than being caught in her natural state, and she felt vulnerable about what could happen when her professional and personal lives collided.

Just then a knock on her door broke her thoughts. Kelly admitted herself and closed the door behind her before taking a seat on the bed. “Well, Torrance isn’t at all what I thought she might be.”

“Don’t start, Kelly. This day is going to be hard enough. I don’t need disapproving looks from you and Mark as well. I’m going to get strange looks all day today. I need your support.”

“You have it. I was just taken back. She wasn’t what I was expecting.”

“She doesn’t look like I expected her too either. I guess I was hoping she would be a little less obvious today since we have to be out in public. I really thought I was okay with her being gay, but right now I feel like the biggest bitch, because I’m bothered by the way she’s dressed.”

“Not to mention that she’s flirting with you.”

“She always does that with her models. It’s just her style, but today I’m unsettled by it. On top of that I’m a little weirded out that she took pictures of me in my underwear. This day just isn’t off to a good start.”

“Well, Mark and I were about to leave, but if you want us to stay here and be with you all day, we will. If she really makes you that uncomfortable, we’ll stay.”

“Thanks for the offer, but this is work. You’ll be bored. I’ve just got to think about where we can go that’s not too public.”

“All right but if you change your mind, call us.”

Helen waited for a few minutes after she heard her roommate leave before going back out into living room. Torrance was still sitting waiting patiently for her. “Look, Helen. The object of this shoot is to be completely natural. You don’t even have to talk to me. Just go about your schedule as if I’m not even here.”

“All right. Fine but just to remind you that there is a clause about me being naked.” she mumbled.

“I’m aware of that.” Torrance answered, offended by the icy demeanor that had struck Helen. “Look, if you have changed your mind about being in the book, you can tell me. I’d like to think that we’re good enough acquaintances at least to be open about our feelings. I wouldn’t hold it against you if you asked to get out of this. I just thought it might be something you’d want, but if you don’t want to do this, tell me. I’ll give you the roll I took of you this morning and be on my way. I invited you to be in this, Helen, but there are other models who want to be in it. I could just use one of them instead.”

Knowing she was being unfair to the photographer, Helen dropped her head. “I’m sorry. I’m just in a bad mood right now, and I’m a little upset that you took pictures of me asleep.”

“I cleared it with your agent first.”

“Well, she didn’t clear it with me. If I had known you were going to do that, I wouldn’t have been in so little.”

“You were fully covered. I’m sorry for the misunderstanding. I’ll tell you what. Do you want me to give you the roll? You can have it if it bothers you this much. I think they’ll be spectacular though.”

Helen knew Torrance was trying to placate her by offering to hand over the film. “No. If you think they are that good, keep them.”

“Are you sure?”

“Yeah. Well, I’m going to go on my run. You going to try to keep up?”

“Maybe for a little, but running and shooting at the same time is nearly impossible.”

Helen went to change into her running clothes before going outside. As she stretched Torrance took pictures of her, but as they began, Torrance quickly gave up trying to pace her with the camera and just waited for her to return. Afterwards they moved into the kitchen for breakfast. Torrance was just a bystander as Helen had her meal and read the paper. When that was complete, Helen went to shower, leaving Torrance on the couch. Pictures were taken of all aspects of dressing once Helen had on sufficient clothing. Torrance was so busy taking photos and notes that the two of them hardly had a chance to speak.

The whole day was spent with Torrance documenting everything that Helen did, from reading in the park, to talking on her cell phone, to meeting friends for early drinks. At dinner time Torrance took a temporary hiatus to eat something herself before getting back to work. The day ended with Helen on the couch watching a movie before going to bed. As Torrance took her final roll of the day, she tucked Helen in for sleep. Helen looked up at her in tiredness.

“You know, we’ve spent this whole day together and hardly said two words. This has been a strange day, Torrance.”

“Well, it’s over now. Just close your eyes and go to sleep.”

“I feel like I’ve been cheated out of a visit with you. If I close my eyes, you’ll be gone. Promise me that if I close my eyes, the next time I open them you’ll be here.” she whispered through a yawn.

“If that’s what you want. I was planning on going back in the morning, but I could spend the day with you and go home the day after.”

“Would you do that for me?”

“Sure. I’d like to visit with you too. I’ve missed your company, but I really should let you get to bed now. It’s been a long day.”

Helen patted the other side of her queen size bed. “Put your head down next to me, Torrance, and go to sleep. You’re tired too.”

“I need to go back to the hotel.”

“I’ll take you in the morning. Rest now.”

Torrance looked at Helen contemplatively for a moment before nodding at her. She really was tired and the thought of sleeping next to the beautiful woman was more attractive than driving all the way back to the hotel to a cold, empty bed. They didn’t say anything as Torrance took a seat on the edge of the bed to take off her sandals. Tossing them aside, she did the same with her cap. Opening her belt Torrance slipped off her shorts, leaving her in a pair of boxers and a t-shirt. Timidly she pulled back the covers and slid into the bed.

Helen had turned toward the door away from her giving Torrance a chance to view all of Helen’s back. The blonde had opted to wear a different tank top and a pair of sleeping pants to bed that night, but Torrance still thought her absolutely lovely. Torrance felt fairly sure that Helen was unaware of her feelings, so Torrance wanted to make sure not to make the younger woman uncomfortable by trying to put a move on her, even though as she gazed at her, it was exactly what she wanted to do. Deciding it would be better if she turned away from the beauty, Torrance turned her back to Helen and closed her eyes.

Helen awoke first in the morning. Feeling the body next to hers, she opened her eyes to see Torrance still sleeping. Helen propped up on her arm as she studied the older woman. Torrance’s short dark hair was matted from her hat the previous day and sleep. She looked up the sculpted arm that Torrance had over her head. Moving her eyes over Torrance’s face, she took in the photographer’s lips slightly parted as she took deep rhythmic breaths. Seeing a silver necklace around Torrance’s neck, Helen curiously reached for it to look at it closer. Dangling from it was a set of dogtags with the name Thomas D. Whitfield imprinted on them, making Helen wonder who it was and why Torrance was wearing them. She placed them gently on Torrance’s chest as not to wake her. As she laid there studying the older woman, it dawned on her how vulnerable Torrance looked in her sleep, a far difference from the strong woman she normally was. Helen smiled as she took in the beauty of Torrance’s sweet face and toned body. Without even realizing it, she reached over to Torrance’s arm, lightly tracing along the indentation of her defined tricep, but when Torrance stirred, she pulled back.

When Torrance awoke it took her a moment to remember where she was. Sitting up slightly she looked around the room before her eyes landed on Helen’s open green eyes. “Morning.” she whispered at the woman lying next to her.

Helen graced her with a smile. “Good morning, Torrance. Did you sleep well?”

Torrance nodded. "Yeah which is weird because I don't normally sleep well in strange places. Must have just been exhausted. Chasing around after you was no cake walk, even though the view was worth it."

"I'm glad you think so."

There was a minute of silence as they just looked at each other intently, but feeling uneasy with the way Helen was staring at her, Torrance broke the gaze as she asked, "So, what's our plan for the day?"

"Well, I guess the first thing would be to get dressed. I need to get you back to the hotel."

"Actually I have my own car, so I can just drive myself back. Why don't I go and take a much needed shower, and when I get back we'll have thought of what we'd like to do. How does that sound?"

Helen nodded. "Sounds fine. Are you going to leave tomorrow or tonight?"

"I haven't decided yet, but I guess I better, because I'll have to check out."

"Why don't you just bring your stuff back over here, so if you decide to stay, you can just crash here again?"

"You wouldn't mind?" Torrance clarified.

"Of course not. I'm planning on having you out late anyway and hopefully away from your camera."

Torrance grinned. "No camera today. I promise."

"Good." Helen stated.

Torrance looked down at Helen again. The softness of her gaze was making Torrance feel more strongly about her, but she figured Helen wasn't even aware how sultry she was looking at the moment. Taking a deep breath, Torrance began to get out of bed. "Well, I guess I better get going," she said putting on her shorts and sandals. Helen got out of bed as well and slipped on her robe before following Torrance to the door. As they passed through the den, they saw Kelly sitting there watching the morning news as she had breakfast. "See you in a bit, beautiful." Torrance said before walking out the door.

Once Torrance was gone, Helen turned to go back to her room, but the quizzical look on her roommate's face stopped her. "What?" she snipped.

"She spent the night?"

"So?" defensively Helen questioned.

“Hey. You don’t have to get bent out of shape about it. I’m just surprised. I didn’t expect that.”

“She was too tired to drive back to her hotel.”

“I see.” she mumbled.

“What? You don’t believe me?” Helen huffed.

Kelly gave her an inquisitive raise of the brow. “Of course I believe you, Helen.”

“Then why are you making such a big deal out of it?”

“I’m not. You’re the one making it an issue. What’s with you? Something you’re not telling me about your relationship with the photographer?”

“We’re just friends. Can’t she stay the night here without you thinking that we did something just because she’s a lesbian? If you didn’t know, you wouldn’t be looking at me that way.”

“I don’t think that even though you’re sure as hell acting guilty. You didn’t do anything with her, did you?” Kelly asked with interest.

“I’m not even going to answer that. You know me.”

“I sure do, Helen, and right now you’re acting that you just had sex and are now regretting it.”

Helen dropped her head forward. She knew she was acting weird, but something about the situation was making her uneasy. “Well, I didn’t.” she replied.

“Then what’s up with you? You’re as uncomfortable as you were yesterday morning when she arrived. If you don’t like her, why can’t you just not see her?”

“I do like her, Kelly. I guess it’s just different when she’s here versus being in New York. I think it’s easier for me to be in her life than for her to come into mine.”

“Because you’re uncomfortable with our friends knowing that you have a lesbian friend?”

“I guess. I just don’t want our friends to think that something’s going on between Torrance and me just because she’s gay.”

“And you think they might, especially with the way she talks to you.” Kelly finished for her.

“Yeah.”

“Well, you’re going to have to get over that, or maybe you’ll have to tell Torrance that it makes you uncomfortable when she flirts with you. That’s what it’s really about isn’t it? Her flirting

with you in front of people we know?”

Helen nodded. “In a way but it’s more than that.”

“How?”

“I don’t know.”

“Well, there’s nothing wrong with finding her interesting, Helen. You can still enjoy her company even though she’s gay without there being anything more.”

“I know. I’ve got to get dressed. She’ll be back soon.”

An hour later Torrance was back at Helen’s and waiting on the blonde to finish getting ready. When Helen came into the den, Torrance gave her a smile. “You look nice.” she complimented taking in Helen’s pastel green blouse and khaki capri pants with matching green slip on sandals. “Do we have a plan yet?”

Helen shrugged. “I don’t know. What would you like to do?”

“Well, I was thinking maybe it would be nice to be outside. I don’t get a lot of green in New York. I thought maybe we could take a drive through the country, possibly ending up out by my parents’ house for lunch. No one is there right now, so it’s quite. I just really would like to be out in the fresh air.”

“Okay. Tonight though we’re supposed to be going out with some friends for dinner, and then they want to go to this club. I told them I would go with them.”

“All right. We’ll be back by then. If you’re ready, your chariot awaits, mademoiselle.” Torrance said standing.

Helen looked over the photographer’s outfit choice. She was wearing a short sleeve knit shirt and khakis with sandals, again tipping the world off to her sexuality. Wondering if she would be able to get Torrance to change before they had dinner, Helen just gave her a smile before following her out the door. Once outside Torrance led the way over to her Cadillac Escalade and opened the door for Helen. As the blonde got up into her seat, she gazed over the features of the SUV. It had every amenity a vehicle could have further forming her opinion that Torrance’s family did have substantial wealth. “Thank you.” she softly said just before Torrance shut her door.

As she waited on Torrance to go around to the driver’s side, she wondered what the day might have in store. Even though they were on their way to forming a friendship, there seemed to be a palpable tension between them as well. Helen wondered if it would dissipate the further along the relationship developed as Torrance got into her own seat.

“Would you like to get a cup of coffee to go or something? I had a little breakfast while I was at the hotel, but there coffee tasted like sludge. I’m in need of a fix.”

“Yeah, sure. There’s a place just down the way.” When they reached the coffee shop, Torrance ran in while Helen waited in the car. As she watched Torrance disappear across the parking lot, her eyes traveled over Torrance back down past her waist to her posterior and legs as she thought to herself what an amazing body Torrance possessed. Helen thought that if Torrance had the desire she could be a model, especially at her tall height, but then the thought of Torrance being forced to wear fashions that obviously would not fit with the brunette’s personality made her chuckle. After a few minutes, she saw Torrance coming out of the shop carrying two coffees. She admired the way Torrance practically strutted back to the car, an air of confidence surrounding her.

“Here we go. Two coffees.” Torrance mentioned as she hopped back in the car. “Now we’re set.”

As Torrance pulled the SUV out into traffic, Helen took a tentative sip of her coffee as she cast a glance at Torrance. She admitted to herself that if Torrance had been a man instead of a woman, she would be physically drawn to her, but as the thought occurred, she questioned if she was attracted to the woman anyway, making her break her gaze and stare out the window.

“What’s going on in that pretty head of yours?” Torrance inquired after a few quiet minutes.

“I was just thinking about you.”

“What about me?”

“I was wondering how old you were.” Helen made up, pushing her other thoughts away.

“Thirty two. How old are you?”

“Oh, I’m practically ancient in the modeling world. I’m twenty seven.”

“And how did you decide to go into teaching? That takes special talent.”

“I don’t know. It’s just always interested me, and I was good in math. I enjoy working with the kids and feeling like I make a difference. How did you get into photography?”

“The same thing really. I just always wanted to do it, started it as a hobby but it became a career. Of course I’m not making a real difference in anyone’s life. I admire people who have it in them to dedicate themselves to helping others. I know that if there had been a teacher as attractive as you I might’ve been more inclined to be interested in my studies. I bet the kids like having you.” she teased lightly.

Helen flushed at the comment. “Well, looks aren’t what’s important in teaching.”

“No but it certainly helps. Tell me the truth. Don’t you think you have an easier time keeping their attention than some of your counterparts?”



She shrugged. "I don't know. Maybe I do but at the same time it can be a nuisance, because they think I'm a pushover or unintelligent. I hate being judged by my looks."

"And yet you model?"

"I can honestly say that I'm only in it for the money, and I know it won't last forever. I might as well make it while I can. I'm sure I only have a few good years left in me."

"Well, regardless of when you stop modeling, nothing can change the fact that you are a beautiful woman. You'll still have to deal with those students ogling you."

"Don't think for a moment that they don't do it either. I tell you there is nothing worse than knowing that when you have your back to the class, the boys and some of the girls are staring at my ass instead of the board."

Torrance laughed. "Beauty has its price. Tell me something, Helen. Do you ever wish that you weren't attractive?"

Helen shrugged. "I guess I never really thought about it much. Why do you ask?"

"I know some women that do feel that way, especially if their looks are inhibiting them from being taken seriously."

"I could see that, but I know my looks will wane with age. I might as well use them while I have them, even though occasionally they cause me problems."

Torrance nodded. "I guess that's one way to look at it, but I know from experience when a woman will age gracefully. You'll be one of those."

There was a momentary lapse in conversation as Torrance took a turn off onto a back woods highway leading north out of the city. Trying to find out more about her, Helen said, "You know you never did tell me where you were from. Have you always lived in New York?"

"Um, well, I guess New York has always been my home base of sorts, but I traveled a lot with my parents when I was young. My father was a senator for New York for a long time, and my mother was a model turned actress and then photographer, so there was a lot of traveling. He would go back and forth between New York and DC quite often, and my mother liked living in New York even though she did most of her work abroad."

"What kind of actress was she? Did she do films?"

"Yeah but mostly foreign, usually Italian. That's where she's from."

"That's where you get your looks. I had wondered if you had Italian in you with that olive complexion. What about the rest of your family?"

“Well, I’m an only child, but I have a large extended family on both sides. I come from a long line of actors and actresses on my mother’s side, and as far as my father’s, most of the men are attorneys or in business. What about you? What’s your family like? You said you were from Maryland. Where?”

“Annapolis. My parents actually still live in the area on the Chesapeake Bay. I’m the youngest of three. My father owns an architectural firm, and my mother is a retired school teacher. My brother is an engineer and lives in Northern Virginia with his wife and my two nieces. As for my sister, she lives in DC and works as an employment recruiter.”

“And how did you get to Philly if all your family is down there?”

Helen smiled as she dropped her gaze into her lap. “I’m almost embarrassed to admit it now, but I came here because of a relationship.”

“One that didn’t work out I take it.”

“No. We worked well together from a distance, but once I had graduated school and moved in with him, I realized it was a mistake. However I had already started working and making friends, so I just decided to stay. It’s that much closer to New York anyway, so it’s not as expensive to take the train in for a shoot.”

“Do you think you’ll ever want to go back?”

“I thought about it when we first broke up, but back then I was determined to make it on my own, especially since my parents were so against me moving in with him, and now I have a life. I don’t want to leave. Nothing short of getting married or moving for a job would take me away. Tell me. What was it like for you as a child growing up around all those famous, successful people? Did you feel pressured to take up professions like your family?”

“Well, as much as I enjoy acting and did it when I was a kid, I’m not exactly what the world wants to see as a leading lady in Italy or the U.S. There’s really not a place for a woman like me in acting. Besides I came to realize early that I had other artistic interests, but as far as my dad was concerned, I did get pressure about going to law school. He didn’t think photography was a way to make a living, and he didn’t want me just abusing the family estate. It took a while to convince him that it was what I really wanted. With the exception of where I live, I’ve done everything myself. I’ve made my own money and own name, so he’s proud of that, even though it’s not the profession he would’ve chosen for me. Then again there is nothing about my life he would have chosen.”

“I take it you’re talking about the gay thing?”

“Yeah. If my father had his way, I’d be exactly like my mother, a beautiful, intelligent woman who is used to the finer things and accepts nothing less. I’d be married with kids of my own and just be a full-time mother, which is just bizarre to think about. However once I told him that I was not only going to have a career but when I married it would be to another woman, who I

expected to be the mother of my children, he started treating me like the son he never had, including being strict on me as to making it on my own. All the men on his side have made their names on their own while the women traditionally have been passive. It was a weird situation for awhile, but now we have an understanding. However my mother and her family are a completely different story. My mother is the one who taught me to appreciate the female body. She just never realized I would take those lessons to heart.” Torrance joked.

“What makes you say that?”

“I went on just about every modeling shoot and movie set she was ever involved in, so I saw a lot as far as the range of sexuality goes. I was a very educated child, and when I began to have my own awakening, it was easy for me to express my feelings. My mother was and still is my best friend, and I could tell her anything. When I began to have feelings for other women, she encouraged me to explore my options. I actually had my first sexual experience on one of her photo shoots when I was fifteen.”

“Really?”

“Yeah, it was one of the models that my mother was photographing. It was funny, because my mother wasn’t upset about finding us together. She was more upset that I had held up the shoot, because the model had to get remade up. I remember that like it was yesterday. It was at that moment that I knew I only wanted to be with women.”

“How old was the model?” Helen inquired.

“Seventeen. Her name was Alena. She was this Danish girl with white blonde hair and blue eyes. I remember I was so nervous the first time I saw her, because I just thought she was so beautiful. Since she didn’t speak English or Italian, I didn’t know how to talk to her, but I was elated when I found out from someone that she spoke French. We just got to talking, and before we knew it, we were back in her dressing area smoking pot. I can recall the look in those blues eyes just before we kissed for the first time. Then suddenly we were doing a lot more than kissing. I can remember the way she kept mumbling in Danish. Even though I had know idea what she was saying, it was still so sexy. I knew I was doing something right.”

“Did you see her after that?”

“Yeah but not as much as I wanted to. Our fling lasted for a few months, but the last time I saw her, she made it clear that she wasn’t interested in that sort of relationship with me any more. Apparently she had met a boy. It hurt so badly, because I was in love with her, but it was bliss those few months. I wouldn’t trade it for anything.” Torrance stated with a smile. “Enough about me, though. How did you lose your virginity?” she asked teasingly.

“That’s a bit personal, don’t you think?” Helen inquired partly in jest.

Thinking she may have overstepped their boundaries, Torrance stated, “You’re right. It is personal. You don’t have to tell me. I’m sorry I asked.”

“It’s okay. It’s just not nearly as exciting as your experience. I’m actually still mortified that I was so dumb as to allow it to happen when it did. It was nothing like I had envisioned as a teenager.”

“What did happen?” Torrance asked, wondering if she was treading on thin ice.

Helen shrugged. “I just lost it in the back seat of a car with my high school boyfriend. It was the first semester of college, but we were still together even though we went to different schools. We were home on Thanksgiving break, and we just did it in my driveway. It wasn’t anything special. In fact I wondered what the fuss had been about, because I was less than satisfied by the whole event. Not much later after that we broke up. I really was disheartened with sex in general until I met Richard, the guy I moved here to be with. That’s when I finally realized the potential of it.”

“He was good to you then? Why did you break up?”

“We just didn’t want the same things. We didn’t work well together living under the same roof.”

The rest of the time passed in idle chat, but as they neared their destination, Torrance called ahead to her favorite restaurant to order them lunch to go. After picking it up, they made their way up to the house. When they pulled to a stop in front of the three story log cabin, Torrance said, “Welcome to my getaway.”

“Wow. I’ve never seen anything like it.”

Going inside Torrance gave Helen a brief tour before suggesting, “Since it’s such a nice day, I think we should have lunch out on the deck. What do you say?”

“That sounds good. Can I help you with anything?”

“I’ve got it. You just make yourself comfortable.” Torrance replied placing her hand on Helen’s lower back and giving her a nudge toward the door. “I’ll be right out with the drinks.”

Helen felt her skin tingle as Torrance touched her followed by a sense of loss when she walked away. She knew that she was feeling things with Torrance she had never experienced with any other women before, but curious as to where things might go, she decided not to think about it too much. “Let me know if I can help.” she said just before she went outside to admire the view of the mountains.

Torrance came out a few minutes later with two glasses of ice tea. “Voila (Here you go), Mademoiselle Melbourne.” she said with a smile presenting the glass to her companion.

“Merci beacoup (Thank you very much).” Helen replied smiling as well as she felt Torrance’s hand against her back.

“Parlez-vous francais, mademoiselle (Do you speak French)?”

“No. I took it in high school, but I hardly remember anything.”

Torrance nodded. “Well, lunch will be right out. Be right back.”

Over lunch Helen mentioned, “This really is a fantastic view, Torrance. I could look at this everyday.”

“Me too but it’s only my second favorite place in the world.”

“Where’s your first?” Helen asked curiously.

“My grandparents villa in Italy. Have you ever been to Europe?”

“Well, I did a semester abroad in London and visited Ireland, but I’ve never been to mainland Europe. I would love to go someday.”

“You would love Italy. You should go with me. I’m one of the best tour guides around.”

“That would be fun.”

“Then why don’t you come with me? You have time to get your passport and visa squared away. I’m not leaving until next week. Just think three weeks in Europe. Wouldn’t that be great?”

“It would, but I don’t think I can afford to do that on such short notice.”

“Well, let me get you a ticket, and you’ll stay with me at my grandparents’ house. You won’t have any expenses.”

“Torrance, I can’t let you buy me a ticket. That’s too much.”

“I won’t be buying it. I have more frequent flyer miles that I never could use. Come on, Helen. You could use a vacation.”

“Well, I wouldn’t want to impose on your family.”

“Nonsense. They love visitors, and they’ll be thrilled I’ve brought someone along. My mother would love to meet you too. She’s already there.”

“Are you sure?” hesitantly Helen inquired, wanting to go but not wanting to be in the way.

“Of course. I wouldn’t have asked otherwise. Please, it’ll be wonderful. I promise. We’ll go anywhere you want.”

“All right. I can see that I won’t be able to talk you out of this. I do need a break, but I’m not spending three weeks with you and your family. You need private time with them. I’ll go for ten

days though.”

“Great. I’m so thrilled. When is the best time for you?”

Later that afternoon after they had just talked for several hours, Helen said, “As much fun as I’m having, we really have to get back if we’re going to make it to dinner on time.”

“Oh, I totally forgot about that.” Torrance admitted looking at her watch. “Just let me get the dishes, and we can go.”

“Could I help?” Helen offered moving to pick up her own plate.

“No, I’ve got it. You just relax.”

When Helen and Torrance returned to Helen’s apartment, there was a note from Kelly and Mark that they would meet them at the restaurant. “Well, I just need to change before we go. Would you like to refreshen up?” Helen asked subtly, hoping that Torrance would change.

“Do I need to? What kind of place is it? I would hate to be dressed inappropriately.”

“It’s a nice place. Khakis aren’t really going to cut it. Do you have something to wear?”

“Sure. I’ll go get my bag out of the car since I guess I’m staying here anyway. Don’t worry, Helen. I wouldn’t embarrass you.”

“I know. We need to hurry though.”

Twenty minutes later Torrance was on the couch just waiting for Helen to finish getting ready. When the blonde came out of her room, Torrance unknowingly gave her sexy grin at the outfit the model had chosen. Helen was dressed in a sleeveless silk blouse and flowing black pants. “You look beautiful.” she complimented standing.

Helen felt herself blush at the comment. “You look nice too.” she replied noticing that Torrance was in a black ensemble as well, wearing a short-sleeved cotton shirt and black pants.

“Shall we go to dinner?” Torrance asked extending her arm for Helen to take.

With only a second of hesitation, Helen took the offered arm, smiling at her friend as her fingers grazed over Torrance’s bare skin just under her sleeve. Helen was beginning to like the feeling she got whenever they touched and decided to indulge in it as long as Torrance seemed comfortable.

Torrance drove to the restaurant that evening, and when they arrived she opened the door for the teacher, allowing her to enter first before unconsciously placing a hand along her lower back. Helen smiled inwardly at the protectiveness Torrance was showing as they walked toward the back of the bar to their other dinner companions. Approaching the table Helen made

introductions before Torrance asked her, “What do you want from the bar while we wait?”

“Oh, I’ll get it, Torrance. You’ve been waiting on me all day.”

“Don’t be silly. You deserve the attention. Now what would you like?”

“Are you sure? I mean after today and taking me to Italy, the least I could do is buy you a drink. You sit.”

“No. You’re not going to win this one, so you better just tell me what you want.”

With a playful sigh, Helen answered, “White wine. Thanks, Torrance.”

“You’re most welcome. I’ll be right back.”

As soon as Torrance walked out of ear shot from the table, Kelly gave a teasing smile. “You two make a cute couple, Helen.”

Helen rolled her eyes. “Don’t start. You know that we’re only friends. The outfits are just a coincidence.”

“You sure? You argue like a couple. Helen’s got a girlfriend.” one of the guys, Tom jibed.

“Don’t say that. You wouldn’t say that if she wasn’t a lesbian.”

“Oh, come on, Helen. It’s obvious by the way you walked over here that she is interested in you. She had her arm around you, and what’s this about going to Italy?” he inquired.

“She invited me to Italy later this month, and I said I would go. It’s no big deal.” Helen tried to defend.

“No big deal? Helen, I know you’re blonde, but are you really that naive? A woman like Torrance wouldn’t just invite you to Europe for the hell of it. She wants something, and I could only guess what that might be.” Tom accused.

“Look, it might be true that Torrance is attracted to me, but she just happens to be the most famous photographer I’ve ever worked with. This woman could single-handedly make or break my career. I’m not adverse to a little interest if it gets me what I want.” she stated firmly, even though she knew she was lying about the way she felt for Torrance. In truth she had never considered what Torrance could do for her careerwise until confronted by her friends. The fact that she wasn’t ready to disclose that she might be having feelings for the brunette made her invent a reason to justify Torrance’s behavior.

“Well, I guess that’s okay then. At least you’re only in it for the monetary gains. It would have surprised me if you were taking dips in the lesbian pool.” Tom mumbled through his drink.

Helen stared at her friends seriously. “Not one word out of any of you for the rest of the night about this. My relationship with Torrance is not up for discussion. Is that understood?”

They all mumbled in agreement as Helen cast a glance over to the bar to see Torrance talking with the female bartender. A few moments later she returned carrying Helen’s wine and her own scotch. “Mon cherie (My dear).” the photographer said as she placed the glass in front of Helen.

The blonde smiled at her. “Merci, mon amie (Thank you, my friend).” she replied, knowing it would irritate her friends that she and Torrance were intentionally keeping them out of their simple conversation.

The next half hour past with Torrance just listening to Helen and her friends talk as they waited on their table. However the women then excused themselves to use the restroom, leaving Torrance with just Mark and Tom. “I’m going to go check to see how much longer the wait is going to be.” Mark mentioned.

As he walked away from the table, Torrance looked at Tom. Sensing that he had something to say to her, she inquired, “What?”

“So, I hear you’re a dyke.” he stated.

Inside Torrance cringed at his tone and language, knowing that the conversation was about to get uncomfortable. Nevertheless she answered with an edge of irritation, “You hear right. So what?”

“Hey, no reason to get defensive about it. I was just asking. How long have you known Helen?”

“A few weeks. You?”

“A couple of years. You know that woman is going to be my wife someday.”

Torrance raised an eyebrow at him. “She didn’t mention that to me. She told me she didn’t have a boyfriend.”

Tom shrugged. “Well, we’re not dating yet, but it’s only a matter of time. I just thought you should know, so you can back off.”

“Back off? What are you talking about?”

“Oh, please, Torrance. Don’t give me that. You know what I’m talking about. You have a thing for Helen, but in case you haven’t noticed, she’s not like you. You would never even be able to get a woman like that. You might as well give it up, because she’s never going to sleep with you. I know this trip to Italy is nothing but a chance to get her to do just that, but she won’t. She’s only hanging out with you, so you’ll help her career. The girl is mine, so just lay off.” Tom growled.

Torrance gave a cocky grin to offset the hurt she was really feeling inside at his accusation.



“Listen, Tom. If I want Helen, I’ll have Helen, and there’s nothing you can do to stop me. She’s made it know she’s available, so that means she’s free game. I think it would be best if you didn’t try to get involved in something that was none of your business.”

Before she could say more he reached across the small table, grabbing her by the front of the shirt and pulling her closer. Being shocked at his action, Torrance didn’t even have time to react as the drinks on the table toppled over from the force. “Listen, dyke, don’t fuck with me. If you lay a hand on her, I swear I’ll make you regret it.”

Just then a voice broke their argument as Mark came back to the table. “Tom, what the hell are you doing?” he yelled pushing Tom away from Torrance. “Torrance, are you okay?”

Torrance scowled at Tom before mumbling, “I’m fine. I think it might be best if I just go wait over by the bar.”

“You better go farther than that! If I ever saw you again, it would be too soon!” Tom yelled after her retreating form.

She was only over there a moment before she felt a hand on her shoulder. Looking up she saw Mark standing there with a concerned gaze. “Torrance, are you sure you’re all right?”

“Yes. I’m a big girl, Mark. I can handle myself. He’s just an asshole.”

“What happened?”

“He just was trying to make it clear that Helen was his, and that the attention I was giving her was unwanted and unappreciated.”

“You know that’s not true. He has feelings for Helen, but they aren’t returned, and he’s probably just jealous. We all like you. Please don’t let him being a jerk ruin the evening. Kelly and Helen will be so upset if they knew I allowed you and Tom to get into a fight.”

Torrance smiled at him. “Don’t worry about it. I’ll make sure Kelly knows you tried to keep the peace.”

“Please come back to the table.” Mark asked.

Torrance shook her head. “Sorry but I can’t. I’m not going to be subjected to him any more. I really just want to go home.”

“You can’t. Then Helen will know something happened.”

Torrance shrugged. “Listen, Mark. This might be hard for you to understand being straight and a guy, but I don’t want to be anywhere around him. He’s threatened me with bodily harm, and even though I can hold my own in a fight, I don’t really want to get involved in an altercation. It would be best for me if I left. Tell the girls that I got a call and had to get back right away.”

Mark sighed and shifted on his feet nervously. “Well, I can see I’m not going to win this one. Let me give you my key to the apartment, so you can at least get your stuff.” he acquiesced.

“Thanks. Will you make sure Helen gets home all right?”

“Of course.”

When Helen and the other women returned to the table, she noticed that Mark and Tom were strangely quiet. “Where’s Torrance?” she inquired looking over toward the bar to see if the brunette had gone to get another drink.

“She had to leave.” Mark answered.

“What? What do you mean? She just left?”

“Yeah. She said she had gotten a phone call and that it was urgent that she get back right way. She told me to extend her apologies.”

Looking at Tom, she saw a smug demeanor on his face. Taking in the table of overturned, empty glasses, she knew something wasn’t right. “Did she saw what was wrong?” she inquired.

Mark shook his head. “No, she just said she had to leave straight away. I gave her my key to the apartment, so she could go by and get her things.”

As soon as Torrance reached the apartment, she threw her things into her bag in a huff. All the way from the restaurant she thought about Tom’s accusations that Helen was only agreeing to be with her to get a jump in her modeling career, and she was uncertain of whether or not it was true. Most of her believed that Helen was as genuinely interested in becoming friends as was she, but being that they hadn’t known each other long, she was unsure. Furthermore Torrance knew her own interest in the blonde was far beyond that of friendship, and if Tom could tell, she wondered if Helen could as well. Knowing that Torrance should at least give Helen an explanation for her sudden departure that night, she decided to leave the teacher a quick note of apology before leaving.

That night as Helen, Kelly, and Mark returned to the apartment, Helen still wondered if there was more to the story that Mark had disclosed. Going into her bedroom for the night, she readied herself for bed, missing the note sitting on her night table. However the following morning when she turned over to see what time it was, she found the folded piece of paper tucked between her clock and light with her name written in Torrance’s bold handwriting. Curious as to what it might say, she propped herself up in bed and opened the note.

“Dearest Helen, I am sorry for my abrupt departure last night. I know by now Mark has probably told you that I had to come home on urgent business, but I feel like I should be honest with you and tell you that is not why I really left. I asked him to tell you that as to avoid a confrontation. In fact the real reason for my leaving has nothing to do with business. I’m sorry to say that while

you were gone from the table, your friend Tom and I got into an argument, in which he relayed to me that you two were more than just friends, and I was acting inappropriately with you. Mark told me that indeed you weren't Tom's girlfriend, that there were no mutual feelings involved. However there are other things that were said that made me think that this relationship between us isn't what I think it is, and I feel like I should be honest with you before you come to Italy. Tom told me that you were only using me as a way to help your career. Now I don't necessarily believe that, but if it is true, I want you to know that you don't have to pretend to be my friend just to receive my help. I would refer you to anyone for anything for modeling, because I think you have a lot of the qualities that are wanted in the business regardless of whether we were friends or not. However I think there is an even bigger issue than that at hand. When he mentioned that he thought it was obvious that I was coming onto you, I wondered if you thought the same. You're a special woman, Helen, but I would never try to make you into something you weren't. Over the course of the past few weeks, we've become close very quickly, and I just want you to know that I'm enjoying our developing friendship. However I've come to realize something else is there. I don't know if you have come to realize that same thing or not, but I just want to assure you that this relationship between us is only going to go as far as we're both comfortable. I just felt like you should know all this before you come to Italy. I've already taken the liberty of booking your flight, and your tickets will be here in a few days. If you have changed your mind, I understand. Just call my agent in New York and let her know, so I know not to expect you. I do hope you decide to come though. Until I see you again, take care. Your friend, Torrance."

Helen reread the note several times, getting angrier each time that Tom had upset Torrance. Wanting to know that whole truth, she marched out of her room to see if Mark and Kelly were home, finding them on the couch. Waving the note at them, she inquired, "What really happened last night, Mark? What did Tom say to her that made her want to leave?"

"I'm not sure, Helen. All I know is what I saw." he confessed as Kelly reached for the note in Helen's hand.

"Well, what did you see?"

"When you left to go to the restroom, I got up to check on the wait, leaving the two of them alone. By the time I had come back to the table, Tom had grabbed her by the shirt and dragged her half way across the table. I broke it up, but I could tell they both were upset. Torrance stalked off to the bar, and I went after her. She told me that Tom had said you were his girlfriend and to stop hitting on you. I told her it wasn't true. I asked her to come back to the table, but she refused. She said she wanted to leave and to tell you she had gotten a call that made her leave."

"Damn him!" Helen cursed. "I'm never going to talk to him again! How could he do that to her?"

"Helen, he was feeling threatened, because it's obvious you like Torrance more than him."

"That's no excuse. Torrance and I are just friends."

“Are you sure?” Kelly broke in. “By this letter it sounds like there could be more.”

When Kelly said that Helen flopped into a chair and sighed. Mark took the letter from his girlfriend’s hand and read it. “Yeah, Helen. This does sound like something else is going on.”

Helen shook her head. “I don’t know what’s going on. I never thought she would pick up on it.”

“Pick up on what? Do you like her?” he asked.

Helen hesitated before replying, “I don’t know.”

Kelly looked at her closely for a moment. “Helen, it would be okay if you did. I know I was teasing you last night, but if you really were interested in her, we would support you. We would just want for you to be happy. If it’s with Torrance, it would be all right with us.”

“Yeah. Torrance is a great person, and you seem to like being with her. We would be cool with it.” Mark added.

Helen looked over at them. “Thanks for saying that, but I’m not sure that’s the direction this relationship is going. I’ve got to figure out what to do here.”

“When are you supposed to be going to Italy?”

“In two weeks.”

“Well, I guess you’ve got some time to think about it. It sounds like she’s leaving things up to you.”

Continued Part 2

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

**Alex Tryst's Scrolls  
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**~ Love in Photographs ~**

**by Alex Tryst  
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## Part 2

The morning after Torrance had arrived in Italy, she found her mother sitting in the garden reading after breakfast. As Torrance took a seat next to her, she smiled at her daughter. However when Torrance didn't give her normal dashing grin, she asked softly, "What's wrong, dear? I can tell you're unhappy."

"It's nothing, Mama, just thinking about a woman that I met recently."

"A woman that you are interested in?"

Torrance nodded. "Yes but I'm not sure she feels the same."

"I see."

"I invited her over to Italy, and she may be coming, but I'm not sure. We didn't leave on good terms, so I don't know if she still wants to come."

"What happened?"

"I got in a fight with one of her guy friends, and then I ran off without saying good bye."

"Why did you do that?" her mother inquired touching her on the arm.

Torrance shook her head. "I was scared, not of the guy but of her finding out how I felt. That's what the fight was about, but I wasn't ready to tell her my feelings. I think I've screwed up."

"Maybe not. Don't worry too much about it. What is this lady's name?"

"Helen, Helen Melbourne. Oh, Mama, she is amazing. She's just perfect."

Her mother smiled at her. "Ah, blinded by love I see. Doesn't she have any faults?"

"Only one that I can think of."

"And what's that?"

"She's straight." Torrance mumbled.

"Oh, well, that certainly makes things a little more complicated."

"Tell me about it. I swore I would never do this again, Mama. I know better than to fool around with straight women. I just end up getting hurt, but I haven't felt this way since I was a teenager with Alena. There is just something about her."

“It’s that serious?” her mother inquired in surprise. Torrance just looked at her. “I can see that it is just by looking in those eyes of yours. I don’t know what to say, darling. You deserve a woman that will make you happy. We can always hope that Helen is the one. Just because she’s never been with a woman doesn’t mean she’s straight. Maybe she’s just now starting to know herself. The chemistry is there?”

“I think so. I mean we have such a good time together, and she seems to like my attention.”

“Well, then give it time. Maybe she is scared too. Now I know you have better things to do than sit around here. Why don’t you go out and try to get rid of some of this nervous energy? Things will work themselves out. You’ll see.”

“I hope so, Mama.” Torrance replied kissing her mother on top of the head and then heading out the back garden gate.

On the night before Helen was supposed to leave to Italy, she was sitting around the apartment with Kelly and Mark. As the three of them just watched tv, Mark asked, “So have you made your final decision about tomorrow yet?”

“No. I’m ready to go, even packed, but I’m not sure yet. I just don’t know what to do.”

“I think you should go.” Kelly stated. “Heck, even if I had to put out, I would go to Italy with Torrance. She’s offering you a trip of a lifetime.” she joked.

“It’s that possibility of crossing the line of friendship that’s stopping you, isn’t it?” Mark inquired.

Helen nodded. “I just don’t know what I want.”

“Well, at least you can be assured that she’s going to let you decide where the relationship goes. I mean she said that in the letter. It’s not like you’re committing to anything but being friends with her by going.” Kelly pointed out.

“That’s true. I believe her when she says that she’s only wants to go as far as I do. The problem is I don’t know how far I want to take it.” she admitted.

“Well, you know you have our support. This would a perfect opportunity, Helen. You’ll be half way around the world with this woman. You won’t know anyone else, so they’ll be no one to look down on you if want to try something new. Know one will ever know unless you tell them. It’s the perfect chance to do whatever you want without any consequences to your other relationships. If I were you, I would go.” Mark said.

Helen nodded. “I feel so stupid about this. I mean I’ve always wanted to go back to Europe and suddenly and all expenses paid trip lands in my lap. I would be an idiot to pass this up just because I’m scared of my own feelings. It’s not even her I’m worried about, because I know

she'll keep her word. She's like that, but it's me. What if I get there and I realize I want more? I'm scared of that possibility, but I guess you have a point. It would be the best time and place to experience it if I wanted to. I guess the only real question is which of you can take me to the airport tomorrow?"

The next morning Helen and Mark were up early to go to the airport. As Helen sat in the living room with her luggage double checking everything, the phone rang. Wondering who could be calling at such an hour, she saw Mark answer it. By the way he greeted the person on the other end, Helen pondered who it could be. He seemed overly friendly and excited as he smiled brightly into the phone. Knowing that Kelly was still in bed, Helen contemplated briefly if Mark was having an affair, because she had never seen him as happy as when he was with Kelly. Suddenly he turned and grinned at her. "It's for you."

Totally confused by his statement, she came to pick up the phone. "Hello?" she hesitantly greeted.

"Helen, hi." Torrance said nervously.

"Oh, hi, Torrance. How are you?"

"Good. You?"

"I'm good. What's up?"

"I was just calling to see how you were."

"I'm doing well." Helen replied. "But I really can't talk right now. I'm on my way out the door."

"Oh, well, all right. We can talk some other time then. Sorry to have bothered you." Torrance mumbled.

Sensing the photographer's sullen mood, Helen inquired, "Hey, Torrance, just one thing. When I land are you going to be there to pick me up?"

"You're coming?" she asked in obvious surprise.

"Of course. Did you think I wouldn't?" she asked when she realized that's why Torrance had called even though she didn't admit to it.

"I wasn't sure. Of course I'll be there to pick you up. I'm so glad you've decided to come."

"Me too but I really have to go now. Mark's waiting to take me to the airport."

"Oh, sure. I guess I'll see you soon then. Be safe."

"All right. See you soon."

When Torrance got off the phone, she raced to find her mother. Running into her in the garden, she hugged her excitedly. “She’s coming, Mama. Helen’s coming.”

“That’s wonderful, dear. I never had any doubts.”

“Oh man, now I have to plan.” Torrance mumbled beginning to pace the stone patio.

Her mother laughed lightly. “You have plenty of time, Torrance. You’re going to drive me crazy if you don’t stop that pacing.”

“I have to figure out what room to put her in too.” Torrance pondered aloud.

“Let’s put her in the room next to yours. That way in the event you two want to sneak into each other’s rooms at night you don’t have far to go.” her mother teased.

“That’ll never happen. I told you Helen isn’t like that. We’re just friends.” the brunette stated even though somewhat sadly.

“You never know, Torrance. She did agree to come. People can change their minds. You already said the chemistry is there. Maybe she wants to see where this relationship can go. Now instead of hanging around here and fretting, why don’t you go out into the fields for awhile and work out your nerves? I’m sure they could use your help out there.”

The next day Torrance went to the airport alone to meet Helen’s plane. As she stood there waiting for the passengers to come off the plane, she wondered what the next ten days might hold. She was genuinely surprised that Helen had decided to join her, so she thought maybe the blonde may be willing to see what might happen in their relationship. However knowing that it would be Helen’s first time if it were to happen, she knew things would have to move at a pace the blonde was comfortable with. Deciding not to put too much pressure on herself about it, Torrance decided it would be best to just let things flow as they would. Noticing the blonde coming out the narrow hallway into the terminal, Torrance smiled widely as she moved to her. Forgetting everything she had just told herself, she gave Helen a huge hug, picking her up and twirling her lightly as she admitted, “I missed you.”

Helen felt the tingle all over her body as taller woman held her suspended in air. “I missed you too, Torrance.” she said with a smile as she let her fingers trail lightly through the brunette’s short hair.

“Come on. Let’s go get your bags and get out of her.” the older woman suggested finally putting the blonde back on her feet. Helen agreed, hanging onto Torrance’s arm as the photographer led the way to the baggage claim. After collecting the luggage, Torrance took Helen out to where the family driver was waiting to take them home. They were quiet in the car as Helen took in the scenery passing outside the car window. Finally though after almost an hour, Torrance mentioned, “We’re almost there. It’s just at the top of this hill. This is actually the beginning of their driveway.”



“This is some driveway. I would hate to have to walk up this thing.”

“The hired hands do it everyday. I guess you get used to it. It doesn’t even phase me any more. I walk it everyday to go into town.”

“And you’ve got the legs to prove it.” Helen mumbled, her eyes moving to Torrance’s khaki shorts clad thighs.

Upon arrival at the house, Torrance took Helen’s bags into the house. “Let’s just get these up in your room, and then I’ll introduce you to my family.” Helen nodded and followed Torrance up the staircase. “Here’s where you’ll be staying. My room is just next door. I hope you like it.” the brunette stated as she put Helen’s suitcases on the bed.

Helen looked around the room, taking it all the exquisite furniture. The room had windows on two sides, and a balcony that looked out over a vineyard. “This room is bigger than my whole apartment, Torrance. It’s beautiful.”

“Glad you like it. As I said I’m right next door, and the balcony joins our two rooms. Come on now. I’ll take you to meet my family, and then you can rest.”

“Oh, I meant to ask you if your grandparents knew English. I feel a little self-conscious, because I don’t know any Italian.”

“Not to worry. They know enough English to hold a conversation, and my mother will talk your ear off if you let her. They’re all excited to meet you.” Torrance mentioned reaching her hand out for Helen to take. Without even thinking the blonde put her hand into the larger one and allowed Torrance to lead her through the house. Going out into the garden, they saw three older adults sitting there drinking tea and just talking. “Mother, Nonna (Grandmother), Nonno (Grandfather), I would like for you to meet Helen Melbourne. Helen, these are my grandparents and my mother.” she said making introductions.

“We’re so pleased you’ve come, Helen. Please have a seat. Would you like some tea?” Torrance mother inquired.

“That would be wonderful. Thank you.”

All five of them talked for about an hour before Torrance noticed Helen trying desperately to stifle a yawn. “I think we better let you take a rest, Helen. That trip is a long one.” Torrance mentioned.

“I am a little tired.” she confessed.

“Well, why didn’t you mention it before now? Forgive us for neglecting your needs, dear. Torrance, show Helen up to her room.” her mother instructed.

“Oh, it’s fine. I’m just a little tired from the flight. I’m not feeling neglected in the least.”

“Come on, Helen. I better do as she says, or else she might start embarrassing me.” Torrance said with a laugh. Taking Helen back upstairs, Torrance hovered outside the door. “If you open your windows and the balcony doors, you’ll get a nice breeze coming through. In fact I prefer doing that since I can’t in New York.”

“That sounds nice.”

“Well, I’ll just let you rest. You know on my first day here, I almost always sleep the whole day away, so please don’t feel like you have to come back down if you’re tired. This is your vacation. You can do whatever you want.”

“Oh, I’m not going to stay up here the rest of the day. I just want to take a little nap. I’ll go to bed early tonight.”

“Okay. Then I’ll see you in a few hours. If I’m not around, my mother will know where to find me. I usually am outside somewhere.”

“All right. I’ll see you in a bit. Thanks again for letting me come, Torrance.”

Torrance gave a dashing smile. “It’s my pleasure, Helen. I’m glad you’re here.”

When Torrance returned to the garden, she was wearing a large smile. “So, what did you think?”

“She’s lovely, Torrance.” her mother answered. “I can see why you like her, and I can also see that those feelings are mutual.”

“Really?” Her mother nodded. “What about you, Nonna and Nonno? What did you think of Helen?”

“She lights up your face, Torrance. You love her very much, yes?” Nonna asked. Torrance nodded in affirmation.

“It shows.” Nonno replied. “How serious is this relationship?”

“We’re just friends right now.”

“Just friends? I think not. There is potential for so much more.” her mother decisively stated.

“I hope so.”

“Well, while you’re hoping, why don’t you go do something? You’ll be restless until she wakes.”

“I think I will. If I’m not back by the time she gets up, tell her I went out to the vineyard.”

“We will. Run along now.”

A few hours later Helen arose from her nap. Going to the balcony, she looked out over the scenic view of hills and mountains. Wondering what Torrance was up to, she freshened up and headed out to find the tall woman. Trying the garden first, she found Torrance’s mother there reading.

“Ah, you look more rested now. That trip always wears me out as well.” her mother mentioned.

“Well, it helped to have such a wonderful place to nap. I think I’ll be able to make it the rest of the day now. Thank you for allowing me to come stay with your family, Mrs. Whitfield.”

“Please don’t call me that. Mrs. Whitfield is my mother-in-law. You must call me Maria. I insist.”

“Very well, Maria. Do you know where Torrance is?”

“You should probably find her out in the vineyard. It’s her favorite place here. Just go out the garden gate and follow the dirt path over the ridge. I’m sure she’s been counting the minutes since you two have been apart, so you better go find her.”

Helen did as she was told. Following the path she eventually came to the vineyard, but since it was so large, she wondered where Torrance could be hiding. Slowly strolling through the rows failed to produce the photographer, so Helen walked to the very end. There on top of a small hill she spotted the brunette kneeling in front of three crosses with her head bowed. Not wanting to interrupt what looked like a prayer, Helen softly approached. She got close enough to hear that Torrance was speaking aloud, but she couldn’t make out what the older woman was saying as she stood at a respectable distance. When Torrance was finished, she made the sign of a cross across her body, as in Catholic tradition signaling the end of her prayer, before moving to sit at the base of the middle cross. As soon as she looked up and saw Helen there, she jumped up.

“Hey. Been standing there long?” she inquired.

“Not really. I didn’t want to interrupt your meditation.”

“Oh, that’s okay. My prayer for your safe arrival was already been granted. Would you like to sit with me?” Nodding Helen took a seat on Torrance’s left side, and they both looked quietly out over the vineyard. “You know I once told you that the Poconos were my second favorite view in the world. This is my favorite, sitting right here.”

“I could see why.”

“This place holds a very special meaning for me, Helen. The most important event of my life so far took place right where we are sitting. Every time I’m here I like to come out here and reflect on it and the man that was apart of it.”

Wondering if Torrance was about to open up to her, Helen inquired, “May I ask what it was?”

“About seven years ago my grandfather on my father’s side and I were sitting right here, and he told me some things that I have never known. He was so sick already, and I think he knew our time together had come to an end. He had asked me to bring him out here, and we were just sitting here, just the two of us. He started to talk about his life, the things he’d done and seen. It was then that I found out that both my grandfathers had fought in World War II. Neither had ever mentioned it to me before. He fought for the Americans, and Nonno fought for Italy. Apparently when my parents had first gotten together and then decided to get married, both of them were adamantly against it, because even though the war was over, they still thought of each other as enemies.”

“Why did he tell you that?” Helen asked softly.

“He told me that he wanted me to know how special I was. He said that when I was born he and Nonno had to finally bury the hatchet. It was because of their common love for me that they came to love and respect each other. I was proof that two different worlds could come together and live amicably. My whole life they were like brothers themselves. I had never known about their animosity before my birth. He just wanted me to know that I changed both of their lives for the better and that I was a real blessing. Then he gave me these.” Torrance said pulling the dogtags out from under her shirt. “I wear them all the time as a reminder of the convictions of both of them as well as their willingness to forgive.” Torrance looked out over the grove again before saying, “He told me that I should never be ashamed of who I was or where I had come from. I should always be proud of my history. It was what happened after that though that really changed my life forever.”

“What?” gently the blonde inquired.

“We were just sitting here holding hands and both leaning back these crosses. He was sitting right where I am, and I was where you are now. He was so sick, barely having any energy. He said he just wanted to rest for a bit before we went back to the house. He closed his eyes, and I just watched him sleep. Then I suddenly realized I was witnessing life leave him. I was twenty five years old at the time, and I didn’t realize the extraordinary gift he had given me until much later. He allowed me to be present during the most private moment of anyone’s life. Of all the people he could have chosen to be by his side, he chose me, and I’ll never forget it. I remember beginning to panic at first, but when it was clear he really had died, I felt a freedom and lightness. It’s what he wanted. He was in so much pain, but then he was free, and in a way I felt grateful that he had gone onto a better place. I carried his body all the way back to the house, because I couldn’t bear to part with him even for a moment. As I came over the ridge, I saw that the garden gate had been left open as if they were expecting us back any moment. The look on my grandmother’s face is one I will never forget either. She just looked at me with such mixed emotions. Later after the funeral she told me she had known all along that he had wanted me to be with him in his final moments. It was his last wish, and I’ll always be glad I was there to fulfill it for him.”

Sensing that Torrance had not told many people that story before, Helen felt honored that she

had been trusted with such personal information about the photographer. Scooting over to the brunette, Helen put her arms around her. “You really are such a caring person, Torrance. Thank you for sharing that with me.”

They sat embraced in the silence for awhile before Torrance finally broke the stillness. “We should get back to the house. I’m sure dinner is about to be served.”

Torrance stood and then extended her hand to Helen in order to assist her. Smiling up at the taller woman, Helen accepted the help but then continued to hold the brunette’s hand as they strolled back to the house. That night after the evening meal Helen just sat talking with Torrance’s family. However through the whole night Helen noticed Torrance kept touching her. Usually feeling uncomfortable whenever her past boyfriends had been physical with her in front of family, she was pleasantly surprised that she actually enjoyed Torrance’s hand as it occasionally brushed her body. Finally being exhausted though, she excused herself for the night. Torrance walked her upstairs to her room and hung out in the doorway to say good night.

“So, what time do we need to leave tomorrow?” Helen inquired, knowing that Torrance had an itinerary for the next few days.

“We won’t be in a rush. You can sleep in if you’d like. Whenever you’re ready to have breakfast, if you just go into the dinning area, someone will see to you. I usually am up early myself, but we don’t have to leave at any certain time.”

Helen nodded. “Are you going to tell me where we’re going, or are you still trying to make it a surprise?”

“Well, I wanted it to be a surprise, but if you really want to know, I’ll tell you I guess.”

“I’m just wondering, because I need to know what to pack. I brought a little of everything with me, because I didn’t know.”

“Fair enough. We’re going to Rome, Venice, and then I thought we could hang out at the beach for a few days as well so all warm weather clothes. I would take you to Milan, but it’s too far north to try to get in on this trip. Maybe next time.”

“Sounds good. I’ll see you in the morning then.”

“Bon soir, mon cherie. (Good night, my dear)” Torrance whispered leaning to give the model a hug and kiss on the cheek.

Helen barely resisted the urge to moan as their bodies came together in a hug. For all her denial of how she felt toward Torrance, she knew with more certainty than when they were in the States that she was physically attracted to the dark-haired photographer. Torrance had been so wonderful the whole day since she arrived, and the little touches the brunette gave her were sending her a clear signal that Torrance was interested in more than friendship. Returning the kiss Torrance had bestowed upon her cheek, Helen slowly pulled away. “Good night, Torrance.”

When Torrance retired to her room for the evening, she thought about Helen. She had missed the teacher more than she cared to admit, even to herself. Seeing her for the first time after their brief separation only solidified her feelings of desire for the petite woman, and she wondered if their time together would bring them even closer. After preparing for bed, Torrance took her book out to the balcony as was her usual habit, but seeing Helen's balcony doors open, she figured she might disturb the blonde's sleep if she read there. Deciding to read in her bed, she began to turn away, but curiosity pulled her back to the model's doors. Peeking into the room, she saw Helen lying in bed asleep, the moon casting light along the white bedding. Torrance's heart fluttered at how beautiful and angelic Helen looked. She knew she loved the woman lying there and longed for a chance to prove her worth to the blonde. After a few more moments, she turned away and headed into her own room.

The next morning Torrance was out in the balcony reading in the morning sun when she heard Helen rise. As the blonde made her way out to the balcony as well, Torrance gave her a bright smile, taking in the sparse sleeping attire of her companion. "Good morning. Sleep well?" she asked as the model stretched. Torrance watched as the hem of Helen's tank top rose with the movement.

"Morning. I slept better than I ever have in my life. I may never want to leave."

Torrance gave a soft chuckle. "I'm sure my grandparents would love to have you." she teased.

"Have you eaten breakfast already?"

"No, not yet. I usually just sit out here for awhile before I go down." Torrance mentioned her hand moving unconsciously to the back of blonde's bare leg. Her fingers curled gently around the toned muscle resting along Helen's inner thigh. "We're not on a schedule here. We can eat whenever we want."

Helen felt Torrance's fingers as they scorched her skin. They were giving her a clear indication of the photographer's desires by the way they lightly traced over her skin, and even as much as she was enjoying it, she felt suddenly uneasy and pulled away saying, "Well, I'm going to go get dressed."

As Torrance watched Helen scurry back into her room, she knew she had made the younger woman uncomfortable. Cursing at herself for being so forward, she left the balcony, throwing her book down on her bed as she ran out of her room. Rushing down the stairs, she made her way out the back through the garden where her mother was sitting.

"What's wrong, Torrance?" she asked.

"I can't handle this! I have to get away for a bit! I just need to regroup!"

"Did you and Helen get into a fight?"

“No! Please, Mama, just let me go! I’ll be back soon!”

By the time Helen had dressed for the day and made her way downstairs, Torrance and her family were already having breakfast. They all greeted her pleasantly.

“Good morning, everyone.” she said taking a seat next to Torrance at the table. One of the women came from the kitchen to find out what Helen wanted to eat, but then the five of them were left alone.

“So, did Torrance tell you where you two were going?” Maria inquired.

“Only that we were going to Rome, Venice, and the beach. I don’t know any more than that.”

“Not to worry. I guarantee you’ll have a good time.” Torrance stated.

“I’m sure I will. After all you did tell me you were the best tour guide. I’m counting on it.”

A week later Torrance and Helen returned from their tour of southern Italy to an empty house. After taking their belongings up to their respective rooms, Torrance went to find out where her family had gone. When the butler told her that they had gone to Milan but would be returning late the next day, Torrance knew that her mother had been behind the plot to give she and Helen as much alone time as possible.

Going to find her companion, she found Helen in the living room. “Well, it’s official. My family has deserted us for Milan. They’ll be back tomorrow evening, so that means it’s just us.”

“That’s fine. I’m enjoying it. I can’t believe it’s gone this fast. This is the best vacation I’ve ever had.”

“Good. This is one of the better ones I’ve had as well. I think it has to do with the company.” Torrance mentioned plopping down beside her. “To think tomorrow is your last full day here. I was thinking that we could go down into the village at the bottom of the hill. I wanted to show it to you anyway.”

“That sounds good. We keep driving through it, and I’ve seen some places I want to go.”

“Great. Then that’s what we’ll do then. What do you want for dinner tonight? I need to go tell the cook.”

Helen shrugged. “I don’t know. Surprise me. You haven’t let me down yet.”

“Very well. Don’t say I didn’t give you a choice. If you don’t like it, you can’t blame me.” she teased scampering off the couch and into the kitchen.

That evening Torrance and Helen had their meal out in the garden. Long after it was complete and they had been left to themselves, they stayed out back stargazing. As they often had over the

past several days, they sat cuddled together as they talked. Being a cool night on top of the hill, Torrance had retrieved a blanket for them, and they laid together under it on the chaise to keep warm as they looked up into the dark sky. Helen lied on her side, one arm draped over Torrance's frame as her head rested on the older woman's shoulder. Torrance had one arm around her back as the other lightly caressed the skin of her bare forearm. All was quiet as they listened to the sounds of the night. Helen silently reflected on the trip. Never in her life had anyone treated her the way Torrance had, always making her feel special and beautiful. All the kindness the photographer had showed her made it easy for Helen to want more from their friendship as well. However time was beginning to run out for them if they were going to venture any further while together in Italy. Helen knew things would be more difficult once they returned home, so she pondered if she should attempt to take the relationship farther. As she thought about the possibilities of what might happen between them, the question that she had always wanted to ask the brunette but had always been too shy came to mind. Deciding that she had to know before they could go any further though, she summoned her courage to ask. Shifting her head so her mouth was closer to Torrance's ear, she whispered, "Torrance."

Torrance felt the model's breath tickle her ear in the most erotic of ways, making her want to moan, but she managed to refrain. "Yeah?"

"Could I ask you something personal?"

"Sure." Helen hesitated, knowing that once she asked, there was no taking the question back. Hearing the long pause, Torrance assured her, "You can ask me anything."

"I just don't want to offend you."

"You won't. What is it?"

"What is sex like with a woman?" she rushed to say before she lost her nerve.

Torrance heart stopped as she inquired, "Why do you want to know that?"

"I was just curious. If it's too personal, you don't have to tell me."

"Curious." Torrance mumbled, slightly disheartened at the admission. Nevertheless she decided to give Helen the honest answer she deserved. "Well, I guess I should tell you that what sex meant to me when I was younger is a lot different than it does now. When I was young, there were many times I was it in for the sake of getting off, like most kids are, but the older I've gotten the more the meaning of sex has changed for me. To me there is nothing that compares to making love to a woman. It's the most beautiful thing there is in the entire world. You see for me to go to bed with someone, there has to be a chemistry, a connection that isn't easily established. I'm not looking for a quick score any longer, because I know it's so much better when you truly care about the person you're with. I've come to realize the closeness I want from my partner can only come with complete trust. For a woman is opening more than just her legs for me, she's opening her soul. To be inside someone where life begins is just an amazing experience. It's like touching their spirit. She's giving me a part of herself. She's offering me something that can



never be taken back. By physically loving a woman, I am forever becoming a part of her and vice versa. It's like nothing else. You know I've heard that with men and women loving can be one-sided at times, one person only seeking their own gratification, but with women, it's about pleasing each other. My only desire when I'm with a woman is to give her the ultimate pleasure. To see a woman when she is reaching her peak, when she's at her most vulnerable and beautiful is an honor she's giving me, and I treasure it. There truly are no words that do real justice to the experience."

Helen sighed as she took in Torrance's words. "You make it sounds so romantic." she whispered softly, thinking that if things ever reached that level between them she wouldn't be disappointed.

"Shouldn't it be?" Torrance replied pulling Helen in a little closer as a cool breeze swept over them.

There was silence after that as they just laid together. As Torrance's hand continued to stroke Helen's back, the blonde felt her herself becoming more sexually aware of the delicate movement. Wondering if Torrance was feeling the same, she snuggled in closer, noting the pace of Torrance's heart speed up to match her own. Torrance focused her eyes on the stars as she felt Helen's body shift closer to her own. The feeling of the blonde's breath along her neck was beginning to stir her passions, but unsure of what to do, she merely kept caressing the model's back lightly. Helen felt Torrance's hand coming dangerously close to the hem of her shirt, and then suddenly she wanted the photographer's hand to slip under it to her bare skin. However she wasn't sure how to bring that action about without telling her, so she opted to try to give the brunette a little subtle direction. Bringing her own hand down off Torrance's shoulder, she began to run it along the older woman's side sensuously. She heard the brunette's breath catch but realized it had worked as Torrance's hand found its way up the back of Helen's top. They went on for several minutes just touching each other, but as each of them became more aware of what was actually starting to happen, their breathing began to become erratic. Still they hadn't kissed each other, but as the thought of that being the next step occurred to Helen, she began to shiver in her nervousness and desire.

"You cold?" Torrance asked softly bring the model's body even closer. Not trusting her voice, Helen merely gave a shaky nod. Knowing that her response meant that Helen was approaching potential overload, Torrance suggested, "Then maybe we should go in. It's getting cold out here, and it's late anyway."

Leading the way inside, Torrance made a stop in the living room to deposit their blanket before escorting Helen upstairs. As they came to a stop outside the blonde's door, they just looked at each other. Torrance knew she wanted to kiss the model more than anything at that moment, but being scared of making a wrong move, she opted just to give the woman a hug. Bringing their bodies together in a tight embrace, Torrance allowed herself to nuzzle Helen's fair hair before resting her head along the teacher's shoulder. Helen couldn't control her breathing as she felt Torrance pull her hips closer, letting the photographer's belt buckle skim along her stomach through her thin shirt. Each of them were so lost in the sensations that neither thought about their actions. Before Torrance could stop herself her lips brushed over the soft skin of blonde's neck. Helen immediately whimpered as one hand clung tighter to Torrance's collar and the other

cradled the dark head. However as soon as Torrance heard the beautiful sound, she realized her actions and pulled away abruptly, startling them both. She longed to be able to hear it again, but she knew she had to refrain.

Seeing Torrance become reserved again, Helen whispered, "Well, um, good night."

"Good night, Helen." the tall woman answered softly before turning to leave.

Going into her room, Torrance softly closed the door and leaned against it. Her emotions were running wild through her body. The small moan that had escaped the model was enough to make her crazy with desire. Knowing she had to reign in her feelings though, she began to ready herself for bed, but as she found herself lying in the dark, she began to think about what it would be like to kiss the woman she loved for the first time.

That night as Helen lied in her own bed, she thought of the woman just next door. Over the course of the trip, she had begun to feel so much more for the photographer than she ever thought she would, and their parting for the night left her with a longing she had never experienced. Allowing herself to fantasize, she imagined what a night of passion might be like between them. Dreaming of the dark-haired woman showering her with affection led her own hands into action as they took in the landscape of her body all the while pretending that it was Torrance there inside of her.

Torrance was just beginning to drift off to sleep when she thought she heard her name being called. Confused she sat up in bed and strained to hear any noise but there was nothing for several moments. However just as she was about to settle down again, she heard it a second time coming from the direction of the balcony. Thinking that maybe Helen was calling her, she slid out of bed and made her way out her doors over to the blonde's. As she approached softly, she heard her name a third time, so she went to Helen's open doors, but as soon as she looked into the teacher's room, she retreated back a few steps. Unsure of whether her eyes were deceiving her or not, she peeked just around the corner. Helen was in bed cast in the white light of the moon. Even though the blonde's eyes were closed, Torrance could tell that she wasn't asleep. Her back was arched slightly and her head tilted back. Torrance could hear the blonde's unsteady breathing, and she was transfixed by the movement of the covers, imagining what Helen was doing to pleasure herself. Torrance's legs went weak as she heard Helen call her name again. She wanted nothing more than to rush in and appease the fervor that was threatening to overtake them both, but she knew she couldn't. Knowing it was inappropriate to intrude on the blonde's privacy, Torrance regretfully turned to go back to her room. Falling into her own bed, she let the images of the model take hold in her mind and moaned sympathetically with her situation. Unable to calm herself any other way, she too brought herself the relief she needed before passing out in exhaustion.

The next morning when Helen came downstairs Torrance was already eating breakfast. Seeing the model for the first time after what had happened, the brunette felt suddenly shy in front of the blonde. Noting the slight flush on the older woman's face, Helen asked, "What's with you this morning?"

“Nothing. I was just thinking that today was your last full day here. It’s gone too quickly.”

“Yeah, it really has, and I feel like there is still so much I could see.”

“Well, it gives you something to look forward to next time.” Torrance replied with a smile.

“Very true.”

Once breakfast was complete, Helen made her way back upstairs to finish getting ready for their outing while Torrance went outside to talk to the driver about her family’s arrival. When she saw Helen emerge from the house a few minutes later, she couldn’t help but smile. “Ready to go?” she inquired extending her hand.

Helen nodded as she took Torrance’s hand. “Ready as I’ll ever be.” she replied with a smile, knowing that her words meant more to her than Torrance knew, because as she drifted to sleep the night before she made herself a promise that she would kiss the woman that had captured her heart before the day was over.

As they began their walk down the hill toward the village, Torrance gazed over at Helen. She was dressed the most casually since she had been there except when they were at the beach, opting for a green top that matched her eyes perfectly with a pair of short khaki shorts and her running shoes. Her skin had taken on a golden hue from their time in the sun and her hair had lightened as well. Her sunglasses were keeping her short hair out of her face, and she wore a bright smile.

When their eyes met, Torrance asked, “You really have no idea how stunningly beautiful you are, do you?”

Helen blushed at the unexpected comment, but she admitted, “You make me feel that way, Torrance.”

Growing more serious the brunette stated, “You are a real blessing to my life, Helen. I hope you know that.”

“I do now.” she answered with an assuring grin.

The whole afternoon was spent down in the small village as Helen and Torrance leisurely browsed all the quaint shops and talked with many people that knew Torrance and her family. When it was time to head home though, they began to long ascent up the steep hill leading to the house. Even though it posed no challenge for Torrance, who had spent her entire life walking the path, the photographer could tell it was taking its toll on Helen. “You all right?” she inquired coming to a stop.

“I’m fine. This hill is just a real bear. I don’t see how you do it.” Helen stated.

“I’m used to it. You want me to carry you the rest of the way?”

“No. I weigh too much. I just need to rest for a few minutes.”

“Don’t be silly. I have equipment that weighs more than you. Just hop on my back, and we’ll be there before you know it.”

“Are you sure?” skeptically the model asked. She figured Torrance would probably be able to carry her, but she didn’t want to impose that way.

“I’m sure. Come on. Jump on.” Torrance insisted dropping down to one knee, so Helen could climb onto her back.

Helen did as she was told. As the brunette stood, Helen slipped her legs around Torrance’s waist. Putting her head on Torrance’s shoulder, she mentioned, “Maybe this wasn’t such a bad idea. Why didn’t I do this before?”

Torrance laughed lightly, clutching tighter to the teacher’s legs. “Glad to be of service to you, Helen.” They were quiet the rest of the way back to the house. Even though having Helen on her back was slowing her down, Torrance didn’t want to let the petite woman go, enjoying the way Helen’s body rubbed invitingly into her back.

As Helen rode piggy back style the rest of the way up the hill, her thoughts began to turn sexual. Having Torrance’s frame between her thighs was beginning to make her amorous as her mind began to play out a scenario of having the photographer take her right there on the side of the dirt road. She was so far off in her fantasy that she barely heard Torrance when she announced their arrival. “Oh, that was fast.” she softly stated.

Torrance let her go and gently guided her to her feet, her hands skimming along Helen’s hips as she steadied the blonde’s landing. “I wonder if my mother is back yet.” Torrance pondered aloud. Instinctively taking Helen by the hand, she led the way inside.

They found Torrance’s family in the living room simply talking, so both of them greeted Torrance’s grandparents and mother with hugs before finding out that dinner wasn’t for an half an hour. Knowing that time was running out on her to make her move, Helen turned to Torrance and asked, “Would you like to go out to the vineyard and watch the sunset with me? This will probably be my last time to go out there.”

“Sure. That sounds nice.”

As they strolled down the path leading to the grove, Helen said, “This has been the best vacation I’ve ever had, Torrance. Thank you so much for letting me come here.”

“You’re very welcome, Helen. You’ve made my whole trip just by coming. I’ll be sad to see you go tomorrow.”

“But you’ll come see me when you get back, won’t you?” hesitantly Helen asked.

“If you want me to, I will.”

Going to Torrance’s favorite place, they sat down together embraced as they quietly watched the sun dip behind the hills. Helen began to gather her courage for she knew the moment had come for her to express her feelings to Torrance. She was determined to do it before they went back to the house, but all too soon Torrance was mentioning they should be getting back. However Helen stalled. “I don’t want to go back just yet.” she said as they moved to their feet.

“Would you like for me to leave you alone?” Torrance inquired thinking maybe the blonde wanted a few minutes to herself in this special place.

“No. I just wanted to tell you something.” she said tentatively. Torrance looked down at her expectantly as she moved in to put her arms around the teacher.

Staring deeply up at the photographer’s green eyes, Helen wondered how she would let her know what she was feeling. As much as she wanted to kiss the brunette, she wanted the older woman to make the first move, but she sensed that Torrance wouldn’t without motivation. “Torrance, I just want you to know that I think you’re the most caring person I’ve ever met. You’ve given me so much in the few months that I’ve known you, and I just wanted you to know that I’m so glad we met that day. Even though we haven’t known each other that long, I couldn’t imagine what my life would be like if I hadn’t met you.” she admitted shyly breaking their gaze.

Torrance felt her heart jump start at the comment. “Helen, I feel the same way about you. I feel so blessed to know you. You’ve brought something to my life hasn’t been there in a long time.” Torrance confessed kissing Helen on the cheek lightly.

Looking back at the woman who held her heart, Helen saw the sincerity in the older woman’s eyes. Instinctually her hand went to Torrance jaw, caressing it gently as she tried to get herself to lean up to kiss the photographer, but she was frozen by the gaze. “Torrance.” she whimpered finally looking away. “Please.”

The quiet request spurred Torrance to action. Lifting the model’s chin with her hand gently, she leaned down toward her lips. Their mouths met timidly at first before they both became active, pressing harder into each other. Both of them moaned as they pulled each other closer and melded together in a sensuous lock. Several minutes passed as they allowed their desires to pour forth into that one kiss. Finally succumbing to the need for air, they broke away slightly. Torrance placed her forehead against the blonde’s as she tried to catch her breath. “Whoa. That was nothing what I thought it would be like.” she mumbled. “I’m actually weak in the knees.”

“Torrance, I know you said that our relationship would only go as far as we were both comfortable, but I want to be more than just your friend.” Helen admitted.

“I want that too, so badly.” the brunette confessed.

Helen smiled before taking the initiative to kiss Torrance again, cherishing the feel of having the

older woman that close. "We should get back before they send out a search party." she mumbled when they broke a second time.

Holding hands they made their way back to the house. The rest of the evening they spent in the company of Torrance's family, but even as they sat in the living room, they snuggled together on the sofa, casting glances at each other every few minutes. Several times Torrance saw her mother giving her a knowing smile to which she just rolled her eyes playfully. When it was finally time to go to bed that evening, Helen and Torrance walked upstairs together. Torrance lingered in Helen's open doorway for a moment not wanting to intrude on the blonde's private space.

"You can come in you know." Helen mentioned. "Keep me company while I pack."

Torrance moved into the room. As she eyed the bed, she thought of what had taken place there the previous night. Deciding on a chair across the room, Torrance sat and began to watch Helen pack her belongings. "I wish you didn't have to go." she said.

"Me too but I have to get back to work. I already have shoots set up for next week. This had been so much fun though."

"I really am glad you came. I haven't had this much fun here since I was a kid. I hope that we'll be able to do this again soon." Torrance proposed.

"I would like that." Helen replied.

Once Helen was finished packing, she moved into her bathroom to get ready for bed. Torrance was just sitting there when she saw the small blonde come back wearing another pair of skimpy pajamas. "Well, I should let you get to sleep." Torrance stated nervously as she shot to her feet.

"Tuck me in first." coyly the model demanded as she went to her bed.

Moving to the bed, Torrance pulled the covers up around Helen before leaning down to give her a soft kiss that lasted several moments. "Sweet dreams, angel." she mumbled, regretting that she couldn't stay as she pulled away.

"You too."

Going into her own room, Torrance got herself prepared for bed. Even though she was elated at the turn of events, the fact that she wanted so much more from her now girlfriend left her with an unfulfilled need. Sliding into bed Torrance quickly began to drift off, tired from all the exercise they had done that day.

Long after Torrance had left her room, Helen lied there thinking about the photographer. Torrance had brought her to the edge with her sweetness and obvious desire. The blonde knew that she wanted to experience everything before going back to the States, but she wondered if she went to Torrance, the brunette would satisfy her. Knowing how the older woman felt about intimacy, Helen had her doubts that Torrance would be receptive to the idea, but her own longing

made her rise from her bed and head out the her open balcony doors toward Torrance's room. Standing in the doorway, Helen momentarily gazed at the sleeping woman. The blonde felt her pulse pounding as she realized what she was about to do, but wanting to fall into oblivion with the woman who had won her, she left her modesty and reservations at the door, swiftly moving into the room. Going to the bed, Helen didn't give herself a chance to hesitate as she leaned down to give Torrance a powerful kiss on her slightly open lips.

Torrance jumped at the feeling as her eyes shot open. She groaned deeply as the blonde slid onto the bed on top of her, diving deeper into her mouth. Torrance responded by wrapping her arms around the petite woman and actively participating in the kiss. Finally managing to break away from the assault for air, Torrance panted, "Helen."

"Please. Don't talk, Torrance. Just make love to me." the younger woman pleaded.

The simple entreaty crumbled Torrance's willpower. It was what she had always dreamed of and having the woman she adored requesting her love was more than she could withstand. Taking the lead between them, Torrance sat up to kiss the teacher with passion as her hands made quick work of the model's top. Helen followed suit, slipping Torrance's t-shirt over her head. Bringing her hands up to the blonde's breasts, Torrance began to kiss down her neck. Helen's moaned as the photographer's hands caressed her with exquisite tenderness and fervor. Instinctively trying to increase the contact, her hips pressed into Torrance's stomach. Torrance moaned feeling the blonde's wetness against her. Moving her mouth further down the model's body, she circled one breast with her tongue teasingly before closing over it. Helen cried out lightly, her back arching toward the contact as her hands cradled Torrance's head tightly against her chest. She could feel herself beginning to peak already, but wanting the moment to happen with the brunette inside of her, she pleaded, "Oh, God, Torrance. Please. I need you inside of me."

Complying with the request, Torrance gently rolled Helen over onto her back as her body found its way between the petite thighs. Kissing her way down the teacher's body, the brunette worked Helen's shorts off. Breathing in deeply the brunette took in the scent of the woman she loved before giving into her desires to taste her fantasy. The unexpected move took Helen completely by surprise, for a moment breaking the mood as she realized for the first time exactly what she had gotten herself into. Having never considered this particular type of affection, she briefly panicked as she realized she hadn't been ready to accept all that this experience would entail. However before she could even consider a protest, her body overrode her mind, as the feeling of Torrance being so intimate with her carried her over the edge. Crying out loudly her hand pushed Torrance's face in deeper as her other hand clung tightly to the sheet. Overwhelmed with the intensity of her climax, she was totally unprepared when she felt Torrance inside of her for the first time. Calling out the photographer's name, she could only hold tighter to the hard body on top of her as Torrance kissed back up her to meet her mouth in a light kiss.

"I've got you, baby." Torrance whispered as she began to gently thrust in time with Helen's hips. Being unable to even think, the model simply rode the feelings of bliss, allowing them to take her to a place she had never been in her life as she surprisingly reached the pinnacle a second time under the ministrations of Torrance's masterful hands. As she fell from the edge that again, she could feel Torrance still her movement. "I've got you, honey. Just hold onto me. I love you

so much, Helen.” the brunette confessed lovingly into her ear as the model began to descend. Managing to meet Torrance’s green eyes, she saw them sparkling with a love she had never seen anywhere in her life. Torrance leaned down to kiss her mouth again. “I’ve got to taste you again. It was too fast the first time.” she whispered.

Unable to even think coherently, Helen quickly found herself floating along the tide of orgasmic delight for a third time at the combination of the photographer’s fingers and mouth feasting upon her. As it claimed her, her body shook uncontrollably and she temporarily blacked out. When she came to, she found herself on her side curled up on Torrance’s bare chest. As the reality of where she was and what she had done took hold of her, Helen became terrified. There she was lying on top of another naked woman, the same woman that moments ago had touched her in ways she never had imagined. Thinking about Torrance’s words from a few nights previous about love between women being reciprocal, she began to panic at the idea of trying to perform the same for the photographer. In all her fantasies, she had never once dreamed about returning the actions, instead always focusing on how it would feel when Torrance touched her, but now as the time to act loomed before her, she froze in fear. She knew she wasn’t ready to bestow the touch onto Torrance, and she suddenly regretted that she had initiated the whole event. Not knowing how to explain her reservations to the woman who held her, Helen laid perfectly still, not daring to move as she pondered how she would be able to leave the situation without paining the woman who had loved her so well. After several minutes Helen knew she had to face whatever Torrance’s reaction might be to her selfishness, so she slowly lifted her head from Torrance’s chest. Surprised to find the older woman asleep, Helen breathed a sigh of temporary relief and took her chance to leave, easing out of bed as quietly as possible to return to her own room.

The next morning when Torrance awoke and realized she was alone, she first thought making love to Helen had only been a dream. Reliving some of the details in her mind, she smiled as she made her way out of bed, but as soon as she realized that she was naked, she knew for certain it had been real. Immediately she became concerned, because Helen had walked out on her. Rushing out the balcony to Helen’s room, she tried to pull open Helen’s doors, but they were locked. Peering in through the window, it appeared that Helen had already gone downstairs and taken her belongings with her. Heading back to her own room, Torrance quickly dressed for the day. Dashing downstairs she barreled through the swinging door that separated the living room for the dining area, practically tripping on her own feet and stumbling over to the table where her family and Helen were already eating breakfast. Torrance and Helen’s eyes locked in a long stare.

“Where’s the fire, Torrance? And what’s with your manners? Can’t you at least say good morning?” Maria inquired.

With eyes only for the blonde, Torrance stated, “Good morning, Mother, Nonna, Nonno. Morning, Helen.” Helen couldn’t even reply as she dropped her gaze down to her plate. The confusion in Torrance’s eyes was too much for her to bear. Seeing Helen turn away from her, Torrance felt her heart tearing.

“Torrance, well don’t just stand there. Sit down and have something to eat.” her mother instructed.



“I’m not hungry. I’m going on a walk. I’ll be back in a bit.” she mumbled.

“You have to take Helen to the airport in an hour.” her mother informed her.

“I know. I’ll be back by then.” Torrance reported before racing from the room.

“That girl can be so moody.” Maria mentioned casting a glance at Helen.

“She gets it from her father.” Helen just nodded as she tried to hold back the tears that had formed in her eyes at Torrance’s sudden departure. She knew she had hurt the photographer by not staying the night, but seeing her for the first time since the incident was difficult for her, especially since she had caused Torrance pain. “Oh, what’s wrong, my dear? Did Torrance hurt your feelings?” Maria asked in concern.

“No. I’m afraid I’m the one who hurt her.” she said as she began to cry. “I’m sorry. Please excuse me.” Rising from the table, she left the room as well. Not knowing where else to go for privacy, she headed back upstairs to the room she had been using. Going over to the balcony doors, she looked out to see Torrance sprinting down the path toward her special place, and it made her sob all the more.

That day Torrance’s family accompanied them to the airport, leaving them no time for a serious conversation, but Torrance was relieved that she didn’t have to be alone with Helen after what had happened. She could clearly see that the model was discontent, and she felt sure that she had ruined what was a blossoming relationship for carnal desires. The awkwardness during the ride continued while they waited for Helen’s plane. Neither of them spoke to each other. Instead Torrance was completely quiet as Helen tried to make small talk with Torrance’s family. Finally when it was time to leave, Helen hugged Torrance’s grandparents and mother before coming to stand in front of the photographer. Seeing the pain in the brunette’s green eyes was too much for her, and she began to cry.

Instinctively Torrance reached out to wipe her tears. Helen leaned into the touch as her eyes remained locked with Torrance’s. “Well, good bye, Torrance.” she whispered.

The formal finality in the teacher’s voice stung the older woman as she tried to keep her own tears from falling. Thinking that it might be the last time she ever saw the woman that held her heart, Torrance gave in to her need to express her love one last time. Leaning down she brushed the blonde’s lips lightly with her own. “Je t’aime (I love you), mon cherie. Adieu (Good bye), Helen.” Helen took one last look into the eyes that she loved before turning to walk away. As Torrance watched her walk down the narrow corridor leading to the plane, she began to weep. “I’ve lost her, Mama.” she whispered when she felt arms encircle her waist consolingly.

“It’ll be all right, Torrance. You’ll see. Whatever you two were fighting about can be made right.”

Torrance shook her head adamantly. “No. She’ll never take me back. It’s over. I’ll never love

anyone else again the way I love her.” she sobbed.

“Don’t despair, honey. I promise you that you can work it out. She loves you as much as you do her.”

When Helen arrived back in the States, Kelly was waiting on her at the gate. They hugged lightly as Kelly inquired, “How was your trip?”

“Fine.” Helen mumbled. “Best vacation I’ve ever been on.”

“That sounds really convincing.”

“I’m just tired. It was a long flight. I just want to get my bags and go home.”

As they began to walk toward the baggage claim, Kelly inquired, “How’s Torrance?”

Helen shrugged. “I don’t want to talk about her.”

“Why not? Did something happen?”

Helen glared at Kelly. “I said I don’t want to talk about her.”

“Okay, we won’t.” Kelly answered. Even as much as Kelly tried to get her to talk, Helen refused, sulking on the ride home instead and then going straight to her room.

Continued Part 3

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### **The Athenaeum's Scroll Archive**

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## **~ Love in Photographs ~**

**by Alex Tryst**

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### **Part 3**

A week later Torrance and her mother were on the same flight back to New York. As they sat in first class just talking, her mother mentioned, “Now that a few days have passed, why don’t you try to talk to Helen? I’m sure whatever the disagreement was can be overcome.”

“I don’t think so, Mama. She seemed pretty set on never seeing or hearing from me again.”

“Come on, Torrance. You told me you loved this woman, that you could never love another. Isn’t she worth fighting for? Don’t let go of the best thing that’s happened to you because of your pride.”

Glaring at her Torrance inquired, “Well, what do you think I should do?”

She shrugged. “I don’t know. Send her flowers or a note or something to let her know that she’s on your mind. Ask for forgiveness for your part of this disaster. Do something. Don’t just sit there and let her slip further and further away. I mean don’t you want her in your life?”

“Then go to her and tell her as much. I could see that she loves you in her eyes, Torrance. Don’t give up on that.”

Torrance looked out the window. “Maybe you’re right. I guess it couldn’t hurt to try.” she admitted.

“Good. I’m glad you’ve come to your senses. You two will be back together in no time. You’ll see.”

The following Saturday Helen and Kelly had just come back from their morning run together when there was a knock on the door. Wondering who it might be at such an hour, Kelly went to open it as Helen sat on the couch and slipped off her running shoes. As soon as her roommate opened the door, Helen saw the largest arrangement of white roses she had ever seen, and her heart fell into her stomach when the driver announced that they were for her.

“Well, looks like Torrance hasn’t given up on you.” Kelly mentioned as she closed the door and moved to put the flowers on the table. Helen just stared at them. “Aren’t you going to read the card?” Kelly inquired. Helen shook her head. “Why not? What happened between you two?”

“I don’t want to talk about it. Could you put those somewhere where I don’t have to look at them?”

Kelly sighed. “Man, she must have really screwed up for you to be acting so mean. Aren’t you at least a little curious as to what she said?” Kelly asked holding the card up. “Why don’t you let me read it?”

“Fine. Suit yourself.” Helen relented.

Kelly immediately ripped open the note and read it. When she had finished, she said, “Well, you certainly have some explaining to do. I’m totally confused.”

Curiosity getting the better of her as well, Helen inquired, “What did it say? Give it to me.”

Reaching for the note in her roommate’s hand, she looked down at Torrance’s strong script. “Helen, I am so sorry for what has happened between us. This is not the way I intended things to go. I need to talk to you. Please. I’m begging you to at least let me see you. Please give me a

second chance. Much love, Torrance.”

Closing the card Helen dropped her head as her tears began. “She’s apologizing to me.” she mumbled. “She has no idea what’s wrong.”

“What is wrong? Obviously you’re extremely upset and have been since you came back. What did she do?”

“She didn’t do anything, Kelly. It was all me, and she’s the one trying to say she’s sorry. God, is she trying to be a saint? She makes it impossible for me not to love her.”

“Do you love her?” hesitantly Kelly asked. Helen paused but then gave a nod. “Then what’s wrong?”

“If I tell you, you have to promise not to tell anyone else, not even Mark.” Helen demanded.

“All right. It’ll stay between us. What happened?”

“While I was in Italy things happened between Torrance and me.”

“I gathered that. What things are you talking about?”

Covering her face with her hands, Helen admitted, “We had sex.”

“Oh, my.” Kelly fumbled. “Well, was it terrible? Was she that bad? Is that the problem?”

“No. God, she was anything but.” the blonde sobbed. Instantly Kelly put her arms around her roommate. “Kelly, it was like nothing I’ve ever experienced. She knew exactly how to please me physically. I’ve never responded like that with anyone else. It was actually a bit overwhelming because of the intense rush of emotions at her touch.”

“Was it only physical though?”

“No. She said and did just the right things. I mean she even told me she loved me in the middle of it. I couldn’t have asked for more. It truly was the first time in my life I knew with certainty that the person I was with really loved me and wanted to be with me that way in order to express that love. I didn’t feel like she was using me at all. She was giving to me the entire time.”

“Well, that sounds perfect. Why are you so upset with her?”

“I’m not upset with her. I’m mad at myself, because I realized too late that I had selfish motivations for going to her bed. I was the one who used her, and I regret the whole event, because I wasn’t able to be as open and giving as she had been.”

“What do you mean?”

Helen fidgeted for a moment. "I just realized during the middle of things that I wasn't able to return the favors she had given to me."

"You mean you didn't touch her? Did she want you to? Was there a fight about it?"

"There was no fight. I don't know if she wanted me too or not. She fell asleep before there was any sort of conversation about it. Kelly, it was so wrong of me to trifle with her feelings. I knew going in there that night what it would mean to her to be intimate, but I was just too curious to let it go, and now I've hurt her. I feel awful about this whole thing. The last thing I ever wanted to do was hurt Torrance, but I did, and it's going to hurt even worse when I have to tell her the truth."

"But you just said you loved her. If she loves you and vice versa, this should be easy enough to work out."

Helen shook her head as she wiped the tears from her cheeks. "I don't feel the same way she feels for me. It's true that I love her, but she is in love with me. There's a big difference. I'm not in love with her." she lied.

Kelly looked at her for a moment before quietly inquiring, "Are you sure?"

Helen sighed as she looked at her roommate and best friend. Ignoring the question she mentioned, "What's even worse though is that now I'm going to have to call her and try to break this off before things get even more out of hand. It pains me to think that I'm going to hurt her even more when I tell her we can't see each other any longer."

"Not even as friends? Helen, are you sure you really want to do that?"

"What choice do I have? It wouldn't be fair to make her have to watch me with other people. It don't want this to be any more painful than it has to be. This is for the best. Now I have to go call her." she mumbled getting off the couch.

Torrance was sitting on her balcony that morning drinking her coffee and studying the pictures she had taken for her book. As she came to the photos of the blonde, her heart ached in sadness at the problems she had caused by not being stronger. If she had only turned the teacher down gently instead of giving in to her own desires, they wouldn't be in their current position. Torrance softly traced the contours of Helen's face in the photograph as she wondered if the model had received her gift yet. She wanted to call Helen so badly but opted to wait until she heard from the younger woman. Just then her thoughts were broken by the sound of the phone. Picking it up from her bistro table, she mumbled a greeting.

"Torrance, hi. It's Helen." the model hesitantly announced.

"Hi. I was just thinking about you."

"You were?"

“Yeah. I was working on my book.”

“Oh.” Helen mumbled. After an awkward pause between them, she said, “I got the flowers this morning. They’re beautiful. Thank you.”

“I’m glad you like them.”

“Listen. Your note said you wanted to talk. I think that’s a good idea. I have something I need to tell you, but I don’t want to do it over the phone. Is there anyway I can see you tomorrow?”

“Sure. I’ll drive over. You want to go to lunch?” excitedly Torrance proposed, pleased that Helen wanted to see her.

“All right. About what time?” the blonde asked neutrally.

“Around noon. That way I don’t have to get up too early.”

“Fine. See you then. I’ll let you get back to work.”

The next day Torrance was anxious as she arrived at Helen’s door. The conversation they had the previous day left no indication of what the teacher wanted to discuss, but Torrance tried to keep a positive outlook. Knocking on the door, she hoped for the best but prepared for what she thought could be the worst. When Helen came to the door, she put on her most charming smile.

As soon as Helen saw Torrance, she exclaimed, “You’re soaking wet. Is it raining that badly outside?”

“Yeah. It started on the way down, and I forgot an umbrella.”

“Well, get in here. We need to get you dried off, at least a little.”

“Don’t worry about it. I thought we would just go to lunch first anyway.” the photographer offered in hopes of delaying what looked like was going to be a serious conversation by the look on Helen’s features.

“If it’s all the same to you, I’d rather not go out. Come sit down. Are you sure I can’t get you a change of clothes or a towel?”

“No, I’ll be fine.” Torrance answered making her way over to the couch. Helen took a seat next to her, and for a moment they just looked at each other. Seeing the teacher’s obvious distress, Torrance softly said, “You know, Helen, I hope you know me well enough by now to know that you can say anything to me. I can see that you’re upset. Whatever is bothering you, don’t be afraid to tell me.”

Shaking her head Helen mumbled, “You are always thinking of others. Even now when I’m only

thinking about myself, you still are trying to put my needs above your own.”

Torrance sensed impending trouble by Helen’s comment, but she decided to take the initiative, and by working through it hoped they could come out the other side together. “Listen, Helen. We’re both here to talk, and there’s something I would like to say. Would you mind if I went first?” The blonde shook her head. Tentatively Torrance enveloped the teacher’s hand in her own. “Helen, that night we were together I told you that I loved you. As much as I do mean that, I’m sorry if that made you uncomfortable. I thought that was a perfectly wonderful moment to tell you, but if I made a mistake in letting you know that at the wrong time, I’m really sorry.” she apologized, going with her instinct that her confession was the issue.

Helen gave her a tearful smile. “Oh, Torrance, I am not angry or uncomfortable with that. It was the perfect moment. I could never be upset that someone said that to me.”

Torrance nodded. Going with her second inclination, she continued, “Well, I’m also sorry that I fell asleep. I’m sure that wasn’t exactly what you had in mind. It’s just that I was concentrating so hard on giving you pleasure that I never considered you might want to do the same for me. I just wanted you to feel how much I love you, but I promise I’ll make it up to you. You can take the lead next time, and I’ll just let you do whatever you want.”

Getting closer to the real problem, Helen shifted uncomfortably and pulled her hand away from the brunette’s. “Torrance, that night was like nothing I ever experienced, but I have to admit that I was completely overwhelmed. I wasn’t expecting things to be the way they were. I wasn’t as ready as I thought I was.”

“Do you regret what happened?” Torrance softly inquired.

The blonde looked into Torrance’s green eyes and saw the concern there. Even though she knew what she was about to do was going to hurt the older woman, she felt it was for the best. “I’m sorry, Torrance, but I do. It was too fast for me.”

Torrance took in the confession calmly, showing little of her feelings on her face. Taking a deep breath, she said, “Well, I am sorry you feel that way, because I feel the opposite. However we can still work around this. I’m willing to start again from the beginning if that’s what you want. We’ll take things slower. I just want to be with you, Helen, even if that means we have to start all over.”

Helen shook her head. “I can’t start again, Torrance. What happened can’t be erased. I know I said I wanted more from our friendship, but I’ve changed my mind. I’m sorry. I’m just not ready for this kind of relationship nor do I think I ever will be.”

Torrance dropped her head forward as she tried to stop the tears from coming. Getting herself under enough control, she gave a small smile she didn’t feel as she stated, “Well, I guess it’s friends then.”

It was Helen’s turn to look away as she began to cry. Knowing she had to go all the way through

with things, she said, "Torrance, I don't think that's a good idea, especially since I know how you feel about me. It wouldn't be fair to either of us. I don't want to hurt you more than I already have, but I think if we were to remain friends, there is a possibility of that. You deserve more than I can give you. It's for the best that we not see each other any longer."

Torrance felt her heart rip at the blonde's request. Looking into the green eyes that she loved so dearly and seeing them wet with tears, Torrance wanted nothing more than to embrace the blonde, but she withheld. For once she had no words, so she simply sat mute for several minutes. She refused to cry in front of Helen, because she could tell the teacher was already hurting, and she didn't want to make her feel worse. Finally she rose from the couch saying, "I guess that's all that needs to be said then."

"Torrance, I'm so sorry." Helen sobbed.

The photographer turned to take one last look at the best thing that had ever happened to her life. Knowing this was the last time she would ever see the woman who held her now broken heart, she opted to speak words of comfort instead of bitterness. "Don't be sorry, Helen. Sometimes love just doesn't work out the way we want it to. You gave all that you could to this relationship, and it would be wrong for me to ask for more. I will always remember what we shared in Italy fondly, and I'll be glad that for ten days my dream of being with the most perfect woman in the world was a reality. You had stolen my heart from almost the first moment I knew you, and I'm thankful that you graced me with your presence even for a short while. Thank you for allowing me to love you as I truly do. I hope that someday you find what you're looking for." She paused to take in the beauty of the woman before her one last time. Giving in to her need to express her deepest affection, she whispered, "I love you, Helen Melbourne. Good bye."

Going back out to her SUV, Torrance just sat in the driver's seat for several minutes staring at the building where her beloved lived, knowing that she would never again make the journey from New York to Philadelphia. Feeling completely destroyed she decided to seek out the comfort of the only woman who truly loved her unconditionally, heading off to her parents' house in the Poconos. As she drove it became hard to distinguish if it was tears or rain that perpetually blurred her vision. Arriving to the area a couple of hours later, she made a brief stop in the small town at her favorite restaurant for lunch before heading next door the liquor store to get her old security blanket of Scotch. Driving up to her parents' home, Torrance sat in her car at the end of the driveway drinking straight from the bottle as she contemplated how she would tell her mother that Helen had asked never to see her again instead of trying to work things out as she had hoped. Torrance didn't realize how long she sat there watching the rain wash over her car as she sobbed. Finally when her bottle ran dry, she went up to the house. She hardly even noticed the cold pelting rain as her only thought was of being in the consoling arms of her mother. Since she knew that at least her mother was there, she decided that she should knock instead of using her key. It seemed to take forever until the door opened, and she saw her mother standing there.

"Torrance, my God, what happened to you?" she immediately asked in concern reaching for her daughter. Torrance collapsed into her mother's arms as she wept uncontrollably. "Darling, are you hurt?" Maria inquired taking Torrance's face in her hands and staring at her seriously. Torrance couldn't even reply. Her mother took the opportunity to look over the photographer.



Taking the empty bottle from Torrance's hand, she set it on the side table before taking the taller woman into her arms again. "Come on, Torrance. Let's get you out of these wet clothes and into bed. Then you can tell me why you've been binge drinking today." Torrance let her mother lead her upstairs into her old room and help her into drier clothes before crumpling into bed. Maria joined her curving her arms around Torrance and bringing her head into her shoulder. "I haven't seen you this upset over something since you lost Alena. Should I assume Helen is responsible for this?"

"She said she never wanted to see me again, Mama. It's over."

"Oh, darling, I'm so sorry. Did she give you a reason?"

"She didn't want to be in a relationship with me, and she thought us being friends wouldn't be fair to either of us since she knew how I felt. I don't understand it. I feel like she lied to me."

"She did, Torrance. That woman loves you the way you love her. I've seen it in her eyes and her touch. She adores you. I don't know what has her so scared, but it's not a lack of interest that keeps her away. What happened in Italy? Why did you fight that day?"

Torrance shrugged. "She got freaked out, because we had sex, but she came to me, Mama. I didn't try to seduce her. She's the one who came to my bed. I gave her everything. Why would she do this?"

Running her hands through her daughter's wet dark hair, Maria replied, "I don't know. She's scared of something. Not all people are like you, honey. Some are not as confident with who they are. This might be traumatic for her to realize she has deep feelings for you."

"But why wouldn't she just tell me that? I would understand! Instead she told me to get out of her life! I'm never going to see her again, Mama! I can't go on without seeing her!" Torrance wailed.

They lied quietly together on the bed as Torrance cried, and her mother held her. A few minutes later there was a knock on the open door. Looking over and seeing her father, Torrance immediately tried to look composed as she frantically wiped her wet face and sat up. "What's wrong, Torrance?" he asked coming into the room. Noticing her empty scotch bottle in his hand, she knew where the conversation was going to go.

"Nothing. I'm just having a bad day. I'm not feeling well."

"I can't imagine why. Drinking a whole bottle of this will make anyone sick." he mentioned putting the bottle on the bed. "You should eat something."

"Yes, why don't I go make you some soup? I'll be right back." her mother suggested taking leave of them.

Once she was gone, Torrance's father took a seat on the bed and stared at his daughter. "Is there

something I can do to help you?" he inquired tenderly, his voice revealing his obvious fondness for her even through their differences.

"No. There's nothing anyone can do. I have to go this one alone."

"Women problems?" he guessed. Torrance nodded. "Well, you're young still, and there are a lot of women out there. You shouldn't let one get you down. She's not worth it. Move on to the next one. I'm sure you've got plenty to choose from."

"Maybe but she's the one I wanted."

"You think that now, but just give it time. You'll be back in the field before you know it."

When her mother returned, her father excused himself, leaving the two women alone again. "Here. Eat this. It'll help you feel better." Maria instructed. Torrance did as she was told, slowly eating the chicken soup and crackers. When she had finished, her mother looked at her seriously. "Torrance, I know you're hurting right now, but I have to tell you I'm concerned that you showed up at the door with this bottle in your hand. You've worked so hard to get where you are. I don't want to see you lose yourself like you did when you were a kid in drugs and alcohol. You know through your time in rehab that this is not the answer to your problems. Please don't let Helen destroy everything you've made of yourself. You've been clean of drugs for almost ten years now. Promise me you won't go back to that, because you're in pain. I'm worried about you."

Torrance took her hand. "I promise you, Mama. I will not go back to drugs. I know I'm down right now, but not even Helen can put me back in that hell. You don't have to worry."

"I do worry, Torrance. I'm your mother. It's my job." Torrance gave a nod in understanding. "Why don't you try to rest now? Get some sleep if you can."

"I have to get back to New York."

"No you don't. You're staying here tonight. We're having a party tomorrow evening. Why don't you stay for it?"

"I don't know."

"Well, just think about it. You can decide tomorrow. If you need anything, you know where to find me." she stated picking up the dishes.

Looking up at her mother, Torrance gave a small smile. "Thank you for being here, Mama. I love you."

"I love you too, honey." she whispered kissing Torrance's forehead before turning to go.

Torrance spent the rest of the night tossing in bed. Between her tears and trying to sleep, she

wondered how she would ever go on without the blonde model who had captured her heart. Torrance knew she didn't have a choice but to try to get over the loss, but at the moment she truly felt as her life would never be the same again. After sleeping in late, she finally rose from bed to dress. Since she always kept some clothes at her parents' house, she had a clean outfit to change into after her shower. Going downstairs she got caught up in the whirlwind of commotion in preparation for the party. Seeing her mother on the deck talking to what looked like the caterer, Torrance just hovered in the background until her mother was free. "Morning," she greeted with a hug when they were alone.

"Good afternoon more like it. Are you feeling any better?"

"A little, at least physically. It's busy around here. What time is the party?"

"Seven. I hope you're going to stay. Your father and I would love to have you here. We so rarely get to spend time with you."

"Well, I would never deny you that pleasure, Mother, but I'm not sure I have the appropriate clothes. I'll have to go shopping for something to wear."

"I thought you had a formal suit in your closet up there."

"Well, I'll have to try it on. I haven't worn it in forever, so I'm not sure it fits."

"Then go do that. If we need to go shopping, we'll have to go straight away. There isn't much time, and I have so much to do."

"Then don't worry about me. I can figure it out alone. You just do your thing. I'll make sure I have something appropriate to wear that won't embarrass you."

"You never could do that, darling. You always have impeccable taste, even in jeans. Run along now and leave me to my work."

That evening Torrance finished dressing just as she heard the doorbell the first time. Going downstairs she joined her parents in playing a gracious hostess. Most of the company that night she had met before through other parties that her parents had given, so she just hung around the open bar watching the festivities from afar. However about half way through the evening as Torrance was beginning to get tired of the bar, a woman in her early forties approached it alone. She gave Torrance a smile before placing her order.

Feeling like she needed to say something to be polite, Torrance said, "Hi. How are you tonight?"

"Great thanks. You?" the shorter blonde replied with a smile.

"Just fine. I don't believe we've ever had the pleasure of meeting. I'm Torrance Whitfield, Thomas and Maria's daughter." she introduced extending her hand.

“Claire St. John.”

“Have you ever been to one of my parents’ parties before? I’m sure I would’ve remembered a face like yours.” Torrance said flirtingly, watching the other woman blush slightly.

“Actually this is only my second party, and I’m without my husband this time. Are you the Torrance Whitfield?”

“Depends on what you mean by that.” Torrance mentioned handing over the champagne Claire had ordered to her.

“I mean New York’s most famous lesbian photographer.”

“I don’t think I’ve ever heard myself be described that way. Photographer is true enough.” she teased.

“I’ve seen your work. It’s absolutely fantastic. I’m surprised we haven’t met before. I’ve been to a few of your exhibitions.”

“Thank you. My agent books that stuff, and I usually don’t know half the people there, but I am surprised as well. Had I seen you I definitely would’ve come introduce myself, husband or not.”

“He wouldn’t be caught dead in a place like that. He’s so conservative. Art isn’t his thing.”

“Well, that’s too bad, but enough about him. I want to hear more about you. You like art?”

“I adore it. It’s my life. I actually own a small art gallery in New York. What I wouldn’t give to have you in there.”

“That could be arranged. I’d love to come by and see it sometime.”

“Anytime. I would love to give you a personal tour.” Claire stated stepping in closer. “Tell me something. Do your parents have any of your work here?”

Torrance gave her a charming smile. Extending her hand experimentally she softly said, “I’ll show it to you if you want.”

Claire looked up at her with her blue eyes for a moment before putting her hand in Torrance’s. “That would be wonderful. I’d love to see them.”

Leading them along the periphery of the gathering, Torrance led them down the hall to the study and shut the door behind them for privacy. Now that they were alone Torrance pondered making more of a move. She had sensed a receptivity in the blonde, but the fact that the woman was married posed a small problem. Going over to the book shelf, Torrance pulled out a book and asked, “Have you ever seen this? This was my first book.”

Claire took it from her, flipping through it slowly. “You capture the female body like I’ve never seen. You have a way of showing women at their finest regardless of what’s going on around them. Like this picture for example.” she mentioned.

Torrance moved behind her to look over her shoulder to see the photo Claire was referring to. “Oh, one of my exs.” teased Torrance. “I do like this shot myself.” she admitted.

“An ex, huh? Well, you’ve done such a good job with this one. I can feel the power she exudes, but you can also see a vulnerability there in her eyes.”

“Seems like everyone always likes the pictures of the exs. I know it’s going to happen again in my next book as well. The best I have is of the woman who just left me.”

Claire turned to look over her shoulder. “How could anyone leave you? You’re kind and successful, not to mention dashing sexy. Who wouldn’t want you?”

“She was just a little to straight I guess.”

“Heck I’m straight, and I want you.” she softly said.

For a moment Torrance actually thought Claire was serious, but she decided not to pursue the blonde unless she had more evidence that the older woman really desired her. Nevertheless she gave the gallery owner a sexy grin. “It would be easy to want you too.” she mentioned taking the book from her and putting it back on the shelf. “Here’s one you’ll never see anywhere else.” she stated pointing to the black and white on the wall of her mother.

“Wow. Your mother is so beautiful already, but you really seize her essence.”

The rest of the evening once they returned to the party Torrance could sense Claire studying her from across the room. Every time she looked up she saw those blue eyes on her. Going with it Torrance always gave the older woman her most charming smiles. As people began to filter out for the night Torrance stood by the door with her parents telling people good bye. When Claire approached she gave Torrance’s parents hugs. “I had a wonderful time this evening, Maria. You’ve out done yourself.”

“Well, I’m glad you enjoyed yourself.”

“And you have such an accomplished, enchanting daughter. You must be very proud.”

“We are. Are you going back to New York tonight, or are you staying in town like some others?”

“I’m staying in town.”

“Then you must join us for brunch tomorrow.”

“That would be lovely. Thank you.”

“How are you getting back to the hotel?” Torrance interjected, wondering if her night with this woman was going to abruptly end at her parents’ door.

“Oh, I scheduled a driver to come pick me up. I’m not sure if he’s here yet or not.”

“Well, I could take you back if you’d like.” she suggested nonchalantly, trying not to let her parents on to what was going on.

“That’s gracious of you, Torrance. If you’re sure it wouldn’t be a problem, but I could always wait for my limo.”

“It’s no problem. Just let me get my keys.”

A few minutes later Torrance and Claire were on their way back to the hotel. “Thanks for the ride, Torrance. This is an unexpected pleasure.” Claire said slipping her hand onto Torrance’s thigh. Torrance shot her a grin but said nothing. She knew that the older woman was flirting with her, but she wondered exactly what might happen once they reached the hotel. Quietly the two of them listened to the radio until Torrance pulled up in front of the hotel. As the valet started for the car, Claire turned to her. “Well, could I invite you upstairs for a drink? It’s the least I could do for the ride.”

Feeling Claire’s hand massaging her inner thigh, Torrance knew drinks were the last thing on the blonde’s mind. Under normal circumstances Torrance never went to bed with women she had just met, but after the way Helen had treated her, she desperately wanted to be desired. For a beautiful self-proclaimed straight woman to be propositioning her was more than she could handle. Giving in to her own cravings, she reached over to the blonde, slipping her hand under the hem of her black dress and leaning in closer to the older woman’s lips as she questioned, “Just a drink, Claire?”

“Just anything you want.” the blonde whispered.

Feeling Claire’s breath caress her face, Torrance knew the ball was in her court. If she wanted to go to bed with this woman, she could have her. Pulling away she mentioned, “Then we better stop giving the valet a show and go upstairs.” Claire led the way into the hotel where she was greeted by the concierge politely. Guiding them over to the elevator, Claire got in first and pressed her floor. As soon as the doors closed, Torrance looked over at her company. “Could I ask you something, Claire? How many times have you done something like this?”

“Would you believe me if I said none?” Claire asked with a chuckle.

“No.” Torrance replied shaking her head.

“Well, you’d be right. Does that matter to you?”

Giving her a predatory grin, Torrance backed the older woman into a corner. Leaning down

toward her mouth, Torrance whispered, "The only thing that matters is that I'm about to fuck you like you've never had it before."

Claire groaned loudly as Torrance crushed their mouths together in a powerful lock. She clawed at Torrance's jacket with increasing fervor as Torrance forced her way into the blonde's mouth. It was only when the elevator chimed, signaling their floor that the photographer broke away. "Oh God, somehow I knew you'd be this way, all forceful and aggressive. It's what made me want you in the first place." Claire whispered pulling Torrance by the hand down the hall to her room. As Claire tried to unlock the door, Torrance leaned down and brushed her neck lightly with kisses as her arms came around the blonde. "Oh, of course, that's quite nice too." the older woman whispered at the tender display.

Seeing that the door had not been successfully opened, Torrance pulled away a bit as she said, "Here. Let me help you with that." She took the key from the blonde and opened the door for them. Pushing it open she whispered, "Heaven awaits."

Torrance followed the older blonde into the room and waited as she flipped on the lights. She hadn't played this type of game since she was younger, but feeling exhilarated by Claire's obvious desires, she went with it. The gallery owner moved toward the bathroom as she mentioned, "I'm just going to put on something more comfortable. Be right back. Help yourself to a drink."

Going to the bar, Torrance grabbed one of the mini bottles of scotch that was sitting there and poured it into a glass. Several minutes passed until she heard the bathroom door open. Looking up she saw Claire standing there in a black silk robe. Giving her a sexy grin, Torrance slowly made her way over to the shorter woman. "You know I just remembered why I enjoy older women so much. They always are so much more confident, and they know how to get what they want." she growled playfully encircling Claire's waist and leaning to kiss her.

"I've got a little something for you." Claire whispered pressing something small into Torrance's hand. Torrance looked at it instantly knowing what it was. Her heart stopped for a moment as she realized she was holding what used to be her drug of choice. "My younger companions usually enjoy having a little something extra during the night." the blonde explained.

Torrance gulped. Even though she had been off drugs for years having it right in front of her proved to be more of a temptation than she thought it would. Part of her desperately wanted to use them, because she knew it would help her forget Helen. However then she thought of her mother and the promise she had made not to go back. If she fell now, she would disappoint her mother, and she had sworn to herself long ago after going through rehab the first time never to do that. Giving Claire a smile, Torrance tossed the cocaine onto the night stand. "If it's all the same, I'd rather just stick to having you instead." she whispered.

"Fine by me." Claire moaned as Torrance attacked her neck.

Later that night as Torrance was dressing to go home, she looked over at the blonde in bed. "Well, Claire, it was a pleasure meeting you."

The blonde gave a dreamy smile. “Oh, I think the pleasure was all mine, Torrance. I would hate for this to be good bye though. Maybe we could get together sometime in New York?”

“Sure. Why not?”

“Wonderful. You might just become my new best friend.” the older woman teased crawling to where Torrance was sitting on the edge of the bed to tie her shoes and wrapping her arms around Torrance’s broad shoulders. “My friends are going to be so envious that I have gotten a toy like you.”

“Well, if you were a real friend, you might share.” Torrance joked.

“Oh? And would you like really like to fuck all your mother’s friends?”

“If they want me, I’m available.” she stated.

Claire laughed lightly. “You are such a hot commodity. I don’t know if they could handle you, but I’ll pass your message along. I know at least half the women in the room tonight would have loved to have been on the receiving end of your tongue.”

Shooting her a devilish smile, Torrance whispered, “Well, my tongue is glad to be of service, but I have to go now.”

“I wish you didn’t.” the blonde mentioned as Torrance put on her jacket.

“Well, it would be a little hard to explain to my mother. I don’t think she would appreciate it if she knew I’ve been screwing one of her married friends. I mean she’s liberal, but she would probably draw the line there I think.”

“Will I see you at the brunch tomorrow?”

“Maybe. I haven’t decided yet, but you have my card. Call me.” she said making her way toward the door.

Over the next six months Torrance stayed busy between work and entertaining all her mother’s female friends. Claire had taken her seriously that night and before she knew it, she had slipped back into the lifestyle that she had tried so hard to leave, but instead of being a teenager with girls her own age, she had suddenly turned into God’s gift to married women over forty. Almost nightly she was with someone different, but it never failed that when she closed her eyes, images of the twenty seven year old teacher from Philadelphia flooded her mind. No matter how many women she had, Torrance still felt as empty as the day Helen had walked out of her life. Just when it seemed impossible for things to get worse, the game went a little too far one night with Torrance ending up in the emergency room when Claire’s husband found them together and threw the photographer out the window of their second story loft. As she lay there alone in her room sedated to help the pain, she began to cry, wishing that for only a moment Helen was with



her, which is how her mother found her.

“Oh, God, Torrance, how did this happen?” she exclaimed seeing her daughter’s body injured almost from head to toe from cuts along her face and arms to a broken leg and ribs. “Who did this to you?” When Torrance told her, her mother gave her a skeptical glance. “How do you even know them? They’re friends of your fathers and mine.”

“Claire and I...” she mumbled. “I’ve been entertaining your friends.”

“What? What are you talking about? What do you mean?”

“What do you think, Mother? I’ve been sleeping with them.” Torrance slurred as she fought the drug induced sleep.

Glaring at her daughter, Maria inquired, “What? Who? They’re all married! I want names, Torrance!”

“No. You don’t need to know. It’s not your business.”

“Not my business? My friends have been sleeping with my daughter! It is my business! I don’t have any single friends! You’ve been having ongoing affairs with how many of my friends and for how long?”

“It doesn’t matter, Mama! It’s what they wanted!”

“Maybe but it’s not what you wanted! They’ve been using you!”

“I’m a grown up! I knew what I was doing! It doesn’t matter who I’ve been with! All you need to know is that Claire’s husband fucking threw me out of a second story window!”

Maria took a few deep breaths as she moved closer to the bed. “Okay. You need to calm down. I’m sorry that I’m getting you worked up. I just am concerned, Torrance. You promised me you wouldn’t go back to this life.”

“I’m not on drugs, Mama. I’m just sleeping around with women you happen to know. It’s not that big of a deal.”

“Not that big of a deal? You’re in the hospital, Torrance, just for that reason.” Torrance looked away toward the wall as tears came to her eyes again. Her mother gently took a seat on the bed and reached for her daughter’s face. Cupping it softly she brought Torrance’s gaze back to her own. “You’re going to be all right, darling. I’m going to take care of you.”

Torrance shook her head. “Why couldn’t being thrown out of a window be a fatal accident?” she pondered.

With tears in her own eyes, Maria whispered, “I’m grateful it’s not. Oh, Torrance, I know you’re

hurting and not just physically either, but this is not the answer. No matter how many women you're with you're heart will only get over Helen in its own time. You can't rid your heart of her by having sex with all these women, and in fact you're probably only hurting worse, because you refuse to let yourself mourn your loss. Suicidal actions such as letting husbands catch you in bed with their wives won't bring her back."

"I don't want to live then." Torrance mumbled closing her eyes.

Continued Part 4

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**The Athenaeum's Scroll Archive**

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**~ Love in Photographs ~**

by Alex Tryst

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**Part 4**

Two summers later Helen was in New York on a photo shoot. Not a day went by that Helen didn't think about the photographer and being in the city where she lived made it more difficult. She often wondered what Torrance was doing and hoped that the older woman was all right. Ever since Torrance had left her life, things hadn't quite been the same. Helen had retreated away from most of her friends, preferring to stay in instead of going out with them, Kelly and Mark being the only two she spent a lot of time with. Most of her time was spent thinking about Torrance and what had happened between them. It hadn't taken very long for Helen to start desiring to see the brunette, but knowing their separation had been her idea, she felt it best that she leave the tall woman in peace. The only time she had tried to contact the photographer was after the book had been released. Quite unexpectedly Helen had received a signed copy in the mail. There was no note attached, only an inscription thanking Helen for all her contributions to the book and wishing her well. Torrance had signed it with love, and it now sat on the coffee table where Helen saw it daily. When her offers for work began to multiply, she thought about sending Torrance a thank you note, and after much discussion with Mark and Kelly did so, hoping that Torrance would take that as enough motivation to contact her, but she never heard anything. That had been over a year ago.

As she left her shoot that day to head back to Philadelphia, her thoughts as usual were with the brunette. Walking with her head down out to the busy street of New York, she checked her watch to see how long she had before her train left. However suddenly she heard the unmistakable voice of the photographer. Jerking her head up, she saw the woman that had dominated her thoughts for the past two years standing in there with a young pregnant woman trying to hail a cab.

Helen was frozen as she watched Torrance open the back door of the cab before hugging the woman and rubbing her stomach in obvious affection. The blonde knew she shouldn't have been eavesdropping, but her heart stopped when she heard Torrance telling the younger woman she would see her at home before bestowing a kiss on her cheek. Suddenly feeling the urge to run, Helen turned to go, but before she could even get two steps, she heard Torrance call her name questioningly.

Slowly Helen turned toward Torrance. "Hi, Torrance." softly she stated looking into the face she still loved and noticing a faint scar along Torrance's temple and specks of gray hair just above her ears but seeing that in almost every other way, the brunette was unchanged. It wasn't until Torrance took a tentative step toward her that Helen observed a small limp.

"Hi. Funny meeting you here. In a city this large I never imagined this would happen. You working?"

"Yeah. I just finished a shoot. You?"

"I was just dropping a package off. How are you?"

"Fine. How are you?" nervously the blonde asked.

Torrance shrugged. "I'm okay I guess."

There was an awkward pause before Helen mentioned, "I got the copy of the book you sent. That was nice of you. Thanks."

"You're welcome. I got your note. I'm glad things are working out well for you."

Helen gave a nod. Not knowing what else to say, she mentioned, "Well, I should probably go."

"Oh." Torrance replied in obvious disappointment. "Well, it was nice to see you."

"You too, Torrance." she stated before turning to walk away. However as she turned her back on the photographer, she wanted nothing more than to stay. She was trying desperately to think of a reason to visit longer when she heard Torrance call her name again. Looking back she saw Torrance walk toward her.

"Listen, Helen, do you have time for a cup of coffee with an old friend?"

"Um... I thought you had business."

"I'm just dropping something off, and then I was going to go across the street for some coffee. Would you like to join me?" As much as she wanted to, Helen had her reservations. Seeing Torrance with another woman had hurt her more than she had cared to admit. Noticing the blonde's hesitation, Torrance gave a smile. "I'll tell you what. I'm going to go upstairs, and then

I'm going right over there for coffee." she said pointing to the café across the street. "I would love to see you there, but if I don't it was good to see you. You have about ten minutes to decide. Okay?" Helen gave a nod. Taking one long look at her, Torrance smiled softly saying, "Good bye, Helen."

Helen watched Torrance enter the building before contemplating the offer. She had missed the photographer more than she had admitted to anyone. However seeing that Torrance was now involved with someone else made it difficult for Helen to see her, but her curiosity of what the photographer had been up to in their two years apart made Helen go across the street to wait.

Fifteen minutes later Helen was sitting at a back table anxiously eying the door for the brunette. Her heart pounded nervously wondering what she would say to the woman who she had grown to love even more through their time apart. As soon as she spotted Torrance enter the café, her breathing stopped momentarily as the tall woman flashed her a beautiful smile. Helen sat watching Torrance as she went over to the counter for a beverage. When Torrance came to the table, Helen saw how the older woman was favoring one leg as she walked.

"Well, I didn't really expect you to be here, but I'm glad you are." Torrance stated as she took a seat across the small table.

Helen took a nervous look out the window as she put on a brave front even though she could feel her hands beginning to sweat. "Well, I guess congratulations are in order, huh?" she mentioned lightly, even though her heart ached at seeing Torrance with her pregnant girlfriend.

"You mean the book? You had a lot to do with that. For the first year after that thing came out, I would get daily calls asking me about you, who you were and if you were available for sittings. I always just directed them to your agent. I don't think I've ever had such a response to a piece of work as I have to your face being on the cover of my book."

"Thank you for your referrals. I've had more offers than I can even deal with. I never thought at twenty-nine my modeling career would be on the upswing. It's been a pleasant surprise. You didn't have to do that."

"Nonsense. You have something special about you, Helen, and they all see that. That's why they ask about you. I just took a picture. They know the real beauty is in you."

The blonde blushed at the compliment. "Thanks but I wasn't actually talking about the book."

Looking at her in confusion, Torrance asked, "Then what were you talking about?"

"You and your girlfriend... having a baby. It's what you've always wanted."

Torrance gave a light smile. "You mean Melissa? Oh, she's not my girlfriend. She's my cousin. She's staying with me for awhile, because she's been having some problems at home. I've agreed to help out with the baby. I wish I was that lucky though." she mumbled.

“We all want to be that lucky as to find the right one.” Helen mentioned, but as soon as she said it, she knew it would hurt Torrance. Seeing the effect her words had on the older woman’s face, she quickly said, “I didn’t mean it like that, Torrance.”

The brunette shook her head. “It’s in the past, Helen. It should stay there.” she said more calmly than she felt.

Helen gave a nod in agreement. An awkward pause occurred in the conversation, but not wanting one comment to ruin their time, she asked, “So, how long has Melissa been living with you?”

“A couple of months. It’s been a real trial, but I’m sure you don’t want to hear about that.”

“Don’t be silly. I can see that it’s a serious matter to you. Please feel free to talk to me about it. I’m here for you.” Helen reached across the table instinctively to take Torrance’s hand.

Torrance looked out the window for a moment before looking back at the green eyes she loved. “Well, Melissa is seventeen and the daughter of my father’s youngest brother. Her whole life she’s been spoiled, and she’s gotten herself into some trouble with drugs. Now she’s pregnant, and her parents want nothing to do with her. It irritates me to no end that parents can feel that way toward their children. Anyway, she didn’t have anywhere to go, so I said she could stay with me. I’m helping her out for awhile, but today we got some bad news from the doctor. Melissa could lose the baby, because she’s been reckless during her pregnancy with drugs and alcohol, but assuming she could carry to term, the baby is going to have severe disabilities. I honestly don’t know what to do. She’s too young to be a mother, not to mention a mother of a child with special needs. She can’t even take care of herself.”

Helen nodded. Hesitantly she inquired, “So what are your options?”

“There are no options. I don’t believe in abortion, but even if I did, she’s too far along already. That choice is out. I know what will happen if she does have this kid. She’s going to continue down her destructive path, and I’m going to be the one trying to care for them both. I don’t think I have it in me to do that, Helen, and I feel terrible about it. I mean privately I sometimes hope that she miscarries, so she can have another chance at life, and that’s wrong of me.”

“I don’t think so. Torrance, you have a kind heart. You’re doing more for her than anyone else ever has, but even you have your limits. It doesn’t make you less of a person. It simply makes you human. I don’t think I could ever do what you’re doing.”

“What’s even worse is that I don’t think she’s even clean now. She was so messed up on drugs, and then she swore to me when she moved in that she would clean up, but in my heart I know she hasn’t. I still think she’s using. I’m worried about her.”

“It’ll be okay, Torrance.” the blonde whispered.

They were quiet for a moment as Torrance just looked out the window, and Helen gazed at her. However after a moment Torrance looked down at the table to notice their hands still joined.

Slowly pulling hers away, the photographer leaned back in her chair and stated, “Enough about me though. What’s been going on with you?”

Helen pretended not to be affected by the loss of contact. “Well, not much actually, just work. Kelly and Mark have decided to get married though.”

“Really? That’s great. When?”

“Early next year. Kelly asked me to be her maid of honor.”

“As you should be. Where are they holding it?”

“In Philly. It should be fun. They’ve been together for long enough.”

“What’s going to happen with your living situation then?”

Helen shrugged. “I’m going to get a new place I guess. Even if they moved out, I couldn’t afford to live there alone.” After another pause Helen asked, “May I ask what happened to you? How did you get this scar?” She reached across the small table to lightly finger the brunette’s temple.

Instinctively Torrance leaned into the caress. “Um, I was in an accident. That just proves that people in their thirties can still be stupid.”

“What kind of accident?”

“I was thrown out of a second story window face first. My arms took most of the glass, but I still had some cuts on my face.”

“Oh my God. Is that how you got your limp too?”

Torrance nodded. “Yeah. I had several broken ribs and a broken leg. I was just in the wrong place at the wrong time.”

“When did this happen?”

“Uh, it was about six months after you and I stopped speaking.”

“Oh. I wish I could’ve been there for you. I’m sure that was a difficult time.”

“Well, it’s in the past.” Torrance mumbled. The two of them sat there the rest of the afternoon while the world passed outside the window. Finally Torrance looked down at her own watch and mentioned, “You know, it’s getting late. If you still have time before your train, I would love it if you would join Melissa and me for dinner.”

Helen consulted her own watch, noting that she had long missed her train, but not telling Torrance that, she just smiled and replied, “I’d love that too.”

“Great. Shall we go then?”

Going out to the street, Torrance hailed a cab for them, but with commuter traffic, they didn't arrive back to Torrance's building for another hour. When they arrived on the photographer's floor, they both heard loud music coming from the direction of the brunette's apartment. Casting a quizzical look at the blonde, Torrance led them down to her door. It was ajar, so Torrance pushed it open and stepped inside. Fearing the worst, she made her way through the entry toward the kitchen where she heard voices. When she stepped into the room, she saw her kitchen littered with empty bottles of liquor as well as an assortment of drugs on her bar as a pack of adolescent hoodlums talked amongst themselves.

“Oh my God.” Helen whispered under her breath taking Torrance's hand.

Not seeing her cousin among the kids, Torrance yelled, “Excuse me! What in the hell are you doing in my apartment?”

They all turned to look at her. One of the older looking boys stepped forward as he commented, “Well, Missy's dyke cousin is home, and look what she has with her.”

Ignoring the slur Torrance asked, “Where is Melissa?”

“She's upstairs with Brad.” he stated. “You want some?” he inquired holding the joint out to her.

Knowing Brad to be the father of Melissa's baby, the brunette felt her anger get the better of her. “This party is over people! Everybody out now!”

“Chill out now. There's no need for that.”

“Maybe you didn't hear me clearly! I said get your drugs and your alcohol, and get the hell out of my loft now!” she screamed grabbing the guy by the shirt. “You have ten seconds before I'm calling the cops!” Torrance watched as Melissa's friends left her place before going after her cousin. Running up the spiral staircase with Helen right after her, Torrance barged into Melissa's room. Seeing Melissa and her boyfriend in bed together, Torrance charged over to them. “I'm going to fucking kill you!” she yelled yanking Brad out of bed and throwing him against the wall. “Haven't you done enough? She's already pregnant because of you!”

“Torrance, stop.” Helen stated from the open door. “Something's wrong with Melissa.”

Torrance turned to the bed to see her cousin lying there completely still. Forgetting Brad for the moment, she returned to the bed and dropped to her knees. “Melissa, wake up.” she stated shaking her by the shoulders. Getting no response, she shook harder. “Melissa, wake up dammit!”

“I'm calling an ambulance.” Helen said seeing that Torrance couldn't bring her around.

Torrance felt herself losing control as she turned her anger on Brad again. Shoving him roughly against the wall a second time and grabbing him by the throat, she screamed, “What did you give her?”

“I didn’t think it would hurt her, honestly.” he stated panting for air.

“You tell me what she took now!” she demanded grabbing him between the thighs. He groaned painfully. “You better tell me or else I’ll make sure you’re never with another woman as long as you live! Tell me!”

“I’ll tell you. Please just don’t hurt me.” he begged.

“Well?” she yelled.

“Heroine. I didn’t think she would OD.”

Torrance released him enough to push him toward the door. “Get the fuck out! I never want to see you again!” she bellowed going back to her cousin. She checked her vital signs.

Moments later Helen reappeared. “Any change?” she softly inquired coming into the room.

“No. Her pulse is weak and breathing shallow. This is not good.”

“The ambulance is on it’s way. I’ll go wait to let them in.” she gently said.

Once she was alone, Torrance looked at her cousin just lying there. “Dammit, Melissa. I never should’ve left you alone.” she stated.

It seemed like forever until the ambulance arrived. As they rushed to take Melissa to the hospital, Torrance grabbed Helen by the hand and dragged her out to the ambulance as well. Just as they were about to get in, the EMT stated, “Only family is allowed to ride with us.”

“We’re both family. Now get out of my way.” Torrance growled. “Come on, Helen.”

As they rode to the hospital, Helen embraced the older woman as Torrance just cried. However once they got there, they were forced to wait. Guiding the brunette over to the corner of the waiting room, Helen sat her down and pulled Torrance into her arms. Neither said anything for awhile as Torrance just quietly cried herself into an exhausted light sleep. As Helen sat there gently stroking Torrance’s short dark hair, she prayed desperately that Melissa be all right for Torrance’s sake. She knew the older woman felt responsible for what had happened.

After a few hours the doctor asked to speak with them. As Torrance and Helen followed him into a private room, Helen squeezed Torrance’s hand tightly in support. “Well, I have to say that Melissa is an extremely lucky young lady this evening. She did overdose, but we were able to save her.”



“Oh, thank God.” Torrance sighed in relief.

“However I am sorry to report that she has lost her baby. It was hard enough to keep her with us, but we had to make a choice. There was just no way we could’ve saved them both. I’m sorry.”

Torrance gave an absent nod. “But Melissa will be okay?” she clarified.

“Yes, she should be fine and able to go home tomorrow night or the following morning depending on when she comes around. Right now she is unconscious but stable. She’s being taken to her room now. You can see her if you’d like.” Torrance gave a nod. “Okay, I’ll have the nurses get you when she’s ready.”

“Thank you, doctor.” Torrance whispered. He nodded before turning to leave them. Looking at Helen Torrance reached for her instinctually, and Helen allowed Torrance to embrace her as the older woman cried in relief.

“Come on. Let’s go to her room.” softly Helen suggested leading Torrance by the hand out to the nurses’ station to find out where Melissa was being moved.

When they arrived at the teenager’s room, Torrance sunk down in a chair next to the bed as Helen stood next to her with a consoling arm on her shoulder. The photographer spared a look up at Helen as she mentioned, “I’m sorry you got dragged into this.”

“It’s all right. I’m glad I could be here for you.”

“I guess we made you miss your train. I’m sorry. You could probably still catch a late one.”

“I’m not going anywhere. I want to be here for you.”

“Well, I’m going to stay here with Melissa the rest of the night. Why don’t you at least go back to my place and get some rest? The least I could do is put you up for the night.”

Helen shook her head. “I want to stay here with you, Torrance. I don’t want you to have to be alone right now.” Torrance gave a nod in agreement, so Helen pulled up the other chair next to the photographer’s, and they were silent the rest of the night.

The following morning when Torrance awoke she felt arms around her and a head on her shoulder. Opening her eyes she noticed that Helen had curled up into her sometime during the night, but the teacher was sleeping soundly. Looking over toward the bed, she saw Melissa’s dark eyes just staring at them. “Melissa.” Torrance softly called out, gently maneuvering Helen off of her. Leaning over to the bed, Torrance took her cousin’s hand.

Melissa’s eyes watered. “Please don’t hate me, Torrance.”

“I don’t hate you, Melissa. I never should’ve left you alone after the news we got. I love you, but you scared me so badly.”

The teenager nodded. "I'm sorry."

"I know. The doctors said you would be fine though." Pausing for a moment, the brunette continued, "I have to tell you though that due to what happened, you lost the baby, Melissa. I thought you should hear that from me instead of the doctors."

"Oh." Melissa mumbled. Looking over at the blonde, she curiously inquired, "Who's that?"

Torrance gave her first smile as she glanced at the sleeping woman. "That's Helen. She can sleep through anything. I better go tell the nurses you're awake. We have so much to talk about, but I first want to know when you can get out of here."

Later that day Melissa was cleared to go home, so Torrance left her cousin under Helen's watchful eye as she went home to get her car. As the three of them got back to the loft, Melissa saw the destruction that had been caused. "Oh, Torrance, my friends ruined your place." she whispered.

"I know, but that won't happen again, because they aren't coming back. They aren't your real friends anyway. Now come on. You need to rest. Let me help you upstairs." Torrance assisted her up the staircase and led her to the master bedroom since Melissa's room was still a wreck from the previous night. Helping her cousin into pajamas, Torrance settled her in the bed before kneeling beside her. "You try to get some sleep. I'm going to start cleaning up the mess downstairs and in your room."

Melissa nodded. "Torrance, I really am sorry. Please let me stay here with you."

"Do you truly mean that, Melissa?"

"Yes."

"All right. You can stay, but there are going to be some changes. You're going to get clean. No more drugs. Do you hear me?"

"Yes. I want to stop, Torrance. I really do."

"Okay and I'm going to help you. For now though, get rest. I'm going to clean up your room. If there are any drugs in there, I want you to tell me now. If I go in there and find them without you telling me where they are, I'm going to be upset."

"They're in the night stand." Melissa mumbled.

"All right. Go to sleep."

Torrance went into her guest room that was serving as Melissa's quarters and began rummaging through her belongings looking for drugs. Finding them in the bedside table as her cousin had

said, Torrance flushed them in the bathroom before going back to straighten up her room and change the sheets. When she was finished, she took a peek in on the teenager to see that she was sleeping. Going downstairs she found Helen in the kitchen cleaning.

“Hey. Is she asleep?”

“Yeah. You don’t have to do that. I’ll get it.”

“No. Don’t worry about it. You’ve been through a lot too. It’s the least I could do for you. Just sit down. I’ll finish this and then make you something to eat. I know you haven’t had anything in at least twenty four hours. You must be starving by now.”

“I am a little hungry.” Torrance conceded. “You don’t have to cook though. I’ll just order some Chinese. I could at least feed you for kidnaping you the last day and a half.”

“I wanted to be here.” Helen mentioned making Torrance give a small smile.

By the time their dinner arrived, Helen had finished with the kitchen. Torrance took the liberty of setting up her bistro table out on the balcony for them, so once the kitchen was clean, they both sat down to their meal. “This is nice.” Torrance stated. “After all that’s happened the last two days it’s nice just to be here sitting still.”

“I’m sure it is. It’s been rough for you. You deserve a break.”

“You’ve made it bearable, Helen. Thank you for being here.”

“It was my pleasure. So, what are you going to do with Melissa now?”

“I was thinking that rehab is the best way to go. I think it’s the only way she’s going to have a chance at staying clean. It’s going to be a long road. Staying off drugs is a tough battle.”

“Sounds like you speak from experience.” Helen said.

“I do. When I was her age, I was just as wild and dangerous. Hell if I had been into guys instead of girls, I probably would’ve been pregnant too. I’ve been in her shoes, and it took a near fatal accident and a caring person to make me see the light.”

“What happened to you?”

“I was twenty two, just out of college. My girlfriend at the time and I had gotten high, and I wanted to go out joyriding. I stole my grandfather’s Ferrari, and the two of us went cruising. I nearly killed us both by running it into a tree.”

“Oh my God.”

“Yeah. I was a real hellion. My grandfather could’ve been upset about the car, but he sat by my

hospital bed everyday until I recovered. We had a lot of talks during that time. He told me one time that he wouldn't have been able to handle it if I had killed myself. He was genuinely concerned about my well-being, and he's the reason I went into rehab. I didn't want to hurt him any more than I already had. It is a long road, but now it's time I return the favor he gave me by being there for Melissa."

Helen just sat looking at her companion across the table as her admiration grew for the photographer. Knowing that Torrance had struggled for her success made Helen regard her even more highly for attaining her goals. "You really are something else, Torrance," she said. "Melissa is lucky to have you."

"Well, I hope I'm enough. Her family wants nothing to do with her, and it's hard enough at that age to think that no one cares, but when you need your family's support and don't have it, things can seem impossible." As their meal came to a close, Torrance inquired, "So, what's your plan? Are you going to try to go back tonight?"

"I wasn't planning on it if that's okay with you. It's getting late."

"I think you should stay here. That can be a long trip on the train, and it is late. You'd be better off staying the night."

"I don't want to impose though."

"Oh please. You could never impose. The least I could do is give you a bed to sleep in. In fact I probably could even do better by offering you my jacuzzi tub. You could have a soak, and I could wash your clothes, so you have something clean to wear in the morning. What do you think?"

"That's tempting. I could use a bath. I bet I look a mess."

"Never. You always look beautiful."

The blonde blushed. "Perhaps we should take these dishes inside," she suggested changing the subject.

Torrance nodded in agreement, so they took everything inside. "Well, just let me take care of these, and then I'll go upstairs and move Melissa, so you can have privacy up there."

"Why don't you go ahead with that? I'll get these."

"You sure?"

"Yes. Go on." Helen said lightly shooing Torrance from the kitchen.

The brunette made her way upstairs to her room. Gently waking Melissa she assisted the teenager to her own room before going into the master bath. Wanting everything to be perfect for

Helen, she arranged candles around the tub along with an assortment of bath oils and bubbles. Getting a new towel out of the cabinet, she laid it out for the blonde as well as hanging her robe where Helen could reach it. By the time she returned downstairs, the model was finished with the dishes. "Your bath awaits." Torrance stated. She led the way up to the bathroom and opened the door for the teacher. "I hope you find this to your liking. If you just leave your clothes here, I'll get to them. Have a good soak."

Helen thanked her before she was left alone. Closing the door, Helen went over to the tub and started the water. She looked around the bathroom as she began to undress. The atmosphere that Torrance had set was romantic and thoughtful, making the blonde's heart ache all the more for the woman she still loved. Taking a seat on the edge of the tub, Helen studied all the products Torrance had laid out for her use before adding some lavender oil to her bath. Shedding all her clothes into a pile, Helen slipped into the warm water and laid her head against the bath pillow Torrance had left for her. Her thoughts went to the brunette. She wondered might've happened had they become a real couple. Helen imagined that the photographer would be there in the tub with her wrapped in her arms. Helen longed for another chance to be what Torrance wanted in her and contemplated a way to get the older woman back in her life as she closed her eyes. The lack of quality sleep was making her tired as she relaxed, and it was only moments before her exhausted body gave into its need for rest.

Torrance waited downstairs for over an hour flipping through the tv channels, but her mind was with the woman now in her tub. She longed to be up there with the blonde, but knowing a relationship was not meant to be, Torrance stayed where she was on the couch until she began to get concerned when Helen didn't reappear. Wondering if something was wrong, Torrance went up to the master bath and knocked, but there was no answer. Cracking the door slightly, the photographer called Helen's name, but when there was no reply, Torrance opened the door all the way to find Helen asleep in the tub. Torrance just stood in the doorway for a moment staring at Helen's nakedness. When they had been together in Italy, Torrance had never gotten a chance to see the blonde's body, because she had come to her under the cover of night, but now that the brunette saw the model in all her glory, she was mesmerized by her beauty.

Knowing Helen's tendency for heavy sleep, Torrance wondered what she should do. Resolving to take care of the blonde's clothes first, she picked them up and took them to her laundry room. When she returned Helen was still passed out, so the older woman decided to pull the drain plug to see if the would wake the younger woman. However as Torrance knelt next to the tub watching the water disappear, Helen still didn't stir. Figuring she couldn't let her stay there, Torrance decided she would try to get the blonde into bed. Going out into her room, Torrance pulled back the covers and laid her terry cloth robe out. Then she went back into the bathroom and gently lifted the teacher from the tub. Helen automatically curled in tighter, nuzzling Torrance's neck in her sleep. Torrance took her to the room and softly laid her out on the bed. Torrance let her eyes gaze over the model's bare frame for a few minutes more before regretfully closing the robe and pulling the covers over her. Brushing back a lock of short blonde hair, Torrance gave into her desire to kiss the younger woman, placing her lips delicately against her forehead. Helen mumbled Torrance's name in her sleep, making the photographer's heart skip a beat at the thought of the younger woman dreaming of her.

When Helen awoke later that night, she didn't know where she was at first. Reaching for the bedside table, she found a lamp and clicked it on, revealing that she was in Torrance's bed, but the brunette was nowhere to be seen. Curious as to where she was, Helen slipped out of bed and made her way toward Melissa's room. She saw that the teenager was sleeping soundly alone. Hearing the tv from downstairs, the model went to the upstairs landing and looked down over the railing into the living room. There Torrance was on the couch asleep with the tv still on. Going down the stairs, Helen went to turn the tv off before looking at the photographer. Torrance was in a white t-shirt and men's cotton pajama pants with one arm behind her head as Helen had seen her sleep before. Her blanket had fallen to the floor, so Helen went to retrieve it. However instead of covering Torrance with it, she put her hand on the brunette's shoulder. Instantly the older woman's green eyes opened.

"Helen? You need something?" she yawned.

"Come on. You're coming to sleep upstairs with me." Helen softly instructed taking Torrance by the hands to help her off the couch. Torrance offered no resistance as the blonde led her up the winding stairs and down the hall to the master bedroom. Taking Torrance to the bed, Helen guided her down into it, and Torrance was sound asleep again before she was even completely settled. Wrapping the brunette in the covers, Helen went to the dresser to find herself more appropriate sleeping attire before joining her friend in sleep.

In the morning Torrance awoke to someone whispering her name. As she opened her eyes, she realized her arms were around a sleeping blonde. Hearing her name again, she looked over toward the bedroom door to see Melissa standing there. "Torrance, I don't feel well." she whispered.

"All right. Come on." Torrance stated sliding out of bed and escorting her cousin from the room, knowing that teenager was starting drug withdrawal.

Helen awoke about an hour to horrible screaming. Instantly panicking she raced to Melissa's room to find Torrance holding it closed as Melissa frantically tried to get out. "What is going on?" she inquired skeptically.

"Oh good. You're up. I need you to go into my dresser and get the key for this room, so I can lock Melissa in here."

"Lock her in? Are you sure that's a good idea?"

"Yes. She's started withdrawals, and she's going to carry on until she gets out or wears herself out. I can't hold this door closed forever. Please get me the key." Torrance said much more calmly than she felt.

Helen did as she was asked. When Torrance finally got the door locked, she took a deep breath. "Torrance, are you sure you have to do this?"

"Trust me, Helen. This is for the best. She's really angry at me right now, because she needs a

fix, and I won't let her have one."

"But she could hurt herself."

"Well, I tried to get everything out of her room yesterday that could be harmful to her, because I knew this was coming. It's going to get worse until I can get her into rehab somewhere. I'm only locking her in while I make some calls and get dressed. Watch this door for me while I'm in the shower. No matter what she says or does, don't unlock it, and if for some reason she does get out, come get me immediately. I have to take a quick shower, because I haven't bathed in days. It'll just take me a little bit."

"Okay. Sure. Whatever you say." the blonde answered staring at the door as Melissa began to throw things against it.

Torrance quickly showered and dressed and then kept watch as Helen did the same. By the time the model was finished, all was silent making Torrance hope that Melissa had worn herself out for the time being. Going downstairs Helen made them breakfast as Torrance started calling around to try to find a place to take her cousin. After several hours and calls by both of them, Torrance finally found a facility that would treat all of Melissa's needs. Calling Melissa's parents she got her mother to agree to meet them in order to check Melissa in. When everything was arranged, Torrance took a deep breath. "Well, now for the hard part. I've got to go upstairs and get Melissa ready to go."

"Is there anything I can do to help?" Helen asked.

"You just being here is a great help. I'm going to go up and get her things together. If you don't mind, I'm going to have you drive my car in case I have to restrain her during the trip."

"All right. Whatever you need."

"Great. Get yourself ready to go, because as soon as I bring her down those stairs, we're out of here."

Half an hour later Torrance came down the stairs pushing Melissa in front of her. Helen noticed that Torrance had gotten a black eye somehow from all the banging she had heard upstairs, but she didn't mention it as she helped get the teenager to the car. The ride to the center was incredibly long as Helen and Torrance had to endure all the vulgar nasty slurs that Melissa threw at the older woman. The fight continued all the way through the check-in process at the rehab facility, and Melissa's mother hardly helped at all, obviously irritated that she even had to be there.

Finally once Melissa had been settled into her room, Torrance led Helen out to the car. "Are you all right? She said a lot of not so nice things to you." the blonde inquired seeing Torrance quiet demeanor as they drove away from the center.

"I'm all right, just tired. She didn't mean what she was saying. Those were the drugs talking. It

can be really hard to physically need a fix and not be able to get it. Addicts will do just about anything to get their craving met. It's part of the process. I know she doesn't mean it."

"She must have really knocked the fire out of you to give you a black eye." Helen mentioned.

"Yeah, she got me good. I had forgotten about that ring she always wears. I had managed to take all the other potentially harmful things out of her room, but somehow that one got by me, and I paid for it. Melissa's a tough one, but I'm tougher. She never stood a chance against me."

Coming to the end of the driveway of the scenic institution, Torrance turned to the teacher.

"Well, could I convince you to have dinner with me before I take you home?"

"You don't have to take me home. I can take the train."

"We're almost half way there. I might as well drive you."

"As long as you promise to spend the night there. I don't want you driving all the way there just to turn around and go back to New York."

"Fine. You have a deal."

It was late when they arrived back at Helen's apartment. As they came in, they saw Mark and Kelly sitting on the couch watching tv. "Torrance, what a surprise. How are you?" Kelly inquired.

"I'm good. I hear congratulations are in order on your engagement. I think that's great." she said smiling at the two of them.

"Why don't you sit down?" Helen suggested gesturing to a chair. Torrance walked over and took the seat, but Helen noticed the older woman gingerly moving, indicating to her that even though Torrance didn't admit it, Melissa had hurt her during their skirmish.

"So, Torrance, you look like you've been in a fight. What happened?" Mark asked conversationally.

"Oh, I wouldn't take no for an answer." she joked lightly. Kelly and Mark both gave Helen a confused glance.

"Torrance, I know I can't offer you a jacuzzi or anything, but I noticed you were favoring your back. Are you hurting? Would you like to soak in my tub? It might help, and then I could give you a back rub."

"That might not be such a bad idea. Melissa gave me a run for my money when I had to wrestle her to the floor. A hot bath might help."

"All right then. Come on. Let me help you up." Helen offered taking the photographer's hands. Helping her from her seat, the blonde led Torrance off to the bathroom. "I'll get you something



to wear to bed. Maybe after you soak I can give you a massage, so you'll sleep better."

Leaving Torrance alone Helen went back to where her roommates were. "Mark, do you have something Torrance could sleep in?" she asked.

"Sure. Feel free to grab whatever." he stated.

"Are you going to tell us what's going on, Helen? We get a call from you a few days ago that you ran into Torrance and were staying with her a few days. Now she shows up here like she's had the tar beaten out of her. What is going on?"

"I'll tell you. Just let me get her some pajamas first. I'll be right back."

Torrance was sitting on the edge of the tub trying in vain to get her shoes off, because her back had decided to stick on her when there was a knock at the door. "Yeah?"

"It's just me. I have something for you to wear."

"Oh, come on in." Torrance mumbled.

When Helen entered and saw the brunette sitting there obviously in pain. "You all right? Do you need help?"

Even though Torrance didn't want Helen's help, she knew she didn't have a choice in the matter. "My back is stuck. I can't move." she stated.

"Oh. Well, let me help you." Helen replied coming to the brunette and kneeling in front of her. Gently she removed Torrance's shoes and socks before helping her stand. "Do you need help with your shirt too?"

"No, thanks. I'll be fine." Torrance responded, even though she knew it would be difficult to do alone, but having the blonde so near was making her heart ache, so she rather go it alone.

"All right. If you need anything else, let me know."

Going back out into the living room, Helen dropped into a chair and gave a long sigh. "Well, so, what's up with you and Torrance?" Mark inquired softly.

"This has been the strangest three days. When I was in New York for my shoot, I accidentally ran into her on the street. At first I wasn't sure that I wanted to see her, because she was with her pregnant cousin Melissa, but I at first thought it was her girlfriend. I just thought it would be weird, but she caught me before I could get away, and I'm now glad she did. We went for coffee and had a long talk. It was really nice. She invited me to dinner with she and her cousin, but that's when all hell broke loose."

"What happened?" Kelly asked.

Helen paused for a moment before stating, "I don't really want to get into details, because Torrance trusts me with her family's problems, but I'll just say that Melissa has some serious issues. She ended up having to go to the hospital. We were there all night and most of the next day. Then today Torrance and Melissa got into a fight, which is how she got the black eye, because Torrance had to put Melissa into a facility that could care for her needs, and Melissa didn't want to go. Torrance really is a saint for putting up with that when the rest of the family turned their back on Melissa."

"What happens now? Are you two going to be friends?" asked Kelly.

"I hope so, but we haven't talked about it or anything."

Back in the bathroom, Torrance had managed to work open her pants and step out of them even though pains shot through her back with the slightest movement. Putting on the pajama bottoms Helen had brought her, she took a deep breath trying to control herself from whimpering in pain. Next she slowly opened the buttons of her shirt, but as she tried to slip it over her shoulders, she groaned loudly in frustration of the agony. Muttering to herself angrily she realized that she was going to have to get assistance, but before she could even move to the door to call for help, there was a knock.

"Torrance, you okay? Do you need help?" Helen softly asked.

"Yeah. I can't get my shirt off." she quietly admitted.

"Why don't I come in and help you?" the blonde suggested waiting at the door for Torrance's agreement before entering. When she came in, Torrance was standing with her back to the door. "Here." she stated reaching for the photographer's shoulders. Helen eased the cotton shirt down Torrance's back revealing the strong muscles underneath. "Did you still want to take that bath?" she inquired.

"No. I'm not sure I'll be able to get in the tub much else out of it in this condition, and I'm not really up to having Mark see me naked when he has to pull me out." the older woman teased.

Helen nodded barely resisting the urge to look in the mirror and catch a glimpse of the front of the brunette as focused strictly on helping Torrance put on her clean shirt. "Well, let me get you settled into bed, and I'll give you a massage. Hopefully that will help." Escorting Torrance into her bedroom, Helen eased the older woman down onto the bed. "Here. Let's get you turned over." she mentioned trying to get Torrance onto her stomach.

"This really isn't necessary, Helen. I'll be fine." Torrance stated.

"No. I want to do this for you. It's obvious you're in a great deal of pain, and if I can help you get rid of it, I'm going to. Now turn over." she demanded gently. Torrance complied with the request, easing herself onto her front. "Good girl." the blonde said giving the photographer's bottom a playful pat.

The model's hand against her posterior felt like fire to Torrance. She hadn't expected such a touch, but she did her best not to react to it as she tried to make herself comfortable. Just when she began to relax, the teacher started to lift the hem of her shirt making Torrance tense. "Is that really necessary?"

"Trust me, Torrance. It'll be better this way. I can get to your muscles easier. You don't mind if I use lotion on you, do you?" she inquired casually.

"I guess not." the brunette replied softly wondering what she had gotten herself into.

Helen went to her dresser and picked up a bottle of lotion before coming back to the bed. Casually she straddled Torrance's hips and began to lather the liquid in her hands to warm it. Torrance tried to focus on anything but the fact that she was now between the legs of the woman she loved as the blonde began to rub her back, but the photographer couldn't help notice that whenever Helen would press harder, her thighs would strain against Torrance's and her hips would undulate sexily into her. It wasn't long before the pain in her back was forgotten as she concentrated on the feel of the woman rhythmically riding her as the pressure of the massage increased. Instinctively Torrance's body responded matching the movement of the blonde's hips. Helen dedicated so much of her attention to easing Torrance's pain that she never realized what she had started to do until she heard Torrance take a ragged breath. Then suddenly it struck her that the woman she had fantasized about over the past two years was exactly where Helen had longed for her to be and whimpered slightly as the older woman's backside brushed against the apex of her thighs sensually. Helen didn't stop however as she kept kneading Torrance's strong back muscles pressing deeper with each quick breath. Torrance moaned at the feeling of Helen's body on top of hers, but she knew they shouldn't be moving so quickly if they were ever going to have any sort of relationship again. Regretfully Torrance slowly turned over and looked up into the green eyes of her beloved who still sat straddled across her. She saw Helen's flushed face and erratic panting and knew without a doubt that they were feeling the same. It would have been so easy to lean up and kiss the woman she loved, and her body screamed for her to do just that as Torrance's slid her hands onto the blonde's hips. Instantly the teacher froze, fearing what the older woman might say or do in reaction to her behavior. There was a quiet moment between them as they just stared at each other.

"My back feels better. Thanks." Torrance stated as evenly as possible.

Helen nodded and exhaled slowly relieved that at least for the moment it looked like the photographer would let the incident pass. Dismounting from Torrance's hips, Helen answered, "Good. I'm glad. Now let's just get you settled in for the night. I'm going to go get ready for bed myself. I'll be back in a few minutes."

Gathering up her night clothes, Helen made a quick retreat from the room. She took her time in the bathroom preparing for bed as she thought about the woman in her bed. Helen knew it had been a lie when she told Torrance she didn't feel the same when they had returned from Italy. She had been in love with the photographer, but she had been so ashamed for forcing their relationship too fast and hurting the brunette that she felt it best to not to continue. The blonde

had been confused by her anxiety about touching Torrance sexually then, but as her body clearly displayed just moments ago she had moved beyond that. It had felt exhilarating to touch the older woman knowing she had elicited her responses, and she wanted nothing more to go in there and pick up where they had left off, but she knew it wouldn't be right. Wondering how she would make it through the night sleeping next to her, Helen made her way out of the bathroom. However she made a quick detour to the kitchen for a drink to stall for a few minutes. Getting a bottle of water from the refrigerator, she came to where her roommates still were sitting and stared at them contemplatively.

"What's wrong?" Kelly asked.

Helen shrugged. "Do you think I'm crazy for wanting to walk straight into my room and have that woman love me senseless?"

"What?" Mark inquired with surprise. "You want to have sex with her?"

Helen looked at Kelly questioningly to which her roommate just shrugged. "What? You told me not to tell anyone, not even Mark, so I didn't." she explained.

"Tell me what?" he asked.

Kelly looked at Helen, who nodded at her. Taking that as permission, Kelly stated, "Helen had sex with Torrance in Italy."

"What? Are you kidding me? You really had sex with her?" he inquired in astonishment.

"Yeah, I did."

"Well, how was it?" hesitantly he queried.

"There are no words to really describe it, Mark. It was like nothing I've ever experienced. It was beyond perfect."

"Well, hell, if it was that good, get yourself back in there and get you some action."

"Honey, it's not that simple." Kelly informed him patting him on the arm. "This is about much more than sex. We're talking about two women, and not only that, they're two women in love."

He rolled his eyes. "Oh Lord, one woman in love is bad enough. Now we've got two in love with each other."

"Are you in love with her again, Helen?"

"I still am. I never stopped, Kelly. I just said that because I was scared."

Kelly smiled at her. "I knew that. It was so obvious that you did."

“I want another chance, but I don’t want to blow it. I’ve never felt like this in my life, but I don’t know what to do.”

“Well, if it makes you feel any better, she still feels the same for you. That should make it a little easier.” Kelly told her.

Helen gave a uncertain nod before stating, “Well, I guess I’m going to go to bed. This will be a long night.”

“Just keep the noise down if you two do decide to jump each other. I’ve got an early meeting.” Mark joked.

Going back into her room, Helen saw that Torrance was already sleeping. Sliding into bed she extinguished the light before tenderly putting her head onto the brunette’s shoulder and closing her eyes. Torrance, who had only pretending to be asleep to avoid any awkwardness after the incident, smiled into the dark when she felt Helen curl up into her. Slowly she brought her arms around the blonde to hold her closely before dozing off.

The following morning when Torrance had to leave the two of them just stood at Helen’s door for a few minutes. “I just want to thank you again for all that you did for me, Helen. I’ll never forget your kindness. I don’t know what I would’ve done without you.” she said touching the younger woman affectionately on the arm.

Helen blushed at the praise. “I’m just glad that I could be there for you. You are by far the most giving person in the world, Torrance, so it was nice to be able to return what you had given to me. You’ll let me know how Melissa is doing, won’t you?”

“If you’d like.”

“I would. I’m leaving for home today for a little vacation, but when I get back, I want a full report. Okay?”

Torrance nodded. “Sure.”

“And if something comes up in the mean time and you need something, I want you to call me at my parents’ house.”

“I don’t want to impose.”

“You won’t be. Please. It will make me feel better if I know you would call. Promise me?”

“All right. I promise to call if I need anything.”

“Good. Maybe when I get back we can find a time to have that dinner you promised me at the coffee shop?” she suggested hoping that Torrance would accept her attempt to be close to her

again.

The brunette smiled. "I think that could be arranged. I should go now. You have to get going."

Giving a smile Helen leaned in and hugged Torrance tightly for a few moments before saying, "I'll see you when I get back."

Continued Part 5

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### **The Athenaeum's Scroll Archive**

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## **~ Love in Photographs ~**

by Alex Tryst

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### **Part 5**

When Helen arrived at her parents's house, the weather was dark and ominous with the rain moving hitting the earth in stinging drops. Helen's mood matched the sky, because the entire ride she thought about Torrance and whether or not she should tell her family about their growing relationship. She knew instinctually that her mother would disapprove, but she wondered what her father might think. The blonde knew without a doubt that whatever the future might hold for she and Torrance, the photographer was going to remain a major part of her life if she had anything to do with it, and she wanted her family to share in her happiness of finding someone so wonderful. However she wasn't sure telling her parents was the right thing even though she felt blessed to have the older woman in her life. Being that they weren't officially together again, the teacher decided just to play it by ear.

Grabbing her bags she made a dash for the front door and knocked loudly. When the door opened her mother was standing there smiling brightly. "Helen, I'm so glad you made it here safely. I've been worried about you since this storm came up." she said hugging her daughter and ushering her inside.

"It's good to be here, Mom."

"Here. Let me take one of your bags. You know we were all disappointed when you called and said you had to postpone your trip for a few days." her mother mentioned as they went upstairs to one of the guestrooms.

"I know, and I'm sorry about that. I ran into an old friend in New York that really needed some help."

“Must be some friend to postpone a trip to see your family.” she stated putting the bag on the bed and taking a seat at the end of it.

Helen deposited the bags she had carried as well and opened it to unpack as she replied, “Torrance is one of my closest friends, Mom. I was glad to be of help to her.”

“Torrance? Do I know her?”

“No. You’ve never met. She’s the one I went to Italy with a few summers ago though.” Helen explained as she began to hang her clothes in the closet.

“Oh yes. I remember now.” There was a pause in conversation as Helen dug out the rest of her belongings, one of which was of Torrance’s book. She had felt the need to have at least a picture of the photographer close while they were apart. As she dropped it onto the bed, her inquisitive mother picked it up. “What’s this? Were you in a book?” she inquired looking at the cover.

“Yeah. It’s Torrance’s book.”

“This is a beautiful picture of you. Are there others in here?”

“A few.” Helen answered wondering what her mother would think when she got to the one of the blonde asleep. She watched her mother flip through the book out of the corner of her eye as she put her pajamas into her drawer. It was only moments before her mother gave her a scowl.

“Helen, what’s the meaning of this? Why is there a picture of you naked in your bed?”

“I’m not naked, Mother.”

“You’re in your underwear. You let her shoot you like this?”

Helen rolled her eyes. “Mom, Torrance is my friend. She took some pictures of me asleep. I’m fully covered. I think it looks good. It’s artistic.”

“It’s in poor taste.” she mumbled continuing to flip the pages. “Now here is a classy picture of you. This is more like it.” Helen busied herself with her toiletries in the bathroom before returning to her room to see her mother looking at the back cover that was graced with Torrance’s picture. “I take it this is her.”

The model gave a smile in spite of herself. “Yeah, that’s her. She’s a real beauty. She could’ve modeled had she wanted to.”

“You think she’s attractive?” her mother questioned with a raised brow that Helen missed.

“She is amazing. She has the longest legs, and she’s so tall, at least six one or two. Oh, she has the greenest eyes. I could look into them forever.” she mentioned so far off in the thought of

doing just that she didn't even realize how it might've sounded to her mother.

"I see. Well, I better get started on dinner. I'm glad you're home." she mentioned making a quick retreat.

That evening when Helen sat down to dinner with her parents her mother was being strangely silent making the blonde suspect that her mother had figured things out already. Her father was being more quiet than usual as well, so she wondered if he had found out as well. After a subdued meal, Helen helped her mother with the dishes before her father stated, "Helen, your mother tells me you were in a book recently."

"Well, not recently but yeah. I brought it with me. Do you want to see it?"

"Of course. You know I always want to see your stuff."

"All right." she stated hurrying off to her room to retrieve the book. Meeting her father in the library, she closed the door behind her and moved to where he was sitting. Handing him the book, she took a seat on the arm of his leather chair.

"Wow. Look at my baby girl." he stated in pride at her face on the cover. "You look so sophisticated." He opened the book and slowly turned the pages until he came to the one of her in bed.

"Mother doesn't like this one." hesitantly Helen said.

"I can see why. She's a conservative woman, Helen. You look nothing like our little girl and everything like a woman in this picture. It's funny though, because I can still see aspects of you as a child. This was your favorite position to sleep." he mentioned lightly.

"Then you're not upset?" she asked.

He shrugged. "Well, this isn't one I'd put up on my desk or anything, but I know this is art. You are a big girl and have a right to do as you choose. It's not like you're naked. It can just be hard, because you're our youngest, but you're not a little girl anymore. For goodness sake's you're twenty nine. We have to let you go sometime." he said with a smile. Together they looked at the rest of the book. Turning to the back cover, he inquired, "Is this the photographer?"

"Yeah. That's my friend Torrance. Isn't she beautiful?" she said with a smile.

"Well, she is a little masculine, but I guess I can see the intrinsic beauty there." he conceded seeing the look on his daughter's face. Helen smiled as she looked off at the far wall and thought of the brunette. However her father speaking brought her out of her musings again. "She's a lesbian?"

Helen gave him a confused look. "How did you know that?"



“It’s right here in her bio.” he explained pointing it out to her.

“Oh. Well, yeah she is. Does that bother you?”

“Why should it?” he inquired in interest.

“I don’t know, because she took pictures of me in bed.”

“Helen, you’re an adult, and if you want lesbians in your bedroom taking your picture or doing other things, that’s your business.” he stuttered quickly breaking their eye contact.

“Other things?” Helen inquired staring at him questioningly.

Her father sighed. “Look, Helen, your mother told me what you said about this woman, how beautiful you thought she was, even going as far as to say you could stare into her eyes forever. That’s a strong statement. It’s more than a friend would say about another, right?” It was Helen’s turn to look away, but a comforting hand to her knee made her look back. “Helen, you’re my daughter, and I love you. All I’ve ever wanted was for you to be happy. If you’ve found that with Torrance then I’m glad.”

“You wouldn’t be upset?”

“No. Helen, life is too long to go through alone. I’ve always hoped you would find the right companion. If it’s Torrance then she’s lucky to have your love. I couldn’t part with you to just anyone. I’ve always wanted you to have everything, Helen, marriage, family, career. You can still achieve that with Torrance. It just wouldn’t be in the traditional sense.”

Helen shook her head. “Wow. I thought you would be supportive, but I never imagined you’d be okay with us getting married and having kids. How did you get to be so worldly?” she teased.

“Over the years I’ve seen a lot in my industry, and I’ve had the opportunity to work with some gay people. I even have some on the staff, and they bring their partners to work functions. Granted I wasn’t always this way. It took some getting used to, but I’ve come to realize gay people are as normal as anyone else. What goes on in a person’s bedroom is of little consequence as to who they are.” Helen gave a nod in agreement. Giving a smile her father inquired, “So, when do we get to meet this charming woman?”

“I don’t know. We aren’t really together, Dad. It’s a complicated story.”

“But you want to be with her. Are you in love with her, Helen?”

The blonde nodded with a smile. “Yeah. I am, Dad.”

“Do you think she feels the same?”

“I hope so. Two years ago she told me she was, but I wasn’t ready then. Even though the feelings

were there, I wasn't prepared to accept all that was involved in that kind of relationship with her, but now I am. Over the last two years I've realized that whatever challenges may arise, they'll be much easier to deal with than being without her. I'd rather live with those problems and have her than try to be something I'm not. Torrance means everything to me, Dad."

"I can see that. I hope things work out for you then. You have my unconditional support."

"Thanks. That means a lot to me. Now if I can just get Mom to understand."

"I'll work on her, Helen. Your mother is a conservative woman, and it won't be easy, but if this is meant to be with Torrance, she's going to have to get used to the idea. Have you said anything to your brother or sister?"

"Not yet. I was thinking about it though. We'll see how it goes."

"Well, they are coming up tomorrow night for dinner, and the girls are staying for a few days while you're here. Maybe you could talk to them then." he mentioned. "I don't foresee a problem with them. We all want your happiness, Helen, even your mother. Just remember that."

The next evening as the whole family sat down to dinner Helen was quiet as she contemplated telling her siblings about Torrance. She figured that since her parents already knew it wouldn't hurt anything to let them know as well. When conversation turned toward her life and what she had been doing, Helen saw her mother shift uneasily in her chair.

"Not much is going on with me. I'm just modeling right now until school starts up again." she replied.

"Dad said something about you being in a book." her brother John mentioned.

"Oh that. Yeah, I was in a book about a year ago, but I didn't tell anyone, because I didn't think Mom would approve." she stated glaring at her mother.

"You're right about that, Helen, so let's not talk about the book or it's photographer at this table." her mother snipped.

"Why?" John asked. "It's not pornographic, is it?"

"Yes." her mother quickly said.

"No, it's not! You're just being homophobic, Mother! You're just mad that I let a lesbian into my bedroom to shoot me!"

"How dare you say that word in front of my granddaughters! I will not tolerate such language at my table!"

"Mom, she didn't say anything wrong. The girls are fine." defended John.

“What word, Mother? Lesbian? Torrance just happens to be an internationally famous photographer, and it was an honor to be apart of her project! The fact that she is gay shouldn’t be an issue! You’re just being a homophobe, because you’re afraid that you’re little girl might be one too!” she yelled getting up from the table and rushing from the room. Going up to her room, Helen fell onto her bed and began to cry. Reaching over to the night stand to retrieve Torrance’s book, she stared at the woman who held her heart.

It was only a few minutes before there was a knock on her door before John entered. Taking a seat on the end of the bed, he just looked at her sympathetically. “I’m sorry I brought the subject up. I didn’t realize this was a sensitive issue between you and Mom.” he apologized.

“It’s all right. You didn’t know.”

Pointing to the book in her hands, he inquired, “Is that the book?” She nodded. “Could I see it?” Giving a nod she handed it over to him. He smiled at her picture on the cover before starting to flip through it. Coming to the one of her asleep, he looked at her. “I take it this is the photo that has her all bent out of shape.”

“Yeah. I don’t see what a big deal it is. All my major parts are covered.”

He studied it a moment. “Well, even though that’s true, I can see what might have gotten her upset. This is not just a picture of you sleeping. This is a picture of a seductress. You’re alluring almost as if you’re inviting the photographer into your bed. The way you’re stretched out is undeniably sexual, Helen.”

“But I didn’t even pose. Torrance just took it of me while I was sleeping. I wasn’t even aware that she had taken it until afterwards. It’s just the way I look asleep.”

“Well, she must be some photographer to be able to inflect any emotions into a picture she so chooses.” He looked through the rest of the book in silence until her got to the back cover. “And this is her?”

“Yeah, that’s her.”

He nodded for a moment before slowly asking, “Is it true what you said downstairs? You know about you possibly being a ...um... lesbian?”

“I don’t know, John. I guess if me having sexual interest in one woman makes me one, then I am, but somehow that label doesn’t seem right to me.”

“Are you in love with Torrance, or is this just some bizarre thing? I mean have you ever felt this way before toward any women?”

“No, I’ve never felt this way for anyone, John. There is no one in this world that makes me feel the way Torrance does. I am in love with her. What that truly means as far as defining myself, I

don't know. What I do know is that I never want to stop feeling this way."

He cracked a smile. "Sounds like love to me."

"Mom is having a hard time accepting that though."

"What about Dad?"

"He's fine with it. I think he's thrilled actually that I've found someone. I mean yesterday when I told him he was talking about marriage and children. He kind of shocked me."

"Is that where this is going?"

"I have no idea, John. We're technically not even together. I mean we haven't discussed our feelings for each other in two years. Back then I was too scared to make a commitment to her, but now I would in a heartbeat. However I don't know where she stands. I hope she still cares for me, but she may not. I think she does, but I haven't asked her directly."

"I see, but you still felt compelled to say something to Mom and Dad?"

"It just kind of slipped out. Mom asked me some questions about Torrance, and I guess she just realized my feelings. I never said anything to her, but I did tell Dad, because Mom had relayed her concern to him over the matter. I don't want this to be a big deal, John."

"It's not to me. I think if you're happy that's all that should matter."

"So, you're okay with this?"

"Of course."

"I thought you might have a problem because of the girls. I would never want to hurt my nieces."

"Please, Helen, don't even worry about that. They need to know at some point what it's all about, and frankly I'm going to have a talk with Mom about her prejudices and let her know that's not acceptable in front of the girls. I won't tolerate such small minded opinions around them."

"Thank you. Now I just have to talk to Amy. Do you think she'll have a problem with it?"

"Amy have a problem with it? No way. She went to a women's college, and she has a ton of gay friends, some of whom we've met. There's no way you're going to have problems with her. She's probably the most liberal of us all."

Helen gave a chuckle. "I don't know. You should've heard Dad. He practically was giving me away to Torrance for marriage already."

John laughed. "Don't worry, Helen. Things will work out. You'll see. If Torrance is the person you're meant to be with, you're going to have your family's support."

"Thanks, John." she said moving to give him a hug.

A few days later Helen was out on the deck watching her young nieces play in the back yard when her mother came out the back door holding the cordless phone. Thrusting it in Helen's direction, she mumbled, "It's Torrance."

Instantly Helen took it and answered with concern. "Torrance, hi. Is everything all right?"

"Hi, Helen. Sorry to disturb your vacation. I hope I'm not calling at a bad time. I hate imposing on your parents."

"You never impose, Torrance. What's going on?"

"Well, as you know I was planning on having my grandparents come over here this summer instead of going to Italy. However a few days ago I got a call from my mother. Nonno fell out in the vineyard and is having hip surgery, so they can't come over here as planned."

"Oh no. Is he going to be okay?"

"Yeah, he should be fine. However I'm going to go over there with my mother to help out, but there is a problem I hoped you would help me with."

"Anything for you, Torrance. Just tell me what you need. Did you want me to come with you?"

"I would love for you to, but that's not what I need actually. I feel really bad about leaving Melissa alone since she's just started rehab, so I'm trying to get some people together to visit her. I was wondering if you would be one of those people. She seemed to really take a shine to you, and she needs all the positive influences she can get right now."

"Oh, you don't need to worry about her. I will more than happy to check in on her and visit. I'll take care of her for you."

"Thank you so much. You don't even know what a relief that is. She doesn't have a lot of people she can count on."

"Well, I'm one she can. When are you going to be leaving?"

"Not until Tuesday. I've got some things to tie up here."

"Well, why don't I come up to see you before you leave? I have a shoot on Monday in the city anyway."

"Sure. I'd like that. You could even stay at my place while I'm gone if it would help you out. I'm

sure you have shoots lined up while I'm gone, and it would be easier to get out to see Melissa that way."

"That's true. Staying at your loft would be a great help. How long do you think you'll be gone?"

"Probably two weeks."

"All right. I'll meet you at your place on Monday after work then."

"That sounds great. You can even use my second parking space here at the building if you want to drive. I guess I'll see you in a few days then?"

"Yeah."

"Okay. I'll even take you to that dinner I promised you that we never went to." Torrance said lightly.

"Sounds good. I'll see you then. Take care of yourself, Torrance, and don't worry about a thing."

On Monday evening Torrance was just finishing her packing as she waited on Helen to arrive at her loft. When she heard the door, she made a move downstairs and opened the door with a large smile. However it was not the blonde she was expecting standing there. Instead it was Claire who was grinning at her.

"Claire, hello. To what do I owe this pleasure?" politely Torrance inquired opening the door wide enough to allow her inside.

"I just was in the neighborhood, so I thought I would see if you were in. Did I come at a bad time? You seemed like you were expecting someone else."

"Actually I was." Torrance admitted. "Would you like a drink?"

"Wine would be nice if you have it."

"Sure." the photographer replied. Pouring her guest a glass, she inquired, "So, what have you been up to? I haven't see you in awhile."

"I've been busy with the gallery, and of course the divorce is now final. I never could forgive my husband for what he did to you, Torrance. It was uncalled for."

Torrance gave a shrug. "Well, I'm not sure I could've handled seeing my wife in bed with someone else either. I might've been that upset too."

"Still he didn't have to throw you out the window. He could've killed you. I just couldn't live with that."

Nodding Torrance changed the subject. "How's the gallery? Business doing well?"

"Business is great. I can't seem to keep any of your photos around long. You are by far the best investment I've ever made. I get requests all the time for your work."

"That's always good to hear." Just then there was another knock on the door. "Excuse a moment, Claire." Going to the door again, she saw Helen standing there with a smile and bags thrown over both her shoulders.

"Hi, Torrance." the blonde greeted moving in automatically for a hug.

"Helen, it's so good to see you. Come in. Let me take your bags. You look great."

Helen blushed at the compliment. "Actually I had Morgan redo my hair and makeup after the shoot, because I was coming over to see you." she admitted.

"Well, you look fabulous." Torrance stated with a bright smile now that she knew Helen had taken special consideration with looks for her. As Torrance led them into the kitchen, Claire looked up toward them. "Um, Helen, this is Claire St. John. Claire, this is Helen Melbourne." Torrance introduced somewhat awkwardly.

"Hi. It's always a pleasure to meet friends of Torrance's." Claire stated standing to shake Helen's hand.

"I'm just going to put your bags upstairs, Helen. I'll be right back."

As soon as Torrance was out of the room, Helen turned to Claire. "So, how do you know Torrance?" she asked conversationally.

"I'm just a friend of hers. We met a couple of years ago at a party. You?"

"We met at a shoot actually."

Claire nodded. "I should've known a pretty young thing like you were a model. Torrance likes models, always has."

"What do you mean?" questioned Helen curiously wondering just how well this woman before her knew Torrance.

"She just always has been attracted to models. It seems like that's the only kind of women she'll go to bed with, me being a rare exception of course. Heaven knows how many of them she's bedded. All of our mutual friends at least." Claire stated taking a sip of her wine. "She's a regular Casanova."

Without thinking Helen replied, "My Torrance? I don't think so. That's not the woman I know."

Claire chuckled. "Oh, you are young if you believe for a moment that she's monogamous. Not to hurt your feelings, but Torrance is unable to be with just one woman. She needs variety."

As Torrance came back into the room, both women became silent. "What are you two talking about?" the brunette asked.

"Nothing important." Helen answered quietly.

Torrance just gave Claire a quizzical look but not getting a response out of her, she turned her attention back to Helen. "Could I get you something to drink? We need to leave for that dinner soon."

"Maybe I should go freshen up a bit then. I'll be back." Helen stated taking her leave from the kitchen.

"What were you two talking about?" Torrance questioned again once it was just she and Claire.

"Nothing of consequence. Is she your latest conquest?"

"No. She's a friend."

Claire grinned behind her glass. "Tell that to her. She seems awfully possessive of you."

"Really?" the brunette asked in interest.

"So you return those feelings." the older woman stated. "Then I guess I'm too late."

"Too late for what?"

"Another chance. I thought maybe you and I could try to make something real from what we had, but if you already have a girlfriend, that might not be possible."

Torrance gave a charming smile. "Well, I'm flattered, but you wouldn't be able to give up your side flings. Contrary to what you might think, I am a one woman kind of girl, and if you and I were together, I would expect the same from you."

Claire nodded before finishing her wine. "Well, perhaps I should just leave while I have some dignity left. I knew it was going to be a long shot, but I thought it was worth it. You're too good to be left on your own. If Helen is it for you, I wish you the best. You deserve that much."

"Thanks, Claire. I appreciate that."

"I hope this won't affect our business relationship."

"It never has, and I have no reason to think it ever will." Taking the older woman by the hand, Torrance led her to the door. "Thanks for dropping by."



Claire nodded. "Thank you for opening your home to me after what's happened between us and for remaining my friend. You could've held me responsible for what happened between you and my husband."

Torrance shook her head. "I'm the one responsible for my own actions."

"Well, could I ask you for a kiss good bye at least?" the older blonde requested.

With a smile Torrance embraced her around the waist as Claire's arms came around the photographer's neck.

After a quick trip to the bathroom, Helen made her way downstairs, but she didn't see Torrance or Claire in the kitchen. Wondering where they were, she moved toward the entry way where she froze at what she saw before her. The woman she loved was holding someone else and kissing her with a passion she had only known that night they had made love. Suddenly she felt her world slipping away from her and she wanted to run, but she was just frozen to the spot.

When Torrance finally pulled back, Claire carefully wiped her lipstick from brunette's lips. "You still are the best kisser I've ever known. Are you sure I can't change your mind?"

Torrance touched her cheek affectionately. "Thank you, Claire, but no thank you. I am completely satisfied with what I have already. Helen means everything to me, and I'm going to try to make something of this if she'll let me."

Helen's heart thudded loudly in her chest when she heard Torrance's gentle words. Suddenly she realized what she was witnessing was Torrance bidding farewell to her past in order to be with her. Feeling more assured with her own emotions, she silently slipped away before she was noticed so that they could say good bye in private.

"Well, you know where to find me if you change your mind. I should go." Claire whispered.

Torrance nodded. "See you later, Claire." When Torrance returned to the kitchen, she saw Helen sitting at the bar patiently waiting on her. "Well, sorry about Claire. She just dropped in without calling."

"It's fine. How do you know her?"

"She's just a friend of my mother's and owns a gallery. We better get going to dinner. We have reservations." Sensing that Torrance was not going to divulge any more information, Helen just nodded.

They took a cab to the restaurant, and as Torrance paid the driver, Helen looked at where they had stopped. It was one of the most famous restaurants in the city. "We aren't going here, are we?" she asked as Torrance turned to her.

“Yeah. Why? Do you not like this place?”

“I’ve never been here, but I’m not dressed for a place like this, Torrance. You could’ve told me.” she mentioned looking over her black pants and blue blouse.

“Oh, please. You look beautiful. I’ve been in here in jeans before. Trust me. The owner is a friend of the family. We’re both dressed fine.” she stated. “Come on now. We have a reservation, and they get onto people about being late.”

Going up to the door, Torrance held it open for her. As soon as they walked inside, they were greeted warmly and shown to an elegant table toward the back of the restaurant. The host tried to pull out Helen’s chair for her, but Torrance brushed him aside to do it herself before taking her own seat. After being handed their menus, they were left in peace for a few moments.

“What’s good here?” Helen inquired conversationally.

“Everything but I usually have to get two servings of it to fill me up. This really isn’t my favorite place in New York, but everyone else seems to like it.”

“Well, why did we come here then? We don’t have to stay.”

“No. I want you to enjoy it. Please. I promised you dinner, and I want you to have a good time.”

Helen looked down at the priceless menu and wondered how much this meal was going to cost. She had never imagined she would ever come into this place even though she had often fantasized what it might be like. To even come through the door, you had to be somebody in New York, and for Torrance to be accepted there in a pair of khakis and cotton shirt made her realize once again the influence Torrance and her family had in the city. Looking around subtly she noted the famous celebrities from movies, fashion, and politics all around them, but Torrance seemed unfazed by it all. When their waiter came to the table, Torrance asked for a bottle of wine for them before they both placed their orders.

The meal passed between them in casual conversation. Helen tried to feel as easy as Torrance did, but she couldn’t help but wonder what people around them were thinking seeing her with the photographer. Once they had finished their dinner, Torrance excused herself saying she needed to use the restroom, leaving Helen alone at the table. While she was away, the waiter came by and slipped the bill onto the table while checking on Helen to see that she had all that she needed. Helen stared at the bill from across the table, but curiosity was getting the better of her. Wanting to know that the meal was going to cost, she looked around to see that Torrance wasn’t coming before reaching for it. As her eyes found the total, she felt her heart stop momentarily. Quickly she tucked the piece of paper back into its jacket and put it back by Torrance’s plate. The blonde took a sip of her water as she tried to regain her composure, but the cost of the meal was making it impossible to remain calm. The wine alone cost more than one month of her rent. Shaken by the reality, Helen began to ponder what she might be getting herself into by being with the woman she loved. She would be thrown into a lifestyle she had never experienced. By no means was her family destitute, but she knew for a fact her parents would never be able to

afford such a luxury Torrance was giving her.

Torrance came back a few minutes later and quickly paid before leading the way from the restaurant. Hailing a cab for them, Torrance opened the door for Helen. Both of them were quiet on the way back to Torrance's loft. Once back inside the older woman suggested they just watch a movie since she had to be up early to go to the airport. Helen agreed to the idea, so they both sat down on the couch.

During the first part of the film, Torrance pondered how she could tell Helen her feelings. She wanted the blonde to know that she still loved her even after all the time that had passed, but she was unsure of how model might react. Torrance knew with certainty that the younger woman was everything she ever wanted and hoped that the blonde felt the same for her. However having been rejected by her before, Torrance lacked the confidence to just say what was in her heart.

Helen pretended to be interested in the movie, but she was really concentrating on the photographer. She wanted so much for Torrance to take her into her arms, but she could sense that the older woman wouldn't without motivation. Helen knew that Torrance was being reserved and that she would have to be the aggressor between them if she wanted things to be the way they were. Neither said a word through the whole movie.

When it was over, Torrance picked up her glass as she asked, "Would you like some more to drink while I'm in the kitchen?"

"No thanks. I'm fine." the blonde replied. She watched Torrance head off into the kitchen as she contemplated making a move. Deciding to just go for it, Helen picked up her glass and followed the brunette into the kitchen. Coming up behind her, she slid her arms around Torrance's waist, as she whispered, "I changed my mind."

Torrance felt her pulse quicken at the admission. Even though she knew the teacher was only speaking about a beverage, her heart still longed for the model to say those words about their relationship. "What would you like?" she inquired.

"Another glass of wine." Helen replied. Once Torrance had taken her glass, she went back to the living room to wait on the older woman.

Torrance came back a few minutes later carrying two glasses of wine. Seeing the blonde stretched out on the couch, Torrance put Helen's wine on the coffee table before moving to sit in a nearby chair. "Would you like to watch something else?"

"Sure. You pick it." Helen answered. Torrance did as she was asked, but as she moved to sit back down in the chair, Helen held a hand out to her. "Come lay next to me, Torrance. You look tired." Torrance just looked at the model for a moment, knowing it might be potentially dangerous to be that close to Helen, but her body overrode her judgement as she came to the sofa. Easing herself down she settled herself onto her back. Helen propped herself up on her side and just gazed down at the green-eyed photographer. "That's better. You'll be more comfortable here."

Seeing a desire in the blonde she had only seen when they were in Italy, Torrance wondered what was about to happen. She desperately wanted to kiss the woman next to her, but she held back. Helen held the gaze for a few more moments before turning her attention to the tv. Her plan was working so far, but she wanted to move slowly so not to scare Torrance. When she saw Torrance turn her attention back to the tv, she knew it was time to implement the second part of her idea. Trying to seem nonchalant, she began to lightly run her fingers along the brunette's neck down her shoulder and over her arm. Torrance instantly felt her body respond to the touch. Looking up at the blonde, Torrance made eye contact. The mutual fire that passed between them was undeniable. Being drawn into the green eyes she adored, Helen leaned down to kiss Torrance's mouth softly. The older woman groaned despite herself as her arms came around the teacher. Feeling Torrance's response Helen shifted her weight onto the strong body as the kiss became deeper.

"Oh God. Helen." Torrance whispered gently prying the blonde's lips from her own to look into the teacher's eyes.

"Please, Torrance." the younger woman begged as her hand moved down the photographer's chest over one of the brunette's small breasts. Torrance moaned and her back ached instinctively into the light touch. Seeing the reaction Helen experimentally let her hand close over the soft flesh.

Torrance groaned loudly. "Helen, I can't think straight when you do that." the older woman admitted cupping the model's face in both hands and staring deeply into her eyes.

"Good because that's the last thing I want you to do." the teacher whispered leaning down to capture Torrance's mouth again.

"God, wait. Can we talk about this?" Torrance pleaded as Helen began on the buttons of her white shirt.

Nipping the photographer's neck, Helen whispered, "Do we really have to?"

Torrance put her hand on top of Helen's to stop the blonde's progress. "Helen, as much as I want you right now, I need to talk about this. Please. If I mean anything to you at all, you'll agree." Knowing they were going to have to do things Torrance's way, Helen flatted her hand out against the brunette's chest, signaling her consent. "I just need to know what's going on in your head, Helen. Why are you doing this now?"

"I just want to be with you, Torrance."

"Well, if that's the case, why did you ask me to leave your life two years ago?"

"I was just scared, but I'm not anymore. I want it all now. I want you to touch me, and I want to touch you too."

“What stopped you then? Did I not give you all that you needed? Are you just settling for me, because you haven’t found anyone else?” hesitantly the photographer inquired.

“God no, Torrance. I love you, always have.”

“Then why did you run from me? I loved you, and you hurt me. Why?”

Looking away for a moment, the blonde whispered, “I was scared, but I’m not anymore.”

Cupping the model’s face to bring the gaze back to each other, the brunette asked, “What scared you so much?”

Helen shifted uncomfortably. “Do you really have to talk about this? Besides it no longer matters.”

“It matters to me. I need to know, because if we’re going to try to do this, I want to know where I went wrong the first time.”

“You didn’t do anything wrong, Torrance. It was all me. I was overwhelmed that night in Italy. I thought I was ready to accept all that was involved in a relationship with you, but I realized that I wasn’t. However I am now.”

“You were overwhelmed? How did I overwhelm you? What did I do that made feel that way?” Helen looked away again, feeling more uncomfortable by the second, because she didn’t foresee how she could get around telling the photographer the truth. “Helen, please talk to me. You’re starting to act like you did the day you broke up with me. Just tell me. I can take it. Obviously I did something.”

Deciding to just get it over with, Helen gave a resigned nod. She put her head down onto the older woman’s shoulder as she quietly said, “The night I came to your room things were nothing like I expected them to be.”

Knowing that they were coming to the real issue at hand, Torrance put supportive arms around her beloved. “What do you mean?”

“I guess I just expected it to be more like my other experiences, and it was completely different. I mean I know you explained it to me the night before, but I just didn’t realize what you truly meant until I was there in the moment with you.”

“Was there something that I did that you didn’t enjoy? Did I touch you in a way that you didn’t want me to?”

“You did something that I hadn’t considered, and it really threw me.”

“What was that?”

There was a second of silence before the teacher whispered, "When you used your mouth on me. I didn't expect that to be apart of the experience."

"Oh." Torrance said, unsure of how to respond the statement.

"I just never imagined things to be like that. I mean the whole thing kind of blew me out of the water. I've never responded to anyone else quite the way I did to you. I've never been very responsive with others. I've always had a hard time reaching peak, and it was only with Richard that I could on a semi-consistent basis. That night with you was like nothing else, because you hardly even had to touch me, and I was there, not once but three times. I've never even gotten there twice in one night, so three was overload for me. I couldn't even comprehend it, and the idea of trying to match that for you was more pressure than I could handle." she admitted.

"What are you talking about? Did you think I was pressuring you?"

"No. I just thought that since you had done all that for me you would want the same, and I couldn't do it."

"Couldn't? Why? Because you were scared or because you didn't want to?" softly Torrance asked.

Helen hesitated. "Torrance, I'm not used to having to be so active in bed, and I never thought I would have to be with us either. When confronted with that possibility, I realized I didn't want to." There was silence for several moments. Helen knew her confession had hurt the photographer, so she quickly added, "But I want to now."

Torrance sighed as she took in the admission. She had never considered that the blonde hadn't wanted to touch her. As much as it hurt her feelings to know that the model hadn't wanted to be physical with her, Torrance knew it was difficult for Helen to make such a statement. The teacher had opted to back out of the relationship rather than hurt the older woman with such a confession. "Well, thank you for finally being honest with me." she whispered.

"Torrance, I'm sorry. I didn't want to tell you, because I didn't want to hurt you. I was upset with myself for being so selfish, and I knew you deserved more. However in the last two years I haven't been able to get you out of my mind or heart. I'm more in love with you than I was then, and I want another chance. Is it too late for that?"

"No, it's never too late, Helen. I've been lost without you."

"And because of what I did, you turned to Claire." the blonde stated, finally putting all the pieces into place.

"Yeah, Claire and others but mostly her. I made some stupid mistakes in my grief, and I'm going to live with them the rest of my life, but if I have you, it'll be worth it."

"Not that I have a right to ask but what kind of mistakes?"

“I went back to my old ways. I didn’t use drugs again, but I was the emotionally void philanderer I had been when I was younger. I knew I was sleeping with women who were off limits, but somewhere deep inside I think I wanted to be caught, and I was, which is why I now have a scar on the side of my face and a permanent limp.”

“You told me you were thrown out of a window.” Helen mentioned.

“I was. Claire’s husband found us together and did put me out a second story window. I was somewhat disappointed when I came to in the hospital. God, how much I wanted you to be there to tell me everything would be all right.” the photographer stated quietly.

Hugging Torrance’s strong frame more tightly, Helen whispered, “I’m here now, and everything will be all right.”

The rest of the night passed quietly between them, and when it was time for bed, Helen joined Torrance in the photographer’s bedroom instead of staying in the guestroom. The following morning when the brunette awoke, she found herself alone in bed. Wondering where Helen was, she wandered downstairs to find the younger woman in the kitchen making breakfast.

Coming up behind her, Torrance slide her arms around Helen’s waist. “Morning.” she yawned nuzzling the nape of the blonde’s neck and making her giggle. “I could get used to waking up this way.”

“So could I.” Helen replied turning her head for a kiss. “I’m almost finished with this. I thought we could have breakfast on the balcony before you leave.”

“That sounds wonderful. I’ll go set the table.” Torrance poured juice for both of them and took it outside with place settings before coming back to help with the food. Following the model out to the balcony, Torrance pulled out Helen’s chair for her and then took her own. Taking a bite of her eggs, she said, “This is so good. Thanks for cooking.”

“You’re welcome. I figured you could use a little fuel for your flight. Even though you can get whatever you want in first class, it still doesn’t beat something home cooked.” the teacher mentioned. There was a pause before she inquired, “So when are you leaving exactly?”

“In a couple of hours. Just enough time to enjoy this meal with you and get dressed.”

“Do you want me to go to the airport with you?”

“No. There’s no point really. I’m just going to take a cab, but thanks for offering anyway.” When Torrance had finished eating, she just looked across the table at her breakfast companion. Helen was sitting in her white pajamas and light green silk robe. She had her right leg crossed over her left at the knee next to the table instead of under it with her left hand daintily resting on her thigh as she ate with her right. Her gaze was looking off to the right at the city skyline, and even though it was obvious she had run a brush through her hair, she still had the fresh from bed look

as the morning sun cast angelic rays of light around her.

Glancing over at Torrance, Helen saw the photographer studying her intently. "What are you thinking about?" she asked.

"I was just wishing that I had my camera right now to capture how beautiful you look at this moment. There is just something about you, Helen, and for as long as I've known you, I haven't been able to figure out exactly what it is, but there is just something in your essence that makes you one of the most stunning women I've ever known."

Blushing at the compliment the blonde mumbled, "I think your opinion is biased."

"I don't know about that. I knew it from the first moment I met you, and I know others see it too."

After breakfast they worked together in cleaning up the kitchen before Torrance went to take a shower. While the brunette was gone, Helen made the bed and started unpacking her own things for her stay. She was just emptying her last bag into one of the older woman's dresser drawers, when she heard Torrance say teasingly, "Making yourself at home already I see."

Helen turned to smile at her girlfriend who was standing there only in her navy robe. "I figured you wouldn't mind."

"Not at all." Torrance answered moving to embrace the teacher. "As a matter of fact, I hope your clothes stay in my drawers often from now on." she whispered leaning down to kiss her softly. Helen moaned bringing her arms around the photographer's neck. Pulling the brunette's body closer, she let her hands wander down Torrance's back taking in the feel of the older woman under her robe. After several minutes Torrance lightened the intensity of her kisses sensing that things could get out of hand quickly if she continued. Breaking away from the blonde's arms, she smiled at the younger woman's erratic breathing and dazed eyes. Smiling smugly she softly stated, "You probably should make that shower of yours a cold one."

Helen gave a loud teasing sigh. "You did that on purpose." Torrance gave a nod. "Well, two can play that game. Just when you least expect it I'll get you back." she stated heading off toward the bathroom.

Time that morning passed quickly for them, and all too soon they were saying good bye as the building's doorman hailed a cab for Torrance. After getting all the bags in the trunk, Torrance turned toward her girlfriend. "I'm going to miss you, Helen." she admitted putting her arms around the smaller woman.

"I'll miss you too, but don't worry about a thing. I'll take care of everything while you're gone. Your loft will be just as you left it, and I'll visit Melissa as much as I can."

"Thanks. Well, I should go."



Helen gave a nod but then leaned up to catch Torrance's mouth in a torrid kiss. The photographer groaned as she merely held on during the oral assault. When Helen was satisfied that she had made the older woman as weak as she had been earlier that day, she pulled away. Torrance automatically leaned back against the cab to keep her legs from buckling under her as she tried to catch her breath. "Told you I'd get you back." Helen joked making the brunette laugh.

"Ah, je t'aime, mon petite chou (I love you, sweetheart)." the photographer whispered touching the blonde's face affectionately.

The model gave a shy grin. "I love you too, Torrance." she replied making it known that she had understood exactly what the older woman had said. "You better go now before this cab drives off with your stuff."

Giving a nod Torrance said, "I'll call you."

"Okay. Travel safely."

Continued Part 6

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### The Athenaeum's Scroll Archive

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## ~ Love in Photographs ~

by Alex Tryst

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### Part 6

Torrance came back to New York two weeks later expecting to find Helen at her loft. However when she got there, the blonde was nowhere to be seen and had left a note that she had to return home to help Kelly with wedding plans. Being tired from the flight, the photographer opted just to go to bed for the night and call her girlfriend the next morning.

The following day though when she called no one was home, so Torrance figured she would catch up with the petite blonde later and decided to go see her cousin for a long overdue visit after catching up on some business. Taking the hour and a half drive to the rehab center, Torrance got there a little after three that afternoon. When she requested to see Melissa though, she was told that she had gone off the premises with Helen, but they were scheduled to return shortly.

Please that the blonde was spending time with Melissa as she had promised, Torrance was glad she would be able to see them both that day. Going out to the porch of the building, she took a

seat on the front steps and waited. It was only half an hour before she saw the two women coming up the walk toward her, and in her excitement, she raced to them. Torrance hugged them both tightly. However as she held her younger cousin in her arms, the brunette thought she smelled the distinctive scent of marijuana on the girl, but she dismissed it for the moment as she asked, "How are my two favorite women? Did you two miss me?"

"Not at all." Melissa joked with a laugh as she pulled her cousin in for another hug.

Looking over at the blonde, the photographer inquired, "Well, what about you? Did you miss me at all?"

"Of course I did."

Torrance grinned at them both as she put her arms around them to guide them back to the building. "Well, I certainly missed the two of you."

"How's your grandfather doing?"

"He's fine. He asked about you, Helen, both Nonna and he did. They are thrilled that we worked things out."

When the three of them got inside, Melissa mentioned, "I need to get going to group therapy, but thanks for coming by, Torrance." She moved to hug her again.

Confident in what she smelled on the teenager, she said, "Sure. Why don't I walk you down there? I need to talk to you about something."

Melissa nodded before hugging Helen. "Thanks for taking me out today, Helen. I had a good time."

"I'm glad. I'll see you later."

Torrance looked at the blonde and asked, "Will you wait for me?"

"Yeah. I'll be right here."

"Great. Come on, Melissa." As soon as they were out of earshot of the model, Torrance asked, "So, you and Helen are getting along well?"

"Yeah. She's cool, and I can tell she really loves you."

"Well, I love her. There's something I need to ask you though. Does she know that you're smoking pot while you were with her?" pointedly Torrance asked taking her cousin by the arms and staring at her.

"I wasn't smoking." Melissa stated.

“Don’t give me that. I can smell it on you. Where did you get it?”

“Torrance, it’s not that big of a deal. It was just one joint.”

“Not that big of a deal? Look around you, Melissa! You’re in rehab for drug addiction! One joint is a big deal! Now tell me where you got it!”

“This friend of one of the people here.”

“I want a name!” Torrance demanded. Melissa told her. “You listen to me, Melissa. You’re here to get help, but you can only get that if you honestly want to quit. If you don’t quit doing drugs, you’re going to end up getting hurt. I don’t want that for you, but I can’t make you do this either. You’ve hit a bottom here, but it’s not too late. Do you want help with this or not?”

“Yes, I do. I don’t want to disappoint you, Torrance. You’re the only one who cares about me.”

“Helen cares about you too. How could you smoke while you were out with her? Did she know you did it?”

“No. I smoked in the bathroom at the mall. I told her I had to go, and she just waited on me. She doesn’t know.”

“You’ve broken our trust, Melissa. If we can’t trust you, you can’t go out with her anymore. Is that understood?”

“I won’t do it again. I swear.” Melissa stated.

“You better not, but there has to be a repercussion for this. I can’t just let you get away with it. You have to learn that there are consequences for your actions. Helen will not be coming here for a month, and during that time I want you to think about you did to her.”

“Torrance, don’t do that. That’s one of the best times of the week.”

“I’m sorry, but you broke the rules. You have to pay the consequences. Now you better get to therapy, and I suggest you tell them what you did.” Torrance waited until Melissa was where she was supposed to be before heading back to the reception area. She was angry that her cousin had managed to get drugs while in rehab, and she was going to unleash her frustration on the staff.

As she brushed past Helen, the blonde sensed her anger and inquired, “What’s wrong?”

“I’ll deal with you in a minute.” she growled more harshly than she meant as she went to the front desk. Slamming her fist against it, she demanded to see the staff director.

Helen silently stood by as Torrance went off on the staff. Realizing that Melissa had used while in her company made her feel terrible, like she had failed the older woman who had put so much

faith in her. Once the photographer finished her ranting, Helen moved up next to her. "Torrance, I'm so sorry I let you down. I didn't know." she apologized.

"I know. Melissa told me as much. It's not your fault. You can't be responsible for her actions every second that you're with her." the brunette conceded. "I'm sorry I was severe when I came by. I was just upset that this had happened under supposedly watchful eyes. I told Melissa because of what happened you weren't allowed here for a month."

"Oh, Torrance, don't do that. I won't let it happen again. I promise I'll be more careful." the younger woman whined. "Give me another chance."

Taking the teacher into her arms, Torrance softly said, "I'm not punishing you. I'm punishing Melissa. She enjoys her time with you, and she deserves some sort of consequence for what she did. This isn't about you. Please don't think that it is."

"It still feels like it is."

"Please try to understand. If this is going to work, you have to support me on this. I'm very thankful that you like coming to see her. It just proves what a wonderful woman you really are, and I would never deny you anything that gave you pleasure, Helen, but she has to learn that there are repercussions for her behaviors."

The model nodded. "Okay. I support you. It's just that I really was enjoying the time here with her too, but if you think this is best, I'll stand by you."

"Thank you."

As they walked outside, Helen looped her arm through her girlfriend's. "So, what are your plans for the rest of the day?"

"I don't know. Go back to New York I guess. You want to come with me?"

"I can't. I promised some friends I go out to dinner with them, but why don't you come with me? I really want to spend some time with you, so we can catch up. I've missed you." she whispered.

"I missed you a lot too. I guess I can take a little side trip to Philadelphia, but I can't stay long. I have to be back in New York by tomorrow afternoon."

"Great. I guess you can follow me in your car. See you back at my place then." she said as she unlocked her car.

"You're forgetting something." Torrance mentioned as Helen started to get in. The blonde gave her a questioning look. Torrance smiled at her as she leaned down to give her a soft kiss on the lips.

"Oh, I didn't forget about that. I was just waiting until we could be alone to do it properly." the

teacher answered going back for seconds. “Now let’s get home, so I can give you the rest.”

“I’m right behind you.” Torrance replied slipping on her dark sunglasses and turning to go. However just as she took a step toward her own vehicle she felt the model slap her on the posterior. Turning her head over her shoulder and looking over the top of sunglasses, Torrance gave her a raised brow. “You are being naughty today.” she joked.

Helen just gave an innocent smile. “I just happen to like you in those pants. They’re my favorite. You look so sexy in them.”

“Now I know you’re being bad. Since when is my girlfriend an aggressor?”

Helen laughed. “Do you have me confused with someone else, honey? If memory serves me correctly, I’ve always been the aggressor.”

“Well, maybe that will have to change.” playfully the photographer threatened.

“Promise?” the blonde teased.

Shaking her head Torrance mumbled, “I had no idea what I was getting myself into when I signed on for this. You can be incorrigible.”

“You better believe it.” the younger woman whispered sexily stepping in closer and running her hands up the older woman’s torso. “And I can’t wait to show you just how bad I can be.”

Torrance moaned at the inference and the blonde’s hands. “We better get going.” she stated fumbling on her words as she tried to take even breaths.

Taking pity on her, Helen stepped back. “Meet you at home.” she said.

Once back at the apartment there was a note from Mark and Kelly that they would meet Helen at the restaurant. “Well, looks like we’re all alone.” Torrance observed coming up behind the blonde and slipping her arms around her as she read the note over her shoulder.

“Looks that way.” Helen replied faintly feeling Torrance’s hands gliding up to cup her breasts as the photographer kissed along her neck. Her head dropped back against the older woman’s chest as she whimpered lightly at the sensations. Vaguely she was aware of the brunette’s large hands unbuttoning her blouse before they slid inside to get more intimate contact with her skin. Instinctually her body arched into the caress even though she whispered, “I have to change clothes before we go.”

“Let me help you.” Torrance suggested seductively moving her right hand down to the button of the teacher’s shorts. Working it open the brunette turned her attention to the zipper. When her girlfriend’s shorts were open, she snuck her hand into them.

“Oh my God.” Helen cried softly. “Torrance.”

“What, baby?”

Helen took a deep breath as she tried to clear her head. “I promised I would be there. My friends are going to be mad if I don’t show up.” she explained.

“Well, we can’t let that happen. Maybe I should stop.”

“Maybe but this feels so good.” the younger woman expressed.

Torrance nodded in agreement. “I know, from this side too, but there’s plenty of time for this later. We should get going, so we’re not late.” Relinquishing her hold on the petite woman, Torrance stepped back. However as Helen turned toward her, she took in the vision of the blonde standing there with her blouse half open revealing her white lace bra that contrasted with the dark golden hue of her skin. With a tortured sigh, she said, “You better go before I change my mind.”

As soon as Helen and Torrance arrived at the restaurant, they were spotted instantly by Kelly. Helen gave a wave as she led the way over to the bar, but as they approached, Kelly moved to give Torrance a hug. “What a surprise, Torrance. When did you get back from Italy?”

“Yesterday.”

“How’s your grandfather doing?”

“Much better. Thanks for asking.”

Mark then came over to give the photographer a friendly pat on the shoulder. “Torrance, always good to see you.”

“You too, Mark.” she replied.

“Well, let me make introductions.” Helen interrupted taking Torrance by the hand and moving her over to where some of her other friends were sitting. As soon as those were complete, Torrance got them both drinks at the bar before coming back to the group to wait on their table. Torrance just stood next Helen who was on a stool as she actively listened to the conversation, but Helen kept leaning into her. At first the photographer thought she was in the way, which is why the blonde kept brushing her, so she kept stepping back to give her space, but after several minutes, Helen turned to her. “Would you stop fidgeting? I’m trying to lean against you.” she teased.

“Oh, sorry.” Torrance apologized moving back to her original position. Helen leaned in to her, resting her head against the brunette’s body and affectionately putting an arm around her waist. Torrance subtly eyed the group for any sort of reaction, but no one even flinched at the intimate display. Figuring Helen knew her friends pretty well, Torrance just decided to follow the younger woman’s lead. Through the whole meal that night, Helen kept touching her and showing

her affection without so much as a comment from the rest of their company.

After the meal had come to a close, there was a discussion about going to a club close by, so Helen and Torrance agreed to attend as well since Kelly and Mark were going. Torrance followed Mark in the car over to the club and paid for she and Helen to get in. However once inside she realized that they were in a typical straight club. Instantly men began to stare at Helen and Kelly as they all made their way over to the bar. At first the four of them just stood around drinking while their other friends took to the floor, but after awhile Helen and Torrance were left alone.

“So, are you going to ask me to dance?” the younger woman inquired when it appeared Torrance was content sitting on her stool.

Shaking her head Torrance answered, “I hadn’t planned on it.”

“Why not? I want to dance. If you won’t dance with me, I’ll have to go find someone else.”

“Suit yourself, but I’m not dancing with you in a straight club. That’s cause for trouble.”

“I never thought a woman like you would be scared of a little controversy.” the blonde mentioned.

Sighing Torrance stated, “I’m not scared, Helen. I’m just not going to do something stupid either. Two women dancing together at a straight club will gain unwanted attention, and I’m really not up for it tonight. I’ve been around dykedom a little longer than you have, so just trust me on this one.”

“Fine. If you won’t dance with me, I’ll just dance with Kelly and Mark.” she stated irritably walking away.

Torrance watched from afar as her girlfriend danced with her roommates. However after several moments she noticed Helen lean over to Kelly and whisper something to her. Kelly looked over at her, making Torrance suspicious that something was about to happen, and a few minutes later she saw Helen and Kelly start dancing closer to each other. She watched them closely for several minutes before glancing around the bar. It seemed like the attention of many men were on them even though they were oblivious.

Just then Mark came up to the bar and ordered another beer and taking a seat next to Torrance. Both of them kept their attention on their girlfriends. “What’s up with Helen tonight? She trying to recruit my woman?” Mark teased.

“I don’t know what she’s doing, but I don’t like it.” Torrance mumbled. Helen and Kelly seemed to get more into each other as the minutes passed, and it wasn’t long before they were body to body grinding seductively to the music. Occasionally they would look across the bar and met the eyes of their respective partners, but it was evident that Torrance was not pleased with the fact that the attention in the club had been diverted to the two beauties. Men were obviously leering

at them, making Torrance uncomfortable. Looking to Mark to comment, she noticed that he too was even mesmerized. "I'm going to put an end to this." gruffly she stated getting off her stool.

Mark shot his arm out to stop her. "No, not yet. Let's see what happens." he said his eyes focused firmly on them.

Torrance acquiesced for another moment, thinking that maybe Helen needed to learn this lesson the hard way. Just then she saw Kelly lean into her girlfriend, kissing her deeply on the lips. "Who's doing the seducing now?" she quipped at Mark.

"I saw tongue in that." he uttered getting off his stool.

"I'm stopping this now before there's trouble." Torrance firmly stated.

Mark nodded in agreement. As the two of them approached their girlfriends, they saw a drunk guy making his way over to them as well. Mark shoved him out of the way without so much as a word and put his arms protectively around Kelly. "We're leaving, Kelly, right now." She giggled at him but agreed quickly, leaving Torrance and Helen standing on the dance floor.

Torrance stared down at the petite blonde who had put her arms around her and stared moving against her. "Change your mind?" Helen asked.

"No, Helen, I didn't. I think we should get going as well. You've got this whole damn bar in a frenzy. Look around you." Helen glanced around the edge of the dance floor and saw all the wolfish eyes on her. "You're not eye candy for these boys. You're mine, but since I can't take on everyone here, I think it would be best if we left. I promise you that once we're at home you'll get the reaction out of me that you want." enticingly Torrance offered.

Helen agreed, so they quickly made their way toward the exit. However as soon as they got out to the street and were waiting to cross, they heard a drunk male voice call out, "Hey, pretty girl, you can't leave yet." They both turned toward the sound to see the same guy Mark had thrown off Kelly earlier. He moved over to Helen and gave her a lustful grin.

"No, it's time for me to go." Helen answered looking at Torrance for help, but the older woman just stared on as if she wasn't going to offer any assistance.

"But the fun was just getting started. You and your little girlfriend were the highlight of the evening. Why don't you stay a little longer and dance with me? And then maybe later the three of us could go somewhere and get better acquainted." he proposed.

Torrance snickered under her breath at his idea. Helen looked at her again for help, but she was determined to let the blonde get out of the situation she had created alone unless things got really out of hand. Helen stared at him a little less friendly as she said, "I don't think that will be possible. Now excuse me."

"No. Wait." he stated putting a hand on her arm.



As soon as he did that, Torrance took a step toward him. “The lady said no.” gruffly she said pushing him slightly in order to get him away from the younger woman.

He pushed back and grabbed Helen by the arm again as he asked, “What’s it to you, dyke?”

Sneering at him Torrance pushed him off more firmly and growled, “You touch her again, and I’m going to break your face against the sidewalk.”

“Yeah, whatever.” he muttered starting for Helen again, but Torrance applied resistance to his chest to stop him.

“Do I look like I’m joking to you?” she yelled. “She said no twice!”

“Third time’s the charm.” he jested looking back at Helen.

“You take one more step, and I’m going to pound you! I mean it!” Torrance screamed poking him in the chest with a finger. A crowd of people came out of the bar and stopped to see the drama unfolding on the street. The guy slapped Torrance’s hand away and took a step toward the blonde. Before he even knew what hit him, Torrance popped him in the nose. It cracked under the pressure and began to bleed profusely.

“You fucking, bitch! You broke my nose!” he yelled.

“I warned you! Now I suggest you just leave us alone!”

“Fuck you! Just for that I’m going to have to teach you a lesson!” he shouted taking a swing at Torrance, but being that he was so drunk, he threw himself off balance as Torrance side stepped the punch. Pushing him in the back as he went by, she sent him crashing to the pavement. The crowd stirred anxiously murmuring about what was taking place.

“Stay down!” she bellowed putting her foot on his back to hold him in place. He remained still for a few moments giving Torrance confidence that the incident was over, so she let him go. Taking Helen by the arm, she said, “Let’s go.”

However just as they were about to step off the curb into the street someone from the audience screamed that he was charging her again. Torrance turned just as he threw his whole body at her, sending them both to the ground. Torrance landed on her back on the asphalt with a thud and him on top of her.

“You fucking, dyke! You’re going pay for that!” he hollered slamming his fist into her jaw. Torrance groaned in pain but struggled to free herself. Just as he cocked back to hit her a second time, she managed to get one of her legs between his and raised it to knee him in the groin. Instantly he gasped and rolled off of her. Torrance got to her feet and took a few deep breaths.

When it appeared that he was definitely staying down that time, she looked over at her girlfriend

on the sidewalk. Helen gasped in horror at Torrance's appearance. The photographer's lower lip was already swollen with blood trickling out of the corner. "Torrance!" she exclaimed coming to her and trying to reach for her face, but the brunette turned away in anger. Without another word between them, they went to the car. Silence prevailed for the first part of the drive.

Finally though Torrance asked, "Why did you do that with Kelly at the bar? I told you there would be trouble."

"I wanted to make a point." feebly the model answered.

"What point was that? That I was right?"

"Torrance, I just wanted to prove to you that I'm not afraid anymore of anyone or anything. I'm not going to hide my feelings for you."

"So, you just decided to come roaring out of the closet, and tell the world to fuck off? Helen, had I not been there, you would have been on the receiving end of some potentially unpleasant actions. He was not going to take no from you period regardless of what you said. Do you realize that?"

Helen looked out her window knowing that Torrance was right. She had been frightened when he wouldn't leave her alone, and if Torrance hadn't been there to defend her, things could've gotten bad. In fact it was the first time in her life that she felt as if her own personal safety was in danger. "I'm sorry." she whispered.

"Helen, I appreciate the fact that you are trying to show this strong side, and I admire you for it, but this is a whole new ball game. Being in a relationship with me is going to create situations that you've never dealt with before. You just have to think and be more aware of your surroundings. That's not to say that you should hide, because I don't, but you just need to be careful. Some people don't like gays, and that's just the way is it. I wish things were different, but until we live in a time when they are, I feel compelled to try to protect you from any unnecessary pain that bigots may cause. I've lived through a lot of prejudice even as privileged a life as I've had, so I know of the things that can happen. If I can spare you that, I want to. I would appreciate if you would take my advisement into consideration next time before doing some like this."

"Okay. Again I'm sorry for the trouble I caused. I never thought things would get that out of hand."

"Neither did I actually." she conceded. "I thought there would be stares and verbal slurs, but I didn't think anyone would actually try to physically challenge me. It's been awhile since that's happened. Most people are intimidated enough by my size that they don't cross me. He was mean son of bitch though and packed quite a punch."

"I'm sorry about your lip." the model stated digging in her purse for a kleenex. Gently she raised it to the photographer's mouth to stop the flow of blood.

When they got back to the apartment, they heard music coming from Kelly and Mark's room. "I can guess what they're doing," the older woman teased. "You and Kelly had quite an effect on Mark tonight. He about died from pleasure when you made his erotic lesbian fantasy come true with his fiancée."

"I didn't even know she was going to do that. I'll admit it was weird for me to have my best friend's tongue in my mouth. I didn't particularly enjoy that."

"We did." Torrance teased.

"Did you now?"

"Yeah. I mean Kelly is pretty hot, and you are just beyond words. Had it just been the four of us, I wouldn't have minded so much." she admitted.

"You're bad." Helen stated lightly. "Well, now that we're home, I think you promised me a dance."

"I think I did." Torrance answered.

The teacher went to the stereo and chose some music for them before coming back to the woman she loved. Quietly they began to move to the sensuous music, but it wasn't long until their mouths got into the action as well. Grinding together sexually their passion sprang to life as their hands became more possessive over each other's bodies. Breaking away from the blonde's lips, Torrance worked her mouth down her neck as her hands started to unbutton Helen's top. Helen encouragingly cradled the brunette's head as it traveled down into her cleavage. She whimpered as the older woman's tongue licked over her satin bra wetting the material as her mouth covered the crest of one of her breasts. Torrance nipped her lightly making the petite woman cry out softly and cling tighter. "Oh, Torrance."

"Talk to me, Helen. Tell me what you want."

"I want you." she panted.

Torrance gave a laugh under her breath. "You'll have to do better than that." she teased sexily lifting the smaller woman. Instantly Helen's legs came around her waist. Torrance leaned Helen back into the wall suspending her mid air. Beginning to attack the blonde's neck with more fervor, her hands slid under the long skirt her girlfriend was wearing.

Needing to even things a bit, Helen focused on Torrance's shirt and soon had it hanging open. She pushed it off the broad shoulders, and it fell down to the brunette's forearms. Then she reached between her own legs to get to the belt holding the photographer's pants on. Torrance ground her hips harder into the blonde's as her pants unceremoniously dropped to her ankles, leaving her essentially naked except for a pair of boxers. Clawing at the strong back, Helen whispered, "Please, baby."

“Please what?” Torrance egged on as her fingers tantalizingly rubbed the model’s soft inner thighs.

“Take me.” she urged.

As much as Torrance wanted to do just that, she was enjoying tormenting the model too much to give in right away. “No. You’ve been a very bad girl all day. I don’t think you deserve it. I think you’ll just have to settle for this.” she stated trying to sound serious as let her thumbs caress the younger woman’s wet heat from the outside of her clothing. She kissed over the slopes of Helen’s breasts in a torturously slow tease before working up her neck to her mouth. Torrance ravaged the blonde’s lips as her hands continued to reek havoc on the younger woman’s senses. “You have to beg me, angel, if you want it.” she whispered diving into her girlfriend’s mouth.

Helen moaned deeply as their tongues battled fiercely. Her body was almost on overload, and Torrance wasn’t even inside her yet. Even though she had never been treated the way Torrance was handling her, she was more excited than she had ever been, especially since she knew Torrance was only playing with her. When Torrance withdrew from her mouth and latched on roughly to her neck, Helen screamed out in her mounting need. “Torrance, please.” Torrance didn’t respond as she bit at the pulsing vein of the younger woman’s neck. Before Helen even consciously made an effort to submit to the older woman’s will, she begged, “Torrance, please fuck me.”

The photographer groaned loudly at the indecent plea. Staring deeply into Helen’s green eyes, Torrance heaved for air. “Say it again.” she demanded.

Helen cradled the brunette’s head in both her hands and yanked her into a powerful kiss. “Fuck me now, Torrance.” she growled.

Just as Torrance was about to grant the request, they heard Mark’s voice behind them scream in surprise, “Holy shit!” Torrance looked over her shoulder to see him standing there staring in wide-eyed astonishment. “I’m so sorry.” he fumbled racing back to his room.

Torrance couldn’t help but laugh at his sudden departure, but his appearance broke the mood. Looking back at Helen, she smiled. “Well, that’s one way to ruin the moment.” she mentioned.

Helen banged her head back against the wall in amused exasperation. “Damn him. Now they’re going to know we’re having sex when we go to bed. I don’t think I can handle such performance pressure.”

Torrance smiled as she mentioned, “Well, I don’t think we should have sex anyway even as much as I want to right now. My jaw really hurts, and that’s not good when I fully intend to give you the special treatment.”

“Oh, poor baby. It looks swollen. Why don’t I get you some ice for it?” Helen suggested.

Torrance nodded as she set Helen on her feet. “Thanks, honey.” She took a seat on the couch as she waited for the teacher to return from the kitchen with an ice pack. When she came back, Torrance took the ice and held it up to her jaw.

“Well, I don’t know about you, but I think I’m going to need a cold shower before bed or else I’ll never make it through the night with you so close.”

“Probably a wise idea. It’s starting to get a little late to go back to New York, and being that it’s the only other option, I think cold showers are definitely in order.”

“All right. Will you be all right while I’m in there?”

“Of course. I’m just going to sit here half naked on your couch and wait for my turn.” she joked.

Helen gave a nod before heading off to the bathroom. As soon as she stepped into the shower however, she was determined to finish what they had started. Even though she regretted that her fulfillment wouldn’t come at the brunette’s hands, she felt content to fantasize about it as she took herself the rest of the way.

While the blonde was in the shower, Torrance imagined what might have happened had Mark not entered the room. She envisioned taking Helen down to the floor and thrusting into the abyss of pleasure that she knew was between the younger woman’s legs. Groaning at the thought, her hands began to work on her own body bringing it the fulfillment it needed before she could feel sated.

Continued Part 7

## **The Athenaeum's Scroll Archive**

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# **~ Love in Photographs ~**

**by Alex Tryst**

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## **Part 7**

Toward the end of the summer that year just before Helen had to go back to school, her parents came up for a visit. Seeing this as a potential opportunity for them to meet Torrance’s family, she began to work on her own parents as soon as they arrived about spending a few days in New York. Her father instantly agreed to the idea being so anxious to meet the woman who had won his daughter, but her mother wasn’t as thrilled. It took several days of the two of them pestering for her to consent to meeting the photographer.

On Friday afternoon the three of them journeyed into the city by train and checked into a hotel before taking a cab over to Torrance's building. The older woman was excited about meeting the blonde's parents and had suggested that they all meet at her loft for drinks prior to going out that evening. As Torrance stood in her kitchen with her own parents and Melissa, she began to pace nervously.

"Now from what I've been told her father likes me, but her mother doesn't, so please just don't start any trouble if it looks like she's uncomfortable. I want this to go well." she stated.

"Everything will be fine, darling. We adore Helen." her mother assured her.

"I just can't afford to screw up. I want them to be impressed with me. That's very important."

"We understand, Torrance, but not to worry. Who wouldn't be impressed? I mean you live in an excellent place in the city. You have a picture perfect career. You're financially stable. What parent wouldn't want their daughter to be with you?" her father rhetorically inquired.

"Her mother for one because I'm a lesbian. She doesn't agree with that."

"Well, she's just going to have to get used to it." Maria quipped taking a sip of her wine.

Just then there was a knock on the door. Torrance gave one last look at her family before slowly making her way to the door. Checking herself in the mirror one final time, she opened the door with her best fake smile on her face pretending that she wasn't the least bit nervous. However as soon as she saw her love standing there her face lit up as her smile turned genuine. "Hi. Come on in." she said having eyes only for the young blonde at the moment.

Helen moved into her and gave Torrance a lingering hug and kiss on the cheek. "Hi. I missed you."

"I missed you too." the photographer admitted.

Breaking away slightly Helen said, "Let me introduce you to my parents. Mom, Dad, this Torrance Whitfield. Torrance, my parents, John and Diane Melbourne."

John stuck his hand out first. "Torrance, it's a real pleasure to finally meet you." he said with a grin as they exchanged a friendly solid handshake.

"Likewise Mr. Melbourne. Helen has so many nice things to say about you."

"Oh, please, let's not be formal. Call me John."

Turning to Helen's mother, Torrance extended her hand to the older woman but was met with a reluctant one in return. Nevertheless Torrance gave her a congenial smile as well. "Mrs. Melbourne, it's nice to meet you too. Helen's told me so much about you as well." When the

older blonde said nothing, the brunette took it in stride knowing she had her work cut out for her. “Well, why don’t we all go into the kitchen for some appetizers? My mother is anxious to see you again.” she said to the teacher curving an arm around the petite woman’s shoulders when she felt Helen do the same to her waist.

As they came into the kitchen, Maria approached Helen for a hug. “Oh, Helen, it’s so good to see you again, my dear.” she exclaimed as the two women exchanged kisses on the cheek.

“It’s good to see you too, Maria. It’s been far too long.” Melissa moved in next for a hug from the blonde as well. “I’m glad to see you here, Melissa.” Helen stated.

“I’m glad to be back.”

Interrupting them Torrance made the formal introductions. “Helen, I’d like you to meet my father, Thomas Whitfield. Dad, this is Helen Melbourne.” she stated proudly.

Her father beamed at the petite woman as he offered his hand. “My dear, I see that Torrance’s description of you as one of the most beautiful woman that ever graced the earth is accurate. You might actually be the loveliest creature I’ve had the pleasure of meeting, second to my wife of course.” he stated suavely with twinkling eyes as he held her hand a little longer.

Helen flushed lightly. “Well, thank you, Senator Whitfield. Being second to Maria in anything is an honor.” she teased.

“Oh, please, don’t make me feel old now. I insist that you call me Thomas. After all that is my name.”

With a laugh Helen turned toward Torrance and said, “Well, now I know where you learned your tricks as a regular Casanova.”

“Be lucky that I learned my fidelity from him too. We’re both as faithful as dogs with the right owners.” she jested.

Looking at her parents, Helen motioned them closer as she said, “Dad, Mom, I’d like you to meet Torrance’s parents, Maria and Thomas Whitfield, as well one of her cousin’s, Melissa Whitfield.”

“Well, would you like something to drink?” the brunette offered after everyone had shaken hands. “We have lots of wine, or if you prefer I have plenty to offer from the bar.”

“I’ll get it, honey.” Helen said moving toward the refrigerator. “Mom, you want some wine?”

Seeing that one of her guests was being attended to, Torrance turned toward Helen’s father. “John, what’s your fancy?”

“Um, I’ll have whatever it seems you and your father are drinking.” he said gamely eyeing the

small glasses in each other their hands.

“All right. Scotch it is.” the photographer replied heading off the her bar.

They all stood around the kitchen making small talk as they waited on their driver to take them to dinner. However as the lobby attendant buzzed them to inform them of their limousine’s arrival, Helen inquired, “Where are we going for dinner anyway? You never did tell me.”

Torrance shrugged. “Well, my father thought it was a good idea to go to Spago.” she stated.

“Spago? Are you really taking us there? We’re not dressed for that.” the blonde stated.

“We’ve been through this, dear. It doesn’t matter what you’re wearing. Wolf (Wolfgang Puck) is like family, and he was so disappointed that he wasn’t there the last time we were. He wants to meet you and your parents.”

“Did you just say Wolf as in Wolfgang Puck?” Helen mother’s cut in.

“Yes. You’ve heard of him?”

“Well, I’ve seen his show on tv.” she replied.

“I assure you that you’ll like Spago. Everyone does except for me, but obviously my opinion doesn’t count.” Torrance joked.

Heading downstairs they all piled into the limo that was waiting and took a quiet ride to the restaurant. The conversation flowed fairly easily between the families thanks largely in part to Helen’s father. Even though his wife was uncivilly quiet, John Melbourne made up for her lack of sociability with his eagerness to learn as much as he could about Torrance.

Dinner lasted most of the evening, so once it was over, Thomas offered to have the driver drop them off at their hotel that way they wouldn’t have to take a cab. When Helen accepted for family, they once again all got into the limousine for the quick ride over to the hotel. While in the car John invited them all to join them for brunch and an afternoon on the town the following day, but all of them had to politely decline due to their schedules except for Torrance. Arriving at the hotel, all seven of them stepped out onto the street to engage in a proper farewell.

However after Torrance’s family had gotten back in the limo, John turned to the photographer and his daughter and asked, “Torrance, could I convince you to come up for another drink?”

The brunette looked at her girlfriend seeing the hopeful eyes but then noticed Diane Melbourne’s scowl. “Thank you, but I think I better pass. There will be plenty of time for that tomorrow.”

“Well, all right. We’ll just let you two say good night. See you up in the room, sweetie.” he said to his daughter giving her a supportive smile before taking his wife’s arm and leading her away.



Helen looked back at her beloved and sighed. "I'm really sorry about my mother." she apologized. "Her behavior this evening was inexcusable. I can't believe she acted that way."

Torrance gave a soft smile as she pulled the blonde into a hug. "It's okay. I knew going in that she would be difficult and so did my parents. The fact that she even agreed to come amazes me. That means there might be hope. I at least choose to look at it that way."

"Thanks for trying to stay positive. I'm about ready to kill her though." There was a moment of silence as they just gazed deeply into each other's eyes adoringly before the model stated, "It seems strange that I have to stay here instead of at the loft with you. I don't like the idea of going to bed alone in New York anymore."

"Me neither but this is just for a night."

Helen gave her girlfriend a smile. "You know, it's been hard not kissing you all night. Do you think maybe you could give me one that will give me sweet dreams of you while we're apart?" she whispered bewitchingly.

"My pleasure." the older woman answered leaning down and catching the teacher's mouth in a soft lingering kiss.

"Wow." Helen sighed when she pulled away. "Now let's see if I can manage to walk after that." she teased.

Torrance caressed her cheek lightly. "I'll see you tomorrow."

The blonde nodded. "Good night, Torrance."

"Bon soir, mon cherie." Torrance stood on the sidewalk until Helen disappeared into the building. Getting into the limo again, she gave a content sigh.

"Well, you certainly have yourself quite a woman, Torrance." her father stated.

"Oh yeah." dreamily she replied taking one last look at the hotel.

As soon as Helen went up to the suite she was sharing with her parents, she banged on their bedroom door loudly. Her father opened it far enough that the blonde admitted herself in a fury. Going right up to her mother, she yelled, "How could you have done that to me, Mom? Your behavior embarrassed the hell out of me! How could you have been so rude?"

"How dare you address me in that tone, young lady! I am your mother!"

"You knew how important this was to me, and it was if you went out of your way to be as impolite as possible! Do you even know how much that dinner cost her father?"

"Helen, I don't even know why I agreed to this! I don't care how much it cost him! He's an

arrogant asshole, concerned more with his image than anyone else I've ever met! All he wanted to do was show off! And Torrance was just as bad with the way she kept introducing us to everyone like you were some sort of prize! She treats you like a trophy, and she wouldn't keep her damn hands off you the entire night! How could you let that woman treat you like some sort of high-priced call girl?" the older woman vented.

Helen's lower lip began to quiver as the tears streamed down her face. To have her own mother think of her as no better than a prostitute left her with a shattered heart. There was silence for a few moments before she spoke again. "Well, I guess I'll be going to Torrance's now to be the harlot you think I am." she muttered before turning to go.

"Helen, wait." her father called out in concern as his daughter rushed passed him, obviously crushed by her mother's words. He hurried to catch up with her as she got to the door of their room. "Baby." he whispered pulling her into consoling arms.

In the comfort of her father's arms, Helen wept as her whole body shook uncontrollably. "Daddy, how could she say that to me?" she sobbed.

He didn't answer instead just rocked her back and forth until she calmed a little. Lifting her face from his chest, he wiped it and kissed her on the forehead. "Go to Torrance's. I know it's only her comfort you need. Your mother and I need to have a talk." He pulled away long enough to go into her room and get her bag for her. Putting it across her shoulder, he instructed, "Call me in the morning." Helen nodded. He dug into his pocket and pulled out his wallet. "Here." he stated trying to hand her a few bills.

"Daddy, I don't need any money."

"Just let your old man pay for the cab. It's the least I could do. Please. Pacify me."

With a resigned nod, Helen took the money and stuck it in her purse before leaning to hug him. "I love you, Dad. Thanks for understanding."

"I love you too. Talk to you in the morning." Just as she turned to go, he said, "Helen, if it means anything to you, I think Torrance is wonderful. I can tell she adores you."

"Thanks, Dad."

Torrance had just settled down into bed that night when her phone rang. When she answered it, it was the lobby attendant stating that Helen was there and asked if she was allowed to come up. Instantly Torrance was panicked and quickly requested that the blonde be granted access. Hurrying out of bed, the photographer grabbed her robe and put it on as she raced down her stairs. She dashed out of the loft down to the elevators to wait on the teacher's arrival. As soon as the doors opened, she noted immediately that something was terribly wrong. Helen was completely silent, looking at her with such a pained expression. Without even a word, Torrance simply opened her arms to the younger woman, who collapsed into them and started weeping uncontrollably. The photographer took the model's bag off her shoulder and put it on her own

before picking the smaller woman up in her arms and taking her back to the apartment. Slowly they made their way up to the master bedroom where they fell into bed. Sliding her arms around the blonde, Torrance held to her tightly as Helen wailed in emotional agony. The pain emanating from the younger woman was so overwhelming to the photographer that she too began to cry for her beloved until exhaustion put the teacher to sleep. Once she was passed out, Torrance took Helen's clothes off and put her into her pajamas, but she was too angry to fall asleep. She figured that Helen's mother was behind the blonde's anguish even though the young woman hadn't said a word, and she wondered how they were going to get through this.

The following morning Torrance was up first. She was just sitting in the kitchen drinking coffee and reading the paper in her pajamas when there was a knock on her door. Looking up at the clock and seeing that it was almost ten, she wondered who it could be but got up to answer. Opening the door she came face to face with Helen's father standing alone outside her door with a suitcase in his hand.

"Oh, I'm sorry I got you out of bed." he apologized awkwardly.

"No, I was up. Please come in." she said. "Could I take your bag?"

"I'll just leave it here if you don't mind." he answered setting it on the floor in the foyer by her entry table.

"Could I get you a cup of coffee?" Torrance offered pondering why her girlfriend's father had dawned her doorway alone.

"That would be nice. Thank you."

Torrance led the way into the kitchen and poured the beverage for him. "There's cream and sugar if you'd like any. I'm just going to run upstairs and let Helen know you're here. She's still asleep."

"No, don't wake her. I'm sure she had a long night, and she needs her rest."

"All right. Well, then I'll just quickly change clothes. Please help yourself to something to eat, bagel, fruit, whatever. I'll be right with you." she stated before heading up to her room. A few minutes later she came back dressed in jeans and a nice shirt. John was seated at the kitchen table looking at the paper, so Torrance joined him there. "So, to what do I owe this visit? I thought we were going to meet you."

"Well, I had to take Helen's mother to the train station this morning and then check out of the hotel. I figured you wouldn't mind if I dropped by." he stated hesitantly.

"I don't mind at all. You're always welcome here, John. May I inquire as to why Mrs. Melbourne left this morning?"

"Well, as you already know, she was terribly rude last night, and I must apologize for my wife's

behavior. That was inappropriate, but after what happened with Helen, my wife and I both thought it best that she go home while I escort Helen back to Philadelphia alone to get our car.”

“I see.” the photographer stated taking a sip of her coffee.

After a moment John asked, “How is my daughter, Torrance? Things got pretty ugly last night.”

“Well, I have to be honest with you, John. I’ve never seen such pain before. When she arrived her last night, she was like a wounded dying animal. The agony coming out of her was almost more than I could even bear to see. I wish I had been there to protect her from that.”

“Diane was just upset. She’s having such a difficult time with this, because you’re a woman, but I don’t honestly think she meant what she said to Helen.”

“What did she say?” the brunette asked.

“Helen didn’t tell you?” he inquired in surprise.

“She couldn’t even hardly breath she was sobbing so badly. She didn’t say anything.”

John stared out the window for a moment before answering, “Diane sort of inferred that you were using Helen as a toy, and because you were wealthy, she was no better than a prostitute for accepting your attention.”

Torrance’s heart hurt for her girlfriend at John’s confession. “I see. Let me guess that if I were a man however, your wife probably be more inclined to accept and encourage this relationship.”

“I’m sorry, Torrance. I don’t agree with my wife’s assessment of the situation. I’ll admit that I even had my own doubts, but I always wanted to be supportive of Helen’s feelings for you. However now that you and I have met and spent some time together, I realize that I have nothing to fear as far as your intentions toward her. I’m thoroughly convinced that you love my daughter more than anything else in life.”

Torrance gave a smile as a slight blush rose in her face. “Your assessment of the situation couldn’t be more correct, John. Helen means everything to me. I’d give anything to have her be apart of the rest of my life.”

“Not too sound patronizing, Torrance, but you haven’t been dating that long. How do you know that with certainty?” he curiously asked.

“Because I’ve been in love with her from almost the moment we met two years ago, and even though we went through a period where we didn’t see or talk to each other, those feelings were still there and as strong as ever. My heart has made a permanent commitment to her, and my greatest wish is that someday she might feel like making things permanent as well.”

“If that’s what Helen wants too, then I would stand by you two. I hope you know that now.”

“I think I do. In the meantime though, we’re going to have to figure out what to do about Mrs. Melbourne. She doesn’t like me. That doesn’t really bother me except for the fact that she’s taking it out on Helen. I don’t care what your wife thinks about me as a person, but I’m seriously upset on Helen’s behalf.”

“You have a right to be, and I’m upset for her too. I honestly don’t know what’s going to happen, Torrance. I’m afraid that she may not ever come around, and I don’t want to lose my daughter. You telling me that you’re having thoughts of marriage confirms just how serious this relationship is and how permanent it can potentially become, so it’s not like she can just out wait you and hope all will make itself right again.”

Torrance gave a nod in understanding. “Well, I’m fortunate, John, in that I have two supportive parents, but it wasn’t always that way. My father had a problem with me at first. Now it wasn’t to the degree Helen is having, but we had to work through some things. There’s always a chance that she’ll come around given enough time.”

“I’m not sure there is enough time, Torrance. What if you and Helen do want to get married in the near future, and Diane refuses to come to the ceremony? That is something that can cause permanent damage to a relationship. I don’t want this rift in my family.”

“I know, but there is nothing you can really do about it except talk to your wife. Helen is going to do what Helen wants to do. I know that much about her, and there is no one that can stop her once she sets her mind to something.”

“That much is true.” John stated with a small smile. “I know if a time comes between choosing her mother or you that you will be on the winning end. I just don’t want her to turn her back on the rest of her family.”

A few minutes passed before there was noise on the staircase. Looking up as the person entered the room, they were both surprised to see Melissa instead of Helen. “Hey, what are you doing up so early?” Torrance asked checking her watch.

“Oh, Aunt Maria is taking me shopping and out to lunch. I promised to be at the house by noon. Hi, Mr. Melbourne.”

“All right. You be careful, though. Don’t get lost going over there.” the photographer stated, referring to Melissa’s former sordid past problems.

The teenager came to her cousin and gave her a tight hug around the shoulders. “Don’t worry, Torrance. I know the way, and I’m not going to stray any more. I promised you. Remember?”

“I remember, and I’m going to hold you to it. Now when are you going to be back?”

“I don’t know.”

“By ten?”

“Torrance, it's summer and the weekend. I'm not a kid.”

“But you are still on a very short leash. You know the rules. You live here, you play it my way.”

“Yeah, I know. How about ten unless I am still with and Uncle Thomas and Aunt Maria's?”

“Fine but as long as they bring you back themselves. I don't want you taking the subway alone after that, and if you leave there, you have to call and tell me where you're going.”

“All right. It's a deal. Tell Helen I said hi. I'll see you later.”

Both adults watched the teenager bounce her way out of the room before looking back at each other. “Melissa lives with you?” John asked.

“Yeah. I'm sort of her guardian. She's been having difficulties with her parents, and we all thought it would be best if she stayed with me for awhile, until she goes to college anyway. Don't let her pretty looks deceive you. That girl can be a hellion.”

“I know the kind. My middle child was that way. That certainly is kind of you to take her in though.”

“She listens better to me than her parents.” Torrance looked at the kitchen clock and noted it was almost eleven. “I think I better go check on Helen. She's been asleep for an awfully long time.” Going up the stairs, the brunette went into the bedroom. Since the blonde's back was to the door, she couldn't tell if the teacher was awake or not, so she climbed onto the bed and put her arm on Helen's shoulder. “Hey, you awake?” she whispered.

“No.” the model mumbled.

“Well, I think you need to get up. You have a visitor.”

“Send them away. I'm not moving.” she stated burying her head deeper into the covers.

“He'll be so disappointed. He's been waiting close to an hour already, because he didn't want me to wake you.”

Helen turned over onto her back and frowned up at the older woman. “Who is it?”

“Your father.”

“Daddy? Just him? Where's my mother?”

“On her way back to Maryland as we speak.”

“What?” she asked sitting up quickly. Grabbing for her robe, she threw it on as she went racing out of the room. Torrance followed hastily. “Daddy?” Helen called out as she ran down the stairs.

Both women stopped in the kitchen to see John trying to act casual as he sat at the breakfast table. “Morning, baby girl. I would’ve thought you had outgrown this sleeping late business by now.” he joked standing for a hug.

Torrance went to get Helen coffee as the blonde took a seat at the table with her father. “What are you doing here, Daddy?”

“Well, I was homeless for a couple of hours, but Torrance took me in.” he teased lightly.

“Here, sweetie.” Torrance said putting Helen’s coffee in front of her and caressing her fair head affectionately for a moment.

“Thanks.” she mumbled taking a sip. “Dad, what are you really doing here?”

“Well, I had to check out of the hotel earlier than I expected, but since I knew we had plans, I just came over. Torrance assured me that it was fine.”

“It is, but why are you alone? Why did Mom go home?”

John took his daughter’s hand and squeezed it. “She needs more time, honey. That big clash you had was more than either of you could deal with, so we decided she just needed to go.”

“Oh, Dad, I’m sorry.”

“You have nothing to apologize for, Helen. However being that it’s just the three of us, I was wondering if you two were still up for going out and doing something?”

“That sounds good to me. What about it, angel?” the older woman inquired.

“If you’re sure, Dad.”

“Of course.”

“All right. Well, I guess I need to get dressed then.” she stated.

“Me too. We’ll both be right back.” Torrance said before both of them headed back up stairs to dress for the day.

Continued Part 8

## ~ Love in Photographs ~

by Alex Tryst

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### Part 8

Once Helen began teaching again that fall, they hardly had any time to see each other. As much as they wanted to be together, Helen was inevitably too tired to make the trip into New York at the end of most weeks, and Torrance's schedule had gotten busy with photo shoots as well as being hesitant to leave Melissa alone overnight. However they talked almost daily. Much to Torrance's regret, things hadn't improved with Helen's mother, making her wondering if her beloved would ever reconcile. The more time that passed the more apathetic the blonde became about trying to make things better, instead putting all the responsibility on her mother. Torrance knew that wasn't the way to repair the relationship, but any time she even tried to broach the subject with her girlfriend, it was met with a quick, indifferent retort. Knowing the younger woman was hurting, the brunette always tried to be sensitive to her feelings on the matter, but there were moments that she wanted to force the model to listen to reason.

One month into their time apart, Torrance decided to surprise Helen on a Friday evening. Calling Kelly's office a few days before hand, she made sure that it was a good time to come see her girlfriend, and after much talk with the brunette roommate convinced her and Mark to spend the evening out, so she could have alone time with the teacher. Additionally she got Kelly to consent to helping her carry out her plan, so she could surprise the model with dinner. Arriving at the apartment early that afternoon, Torrance knocked on the door to be sure no one was there before using her key to enter.

Since Kelly and Mark were taking Helen for drinks after work, Torrance knew she had a few hours to prepare the meal and apartment for their romantic evening. She quickly began fixing their dinner before heading off to the bedroom. Ever since they had reunited, they had yet to become intimate again due to unexpected circumstances, but the photographer was hoping that this particular night would be different and having Helen's two roommates gone greatly improved their chances. Deciding to go all out for the evening, Torrance decorated Helen's bedroom with candles and flowers. She took the time to spread rose petals over the comforter as well as pick soft intimate music. Heading back into the dining area, the brunette set a table for them with the finest place settings she could find. Once she felt everything was in order, she changed into a dark suit and awaited her girlfriend's arrival home from a long week.

That evening when Helen met Kelly and Mark for their usual Friday drinks, they were both being secretive. As Helen sipped her wine, she inquired, "What's up with you two tonight?"

"Mark just has finally decided to be romantic for once and take me out for a night on the town."



Kelly mentioned.

“Oh, well, that’s great.” the teacher mumbled into her drink.

“What’s wrong?” her roommate asked touching Helen on the arm.

“Nothing. I just thought we might do something this evening, but I think that’s wonderful that you two are going out alone. I’m sure you’re tired of us singletons.”

“Missing Torrance a little, are we?” Mark inquired.

“Yeah, I guess. I just never imagined it would be this difficult, but this long distance thing is driving me crazy. I miss not being able to see her all the time like I could in the summer.”

“Well, why don’t you move to New York to be with her?” he asked curiously.

“I hate New York, at least I did until I met her. I don’t know. I already moved once for a relationship, and it didn’t work out. I’m not sure moving to New York would be in my best interest. What if it doesn’t work? Then I’d be stuck in a city I hated. I guess I just need more time before making a commitment like that. That’s a serious step.”

“Well, do you see things going there? I mean you’ve had feelings for Torrance for a long time.” Kelly said.

Helen smiled. “I think that eventually things might progress there or even further.”

“Further? How much further?” the auburn-haired woman asked in interest.

The model blushed. “You know when I first moved in with Richard, I thought we’d be together forever. I thought he made me happy and that I was in love, but I was so wrong. I deceived myself, probably as much as he did himself. However with Torrance I honestly believe that she could make me happy for the rest of my life. I can see us together next year, ten years from now, even forty and fifty years from now. Everything I ever wanted I can see happening with Torrance, marriage, children, life. She encompasses everything I ever thought I wanted in a spouse. I just didn’t realize that spouse might be a woman.”

“Wow. So, does this mean that when she does ask you to marry her that you’ll say yes?” Mark inquired.

“If she does, Mark. I know Torrance loves me, and I know she believes in fidelity, but I don’t know if she wants to get married yet, and I don’t know if she wants to have children necessarily. My gut feeling says that she does, but we’ve never talked about that kind of stuff seriously. There is a lot we need to discuss before either of us could make a commitment like that. I’m not going to make the same mistake again. I’m getting too old to take a chance like that. I have to know before we take such a serious step like living together or anything.”

Kelly patted her arm lightly. "Well, I think you've met your match, Helen. From the moment I saw you two together for the first time since you broke up, I knew she was the one for you."

"Well, I hope so. I'm going to go. I think I'm going to go home and call Torrance now. You two have got me missing her all that much more. Have fun tonight."

"We will. You try to have some fun as well."

As Helen drove herself home that night, she thought of the photographer, wondering what she might be doing at the moment. She thought that Torrance was probably at home with Melissa having dinner and a quiet evening, but she wished she was a part of it. Upon reaching her building, she retrieved the mail before heading upstairs to the apartment. However as she put her key in the lock, she noted that it was already unlocked making her nervous, because she wondered if someone had broken in. Hesitantly pushing the door open, she saw the older woman sitting in a chair in direct eye line of the door. Torrance was dressed in a black suit and was sitting off center in the chair. In her hand was a glass of wine, and she was giving Helen a dangerous grin.

"Good evening, Ms. Melbourne." she whispered alluringly.

"Torrance, what a surprise. Hi." the blonde said closing the door and coming to the brunette. "What are you doing here?"

Torrance stood and embraced the younger woman in a slow kiss. "I just couldn't stand it any longer. I had to see you. You don't mind, do you?"

"Of course not. I've been missing you so much. These phone calls are nothing like being near you."

"Well, tonight I'm all yours. I believe that we have the apartment to ourselves, don't we?"

"You know about that?"

Torrance gave a laugh. "Know about it? It was my idea. I just let Mark take the credit. Why don't you relax? Sit down and rest a bit. Dinner is almost ready. Would you like some wine?"

"That would be wonderful. Just let me go change, and I'll join you." she said making a move toward her room, but Torrance held her back.

"Oh no. You look perfect as you are. I like what you're wearing. Just sit here on the couch." Torrance instructed leading the blonde over to it. She pushed her down gently before going to get a second glass of wine. Coming back with it, she extended it to her girlfriend before kneeling on the floor to take off the blonde's low heels. Soothingly the photographer began to rub Helen's feet. Helen moaned her approval. "Long day?" the older woman whispered.

The blonde nodded. "It's drastically improving though. This feels fantastic."

“Good. Why don’t we take these off though? I guarantee it will feel even better.” she suggested lightly picking at the hose encompassing the teacher’s leg. Helen agreed and lifted her hips off the couch enough to slip off the hose. Torrance assisted in the process and dropped them in a pile with her shoes. Returning her attention to her girlfriend’s feet, she massaged each one with a firm yet tender touch.

“Oh, Torrance, you have no idea how wonderful this feels after being on my feet all day.” she sighed closing her eyes and leaning her head back against the back of the couch.

“Good. I’m glad. That’s all I want to do tonight is bring you pleasure.” sexily the older woman murmured as her hands moved up to the blonde’s calves, and her mouth lightly began to follow their path. Inching the teacher’s long skirt up to her thighs, Torrance leisurely kissed and stroked Helen’s legs until she reached the model’s knees. The older woman was intently exploring the shapely legs and steadily moving higher when the buzzer signaled dinner.

“Oh, God. I’m not sure I can make it over to the table after that.” Helen teased.

Torrance pulled her up from the sofa and helped her to the table, pulling out her chair. “Just stay right there. I will be right back with our dinner, mademoiselle.” Torrance served to plates in the kitchen and brought them to the table. She topped off each of their glasses before raising her glass in toast. “Bon Appetite.” she stated.

The meal passed in content quiet talk, but Torrance’s mind kept straying to the surprises she had for the younger woman after their meal. When it was obvious that Helen wasn’t going to eat any more, Torrance began to clear the dishes. “While you’re doing that I’m just going to go change clothes. Okay?” the blonde mentioned.

“No. You can’t.” the photographer stated.

“Why not? Why won’t you let me go back there?” curiously the teacher inquired.

“Because it will ruin the surprise. I’ll tell you what. You give me two minutes to get things ready, and then you can go in there.”

“Fine. I’ll do the dishes then. Go on now. I’m anxious to get out of these clothes.” the model replied shooing the brunette from the kitchen.

Torrance went back to the bedroom to light the candles and turned on the music. Then she returned to the kitchen to finish the dinner dishes. “All right. You can go back there. I’ll join you in a few minutes.”

Helen waltzed back toward her room wondering what the older woman was planning. As she pushed open the door and saw the elaborate setup, her heart constricted at the beautiful layout. Never in her life had anyone gone to such effort to be romantic for her, and it stirred her spirit and passion. Hoping that she was reading the intimate scene correctly, the blonde decided to do

something equally inviting. Deciding on her most provocative lingerie, the blonde slipped it on before crawling onto the bed and striking a seductive pose for her beloved.

After the kitchen was clean, Torrance grabbed their dessert of fresh cut strawberries and whip cream and headed back toward the bedroom. She opened the door to the bedroom to find her girlfriend stretched out across the bed of roses staring at her with obvious longing. It had been such a long time since Torrance had seen that look on the blonde that her knees almost gave way, and she had to lean into the door frame momentarily as she took in the green teddy on her lover's body that left little to her imagination. "Dessert's ready." she finally stated.

"Not quite." the blonde whispered beckoning the taller woman to the bed with an outstretched hand. When Torrance came to the bedside, Helen stood and took the bowl of dessert from her to place it on the night stand out of the way. She looked up into the brunette's face and saw the excitement and fire just lurking under the surface of her seemingly calm exterior. Without a word the model slid the photographer's suit jacket off her shoulders to the floor before slowly starting on the buttons of her shirt. The only reaction from the photographer was hitched breathing, but she stood completely still letting the teacher do as she wanted. Helen focused on each button leisurely undoing it and taking a few moments to gaze at the new treasures each one revealed. Being that she had never seen the photographer completely naked, she wasn't sure what to expect, but as the moments passed, she felt herself becoming more aroused at the idea of finally being able to see the body she had dreamed of so many times. When the shirt was open, it followed the jacket to the floor. The photographer hardly ever bothered wearing a bra, because she thought there was little need for her size, and tonight was no exception, leaving her entirely exposed from the waist up to the model. The belt was next as the younger woman slipped it out of its loops on Torrance's pants and dropped it to the growing pile on the floor. Helen intently concentrated on the button and zipper next, and it wasn't long before the photographer's pants slithered down her legs to pool at her ankles. Helping the process a bit, the older woman stepped out of her slip-on shoes and slacks, leaving her in only her boxer shorts. Their green eyes met momentarily. Torrance could see the mixed emotions of her lover's. There was a sense of curiosity combined with slight anxiety, but more than anything there was an ardor that the brunette had never seen in her entire life. Holding each other's gaze, the blonde shed the brunette of her final article of clothing. Torrance took an nervous breath, a flicker of insecurity passing through her as the blonde dropped her eyes to take in the photographer's body. Almost in childlike exploration, the blonde's hands took in the new unveiled landscape for a moment.

"Well, it's about time I saw the body that loves me so well." the blonde whispered meeting Torrance's eyes again. The older woman saw the approval in the teacher's gaze. "I've never looked forward to touching someone so much as I am with you." she murmured sexily leaning into to kiss the slopes of the brunette's breast experimentally. When Torrance whimpered and put her arms around the blonde's shoulders to steady herself, the younger woman dipped her head lower as her hands moved over the photographer's breasts.

"Helen." she softly called out as her hand cradled the blonde head in further.

The teacher pulled away for a moment and smiled at her lover. Giving Torrance a slight push, she got the older woman down onto the bed before covering her with her own smaller frame.

Torrance's legs had widened to balance herself as she fell leaving just enough room for the younger woman's slim hips to wedge themselves between her thighs. The lace of the teddy scraped against the brunette's breasts enticingly as their mouths finally met. As they kissed Torrance realized that the moment she had dreamed of for the past two years was finally coming true, and the feelings were so overwhelming that she began to cry.

The blonde felt the older woman's tears against her lips and pulled away slightly. "What is it?" she whispered.

Torrance cupped the younger woman's face in her hands. "I love you more than words could ever say, Helen. You'll never know how much I've longed for this moment."

"So have I, Torrance. I've wanted this for two years. I love you, and I'm now going to show you how much you mean to me." The smaller woman began to kiss her way down the older woman's neck and across her shoulder as she began to stroke Torrance's torso with tender hands.

Torrance closed her eyes as she enjoyed the feeling of the model showering her with love. However after a few minutes she regained enough of her senses to realize it might be easier for the blonde if she took control of things. Becoming more active she began to tend to the petite body on top of her own. She ran her hands over the younger woman's back down between her legs from behind to unclasp the snaps holding the teddy in place. Once it was open, her hands guided the material up the slender body and over Helen's head, leaving them both naked. Torrance groaned as their bare bodies meshed firmly together. It was even better than she had remembered. Moving her right hand onto Helen's side, she slid it up to the teacher's breasts.

Helen gasped but then pulled away slightly. "What are you doing?" she inquired.

"I want to touch you, Helen. Please let me touch you."

The blonde smiled at her lover. "A long time ago, Torrance, you promised me that next time we were together, you would let me lead this dance. May I?"

"Are you sure you want to?"

Helen nodded. "I want to make love to you, Torrance, like no other woman ever has. I'm long overdue in showing you exactly how you make me feel. I want to give you all the love you've given me over the years. Please?"

The plea was her undoing. Torrance knew at that moment she really never could deny Helen anything. "Then do with me what you will. I'm at your mercy."

With a small grin, Helen returned to the photographer's neck. It wasn't long until Torrance was in ecstasy with the attention she was receiving from the younger woman. What Helen lacked in experience, she made up for in fervor as she investigated every inch of the photographer's frame with her hands and mouth. However when Torrance saw the model starting to direct her attentions up her inner thighs, she wondered if the younger woman was about to fully and

intimately ingratiate herself between the photographer's legs. As Helen neared the older woman's sexual core, her trepidation of the unknown began to surface, but she was determined to give to Torrance all that the taller woman had given those many years ago out of her adoration for the brunette. Before she could change her mind on the matter, the teacher let her mouth close over Torrance's wet heat.

"Oh, God, Helen." Torrance called out interlacing her fingers in the model's fair hair.

Helen moaned at the brunette's reaction, knowing that her actions were pleasing the older woman. Spurred by that she let instincts take over and within moments she was inside the photographer bringing her to peak. Torrance screamed and her legs trembled as her climax ripped through her body, leaving her temporarily incapacitated. Feeling the taller woman's spasms, Helen felt a sense of accomplishment overcome her. She had brought her lover pleasure which in turn gratified her immensely. It was at that moment she realized what Torrance had felt the first time they ever shared themselves. For one instant in time, all that mattered was Torrance's delight, and Helen felt just as satisfied as if she had been the one to have the physical release.

A moment passed as Helen rested her head against the photographer's stomach before she crawled up the strong body under hers to look into the green eyes she loved. They were dazed, but the older woman was wearing a appeased grin. "You okay?" the blonde whispered gently pushing Torrance's hair back..

"Yeah, better than okay. How are you?" she inquired softly.

The teacher gave a reassuring smile. "For the first time in my life, I now know what making love really means. I now understand what you tried to tell me in Italy. Being inside someone else and seeing them that vulnerable is truly an homage to the love people share. You were so right, Torrance. I'm glad I learned this lesson with you."

Torrance gave a chuckle. "I'm glad you did too. I haven't actually had that many people touch me like that, Helen, but I always desired to let you if that's what you wanted."

"Really? I thought you were quite the expert."

"I am when it comes to giving my affections. However when it comes to trusting someone enough to touch me as you have, very few have had that honor."

"How many?" curiously the model inquired propping her head up on the brunette's chest.

"You're only the third." Torrance admitted. "The last one being my previous serious girlfriend."

"How long ago was that?"

"I was in twenty nine, so it's been five years."

“Wow. I had no idea.” Helen confessed cuddling closer as she contemplated the meaning of what had just transpired between them.

Torrance was quiet a few minutes as well as she simply played with the blonde’s hair and enjoyed the feeling of their naked bodies against each other. Finally breaking the stillness, she asked, “Do you think you might be interested in your other dessert now?”

Helen sat up and smiled playfully. “Only if I can have more of you later.”

“I’m yours, but how about a little fuel first?” Sitting up Torrance reached for the bowl to pick up a strawberry. She held it to her lover’s lips. Keeping their gaze the smaller woman took the treat into her mouth. Torrance watched her swallow it before the model scooped one up as well.

Making sure it had whip cream on it, Helen whispered teasingly, “You want it?” Torrance gamely nodded. The teacher smiled slowly running the fruit down her own breast and circling the crest of it. Leaving it there and leaning back slightly so it would balance, she demanded, “Come and get it.”

Torrance gave her girlfriend a playful raise of her brow as she wondered if there was a wild side to the blonde she had never considered before leaning down to capture her prize. Helen’s hand came to the back of Torrance’s head as the brunette sucked her dessert and girlfriend’s breast into her mouth. “So good.” she mumbled leaning over to the other one to give it attention as well.

“Still want that for dessert?” breathlessly Helen asked.

Torrance moaned as the younger woman pushed her head in deeper. “No. There is definitely something else I’d like to eat right now.” she muttered.

With a chuckle the model inquired innocently, “And what might that be?”

Torrance gave her a predatory stare and growled, “You.”

Helen felt the admission go straight between her thighs as her arousal jumped in response. Just the thought of the photographer’s tongue working its magic put Helen on the edge of orgasmic bliss. Her legs automatically opened to accommodate the hard body on top of her as Torrance began to kiss her way down the model’s frame.

Even though they had been together once before, it truly was like the first time with the way Torrance explored every curve of the body she adored. Torrance felt addicted to the teacher’s body with the way her own responded to the sight, sound, and smell of her lover. The brunette never wanted the overload of her senses to end as she took an inventory of each inch of the model. Being drawn to the blonde’s essence though, the older woman spent most of her time relishing the taste and feel of her lover from the inside. Torrance knew that all she could ever want was right there in the cradle of the younger woman’s thighs and simply savored being that close to her at first. She didn’t aim to bring Helen to climax, content with just their intimate

connection. However she kept in time with the instinctive rhythm of the blonde's hips thrusting gently each time they undulated up toward her taking her deeper into the depths of Helen's body and soul.

Helen felt herself floating along a plane of pleasure she didn't know existed. She had never experienced making love the way she was now, even with their first time. It was clear that Torrance's mission was not to just make her orgasm but to give them a real physical and emotional tie, and the feel of the older woman being there inside of her made her heart ache in so much joy that tears began to form in her eyes. The years of longing were over, and she now had the love of her life there worshipping her body out of reverence of their relationship. "Torrance." she softly uttered.

The photographer glanced up into the teacher's face. Seeing the green tearful eyes, she pulled away slightly and moved up the petite frame so they were face to face. "What is it, beautiful?"

"I love you." she avowed.

"I love you too, Helen, more than you could ever know." the older woman replied gently wiping the blonde's tears and kissing her sweetly.

Their love making last long into the night with each of them taking several turns acquainting themselves with their lover's body until exhaustion finally overtook them both. As they laid quietly having worn themselves out for the night, Torrance lightly stroked her girlfriend's forearm as she cuddled in closer to the blonde's back and leaned in for one last kiss.

Helen sighed when she felt Torrance's lips against her temple. Everything in her life finally seemed right. After such a long wait, the photographer was there holding her and protecting her from the world. All she had ever wanted in their relationship had come true, and she was now intimately reconnected with the woman she had loved for so many years.

In the morning when Helen awoke she rolled over expecting to find Torrance there bedside her, but the bed was empty. Alarm came over her at seeing her girlfriend gone, but refusing to give in to the panic she felt right away, she slid out of bed to investigate the rest of the apartment. Stepping out into the hallway, she heard the shower running in the bathroom instantly calming her. For a moment she felt as if she was reliving their past, but the fact that Torrance had stayed made her feel more assured that their relationships was strong. Helen knocked on the door before opening it and saying, "Morning."

Torrance pulled back the shower curtain enough to see the blonde standing there. She flashed a soft smile. "Bonjour, Mademoiselle Melbourne."

The teacher's eyes roamed over the photographer's naked, wet body and found her passion from the night before making another appearance. "Is there room in there for one more?" she inquired stepping completely into the bathroom and shutting the door behind her.

The older woman gave an audacious grin at the sight of the blonde's bare frame. "There's always



room for you. Care to join me?" Extending her hand, Torrance grabbed the smaller woman by the arm and pulled her into the shower. Helen stumbled slightly off balance, but the strong arms of her girlfriend enveloped her. "I've got you."

"You certainly do." the model replied looking up into the eyes she adored as her arms came around Torrance's neck. They began to kiss softly but before long their ardor began to resurface as their hands became more possessive along each other's bodies. Taking control of the situation, Torrance leaned the blonde against the wall of the shower to help support her as her mouth dipped down to taste her beloved's inviting cleavage. Immediately Helen's hands were in her hair pressing her deeper as the younger woman let out a strangled cry of her mounting desire. "I need you, Torrance." she pleaded when the older woman's hand dropped between her legs and began teasing her inner thighs lightly.

The photographer wasted no time as she responded to the request, sliding easily inside her girlfriend. Both of them groaned at the feeling. Torrance set a grinding pace working Helen slowly as she had done the night before, making the blonde do her share to reach satisfaction. "God, you're so sexy." she whispered against the smaller woman's ear as she thrust with her whole body.

Helen gasped and cried with each plunge as her lover went deeper into her body. She felt incredibly and blissfully full as she did her part to increase the contact by pulling Torrance closer each time she delved further. "Torrance!" she shrieked as she neared her climax.

"I've got you. Just let go. Come for me, Helen." seductively the brunette instructed.

Helen screamed and gasped loudly shoving Torrance's face into her neck and holding on tightly as she shook to the core with her peak. Torrance went over the edge as well feeling the younger woman contracting around her fingers. Heavy breathing was the only sound for several moments until they settled. When it appeared that they were both calm, Torrance kissed the blonde's cheek lightly. "I love you."

"I love you too, Torrance."

"Could I wash your hair for you?" the photographer sweetly asked.

After their shower Torrance regretfully announced that she had to get back to New York that afternoon much to Helen's disappointment. However making love to her again before they dressed seemed to pacify her blonde lover temporarily. That day as they stood at the door saying good bye, Helen didn't want to let Torrance leave. She knew that even though she was content it would now be harder when they were apart due to the new aspect of their relationship. Now that she was open to their sexual relationship she couldn't stop thinking about her girlfriend in the throes of passion.

"I wish you didn't have to leave." the younger woman mentioned fondling the seat of the brunette's pants.

“I wish I didn’t have to either, but I have work to do.”

“Stay just a little longer.” she pouted kissing the older woman’s neck temptingly.

Torrance moaned at the feeling as her sexual core responded to the stimulus. “You’re making this impossible to leave.” she groaned, her hands bringing their hips together.

“Then don’t go. Stay here and love me.” Helen leaned up to catch her girlfriend’s mouth in a steaming kiss.

Torrance growled deeply in her chest as she gave into her desires to have the young woman again. She dropped her bag off her shoulder and backed Helen over to the couch. Pushing her onto it, Torrance fell on top of her and began to grapple with the teacher’s clothing. Helen forwent undressing the photographer, content with just slipping her hand between the folds of her trousers. Their mouths came together roughly, their tongues battling each other hotly as their hands found each other’s entrance. Without any hesitation they slipped into each other simultaneously. Groping each other’s frames, they came together with a carnality neither of them were used to at least with each other, but both were satisfied with the quick jaunt.

They rested inside each other as they cuddled on the sofa for a few minutes. “I really have to go even though I don’t want to.” the older woman stated quietly.

Before Helen could reply the sound of a door opening in the back of the apartment made them quickly pull away from each other and get presentable. Kelly hesitantly walked into the room and jested, “Is it safe to come out yet?”

“Kelly, what are you doing here?” Helen asked. “I thought you were working today.”

“Well, I was supposed to, but I was too tired after last night. When Mark and I got home, the two of you kept us up with your carrying on. Then after he left this morning I thought I was going to finally get some sleep, but then you two got into the shower. I’ve been waiting all morning to escape the confines of the bedroom. Sorry I interrupted though.”

“It’s all right. I have to get going anyway.” Torrance stated taking the opportunity to stand. Helen did the same. Going over to the door, the brunette picked up her discarded bag. She turned her eyes to her girlfriend. “Well, I will miss you, Helen.”

“I’ll miss you too, so much. I wish we didn’t have to do this.”

“Yeah, me too but we have to. That’s what we get for being in two different cities. Sometimes that few hour commute seems like across the country.”

“I know, but I’m going to make more of an effort to come to New York on the weekends.”

“I’d like that, but you don’t need to be running yourself ragged just trying to come see me. All we’d be doing there is babysitting Melissa. That’s not very exciting.”

“But I want to. A month was too long, Torrance.”

The older woman nodded. “Well, we can talk about this more later. I really have to get going. I’m going to be late for my shoot if I don’t hurry.”

“Call me later?” Helen asked.

“Sure.” They kissed quickly before Torrance whispered, “I love you.”

“I love you too. Talk to you tonight.” Helen closed the door behind the older woman and then leaned her forehead against it momentarily. Even though she felt wonderful about the new phase of their relationship, her heart ached all the more at the dark-haired woman’s departure.

Her thoughts were interrupted by her roommate’s voice. “So, do I even need to ask how things went?” Kelly inquired playfully. Helen turned to look over to the couch. Seeing the blonde near tears, the brunette softly asked, “What’s wrong, Helen?”

“I feel like my heart just walked out the door.” she stated coming to drop onto the sofa next to her.

“That’s because it did, but it’s a good thing.”

“I know. This is just going to be harder now.” she mentioned.

“I know. On a brighter note, tell me. Was last night as good as it sounded?” she teased shaking her roommate lightly by the arm.

The teacher blushed and giggled. “Oh, I can’t even begin to describe it, Kelly. It truly was like nothing I’ve ever experienced, even the first time. I now know what I’ve been missing my entire life. This is what it’s supposed to be like.”

“Sounds like she really knows her stuff. I’ve never heard you like that.” she joked.

Helen gave her roommate a serious look as she replied, “That’s because I’ve never been like that. She touches something inside of me that no one else has.”

Kelly nodded. After a pause she hesitantly inquired, “So, how was it for you to reciprocate?”

Helen smiled. “You know, Kelly, I don’t know why I was so freaked about it now that I look back. I guess it was because I just didn’t understand what it meant. Now I know that my giving to her is just an extension of my feelings for her. I mean when I think about it giving a blow job is much worse.”

“How so?” curiously Kelly asked.

“Well because guys just use you as a receptacle. Men expect that service as a part of being a girlfriend, and I always just kind of did it out of a feeling of obligation to the relationship. It was just a way to get out of sex if I wasn’t in the mood, and they didn’t care as long as they got off. I never felt the urge to do that of my own accord. However with Torrance I wanted to show her in a way I’ve never shown anyone how much I love her. In fact she was the one who was a little hesitant. There was a moment of nervousness on my part, but I just jumped in, and the moment I did I realized how much time I wasted by being scared.”

“But you didn’t think it was disgusting or anything? I mean the thought of me doing that personally is vile. I think it would make me sick to eat out a woman like that.”

Helen shrugged. “Well, I always thought giving head was disgusting, so to each their own I guess. There is nothing about giving Torrance pleasure that is repulsing to me. Besides aren’t you the one that said you’d go to Europe with her even if you had to sleep with her to do it? You couldn’t be that disgusted by it.” she joked.

“Well, there’s a difference between letting a hottie like that bang me for a free trip to Europe and getting personal with that tiger of hers. I’d still let her eat me if she wanted to. How hard is it to spread your legs for a body like that? To tell you the truth, if Torrance were a man, I’d probably dump Mark for her.” she quipped with a laugh.

Both women laughed. “I guess it’s a good thing she is definitely a woman then. I’d hate to have competition from you on this one. Seriously though I’m perfectly comfortable with the idea of being sexual with her now. Providing her that particular intimacy is enjoyable for me, because I know how it makes her feel. She was right when she said it was different between women. You have to be completely there and into it for it to work. There isn’t this laying back and letting a guy to what he will. You have to be an active participant, and I’ll tell you, Kelly. It’s so much better than I’ve ever had it before, because I know for certain when she touches me that it’s out of love. Even though she can get off on giving to me, the reason she touches me is to give me pleasure and only that. With men they touch you to try to get you in the mood to please them, but with her it’s all about mutual pleasure. It really is incredible.” the blonde stated with a content sigh.

“Sounds that way. I’m glad you’re happy, Helen. I always hoped that you would find someone that makes you as happy as Mark makes me, even though if you keep this up, you and Torrance will be the death of me.” she teased.

“Why’s that?” Helen asked in interest.

“Mark is just a man. He doesn’t have superhuman strength. The idea of two women in the room next to ours getting each other off like there is no tomorrow was a little more than he could handle. As soon as we settled down for bed, he wanted a little action himself. I think hearing you like that knowing that Torrance was the cause made him horny even as much as he didn’t want to admit it. I think he was disappointed though that Torrance lasted longer than he did.” she jested.

Helen moaned as she thought of the photographer’s stamina. “Oh, she can go all night. That part

might take getting used to. I've never had anyone with as much endurance. Tiring her out might be a challenge, but it's also great, because it doesn't have to be over as soon as you orgasm. She's the first one to tap me for multiples. It's fantastic." she said dreamily.

Kelly laughed at her. "You are so in love, Helen. This is so good to see. Mark and I are happy that you've found the right person."

"She is the right person." Helen replied.

Sobering slightly Kelly inquired, "Could I ask where you stand as far as your general sexuality? Saying Torrance is the right one kind of leaves the question open."

"Well, I've been giving that a lot of thought actually, and last night confirmed what I think I already knew. Torrance is the one I could see myself being with the rest of my life. However heaven forbid something happen to us, I don't think I could ever go back to men. Torrance has showed me that I deserve more than I got from them. I've always needed more I think, but I never realized that until her. She's shown me that I deserve to have all my needs met, and I never found that with men. There was always a piece that was missing, and Torrance has filled that void."

"So, does that mean you're a lesbian?" Kelly timidly inquired.

"I don't know. I don't think I've started looking at women sexually in general except for Torrance, but I do know that I've stopped looking at men. They don't interest me at all anymore. If that makes me a lesbian, then I guess I am one. I know people will think I am one by virtue of being with Torrance, and I'm comfortable with that. I'm not going to say it of myself yet, but if they say it of me, I don't think I'd dispute it."

"Well, that says a lot, Helen, but I think you have found the person you're supposed to be with for the rest of your life as well. I guess the only question is how are you ever going to survive in New York?"

Continued Part 9

**The Athenaeum's Scroll Archive**

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## ~ Love in Photographs ~

by Alex Tryst

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## Part 9

Thanksgiving that year was spent in the Poconos with Torrance's extended family. Even though Helen was used to always being with her own family, she felt that she couldn't go home with the way things were going with her mother. She expressed her sadness for the first time since the incident to Torrance, so the older woman made sure to include her in her own family's plans.

Since the house was almost half way between them, they felt it was better just to meet there, so on Wednesday both of them drove up to the house. Torrance arrived with Melissa first to a house full of her family. After greeting everyone she took her suitcase to her room and joined her mother in the kitchen.

"When will Helen be arriving?" Maria inquired as she looked up from her cooking.

"Any time now. I'm surprised we got here first actually. Since she's not here though, I feel like I should mention something to you. She and her mother aren't doing well, and she's kind of upset that she's going to be away from her own family for the first time. I know that's she hurting over this, but she rarely says anything about it. I just want the family to be sensitive about it."

"Don't worry, Torrance. Helen is already a member of our family in our hearts, because I know you have your sights set on having her as your wife. She is always welcome here. Your father and I will make every effort to make sure she knows that."

"Thanks. I'll tell you, Mom. I'm just not sure what to do about this situation. I don't want her to lose her family, and I know her father feels the same, but her mother hasn't budged."

"Neither has Helen." her mother reminded her.

"You think she should?"

"I don't know. Neither of us knows what is best for their relationship, and it's really none of our business. It's your job to just support and love her as she is. It would be nice if her mother would come around, but she might not. That's a reality Helen will have to deal with, and you're going to have to be there for her if that happens."

"I know. I just wish she didn't have to know this pain. She's such a wonderful, sweet woman. She doesn't deserve this." Torrance mumbled.

A little later she was sitting around with some of her cousin's in the living room when the door bell rang. Knowing it was probably her girlfriend, Torrance went to answer it, but by the time she got there, her father was already admitting the blonde. Helen looked over at Torrance and gave a smile, but the brunette saw the despondency in those pretty green eyes anyway.

After hugging Thomas Helen turned to embrace her girlfriend. "It's good to be here with you." she whispered as they held each other closely for a moment.

"I'm glad you're here with your other family." Torrance said softly giving the teacher a soft kiss

on the lips. "Let's take your bags up to our room, and then I'll introduce you to the rest of the family in a little bit." she suggested. Helen nodded in agreement, so she followed the older woman up the stairs. When they entered the room, Torrance put the bags down next to her own as Helen took a seat on the bed. Seeing the look on the model's face, the taller woman thought they might need a few moments alone together, so she went and closed the door before joining her girlfriend on the bed. Instantly Helen came into her arms and began to cry. Torrance eased them into a lying position on the bed, so they would be more comfortable and then just held the petite woman as she sobbed. Her own heart began to break feeling the pain coming from the woman she loved, and she wished there was a way she could make things right for her.

"I'm sorry." Helen finally whispered. "I promised myself I wouldn't do this."

"It's okay. I know you're upset and with reason. This has to be hard to be away from your family."

"I talked to my dad this morning. He tried to convince me to come down there again. I know I'm hurting him, but I just can't stand the thought of spending time with my mother when she feels the way she does about me."

"Helen, she does love you. She's just having a hard time with this. Sometimes people say things they don't mean when they're hurt, but that doesn't mean she doesn't love you."

"She called me a whore, Torrance. My own mother said I was no better than a hooker for being with you. That's not love."

"No, it's not. She's hurt and angry, and she's probably confused as to how this happened. I think if you two just talked it might help things a bit."

"I don't want to talk to her until she apologizes for what she said." firmly the blonde stated. "She needs to know that this is not just some phase and that she can't just treat me like trash, because she doesn't agree with the choice I've made."

"I think she knows that. Give her time, Helen. It's only been a few months."

"It's been four months, Torrance. I haven't spoken to her in four months. I used to talk to her every other week. She doesn't seem to want to talk to me either, because she hasn't called. I'm afraid that I'll never speak to her again." she admitted quietly.

"You will. I promise you will, even if it's just to come to an understanding. Your father isn't just going to sit by and let you go, and I'm not going to give up either. I know how important your family is to you, and I think there shouldn't be anything that comes between you."

"You've come between us, though."

"I know, and I'm sorry for that."

“I’m not. I’ve never been happier in my life. You’re all I really need.” Helen whispered pulling the older woman’s frame closer.

Torrance was touched by the younger woman’s words. Kissing the top of the blonde head sweetly, she said, “Things will work out. You’ll see.”

The rest of the day was spent in the company of the photographer’s relatives. Helen put her own problems aside and just tried to enjoy being with her beloved. The teacher helped out Maria and some of Torrance’s other female cousin’s in the kitchen, so Maria wasn’t stuck preparing the whole meal alone. The Whitfield women eagerly accepted the assistance, and it wasn’t long until Helen felt a part of the family herself as they all conversed about different relatives. It was at that time that Helen learned that Torrance had never brought anyone home with her for the holidays, which made her feel even more special.

Since the Thanksgiving meal was taking up most of the space in the kitchen, Torrance and a few of her younger male cousins went to pick up dinner for the whole group. When everyone sat down to their casual meal, Helen noticed that Torrance wanted to have her youngest second cousins around her. It was a pleasant surprise to the blonde that Torrance wanted to be with the children, and Helen went along with the brunette’s wishes, curious to see what would happen. Sitting at the children’s table, the model watched the way Torrance interacted with the kids and quickly realized how well she handled them. The photographer had unending patience for the rowdy group, giving each child attention, and Helen saw that the kids relished and idolized their cousin, even fighting for the woman’s attention. However Torrance made sure to make each one feel cherished.

That evening as they got into bed and cuddled, Helen kept thinking about what she had seen. Torrance had never really spoken of children before, but with the way she encouraged their interaction with her, the model was sure the brunette liked them. Wondering if this might be a good time to bring up the subject of having some, she mentioned, “You surprised me tonight.”

“How so?” the older woman inquired fingering the blonde’s hair lazily as she pulled her closer.

“You were so good with the kids.”

“Did you think I wouldn’t be?”

“I just hadn’t thought about it actually. You really enjoyed them, didn’t you?”

“Oh yeah. I love kids. Someday I hope that maybe I can have some of my own.”

“Do you really want them?” Helen inquired.

“I’d like to have some, but I guess it wouldn’t be the end of the world if I didn’t have any. I just thought that the woman I marry would want them too. I never considered that she wouldn’t. Why? Do you want them?”



“Very much, Torrance. How many do you think you want?”

“I don’t know. I’d feel blessed with just one. Any more than that would just be bonuses. I’m up for negotiation. I think five might be excessive but two or three would be a nice number, four if we got really ambitious.” she teased, not even realizing she had said the word we.

However Helen heard it, and it made her heart flutter. “I don’t think I’d want to be pregnant four times. I think two or three would be nice though.” Torrance propped up on her arm and looked down at her girlfriend seriously. Seeing the look Helen asked, “What?”

“We’re talking about having kids.” she stated.

“Yes, we are. Don’t you think it’s important to discuss?” the blonde questioned.

“Yeah. It’s very important.” Torrance answered. Giving her girlfriend a tantalizing smile, she leaned down to her ear and whispered coyly, “Makes me want to try to make one with you right now.” Helen giggled as the photographer ducked into her neck and kissed her enticingly. “It’s been such a long time.”

“Too long.” Helen replied breathlessly as her girlfriend’s hand moved up under her nightshirt to her bare breasts.

“Do you think we should try to rectify that problem?” Torrance asked rolling into her and sliding between her already open thighs.

“Maybe.” Helen gasped as the brunette lowered her mouth to her chest. “I just don’t want to get caught.”

“Then you’ll have to be silent. Come on. Let’s see who can make each other come the quietest.” suggestively she proposed. “You can go first.”

Helen bit on her lip to hold back a whimper as Torrance’s hand trailed between her legs. “I’m not sure I can do this.” she stated after a moment just before a loud moan escaped her that coincided with the older woman’s fingers teasing her on the outside slowly.

Feeling that maybe she had pressed the blonde at an inappropriate time, Torrance removed her hand. “Okay. I’m sorry. We don’t have to if you don’t to.” she apologized giving her a assuring gaze.

Helen stared at her quizzically for a moment until she realized what Torrance had thought she meant. Giving Torrance her own reassuring grin, she cupped the brunette’s face with one hand. “Honey, I meant I wasn’t sure I could be quiet, not that I wasn’t sure I could do this with you. I just don’t want to wake up the whole house.”

“I understand. You tend to be rather loud sometimes. I’ve had complaints from Melissa.”

“And I’ve had them from Kelly.”

“Then I guess we won’t.” Torrance stated rolling off the blonde and onto her back.

Helen sat up slightly and sighed. Looking down at the older woman, she confessed, “I sure do want to though.”

“Me too.” Torrance admitted letting her hand caress Helen’s arm.

“I just feel awkward about it. I mean we are sleeping together at your parents’ house without being married, and that seems a little strange to me. Having sex in their house though without being married just seems inappropriate somehow, like I’m taking advantage of their hospitality.”

“If that’s the way you feel, then we definitely won’t have sex. I don’t want you to feel guilty at all about it. Making love shouldn’t have guilt associated with it, just pleasure. We’ll wait until we’re married to christen this room.” she whispered kissing Helen’s hand.

The teacher’s heart began to race at the comment. Wondering if the photographer actually thought about them marrying seriously, she inquired, “Do you think about getting married?”

Torrance pondered the best way to answer the question. It wasn’t the place she really wanted to discuss the idea of them making a formal commitment, but she did feel the younger woman should know how she felt, so she nodded. “Yeah, I think about it. I’ve always wanted to. It seems more right to me now than it ever has. Do you think about it?” nervously she queried.

Clearly seeing her girlfriend’s uneasiness, she smiled to assure her. “Yes, I do think about it. It does seem more appropriate now to me too.”

Torrance gave another nod as she processed the information. Overwhelmed by what had just transpired and unsure of what else to say at the moment, she simply brought the blonde into her arms. “We should think about getting some sleep. Tomorrow is a big day, and the kids are going to be banging down our door early.”

The following day passed much the same way with Torrance spending most of her time with the younger relatives, entertaining them by playing in the yard and chasing them through the leaves. Helen and Maria sat on the porch and watched her from afar. “She’s just a big kid sometimes.” Maria mentioned.

“I guess she can be, but I never knew it until this trip. I’ve never seen her with kids before.”

“Torrance needs children to love. She’s such a giving spirit.”

Helen nodded. “I know, Maria. She deserves all of them that she wants.”

“And what about you, dear? Do you want children too?”

“Yes, I do. Torrance and I are in agreement on this one. We both want to share our lives with kids.”

“Good. I would’ve hated there to be a conflict between you about something so important.”

Helen looked at Torrance for a moment before turning back to her girlfriend’s mother. “Maria, Torrance once told me that when Thomas found out about her being a lesbian things were difficult between them. How did they move passed that?”

Maria placed her hand on the blonde’s arm. “Most of it was time and serious talks. It’s true Thomas wasn’t happy about it, but even though he disagreed, he still respected her as a person. There were even strong words between them, and it took seeing that it was a permanent part of her life to accept it. I think he thought she wouldn’t have all in life that we did with the family and acceptance from society. He really just wanted to protect her from pain, but it came across as rejection. His intentions were good, but she didn’t always see it that way. Parents have a hard time with this kind of thing, even the ones that feel they are most prepared. I mean I knew early on before she even did that she was going down that path, but still seeing her in that kind of relationship was hard for me. When Thomas found out, he really thought we had done something wrong as parents and that we had screwed her up. It took a long time for him to realize it was nothing we did.” Helen gave a nod. “Give your mother time, Helen. If she truly loves you, as I suspect she does, she will accept this part of you. She only wants what’s best for you as all parents do for their children, but she thinks Torrance is not good for you. Give her time to see that you are happy and content. Parents sometimes don’t want to see their children as grown ups. They still want to have the control to make their children’s decisions, but she needs to accept that this is your life and that you’re living it your way. She will have to deal with Torrance eventually if she stays a fixture in your life. It will be either that or lose you, and your mother doesn’t strike me as the kind of woman to let you go easily. If she was you wouldn’t be having this problem. You have to understand that she’s doing this out of love. It is misplaced, but she cares about you and your well-being, which is why she’s making such an issue of it. She just wants to protect you.”

“I guess I never thought about it that way. Maybe you’re right.”

“Your father seemed to take a shine to Torrance. That should help things. At least you don’t have to deal with the both of them.”

“Very true.”

“Just give it time, Helen. Your mother will come around, but on the off chance that she doesn’t, know that it’s your right to live your life as you so choose. She may have brought you into the world, but she is not your keeper, not anymore. You are your own person. Don’t let anyone else define you, not even Torrance. Live your life as your own.”

The model leaned over and hugged the older woman she admired. “Thanks, Maria.”

“Anytime, my dear. I mean that. With or without Torrance, I want to see you succeed. You’re a

bright, caring, young lady, and I'm thankful that you love my daughter. You've changed her for the better, but if something were to happen and you were no longer together, I'd still like to see you get all that you want out of life. You deserve it."

"Now I know where Torrance gets her compassion."

"Someone helped me. It's my turn to help others."

"The very principle Torrance lives by." Helen stated.

The rest of the break passed uneventfully, but Helen seemed to be in an improved spirit. Heading back to Philadelphia, she was determined to take Maria's advice and start trying to work through her problems with her mother. However it was not without its challenges. Many of their conversations over the next couple of weeks ended with the blonde being frustrated and angry, but she tried to keep in mind what Maria had said. Given that they still weren't on good terms, Helen spent her Christmas break with Torrance and her family in Italy much to the delight of the brunette's grandparents but the disappointment of her own father. Helen had made it clear to him when she had declined his offer to come there for the holidays that she was not coming to visit again until Torrance was welcome there as well. Even though it was a difficult thing for Helen to do, she knew that it was best that she be up front with her parents about the situation. She wanted to be with Torrance, and nothing was going to stop her, not even her mother's disapproval.

By the middle of January the following year Torrance was back to business. She had taken Melissa to college to start her first year, leaving her with an empty loft. On the first night alone she realized how much she had gotten used to having another person around, and she found herself lonely for companionship. Her thoughts automatically turned to the blonde.

She had Helen hadn't seen each other since their return from Europe, and the time apart seemed to be getting harder for both of them. However Torrance wasn't sure how to resolve the situation short of moving to Philadelphia, and she knew that wasn't feasible given her career. The photographer truly longed for the teacher to join her there in New York, but knowing the model's dislike for the city, she wondered if they could find a compromise. She knew any move on Helen's part would mean having to resign from her position at the school, and she didn't like the idea of asking the teacher to change her own career goals since she wasn't sure she could do the same. Deciding to ponder the options a little longer, she called her girlfriend and invited her up for the following weekend. Helen agreed immediately stating that she had accepted a shoot for that Saturday anyway just as an excuse to come to the city.

On Friday morning just as Helen was getting ready to leave for school she got a phone call from her father. "Hey, Helen. How are you?" he asked cheerfully.

"Hi, Daddy. I'm good. How are you? Why are you calling so early?"

"I just wanted to talk to you before you left for school."

"Well, what's up? I really have to get going, so I'm not late."

“As you know my sixtieth birthday is next month, and your mother is throwing me a party. I’d like it very much if you would come. The rest of the family will be here, but it won’t be a celebration without you.”

“Dad, you know how much I’d love to be there, but I have to hold to my convictions. If Torrance isn’t allowed to come with me, then I shouldn’t be there. Mom has to come to realize that she’s not going away. She is a part of my life, and if she can’t accept her, then she can’t accept me.”

“I know that, honey, and I support your decision. It’s just that we haven’t seen you almost five months. I miss you terribly.”

“I miss you too, Daddy, but you have to understand.”

“I do. I want Torrance to come with you. I think it would be a great idea, because the rest of the family will be here, and she needs to meet them. I think that whether your mother likes it or not you and Torrance are in a long term relationship, and if that long term becomes permanent, I think everyone should meet the woman who has made you so happy.”

“You really want her there?”

“Yes, I want her there, Helen. I even want to call her personally to invite her. That was why I was calling actually. I was hoping that you would give me her number.”

“Well, I’m going up there this weekend. I’ll just ask her then.”

“No. It’s important for me to call her myself. I want her to know this invitation is genuine.”

“How does Mom feel about this?” Helen hesitantly inquired.

“It’s my party, and I want you and Torrance there. It’s my decision. I even want you two to stay here at the house with us if you feel comfortable with it.”

“I’ll have to talk to Torrance about that. I’m not even sure what her schedule is, so I’m not sure she can even go yet.”

“If she can’t, will you still think about coming knowing that she was invited?”

“We’ll see. Let’s just take it one step at a time. I need to get going now, so grab a pencil to take down her number.”

That morning Torrance was just having breakfast when her phone rang. Picking it up she mumbled a greeting as she took a sip of her coffee. “Torrance?” John inquired.

“This is she.” she stated looking at her watch and noting it was too early for solicitors, but she didn’t recognize the voice on the other end.

“Hi. This is John Melbourne, Helen’s father.” he announced formally.

“John, hi. What a surprise. To what do I owe this pleasure?”

“Well, I hope it’s okay that I got your number from Helen. I was talking with her this morning and invited the two of you to come down here next month for my birthday party, but I wanted to speak to you myself and extend the invitation.”

“That’s very nice of you, John. I’d like to come if it fits into my schedule and Helen is okay with it.”

“Helen won’t come unless you do.” he said. “Things are still kind of rough between she and her mother, but it’s been such a long time since I’ve seen my baby girl, Torrance. I was hoping that you might be able to mend the bridge here. I’m desperate to see Helen.”

“I know you are. You’re a good father, John, and she loves you. I want Helen to have a good relationship with her mother again, but I can only do so much. It’s really up to the two of them. Isn’t your wife going to throw a fit if I’m there?”

“I don’t care if she does. This is my party, and I want all of my family here. I consider you a part of that family, Torrance, because I know you have your sights on marrying my daughter. I want you two here to share in this occasion. You need to meet the rest of Helen’s family, her siblings, grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins. They will all be here. My wife will have to learn at some time. She won’t throw a fit in front of everyone. I’m confident of that.”

“Is Helen okay with being that public with our relationship?”

“Oh, the family already knows. Everyone is excited to meet you.”

“Well, John, I’ll have to talk to Helen about this. I’d like to come but only if she’s comfortable.”

“I understand. I was kind of hoping that you two might stay at the house as well, but I’d be content just to have you here even if you stayed at a hotel. Helen didn’t seem thrilled with that idea. There’s actually a really nice bed and breakfast close by though. Maybe you’d like to stay there. I don’t know. Whatever you two decide would be fine as long as you’re here.”

“I’ll do my best to convince her, John. I think she should be there.”

“Thank you, Torrance. I knew I could count on you. Regardless of what my wife might think, I know that you are the best thing to ever happen to my daughter. I see how happy she is with you, and I know that it was meant to be. You’re a perfect pair in every way.”

“Thank you for thinking so. I know that means a lot to Helen. She values your opinion highly. I’m going to actually see her this weekend, so I will discuss this with her then and get back to you.”

“Sounds good. I appreciate your help. I know you could just be indifferent, so I just want you to know how much this means to me.”

“You’re welcome. I’ll get back to you in a few days. Right now I have to get ready for a photo shoot, so I’m going to have to cut this short.”

That evening Torrance had just gotten back from a long day when Helen arrived. Being that both of them were so tired, they opted to order in and spend the evening in front of the tv. However the entire night Torrance was preoccupied with where their relationship was heading. She knew that Helen loved her as much as she loved the teacher, but she wasn’t sure how to resolve their living situation, and she was unhappy continuing in the fashion that they were.

The model could tell just in the photographer’s demeanor that something was wrong. Torrance was rarely in a foul mood and never when they were together, so the blonde wondered what was causing her beloved distress. However she also knew that the older woman wouldn’t talk about things until she was ready, having seen that in other areas of the brunette’s life. Helen knew that Torrance would only share when she was comfortable, so she simply tried to make herself available when the moment came. However as the hours passed without so much as a sound from the photographer, the teacher began to get concerned, and when Torrance suddenly announced that she was going to bed, the blonde began to panic thinking that Torrance was upset with her. The model reached to touch her girlfriend on the arm. “Are you all right tonight?” she questioned softly.

“I’m tired, and I have a lot on my mind.”

“Anything I can help you with?”

Torrance shook her head. “No. I’ve got to figure this one out on my own. I just need some quiet time.”

“All right. Do you mind if I use the phone to call Kelly? I forgot to tell her something before I left this morning.”

“You don’t have to ask to use the phone, honey. I consider this place is as much yours as it is mine. Anything that I have is yours.” the older woman replied taking a moment to affectionately caress the blonde’s cheek.

Helen smiled up at her relieved that it appeared as if Torrance wasn’t angry with her. “All right. You go on up to bed. I’ll be there in a bit.”

“Sounds good. Take your time.”

Torrance went upstairs and did her nightly routine before settling into bed with a book. However as she stared at the pages, she realized her thoughts were dominated by the blonde. She felt as if she was on the edge. She wanted their relationship to progress, but she wasn’t sure the blonde

would agree that they were ready for the next step, and she was afraid of moving too quickly. Torrance knew though that she was tired of only seeing the woman she loved every few weeks. She wanted to come home to the younger woman everyday more than she wanted anything else in her life, even her career. Coming to that realization, she decided that she needed to say something to the blonde.

An hour later Helen made her way upstairs as well. The photographer just watched her fondly as she changed into her pajamas and robe before going into the bathroom. As the model returned a few minutes later, rubbing the last bit of moisturizer into her face, Torrance smiled at her. "You are so elegant. You know that?" Torrance mentioned.

"I didn't, but thank you." Helen replied coming to the bed and taking a seat next to the brunette.

"You were on the phone with Kelly for a long time."

"Yeah. We were talking about the wedding."

"It's not too long now, just about six weeks or so, isn't it?"

Helen nodded. "As happy as I am for them, I'm still going to miss living there with them. The three of us have lived together since I moved out of Richard's place. It's been a long time."

"Yeah, well, something else just as fantastic will come up. Have you even started looking for an apartment though?"

"Not yet. I was planning to this weekend, but being here with you was more important. There are times when I wish we could live together." she mentioned lightly running her hand along her lover's arm.

"Me too." Torrance answered meeting her girlfriend's green eyes. After a moment of silence of not knowing how to broach the subject, the photographer just decided to change it for the time being. "You know, I've been meaning to mention to you that I spoke with your father this morning."

"I know. He called me to get your number. I assume he told you about the party."

"He did. I have to work, but I'm willing to pass off the assignment to someone else if you want to go. He thinks it's important that we be there together, and I feel like I should go if you want me to."

"You'd really give up a job for me?" Helen asked in mild surprise.

"Of course. This is a big deal for him, and he wants you to be there. Do you want to go?"

"Yes. I miss him, Torrance, and the rest of my family too, even my mother as much as I hate to admit that. It's been a long time since I've been home, but if he's making an effort, I feel like I



should too.”

“Then we’ll go.”

“However I’m not sure I’m up for staying at their house. I don’t think I can stay in that close quarters with my mother again yet. The feelings are still a little raw.”

“I understand. He made a suggestion to me about a bed and breakfast close by. That sounds like it could be nice.”

“Oh yeah. That’s a great place. We should stay there. I’ll make the arrangements.”

“Great. I told him I would call him and report back. He’ll be thrilled to know that we’ve decided to attend.”

Helen moved to hover over Torrance’s half-reclining frame as she leaned to kiss her softly on the mouth. “Thank you.” she whispered.

“For?”

“For being so good to me. I know you passing up a job means a lost opportunity and money for you.” she stated gazing lovingly into the photographer’s eyes.

Torrance cupped her girlfriend’s fair cheek. “I don’t care about any of that, not anymore. You’re the only thing that matters to me.” the dark-haired woman whispered giving the model such an open, adoring gaze that Helen knew with utter certainty that it was the absolute truth.

In one statement Helen saw her future in front of her. She knew in that moment that she would never again long for her perfect match, because she had it in the photographer. The teacher recognized that she was truly ready to begin the rest of her life with the woman who now regarded her, even if that included leaving the city of Philadelphia that she had grown to love so much to be with Torrance in New York. Giving her lover a alluring smile, she took the book from Torrance’s hands and placed it on the night stand before seeking out the lips she craved.

Torrance moaned lightly and her arms came around the teacher’s back as the blonde delved softly past her lips in a stirring kiss. “Oh, I love you.” she confessed meeting the younger woman’s mouth a second time.

“I love you too, Torrance.” Several moments passed as they became to kiss more amorously before Helen pulled back slightly and gave a playful grin. “Torrance, I’ve been dying to ask you something ever since I stayed here last summer while you were in Italy, but I didn’t want to while Melissa was living here. However now that it’s just the two of us I was wondering if you would care to explain the meaning of something to me.”

“What’s that?” curiously the brunette asked wondering why her girlfriend suddenly had an urge to talk instead of continue what they had started.

Giving one more smile, Helen leaned down to retrieve something from under the bed. As Torrance heard her rustling around, she knew the woman was going through the sex toys she had stashed there. Thinking things might be interesting, Torrance patiently waited until her girlfriend sat up again before looking down at what she was holding. Seeing a double-ended phallus in Helen's hand, she teased lightly, "That looks self-explanatory to me, honey. Were you snooping while I was gone?"

"I was just cleaning up before you came home and found your box. I didn't mean to pry, but once I opened it, I was somewhat fascinated. You have quite a collection."

"Well, I still needed to have some fun while I was alone." she joked.

"But this looks like a two person toy."

"It is. Care for a demonstration on how it works?" Torrance asked.

Helen gave a snicker. "I know how these things work, probably better than you do." she jested. "I actually had something else in mind. Would you mind indulging me in a fantasy of mine?" sexily she inquired.

"I'd give you anything, Helen. Whatever you want is yours."

"Good. You won't be disappointed. I promise."

"I never am." Torrance replied raspily as her girlfriend began to kiss her neck tantalizingly.

Helen moved methodically over her lover's frame, taking in her upper torso with her mouth as she worked the older woman's t-shirt over her head. Moving down to the photographer's abdomen, she licked over the outline of each defined muscle making Torrance instinctively flex at the caress and causing her muscles to become more pronounced. The older woman groaned as her girlfriend's hands began to untie her pajama bottoms and pull them off her hips. When they were down to the older woman's knees, Helen ran her hand up between Torrance's thighs. Torrance groaned as her hips reacted to the gentle probing, rising slightly off the bed. Seeing the blonde reach for the toy, the brunette knew what was coming next and opened her legs wider to accommodate her lover's wishes. Once it was inside her, their eyes met in a long stare.

"You know, I never thought I would ever do this again, but something tells me I'm going to enjoy servicing you." the model whispered before her mouth closed over the other end.

Torrance's hips shot off the bed in reflex as she let out a loud cry and grabbed at the blonde's head trying to get her to go deeper. She could feel every movement of her lover's mouth inside herself, because with each thrust and suck, her end reacted in kind. "Oh God, Helen." she bellowed overcome by the sensations, clutching a fistful of the teacher's hair to hold on. Torrance's body responded wildly, her hips rocking erratically as she neared climax. She had never had anyone perform this type of favor on her body, and it was overloaded by the new

sensations, reaching peak much more quickly than she was used to. She panted loudly as her legs shook violently before there was stillness.

Helen lifted her head and stared at the sedate, glossy eyes of her lover. Moving up to her mouth, she kissed Torrance lovingly. "For a moment there I forgot that you weren't going to shoot any of that disgusting crap down my throat."

"Whoa." the photographer mumbled. "No one has ever done that to me before. You'll have to do it again sometime."

"Anytime. I'd suck your cock whenever you want." she murmured vulgarly, knowing that the older woman would enjoy the dirty talk. "In fact yours is the only one I want to ever have again, because you don't shoot, and you're always still hard for me."

Torrance grunted as she felt Helen pump the shaft with her hand slowly. "God, I want you so badly." she confessed looking up at the teacher.

"Do you now? What do you want? Tell me." Helen instructed turning the tables on the older woman, who always wanted the blonde to express herself during sex. Torrance moaned. "I'll stop unless you tell me." the model stated as she teased the brunette a little more.

"I want to be inside of you." the older woman said desperately.

Helen gave a smile as she began to remove her own clothes. "Tell me what you want to do to me."

"I want to make you scream, make you beg for more. I want to crawl inside of you and never return." Torrance softly said taking in the newly exposed skin of her lover with her hands and eyes.

Helen's head dropped back at the feeling of the large hands on her body. The older woman's fingers always worked magic on her, and she was anxious to give in to the pleasure she knew would soon follow, but she wanted to tease the brunette a little more before letting go. Keeping her eyes on Torrance's, Helen reached between her own thighs and gathered moisture onto her fingers. The photographer's gaze grew wide as the blonde brought her hand up toward Torrance's mouth. "Feel what you do to me." sexily she implored wetting the older woman's lips with her essence.

Greedy Torrance licked her lips before sucking the younger woman's fingers into her mouth. "Please, baby, I need to have you now." Torrance begged.

Helen lowered herself so just the tip of the shaft entered her, making Torrance moan. Leaning over the older woman's body, she kissed her mouth again as she provocatively inquired, "Do you want to fuck me, Torrance?"

"God, yes." the photographer replied putting her hands on the blonde's hips and trying to slide

into her, but Helen resisted.

“You have to say it, or you won’t get what you want.” the petite woman commanded.

Torrance groaned at this side of her lover. She had never seen the blonde act this way, but having her play authoritarian further aroused the older woman’s passions. Harshly Torrance yanked Helen’s mouth in for a kiss. When it ended the dark-haired woman stared deeply into her girlfriend’s green eyes and growled, “I want to fuck you.” She pushed the younger woman’s hips down into her own without resistance. Helen cried out at the feeling of having Torrance inside of her. However after the initial roughness it quickly became clear that each of them wanted a more gentle encounter as they tenderly explored each other until they both peaked.

Sitting there in silence, Torrance held the woman she loved who was straddled across her hips. Even though they were still interlocked, it was clear that both of them were sated as Torrance reclined against the headboard and Helen into her with her head on the photographer’s strong shoulder. Time seemed to stand still around them as they enjoyed the closeness. Torrance was beginning to drift off when she felt a wetness on her shoulder as it began to trickle down onto her chest. “Helen, are you all right?” softly she asked.

The blonde nodded against her. “I love you, Torrance.”

“I love you too. Why are you crying?”

“I just feel so much when I’m with you. You make me so happy. I don’t know how I ever survived without you.”

“I feel the same way about you. The day you walked into my life everything changed for the better. I remember looking at you for the first time through the lens of my camera and being spellbound. I fell for you right then.”

“Do you know when I fell for you? The day we drove up to the Poconos for the first time. I remember staring at your butt as you walked into the coffee shop and thinking how sexy I thought you were. Then every time you touched that day I kept feeling all warm inside. I never wanted it to end, and it never has. You have no idea how I longed for you while we were in Italy. Not a day went by that I didn’t want you to touch me. Every night I would fantasize about what it might be like to be in your arms and have you loving me.”

“I know. I saw you one night.”

“You saw me? What do you mean you saw me?”

“One night while we were there I saw you in bed touching yourself.” guiltily she admitted.

“You pervert. You watched me?” Helen teased.

“It wasn’t my intention. I heard you calling my name, so I got out of bed to see if you needed

something. I didn't know until I looked into your room what you were doing, but I was mesmerized. You were so beautiful lying there in the moonlight. I had never seen anything like it. I wanted to come to you right then and fulfill your desires."

Helen paused a moment before saying, "I'm sorry I hurt you, Torrance."

"I know. You were scared, but none of that matters any more. You're here with me now, and I feel blessed to have you."

Helen sat up, so she could look into her lover's eyes. "You know it's at moments like this when I desperately wish..." she mumbled before trailing off.

"Wish what? Tell me, Helen, and I'll make it true. You know I will."

Cradling Torrance's face in both her hands, Helen's tears began again as she replied, "I know you would if you could."

"Tell me what it is, and I'll make it happen for you." the photographer said wiping at the tears on Helen's face.

"I wish that we could conceive a child out of our love. I would give everything to have your baby." she avowed.

It was Torrance's turn to cry as the remark touched her heart deeply. "Oh, Helen, that is the most beautiful thing anyone has ever said to me. I want you to be the mother my children more than anything else in this entire world. If you want to have a baby with me, I can make that happen. It's true that I can't give you the romantic accident that you desire, but I can make a baby with you out of our love. I swear I can. Is that what you really want though?"

The blonde nodded. "I want to spend the rest of my life with you, Torrance. I want to have your children and watch them grow to have their own families. Sixty or seventy years from now I want to be surrounded by a family of grandchildren and great-grandchildren, and I want you to be the person holding me when I take my last breath of life. I'd give everything for that." Helen whispered through her tears.

Torrance couldn't even reply at first as she was overcome with emotions. Her body trembled as she sobbed lightly. Bringing Helen into her arms, she confessed, "I'd give everything I had for that as well." Neither of them spoke the rest of the night as they held each other. Words were no longer needed now that everything had been laid bare. Torrance no longer questioned the direction of their relationship now that she knew Helen wanted everything she did. She knew in time they would both have all they ever wanted in each other.

The following morning Helen was out the door early for her photo shoot. As soon as she was gone, Torrance called her mother on the phone. "Torrance, darling. Good morning. How are you?"

“Morning, Mama. I am the most wonderful I have ever been in my entire life. How are you?”

“Glad to hear it. I’m doing well. What brought on this mood? I’m sure Helen is behind it no doubt.”

“Of course she’s behind it. Listen. I was wondering if you were busy today. I am in need of your assistance.”

“Actually, dear, I am fairly busy. What did you need help with? Is it an emergency?”

“It’s not an emergency, but I really wish you would come with me. It’s extremely important. I’m going to try to buy Helen an engagement ring, and I would like for you to be there, so I get the right one, but if you’re busy, I guess I can go alone.” Torrance stated laying on the playful guilt.

There was a moment of silence before her mother simply replied, “I’ll meet you at Tiffany in one hour.”

“Thanks, Mama. I knew I could count on you.”

“Well, this is an important decision to make, and if you want me to help you with it, I’ll be there. We’ll start at Tiffany just to get an idea of what you might like to get her. Don’t forget to try to get her ring size somehow if you can.”

“No problem. I can do that.”

“Now go on. Time is wasting. I’ll see you in a bit.”

Torrance was standing looking at rings at Tiffany and Company exactly one hour later when she saw her mother walk through the door. Watching her from afar, Torrance took in how elegant her mother was and the regal air that surrounded the woman as she made her way over to the photographer. The sixty one year old brunette could’ve passed for Torrance’s sister instead of her mother, and briefly Torrance hoped that Helen would grow older as gracefully as her mother. The younger brunette watched in amusement as men eyed the exquisitely dressed woman as she came and gave her a hug and kiss on each cheek.

“Mother, so glad you could make it.” Torrance said.

“Darling, this is one of the most important purchases you will ever make, so I need to be sure you get the right thing for your bride.” she mentioned as a well-dressed man approached and asked if he could be of assistance. “Yes, actually you could be of help. We are looking for an engagement ring for a lovely young woman.”

He turned and eyed Torrance quizzatively but inquired, “Would this be for you?”

“No, for my girlfriend actually.” the photographer announced challengingly.

He gave a professional smile. "Very well. I'd be happy to show you our collection. What does the young lady like?"

The two women spent an hour at Tiffany looking at their selection and trying on different rings before deciding to visit some other places. As they strolled down Madison Ave. discussing what might be most appropriate for the blonde woman, Torrance's mother stopped at a window. "Look at that dress. Wouldn't that look fabulous on Helen?" she asked. "Come on. Let's go in and look at it. What size does she wear?"

"I don't know." Torrance answered as her mother dragged her into the boutique.

Immediately a sales lady greeted them. "We'd like to see that dress you have in the window in a size four and six please." The sales woman looked at them skeptically, because it clearly wasn't either of their sizes. However Maria stated, "It's for my daughter-in-law. I think it would look wonderful on her. Is there anyone here that might be able to model it for us? I'm not sure of her size."

"Certainly. Right away."

Within a few minutes one of the younger sales women came out wearing the dress. "What do you think, Torrance? Is she larger or smaller than Helen?" Maria inquired.

Torrance studied the model she had in front of her, circling her slowly. Hesitantly she asked, "Would you mind if I got a little bit better idea?" She gestured with her hands that she wanted to encircle the woman's waist.

"Honey, if you buy this dress from her, she's not going to care what you do." her mother joked.

The young woman nodded her consent to Torrance, so the brunette timidly put her arms around the stranger's waist and pulled her in closer. Holding her for only a second, she stated definitively, "Helen's smaller than this. What size is this dress?"

"It's the six." the sales lady responded waiting until Torrance let her go to step away.

"We better buy the four. I think Helen is a four, but I wanted to double check. Now we need to get her a pair of shoes to match as well as a hand bag." Maria stated confidently.

"Mother, where do you think she's going to be wearing this thing anyway? Helen doesn't need a Vera Wang dress."

"Well, I thought you two were coming to your grandmother's cocktail party this evening out at the house. She will need something appropriate to wear."

"I wasn't planning on going, much less bringing Helen."

"Why not? If you're going to marry the girl, she needs to see all the facets of your life

beforehand. You haven't taken her out to the house yet once. I think she needs to see what she's getting into."

"Well, I'll talk to her about it. She might not be up for it after working all day today. I'd hate to drag her to a political party if she's tired."

"Nevertheless if you do decide to come, she needs a dress to wear, so we're buying this and the appropriate accessories to match." Maria insisted.

Torrance sighed knowing it was pointless to fight her mother on the point. Instead she wisely just allowed the young sales girl to show them shoes and bags to go with the dress. Half an hour later they were being rung up. "You know I could buy a car for what I'm spending right now." Torrance grumbled half heartedly.

"But don't you think Helen will look simply radiant in this?"

"Yes, of course. It's hard not to look good when you spend this kind of money."

"Torrance, if you're going to be married to Helen, it's only fair to show her what she's getting involved in. I know you've been hesitant to show her this side of your life too much."

"I know, and she is going to look wonderful. I just don't want her to make a big deal of this, and I think she might."

"She'll have to get used to the money sometime. Better to do it now. Now come on. We still need to find that ring. I personally think a diamond and emerald setting would be the best. It will go with her eyes magnificently."

"Now that is a brilliant idea, Mother. Why don't we look for that? If we can find the right cut in platinum, I think we'd be set."

Their conversation was interrupted by the young sales woman. "Here you go, Ms. Whitfield. Enjoy your purchases."

"Oh, I will." Torrance stated with a smile. "Thank you for your help. I'm sure my girlfriend would appreciate it as long as she didn't know about me putting my arms around you." she teased lightly giving a captivating smile.

The young woman blushed slightly. "You have an extremely lucky girlfriend." she said handing the bag over to Torrance. Their hands brushed lightly.

"I'm the lucky one. Thank you again for your assistance." As soon as they got out onto the street, Maria chuckled. "What's so funny?" inquisitively Torrance asked.

"That young girl was flirting with you and you her. It was amusing, because I've never seen women come on to you. You can be quite the charmer. God, no wonder you're gay. You play



women so well.”

“What can I say? I have the touch.” the younger woman stated teasingly.

“All right, Miss Thing. Let’s go get that engagement ring before some other woman tries to put her hooks in you.”

Torrance arrived home in enough time to stow Helen’s new dress in the closet and put the blonde’s ring back that she had left that morning on the dresser before her girlfriend came home. “Hey. Welcome home.” Torrance greeted coming down the stairs to give her a kiss.

Helen moaned softly. “This certainly is a pleasant way to end a work day.”

“How are you feeling? Tired?”

“Not too tired actually. I think I was just excited about the prospect of coming home to your arms.”

“Well, how would you like to go out for the evening? My grandmother is having a political cocktail party at the family house out on Long Island, and my mother really wants us to go. I told her you might be tired, but if we could possibly make an appearance, it would make her happy.”

“Well, I’d be fine with that except I have nothing to wear. I wish you had told me this yesterday. I would’ve been able to bring something.”

“I didn’t plan on going, but when I was out with my mother today, she made such a big deal out of it that I felt like we should attend. I knew you didn’t bring anything with you, so we took the liberty of getting you something to wear while we were out.”

“You bought me a dress?” doubtfully the blonde asked.

“Mother picked it out for you, so you don’t have to panic.”

“Where is it? Let me see it.”

“It’s up in the closet.” Torrance replied. Following Helen upstairs she stood near the bed and watched the younger woman go into the closet. Pulling it out the teacher lifted the protective plastic over the top and simply stared at the formal black dress. “We weren’t quite sure of your size, but Mother thought you were a four, and it looked about right to me.”

The model looked to see if there was a size label in the dress, but as she came across the designer name, her heart momentarily stopped. “Does this say Vera Wang on it?” she inquired.

Torrance nodded hoping that the blonde wouldn’t make an issue out of it. “She’s a friend of my mother’s.”

“This is a real Vera Wang?” Helen questioned in disbelief.

“Yes.” plainly the older woman answered.

There was an awkward silence. Helen knew that the dress she was holding had to have cost a small fortune, and she wasn't sure how to respond to such a gift. Seeing the brunette's uneasiness though, she thought it would be best to assure her. “Torrance, this is the most beautiful thing anyone has ever given me. Thank you.”

Torrance smiled at the blonde's acceptance. “You're welcome. Mother also chose some shoes and accessories for you. We need to start getting ready here soon. I'm going to take a shower.”

“I'll join you. I really could use one myself.” Helen replied making the photographer smile.

Torrance was finished dressing first and went downstairs to wait at Helen's request, because she wanted to surprise the brunette with how she dressed looked. As Helen stood in the bathroom looking at herself in the mirror fiddling with the obviously expensive diamond necklace Maria had loaned Torrance for Helen to wear that evening, she wondered exactly how much money had gone into her outfit. She knew for a fact that her dress was tens of thousands of dollars, but the necklace had to have been worth more money than she had ever made in her life. Helen felt nervous about what the night might hold for them, because Torrance had never taken special interest in choosing outfits for her, only complimenting her on whatever she decided to wear, so it was curious that the older woman had bought her something specifically for a party. Taking a deep breath, Helen tried to put the price tag of the items adorning her out of her mind and went to find her girlfriend.

Torrance was sitting in the living room sipping on a glass of scotch when she saw Helen begin to descend the circular staircase. She felt her breath leave her as she stood at the sight of the woman she loved floating down the stairs in the elegant floor length dress. It was obvious that Helen had made a special effort with her make up and hair that night, and Torrance could feel herself becoming weak at the sight of the blonde. Coming to the stairs, she extended her hand to the younger woman to assist her with the last few steps. “You are the most beautiful creature I've ever seen.” she stated in obvious appreciation. “I am truly honored to be your escort for the evening.”

Helen flushed as she smiled at her girlfriend. Torrance was wearing a black tuxedo style suit with a matching vest. “You look really sexy in that.” the blonde whispered, not trusting her voice at the moment as she was overcome with fervent emotions at the sight of her lover looking torridly dangerous. “You truly are the James Bond of lesbians. Just seeing you like this makes me want you.”

“That is exactly how I feel about you at this moment. I suggest we get going before I change my mind and take you right back up to the bedroom.” Torrance stated seriously. “Shall we?” She extended her arm to her girlfriend.

“Merci beau coupe, Mademoiselle Whitfield.”

“Je t’aime, Helen.” Torrance whispered with a smile before guiding her down to their awaiting limousine. As they emerged from the building, the driver came to open their door. “Good evening, Ms. Whitfield, Ms. Melbourne.” he stated formally.

“Bon soir, James.” Torrance stated allowing Helen to get in first.

“To the family estate?” he inquired.

“Yes, thank you.” she replied as he closed the door behind her.

Helen smiled at Torrance as she asked, “Why are we taking a limo?”

“Well, I thought it might be nice to ride in style to this event. Trust me. We will fit right in. Besides when I drink too much as I always do to be able to get through these things, my grandmother’s driver can take us home, so you don’t have to drive my car back. It would be difficult to do in that dress. Would you like a drink?”

“Sure.”

“Champagne?” Helen nodded. The photographer popped the cork on a bottle from the mini bar and poured two glasses for them. Raising her glass in toast, Torrance said, “To you, Helen. Thank you for making my life complete.”

“And thank you for finding the real me, Torrance.” she responded. When they arrived at the estate, the chauffeur came to open their door. Torrance stepped out first and then extended her hand to Helen in assistance. As the model emerged from the car and saw the house, her eyes grew wide. “Your grandmother lives here?” she inquired of the grand mansion.

“Well, technically yes but she’s hardly ever here anymore. She spends most of her time traveling. This is our family estate. My family actually wanted me to move in here to oversee it, but I just didn’t think it would be a good idea. I have a hard enough time getting girls back to the loft. I’d never get any to agree to come home with me if I lived all the way out here.” Torrance teased lightly.

“Except for this one.” the teacher said as she took in the majestic building. “This is the biggest house I’ve seen.”

“Well, if we can slip away for a bit, I might give you a tour. However I don’t know if we can go missing for several hours. Besides I think the grounds are better than the house. Come on. We better get inside. It’s starting to snow.”

Taking Helen by the hand, Torrance led them into the house. Her grandmother was in the foyer greeting guests when she saw the two of them enter. “Torrance, Helen, I’m so glad you came.” she exclaimed hugging them both. “Helen, you look simply fantastic.”

“Thank you, Mrs. Whitfield.”

“Come on in. I want you to meet some people.” she said taking each woman by the hand and dragging them into the party. Pulling them over to the guest of honor that evening, the current democratic senator of New York, she made introductions. “I believe you know my granddaughter, Torrance, Bill.”

“Yes, of course. Torrance, nice to see you again.” he said shaking her hand.

“And this beautiful young lady is the woman I hope to someday soon say is Torrance’s beautiful wife, Helen Melbourne. That is if my granddaughter doesn’t mess things up between now and then.” she joked.

“Helen, you are a stunning. Torrance is extremely lucky.” the senator stated shaking her hand as well. “May I introduce my wife?”

The two of them were drawn through the crowd of people by Torrance’s grandmother as she showed them off. Finally breaking free though, Torrance went off to the bar to get them both beverages. By the time she returned, Helen was talking with Maria and Thomas. “Here you go.” the brunette said handing over the wine to her girlfriend.

“Thank you.”

“There certainly is a crowd here tonight. I didn’t think it was going to be this many people.”

“Well, you know your grandmother. She doesn’t do something unless she can do it in style.” Maria commented. “Helen, I’m so glad that dress worked for you. The moment I saw it I knew it would look wonderful.”

“Thank you for picking it out for me, Maria. I was scared for a moment when I came home, and Torrance said she bought me a dress. Thank you for letting me borrow this necklace as well. It truly is a beautiful piece.”

“You can thank Torrance for that. It belongs to her.”

The teacher looked at the photographer questioningly, because the jewelry didn’t look like anything the older woman would wear. “This is yours?”

“Yeah, I guess. Mother gave it to me about ten years ago. It’s a family heirloom, but it’s not my style, so I let her borrow it back on a long term loan. She’s the custodian you could say.”

“Well, I’ve never seen anything like it.”

Just then Torrance’s father broke into the conversation. “Helen, may I ask you to dance? I have to dance with the prettiest woman in here under thirty.”

“Well, you’re in luck. I don’t turn thirty until later this year.” she quipped putting her hand in his and letting him lead her off to the dance floor.

When they were out of earshot, Torrance asked, “You didn’t say anything to Dad about the ring, did you?”

“No. You and I are the only ones that know. However I’m about to burst with excitement. Have you decided when you are going to propose?”

“Well, it should be ready before we leave for her father’s party. I figure I’d talk to him about it, and make it official by asking his permission first. Then I thought I might just ask her while we were down there. We’re supposed to be staying at this romantic bed and breakfast. We’ll see. If not then I’ll think of something.”

“I just can’t wait. I want to tell everyone that you’re finally getting married.”

“Well, you have to at least wait until she says yes.” Torrance said seriously. “Now how about a dance, Mother?”

Torrance led her mother to the dance floor and began to dance with her, ignoring all the looks from those people who didn’t know their family well. As they moved around the floor, Maria asked, “You’ll dance with me at your wedding, won’t you?”

“I wouldn’t have it any other way, Mama. You were the lady of my life for a long time, and I’ll always love you.”

“I know, but it was time that you grew up, and I’m glad you found Helen. She is your perfect compliment. You two will be so happy together.”

“I hope so. I just hope she says yes.”

“She will. You don’t have to worry about a thing.”

Several songs passed before Torrance’s father asked to cut in, so Torrance traded her mother for her girlfriend. Putting her arm around the blonde’s waist and taking her other hand, the brunette began guiding them through the dance. “What were you two talking about over here?” curiously the teacher inquired. “Your mother as glowing.”

“Oh, we were just talking about you. She’s just being a mother, putting pressure on me to move our relationship along. You know how they can be.”

The model gave a nod. The thought of Torrance and Maria discussing their relationship made her happy, because she realized the older woman was hopefully confiding in her mother her plans for them. Every time she thought of she and Torrance being together in a permanent relationship, she as more sure of what she desired and hoped that someday soon that dream would be reality.

Torrance and Helen were one of the last couples at the party that night. As they were saying good night to the brunette's grandmother, the older woman mentioned the inclement weather, making Torrance look outside for the first time all evening. Turning back to Helen, she said, "The snow has gotten worse."

The teacher glanced out the window as well. "Torrance, I'm not sure we should be driving back."

"I know. I've had a lot to drink, and I don't want you or James trying to drive us home either. We should stay here for the night and go back in the morning. Hopefully by then the streets will have been cleared. You wouldn't mind having us here, would you, Grandmother?"

"Of course not. I'll have one of the attendants prepare your room." Signaling one of the awaiting women house attendants, her grandmother stated, "Please set up Torrance's old room for the night, Michelle."

"Right away, Mrs. Whitfield. I'll have the two rooms prepared shortly."

"Um, Michelle, only one room is necessary." Torrance softly corrected her as she started to turn away.

The young maiden glanced at Helen in a less than professional manner before mumbling, "Qui, Monsieur Whitfield."

As she brushed by them, Helen turned to the photographer and inquired, "Why did she just call you Mr. Whitfield?"

"It's a long, private story. I'll tell you about it when we get to our room. Good night, Grandmother."

"Good night, Torrance and Helen. I will have your breakfast delivered to you in the morning. Sleep well." she said hugging them both and sending them on their way.

Torrance took the long route to their room in hopes that by the time they arrived Michelle would be gone. "Do you want to tell me what was going on with you and your grandmother's maid?" Helen inquired.

"Um, Michelle and I have a history."

"What kind of history?" Helen pressed in interest.

"A sexual one."

Seeing that the older woman wasn't going to give more information, Helen stated, "I gathered as much. That still doesn't explain why she called you Monsieur Whitfield."

Torrance began to feel uncomfortable with the idea of discussing the details of a sexual encounter with her girlfriend. Trying to dodge the issue, she stated, "It was just a joke at my expense. I hope the roads are clear tomorrow. I know you have to drive back to Philly at some point."

Helen noticed the deliberate attempt to change the subject as well as her girlfriend's uneasiness in discussing the young maid. Deciding to push the question, she queried in growing irritation at the intentionally vague answers, "Why are you avoiding this discussion? What aren't you telling me about Michelle?"

Hearing the edge to the blonde's voice, Torrance rolled her eyes. "I don't want to talk about Michelle. That's why I'm avoiding the topic. I slept with one of my grandmother's housekeepers. Let's just leave it at that."

"I don't think so, Torrance. You've never been this way when it came to women you've been with. Why are you doing it now?"

"Because you don't have a right to know everything about my life!" Torrance yelled as they came to the room. She threw open the door and marched through leaving Helen to follow behind.

As Helen walked into the room, she didn't even notice its elegance or the fire that had been started in the fireplace. All she saw was one angry photographer glaring at her in such a way that it made her heart ache. Suddenly finding it difficult to breathe, she leaned against a wingback chair for support. "Why don't I have a right to know? What are you hiding from me? You aren't still... sleeping with her, are you?" hesitantly she asked, hoping that it wasn't true.

Torrance scowled at her. "Thanks for the trust, Helen! Jesus Christ!"

"I was just asking. You're acting so weird about this. I don't know what this attitude is, and I don't understand why you're so upset over a simple question."

"Fine! If you have to stick your nose into my business, I'll tell you why I'm being weird about this! When she was sixteen and I was twenty two, she was working here part time, and I fucked her! I was on serious drugs, and I slept with her! When she realized I had used her, she had me arrested for rape! I didn't want my grandparents to find out about it, so I bribed her with a half a million dollars to keep her mouth shut and drop the charges! She's a rich woman today because of me, but now she just stays here to torture me! She always wanted to be the mistress of this house, and I guess now in a way she is, just not the way she wanted! There! Now you know!" the older woman screamed.

Without even thinking about what she was saying, Helen commented aloud, "How could you do that?"

Torrance glared at her. "Don't you dare judge me! You have no authority to pass judgement on my life! After all you're the one who kicked me to the curb, because you were too scared of realizing your true self! You hurt me, so you have no right to judge me!"

Helen's heart dropped into her stomach at the rage directed toward her. She had always regretted hurting the woman she loved out of fear, but she had never expected the brunette to throw it in her face. Sinking down into the chair, she just stared at the photographer wordlessly.

Torrance saw the pain in her lover's face, but feeling it herself, she didn't apologize. Instead she mumbled, "I think I need a moment alone. If you want to change clothes, there should be some pajamas in the dresser." She didn't wait for a response as she fled the room.

The teacher broke down into tears after the photographer slammed the door. She didn't even know how to process what had just taken place between them. They had never had a fight before, and she was shocked into immobility at Torrance's fury. The incident with Michelle paled into comparison to the pain she felt at Torrance's blowup about the end of their relationship the first time. She never thought the older woman who say something so malicious, and she was stunned that she had been the recipient of the photographer's explosion.

However she was just as dismayed at Torrance's admission of what had taken place between Michelle and her. She couldn't fathom the women she knew to be so irresponsible, but the older woman had already confessed previously to her reckless behavior when she had been on drugs. The longer Helen sat there the angrier she became at Michelle for wounding the woman who held her heart. Letting the feeling move her to action, she stormed out of the room to find the young maid.

Helen stalked the corridors of the mansion until she ran into the woman not much younger than she in the kitchen. "You!" she yelled getting Michelle's attention and everyone else's as she marched over to her. "You will not do this to Torrance any more! She's suffered from your manipulation long enough! You've had your fun for the last twelve years, but it ends now!" she shouted. "I don't want you near her! Don't talk to her! Don't even so much as look at her! The woman is mine! She always will be, and you need to get on with your life! She hurt you, but it was twelve years ago! I won't let you torment her any longer! I know what happened, and I know what you got out of it! You won't be getting any more either, not at Torrance's expense!"

Michelle stared at Helen in indignation. "Who are you to talk? You're just her flavor of the month. You'll be gone soon enough, and I'll continue to do as I please."

"Listen, Michelle! Every time you see Torrance from now on, you're going to see me! I'm going to become your worst nightmare if you don't leave her alone! You don't need this job after what you got off her! You're only here to make her suffer, but I won't allow it any longer!"

The other worker's in the kitchen stared at the two of them in growing interest. "You have no idea what you're talking about." Michelle mentioned. "I'm not the one who did anything wrong."

"Oh no? You only manipulated and blackmailed your boss's granddaughter for something she didn't do for your own personal gains! Now I suggest you leave the woman alone, or else I'll be forced to have you fired by telling Torrance's grandmother exactly what you did! Are we clear



on this, Michelle?”

“Fine! Now get out of my face, bitch!”

Helen cracked a little smile, deciding to add extra humiliation and trouble to the maid. “I’ll ask you not to call me that again. I think you should be calling me Mrs. Torrance Whitfield. After all I’ll be family soon.” There was a collective gasp from the group at that announcement and even a small one from Michelle. “Now I’ll ask again if we’re clear on things, Michelle.”

The women met eyes. Helen saw Michelle swallow hard before the housekeeper muttered, “Yes, Mrs. Whitfield.”

“Good. Well, good night.” she stated with a satisfied grin before leaving to go back to the bedroom.

The photographer hadn’t returned, so the model prepared for bed. As Torrance said there was a pair of the older woman’s pajamas in the dresser, so Helen put on the night shirt after taking off all her clothes and left the pants for her beloved when she returned. Going into the bathroom, she found a supply of everything she needed to do her nightly bedtime routine. However Torrance still wasn’t back by the time she was out of the bathroom, so Helen decided to sit up and wait. Going over to the couch near the fireplace, she plopped down, sitting with one foot resting flat against the bottom cushion as she encircled her shin with her arms and stared contemplatively into the flames.

She didn’t know how much time had passed, but she looked up from the fire when she heard the door softly creak open. Helen met Torrance’s green eyes. Neither of them spoke at first, each of them showing a vulnerability that hadn’t been there earlier. After several seconds Torrance mentioned, “I wish I had my camera.”

“Why’s that?”

“To capture your beauty right now. You never cease to amaze me, Helen, by how much the sight of you affects me.” the brunette confessed coming to the couch and dropping to the floor in front of the model. Awkwardly she reached for the blonde’s exposed inner thigh and brushed it lightly with her fingers. Torrance looked up into the teacher’s eyes after a moment of intently studying the limb. “I’m so sorry about earlier. I really went off. You didn’t deserve that.”

Helen gave her a reassuring smile as she interlaced her hands through the brunette’s hair. “I’m sorry for pushing you on such a sensitive issue. I never would’ve brought it up had I known your suffering at the hands of that woman.”

Torrance sighed as she relaxed into Helen’s touch. “You’re the only person who knows. I should’ve told you earlier, but I was ashamed. It was an honest mistake. I didn’t even know she was underage at the time. I really thought she was eighteen, and I was completely caught off guard when she came up with that statutory rape charge. I would never have had sex with a minor knowingly. I wasn’t that stupid then. She came onto me, and as I said I was really messed

up. We both did some lines of coke, and then had sex. The Monsieur Whitfield thing was just a part of a sex game we played that night, and I think she just said it tonight to get to me.”

“It’s okay. I understand, but you don’t have to feel ashamed any longer. It was a long time ago, and she took advantage of you. I’m not going to let that woman hurt you ever again.”

“I’m also sorry about what I said about you. I know you never intentionally tried to hurt me. I just lashed out, because I knew you still felt bad about it, and I was just being a jerk. I never should’ve said that. I was just being cruel, and I’m terribly sorry I said it. It was wrong of me.”

“I still love you, Torrance. Sometimes we all say things we don’t mean, but that won’t keep me from loving you with all I am. I’m sorry too for suggesting that you were having sex outside our relationship. I know for a fact that you would never do that. I have no doubts about your fidelity, and I’m sorry that I questioned it.”

“Thank you for saying that.” the older woman whispered.

“Something else has been bothering you tonight. I’ve noticed it since we left the loft. What is it? You didn’t want to come here tonight.”

“You’re right. I didn’t want to come here.”

“Was it because of Michelle?”

“Partly. I didn’t want her to become an issue.”

“She’s not, not any more. You’re mine. I know it, and she knows it. What was the other part?”

“I don’t want this to come out wrong, Helen, but I don’t know how to put it delicately. This isn’t about you, even though it’s going to sound like it is.”

“Go on. What is it?”

“I didn’t want to bring you here, because I didn’t want you to see how much money my family had. I’ve been so insecure when it came to women finding out about my monetary situation, so I’ve always tried to hide it the best I could. After Michelle I’ve been wary that women will try to take advantage of me again.”

“That’s understandable, but don’t you trust me?”

“Yes, I trust you completely, Helen.”

Looking into the photographer’s green eyes, Helen said, “Torrance, you have money, a lot of money by the looks of it, but I don’t care about it. I don’t love you for your money, for your success, or your fame. I love you, just Torrance, and I would like to continue to love only you. Money has been your nemesis for most of your life, but it doesn’t have to be with me. Personally

I don't really like that you have all this money, but it's a part of you, and I have to deal with it. I mean you bought me a dress that costs two or three times what I make in a year, and I don't even want to know how much this necklace I was wearing is worth, because I'd probably faint from the shock. I'm coming to realize that being with you has it's own problems, one of those being people trying to get close to you for financial gains, but I will never be one of those people."

"I know."

Smiling the teacher mentioned lightly, "Well, I guess we weathered our first major fight all right."

"Yeah, I guess that was our first fight. I hope it will be our last."

"I doubt it will, but let's just try to keep things to discussions before they get out of control next time." Torrance nodded in agreement. "Now don't you think we should make up?" she asked lightly with a smile.

Torrance got up on her knees and leaned up to kiss the model's lips gently. "I love you." she whispered.

"I love you too, Torrance." Helen replied softly as she began to work Torrance's jacket off her shoulders. Getting it off she repeated the process with the black vest. "Did I tell you how sexy you looked in this suit?" she asked as her hands found the pearl buttons of the tuxedo shirt. "You make me want you so badly."

Torrance moaned into her girlfriend's mouth in response. Her hands trailed up the teacher's bare legs, taking in the smooth skin of her legs and hips. Opening the large buttons on the flannel night shirt, Torrance trailed down the model's body with kisses. As she neared her destination, she eased the blonde's thin thighs apart and raised them over either of her shoulders before leaning in to give the woman she loved the intimacy she craved to make them whole again.

Helen's head dropped back as she cradled the brunette's head into her. Nothing ever compared to when Torrance rendered this service, and Helen was more than happy to provide the photographer access to what she wanted. Allowing the older woman to do as she pleased, Helen simply rode the waves of pleasure that flowed through her until she came to the glorious summit that she had only visited through Torrance's talented mouth. As she shook from her peak, she felt the older woman slide her arms around the blonde's quivering body.

"Oh God." the younger woman mumbled. "I love you, Torrance."

"I love you too, Helen."

"There is just something so comforting about make up sex." the model mentioned teasingly.

"Well, I'm not finished making up to you." the brunette whispered picking the petite woman up and moving her to the down turned bed. Laying her down against the soft sheets, she stated, "In

fact I could spend forever inside you and still be insatiable.”

Helen’s pulse quickened at the sultry tone of her lover’s voice. “I want to feel you.” she requested beginning to remove the rest of the photographer’s clothes. “I need to feel you inside of me.”

The following morning Torrance was up and dressed by the time there was a knock on the bedroom door. Being that Helen was still sleeping after their strenuous night, the photographer quietly went to answer it. When she opened it, one of the cooks was standing there with their breakfast and a morning paper. “Good morning, Ms. Whitfield. Your grandmother requested that this be sent to your room this morning.”

“Thank you. I’ll take it from here.”

“If I may say so, Ms. Whitfield, you have one spitfire of a fiancée.”

“Why do you say that?” Torrance inquired not correcting Helen’s technical relationship to her and allowing the cook to believe she was indeed her intended.

“Because she put Michelle in her place last night. I’m so glad that she said something, because we’ve all seen how Michelle treated you all these years. She deserved what she got from the future Mrs. Whitfield.”

Torrance gave a nod, wondering what the cook might be talking about. “Well, thank you for the breakfast and the kind words about Helen. She is a special lady.”

“I hope she makes you happy, Ms. Whitfield. You deserve it. All of us on the staff have been wishing for this day when you would find a bride to carry on the Whitfield name. We all wish you and the your fiancée the best.”

“Well, you are all very kind. Thank you.”

“I’ll just leave you to your breakfast then.”

Pushing the cart of food into the room, Torrance put it by the sofa before moving to wake her girlfriend. Helen sleepily opened her eyes to Torrance’s voice. “Breakfast is here. Are you hungry?”

“A little.”

“You want me to bring it to the bed, or would you like to eat on the couch?”

“I’ll come over there. Just give me a moment. I’ll be right with you.”

As Torrance waited she pondered whether or not to mention her conversation with the cook but decided against it for the moment. Even though she was curious about it, she didn’t want to bring

up the marriage discussion again until she had a ring in her hand, so she mentally filed it in the back of her mind to talk about at a later date.

Continued Part 10

## The Athenaeum's Scroll Archive

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# ~ Love in Photographs ~

by Alex Tryst

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### Part 10

Three weeks later Torrance and Helen were on their way down to Helen's parents' house for her father's birthday. Arriving at the bed and breakfast late Thursday night, they called her father to let him know that they had gotten there safely and that they would see him tomorrow. However Torrance asked to speak with him as Helen went into their bathroom to prepare for bed.

"John, listen. I was wondering if you were free early tomorrow morning. There is something I wanted to discuss with you."

"Well, sure. You and Helen can come by the house if you'd like."

"Actually I wanted to talk to you alone, just the two of us. Would that be possible?"

"Sure. There's a coffee shop close to the bed and breakfast. Is Helen still a late sleeper?"

"Yeah. I figure I could sneak out of here about eight or so and be back before she wakes. How does that sound?"

"Sounds fine. I'll see you then."

"Fabulous. See you in the morning. Good night."

Early the next day Torrance was out the door before eight and waiting anxiously for John at the coffee shop. As he came in, Torrance gave him a friendly wave and waited while he got himself something to drink before joining her. "Morning, Torrance."

"Good morning, John. Happy birthday."

"Thanks. Now what did you want to talk to me about? I've been wondering all night."

Torrance gave a little chuckle. “Now I know where Helen gets her voracious curiosity.”

“Well, tell me. Don’t leave me in suspense.”

The photographer gestured in mock surrender before taking a sip of her coffee. “Well, since you’re so anxious, I’ll get straight to the point. Helen and I have known each other for quite a while. I love your daughter with all that I am and ever hope to be, John, and I want her to be my wife. As her father I would like to ask you for your daughter’s hand.”

Giving a large grin, John replied, “You don’t have to ask me, Torrance. You already have my blessing. This is the best birthday present I could’ve ever gotten. Have you gotten her a ring yet?”

“Yeah. I figured you might like to see it.” she stated digging the box out of her pocket. Opening it she placed it in front of him.

“Wow. This is a beautiful ring, Torrance. She’s going to love it.”

“Do you think there is any way she’s going to say no?” hesitantly the brunette asked.

“Not a chance. Helen has spoken to me many times about how she wishes to be your wife. She is going to say yes. When are you planning on asking?”

“Well, I was thinking about today before the party if I can find a romantic spot.”

“I know of the perfect place. I’ll show you after this. It’s rather mild out today too, so you shouldn’t have a problem being outside.”

“Yeah. I was hoping it could be outside since the weather is unseasonably warm all of a sudden. I don’t want to ask her today though if it’s going to cause a problem.”

“No, I think you should do it today if you’re ready. I’d love to be able to introduce you at the party tonight as Helen’s fiancée.”

“I just don’t want your wife to take her disapproval out on us in such a public forum. I would hate to ruin your birthday with that.”

“Nonsense. You can’t ruin it. This is the best gift you could’ve given me. The only thing that would be better is if Helen arrived tonight with this ring upon her hand.”

“I guess that settles it. Assuming that we can find a spot, I’ll do it today.”

“Actually there is a place on the property of the B&B that I think would be perfect. It overlooks the water, and it still looks somewhat spontaneous. She’s a smart one and would figure out if you tried to do something planned.”

“Very true. Come on. Show me these places you have in mind. I have to get back before she wakes up and discovers I’m gone. I’d have some explaining to do.”

An hour later Torrance returned to the room to find Helen getting dressed. “Hey. There you are. I woke up, and you were gone. I was wondering where you went.” the blonde mentioned.

“I was just went for a walk. It’s a nice day.”

“Oh. Well, we have so much to do before the party. I still have to go buy my dad a gift. I just have no idea what to get him. It’s his sixtieth, so I feel like it should be special.”

“It will be, because you gave it to him, Helen. Come on now. Let’s have our breakfast and go shopping. We have to be back here early to get ready.”

That afternoon they returned to their room around four to get ready for the evening. As usual Torrance was ready first deciding upon a nice suit since it was a formal event. As she took one last look at herself in the mirror, she took a deep breath. The moment she had dreamed about was fast approaching, and her stomach was fluttering nervously, but she was determined to make her marriage proposal to her beloved before they left for the dinner. Turning to Helen she gave the woman she loved a smile. “I’m glad you’ve decided to wear this dress tonight. It really does look great on you. My mother has excellent taste.”

“She sure does. Besides I want to wear it, because you bought it for me.”

“Well, I’m going to go downstairs to wait. I like getting the full effect when you come out fully dressed.”

“All right. See you in a bit. Give me about fifteen minutes.”

Torrance left the room and headed off to find the owner for the bed and breakfast to ask that he send Helen out to the garden when she came down looking for her before going outside herself. Taking a seat on the wooden bench, she looked out over the Chesapeake Bay to watch the last bit of sun. She hoped Helen would make it down before the sun completely set, but she figured even if she missed it, it was still romantic enough.

Ten minutes later the photographer heard footfall behind her. Looking over her shoulder, she saw the blonde coming toward her. Torrance felt her chest tighten at the sight of the teacher in her elegant black dress with a black wrap covering her shoulders. “You look beautiful.” she stated standing and extending her hand to the model.

“Thank you. You look sexy yourself. You should wear suits more often. I love they way they look on you.” Helen said. They both looked out over the water to watch the last bit of sunset. “It’s a beautiful night.” the blonde mentioned.

“It certainly is.” Torrance replied looking down at the younger woman and giving a smile. “You

want to sit?”

“We really should get going.” lightly Helen protested.

“Just for a minute.” Torrance said knowing by the blonde’s answer that she could be swayed easily.

Nodding in consent the younger woman took a seat on the bench and looked up at her tall companion. “Well, aren’t you going to join me?”

Nonchalantly Torrance slid her hand into her pocket and slipped the ring partially onto her large ring finger before taking a seat on the bench next to Helen. “Helen, I love you.”

“I love you too, Torrance.”

“From the moment you came into my life, I wanted to be close to you. You had a magnetism about you that I had never felt with anyone else, and I feel blessed that you have allowed me to love you. Lately I’ve been thinking about where I wanted this relationship to go, and I had decided that I was going to ask you to move in with me. However I know how much you dislike New York, and I wasn’t so thrilled about the idea of moving to Philadelphia due to my career, so I felt as if I was stuck, but then something happened. We were at the loft, and I was holding you after we had made love when you said something that made me realize what a fool I was being. You said you wanted to have a baby with me, and it was at that moment that I realized nothing else mattered to me except you. If I never took another picture again, I’d still feel complete as long as I had you. Because I feel that way, I decided that it didn’t matter where we lived as long as we were together. My need to be with you everyday outweighs everything else, Helen. The obvious choice would be to ask you if you wanted to move in together, but you deserve more than that. You deserve it all, and I want to give it to you.” Torrance softly confessed as she slid off the bench and down to her knee. Taking her girlfriend’s hands, she smiled nervously. “Helen, you mean the world to me, and I love you more than I’ve ever loved anyone in my entire life. It would be the greatest honor if you would allow me to be your wife and mother to our children. I will do anything within my power to make you happy. Helen, will you marry me?” she gently inquired pulling out the ring and slipping it on the younger woman’s finger.

Helen stopped breathing momentarily as she stared first at the ring adorning her hand before looking into the green eyes of her beloved Torrance. “Oh, God, Torrance. You’ve caught me completely by surprise. I wasn’t expecting this. I thought for sure I would know when this was coming.”

Torrance waited another second before half jesting, “Helen, I’m having a minor heart attack here. Don’t keep me in suspense.”

“Oh, Torrance.” she exclaimed throwing her arms around the brunette’s neck. “Yes, I will marry you. I’ve always dreamed of this moment. You have no idea how much I want this.”

“Probably as much as I do.” the photographer teased leaning up to her fiancée’s lips. After



several minutes of kissing, she mumbled, "We need to get going to the party."

"I can't wait to tell my dad. He's going to be so thrilled. Come on. Let's go." Helen excitedly taking her fiancée by the hand and leading the way to the car.

When Torrance and Helen arrived, the young blonde took the photographer's hand and led her into the ball room of her parents' country club. Immediately people took note of their entrance and greeted them as they headed directly for the teacher's father. As John saw them, he came rushing over. "Helen, I'm so glad you're here." he stated embracing her in a tight hug.

"Happy birthday, Daddy." she said as he kissed her on the cheek.

Finally breaking away he turned to Torrance and brought her into a firm hug as well. "Thank you for bringing her, Torrance."

"You're welcome." Leaning down slightly towards his ear, Torrance whispered so only he could hear, "She said yes."

John's eyes lit in warmth as he turned back to his youngest and grabbed her left hand. "Oh my God! This is great!" he screamed in joy.

"You knew about this?" Helen asked of her father.

However Torrance answered for him. "Knew about it? He helped me plan."

"Oh, Daddy, thank you." the model said throwing her arms around him.

"Anything for you, Helen." he whispered, his eyes beginning to tear.

"Why are you crying, Dad?"

"I'm just so happy for the two of you. My little girl is getting married, and I couldn't have hoped for a better mate. Oh, Mrs. Whitfield, I'm overwhelmed with happiness."

Hearing her father call her by her soon to be married name made Helen start crying as well as she clung tighter to him. "I love you, Daddy."

"I love you too, sweetie. Now I guess we better introduce the newest member of our family to everyone, huh?" he suggested taking one of Torrance's hands in his own.

For the rest of the evening Torrance was introduced by John as Helen's fiancée. If anyone had a problem with it, no one said anything, but the brunette could tell that Diane Melbourne was extremely displeased with the development. However the rest of the family seemed to welcome her with open arms, and she spent most of the night with Helen's siblings and nieces.

That night as John was presented with his cake, he stood to address the group. "Well, I have to

say that this has been absolutely the best birthday I've ever had, and I thank all of you for being here to share it with me. However there is someone in particular tonight that I wish to thank for being here for she has brought me a special gift. For those of you who have yet to be introduced to this woman, I want to introduce her now. Over here with my family is Torrance Whitfield." he mentioned coming to put a hand on her shoulder. "I haven't known this woman very long, but in our short acquaintance, she has given my family something that no one else ever could, another daughter. Just this evening she and my own daughter Helen decided that they want to be married for which I am overjoyed. No words could ever truly express how I feel about this news. I've always dreamed of my children's spouses, and even though I never imagined that this well to do, internationally famous photographer would sweep my youngest right off her feet, I still feel blessed that she has. I know that the two of them will be happy together, so I have to thank Torrance for giving me the best gift anyone ever could. You have made Helen's dreams a reality and therefor her father's as well, so tonight as I celebrate my sixtieth birthday, I toast the two of you and wish you all the best."

Moved by the public display, both Helen and Torrance enfolded him into a hug as he finished speaking. As attention was turned back to everyone's own tables and conversations, John reached up and cupped the side of the photographer's face affectionately. "Welcome to my family, Torrance."

"Thank you, John. I promise that I'll make your little girl happy."

"I know you will. You already do."

A little bit later Torrance went to the bar to retrieve another drink for Helen and herself when she was approached by Helen's mother. "Good evening, Mrs. Melbourne." the brunette greeted as politely as possible.

"Doesn't feel like one." she mumbled. "You're not going to go away, are you?"

"I hadn't planned on it. I love Helen, and I want to be with her."

"And she has agreed to marry you?"

"Yes. Apparently she wants to be with me as much as I do her."

"Well, I don't like it."

"I'm aware of that, and I'm sorry that's the way you feel."

"I want my daughter back, Torrance."

"And I want you to have your daughter back, Mrs. Melbourne, but I want you to have the real her, not the one you want her to be."

"Torrance, regardless of what you might believe, I've always had the real Helen. Whatever this

phase is, she'll get over it. I'm upset that she's choosing to do something that I disagree with so immensely, and marrying you, whether it's for your money or not, is wrong."

"It's her choice, Mrs. Melbourne. It's her life, and I just feel blessed that she has decided to spend it with me. I want her to have her family too, but she's made it clear that she'd rather have me than anyone else. It's your choice whether or not you want to be in her life. I wish that you would, but I'll comfort her if you're not. She wants her mother back but with an apology for the way she was treated, and she also wants you to show your support. Maybe in time you can come to accept us as a couple, but even if you don't, that's not going to stop her from fulfilling her own dreams. She will do as she pleases, but there will always be a hole in her heart where you are supposed to be. I wish that you would fill that void before it's too late." Torrance stated as she looked up to see Helen watching them. "Excuse me. I need to get back to Helen now."

Heading back to the table, the brunette set Helen's wine down in front of her. "What were you talking to my mother about?"

"You. She's just voicing her opinion on this latest news, but don't give her another thought. How about a dance?"

"Sure. That sounds great."

Helen and Torrance took to the dance floor for the next hour, but after awhile, John asked to cut in and dance with the blonde, leaving Diane and Torrance standing there. Putting on a confident face, Torrance looked down at the older version of her beloved. "Mrs. Melbourne, would you like to dance, or should I escort you from the floor?"

"I'm not finished talking to you, Torrance." she stated.

"Very well. We could dance and talk or maybe find a quiet place over by the bar." she suggested. "Whatever you would like would be fine."

A moment that seemed to last forever passed before she answered, "I want to stay right here."

Surprised by the response, Torrance experimentally extended her hand for the older woman to take. Diane Melbourne stared at the outstretched hand for several moments before putting her hand into the larger one. Swallowing her nerves, Torrance stepped to Helen's mother and put a tentative hand around the older woman's back. Just as indecisively Diane's hand came up to the photographer's shoulder. Torrance began to slowly move the two of them to the music, and there was silence between them for a few minutes. The brunette's thoughts were running wild as she held the woman who had caused Helen so much pain. It felt strange to her that a woman that felt so much like her beloved could have open hostility for her.

Helen danced with her father as she watched what was happening with Torrance and her mother. "Oh my God. They're actually dancing together." she whispered in complete shock.

John looked over his shoulder at his wife and Torrance. "Good. I was hoping that Torrance

would turn on the charm. It's only a matter of time now before your mother comes around, Helen. I promise you that she will."

After a few songs passed, Diane stated, "This is a strange sensation, Torrance. I've never danced with a woman before. You're so much larger than my husband that it's almost like dancing with another man."

"Well, I am usually tall. That much is true." nervously she replied, unsure of how to proceed in conversation.

"Torrance, after what you said to me earlier, I feel like I should be honest with you about my objections. I know with complete certainty that Helen is the type of girl to do as she pleases regardless of what I think. She always has been that way, and I don't want to lose her. She's my daughter."

"I don't want you to lose her either. Children always need their mothers regardless of their age."

"Torrance, I just have a real moral objection to you and Helen being together."

"You don't like the fact that I am a woman. Mrs. Melbourne, notwithstanding that one point, do you have any problems with me?"

"Well, I think you're haughty. You have too much money for a person of your age."

"I do work hard for a living, Mrs. Melbourne, but most of my money I was born into. There is nothing I can do about that. Don't you want Helen to be taken care of? I can give her anything and everything she wants."

"I don't think that is always best. I don't want her to become spoiled. Helen has had a nice upbringing. She's always had what she needed and a lot of what she wanted as well, but I think moderation is good for everyone. I mean that dress she's wearing tonight is not something you just buy off the rack. I know you had to have bought it for her. I don't want her to become arrogant because of your status."

"I don't think she will. Helen has made it clear to me that she wants nothing to do with my money. It makes her uncomfortable. Mrs. Melbourne, I don't want to change Helen in anyway, because I love her as she is. The reality of the situation is that the money is there, but I don't think either of us has the intention of abusing it. What else about me bothers you?"

"You have an ego problem."

"What makes you say that?"

"That night we went to dinner with you and your parents you were introducing Helen to everyone like she was some sort of trophy. There is more to her than her looks, Torrance, but the way you kept touching and ogling her made me uncomfortable."

“I’m terribly sorry. I wasn’t aware that I was doing that. I just want everyone to know who Helen is, because I’m so proud of her. She’s an amazing, special woman, Mrs. Melbourne, and I want the world to know it.”

“She is special.” Diane conceded.

“See. We can agree on something. If I were a wealthy, haughty, egotistical man instead of a woman, would this bother you as much, or do all those things about me truly irritate you?” gently Torrance inquired, hoping not to sever the wavering connection they were sharing.

“They would still upset me, Torrance, but to answer your unspoken question, the fact that you are a woman is the key issue.”

“Good.” the photographer mumbled.

“Good? Why is that good?”

“Because I only have one real issue to deal with. I wasn’t sure I’d be able to change your mind about all of those things.”

“And you think you can change my mind about how I feel?” Diane challenged.

“Yes.”

“Why do you think that?”

“Two reasons really. Number one you came to talk to me twice this evening. If you were truly set in your ways, you wouldn’t have given me the time of day. Secondly, but more importantly in my eyes though, is the fact that you are dancing with me. If you really objected to two women being together, you wouldn’t be here allowing me to lead you around this dance floor. You’d be off in the corner cursing my very existence, but instead you are out on a limb trying to resolve this issue with me. That says a lot about you, Mrs. Melbourne. It proves what I’ve always thought to be true. You do love Helen, and you want what is best for her. Hopefully in time you will come to realize that she thinks I am what’s best for her.”

“Dancing with you is one thing. Two women being intimate is quite another, Torrance. That’s not something I agree with.”

“Well, you’d probably be uncomfortable with that idea regardless of who was with Helen. She is your baby after all. It’s hard to see her as an adult, but she’s twenty-nine. Intimacy is only a portion of a relationship. It’s not everything. If you can just focus on her happiness, I think that maybe you’ll see that she is content. Isn’t that what matters most, her happiness?”

Diane didn’t answer the posed question. Instead she withdrew from Torrance’s arms. “I think I need to go socialize some more now.” she said, her tone of voice relaying her newfound

openness in discussing the topic.

“Sure. I understand. You are the hostess after all. Thank you for taking the time with me this evening, Mrs. Melbourne.”

Helen’s mother gave a nod. “Call me Diane.” she stated as she turned to go, leaving Torrance standing there alone on the floor.

It was only a moment before her fiancée came to her. “Well, that certainly was interesting to watch. I never thought I’d see the two of you dancing together. What did she say?”

“That she doesn’t want to lose you. I think things are going to get better now. We had a good talk.”

That evening as they were leaving the party, John and Diane escorted them to the door. “Thank you for making this night.” John said to both of them as he gave them each a hug.

“Thanks for inviting me, John. I had a great time. It was a pleasure to see you again, Diane.”

The older woman just gave a nod in the brunette’s direction but then asked to speak with Helen alone. Helen followed her mother a few steps out of earshot and looked at her expectantly. Her mother shifted nervously on her feet for a moment. “Helen, I just wanted you to know that I’m sorry for what I said in New York. That’s not the way I really feel about the situation.”

“How do you feel?”

“I still don’t like it, but it’s obvious that you are going to marry this woman whether or not I approve.”

“That’s true, Mother. I am.”

“Well, if it means anything to you, I like her more than I ever liked Richard.” Helen nodded knowing that was a difficult admission for her mother to make. “Tomorrow all the family is coming over for brunch. I think you and Torrance should be there.” she stated.

“Okay. I’ll have to run it by Torrance.”

“All right. Then just give us a call.”

Helen looked at her mother for a second before moving to hug her. The embrace was returned without hesitation. “Thank you for at least understanding, Mom, even if you don’t agree. I love you.”

“I love you too, Helen.”

Pulling away Helen went back to Torrance’s side and curved her arm around the taller woman’s

waist. "We'll call you tomorrow about brunch. Happy birthday, Dad."

"Hope to see you in the morning. Congratulations again." he said as they turned to go.

"Well, you hugged your mother. Things must be looking up." Torrance mentioned as they went out to the car.

Helen smiled. "I think so. She invited us to the house for brunch tomorrow."

"Are we going?"

"That depends on you. I don't know what you had in mind."

"Well, I'm up for it if you are."

"Great. Thanks, but enough about my mother. I feel like celebrating our own event tonight."

"What did you have in mind?" curiously the older woman inquired.

Cracking a rakish grin, Helen whispered, "Take me back to our place, and you'll find out."

The next day they arrived at the model's parents' home just after eleven. After greeting everyone Helen said that she wanted to show Torrance around since the food wasn't ready yet. Helen gave the brunette a tour of the house before taking her outside down to their own private beach. "This is a beautiful place." Torrance mentioned as they stood and cuddled together up on the deck.

"My dad designed the house."

"It's fantastic. He's quite a talented architect. The use of space is just incredible, and of course this view is wonderful too. It's a lot better than looking at downtown New York."

"Speaking of New York, I think we need to talk about our living situation."

"Yeah, I know. You don't necessarily want to live in New York."

"But you can't move to Philly either. You need to be in New York for your career."

"Helen, I told you. I don't care about that anymore. I just want to be with you."

"I know, but I can't let you give up on your dreams for me. That wouldn't be loving you as you are. There has to be some amiable compromise. Can't we live in the suburbs of New York? I mean isn't there a place far enough from the city that suits my needs but that is close enough to meet yours?"

"We could always move to Long Island. It's not that far from the city, and it would make my family happy for me to be closer to the family estate. I still don't want to move in there. My

parents have a place out there. I don't see why we couldn't get one too."

"You see? That sounds like a great idea. Why don't we start looking there? We have so much to discuss concerning the wedding, but if we can find a place to live, that would be a load off my mind."

"True."

"It's going to be a shame to have to resign from my position however. I truly love it there." Helen mentioned.

"Well, you can always find a school out on Long Island. There are many prestigious private schools there. I'm sure they would benefit from your talents as a teacher."

"I know, but I was actually thinking that I might resign before the school year is over, and I know I won't get hired for this year with only a few months left."

"Why would you do that?"

"Because we have a wedding to plan. That's going to take time, and I think it will be especially difficult to do when we're in two different cities. I thought it might be easier if we lived together at the loft until then. Besides when Kelly and Mark get married in two weeks, I'm going to have to move anyway. It doesn't make sense to get another apartment for a few months just to have to move again when the summer starts. Come summer time I'll be in New York for modeling, and I figure we'd probably want to get married sometime within the next six months or so."

Torrance nodded. "I can understand your thought process on that. I just hate the idea of having you quit your job for me."

"It's for us. Besides being in New York, I can pick up a few modeling jobs here and there to give me something to do. I won't just be sitting around our house."

The photographer smiled as she pulled the petite woman closer. "Our house. I like the sound of that."

"So do I. Torrance, there is one other thing I wanted to talk to you about."

"What's that?"

"When we talked about having a baby that night, I was completely serious. I want to have a baby with you."

"As I do with you. Why is this an issue for you? Are you saying you want to have one now?"

Helen nodded. "I'd like to get pregnant as soon as possible."



“How soon? Before we even get married?” the older woman asked turning her fiancée in her arms to look at her.

“If I could be pregnant now, I would, Torrance. The thought of our baby growing inside of me makes me ache for it all the more. I want to have your baby now.”

Torrance smiled down at her. “Well, I guess I’m going to have to get you pregnant then.” she teased lightly.

“You mean it?” hopefully the blonde asked.

“Yes. I want to give you everything, Helen, and I want to have children with you. If you’re ready, then so am I.”

“Oh, thank you, Torrance.” Helen exclaimed pulling the taller woman down into a kiss.

Several minutes passed with them sharing their intimate moment when Diane’s voice called out to them. “Brunch is ready.”

The both looked over at her seeing that she was nervous about what she had seen, but neither of them said anything, deciding that the older woman needed time to adjust. “Come on. Let’s go spend some quality time with your family.” the photographer stated taking Helen by the hand.

That afternoon after spending part of the day with Helen’s family, they left to drive up to the Poconos to see Torrance’s family. Upon their arrival the photographer’s parents rushed to them, and Maria grabbed the blonde’s hand to check for the ring. “Apparently your mother knew too.” Helen teased. “Was I the only one out of the loop?”

“Well, I didn’t know until today.” Thomas stated. “This is fabulous news. I’m so glad that the two of you are finally tying the knot.”

“Have you even started talking about the wedding yet?” Maria inquired as they moved to sit in the living room.

“Not yet. It’s just been a whirlwind between this and John’s birthday that we haven’t even talked about it yet. We’ve just discussed our future living situation, but nothing has been decided about a date.”

“Oh? And what about the living situation? Where have you two decided to reside?”

Torrance smiled at Helen as she brought her in closer into her embrace. “Well, we’ve decided that a compromise was in order. Helen isn’t thrilled on the idea of living in the city, but I need to be close by for work, so we thought we’d move to Long Island. That way we’d be closer to you all as well as Grandmother. Helen gets to keep the suburbs, and I get easy access to New York.”

“That’s a wonderful idea, but what about the wedding? Do you even have an idea of when you’d

like to have it?”

“We were thinking within the next six months or so, but we haven’t set a date yet, Maria. We have so much to talk about.”

“Well, you must allow me to get you a wedding planner. That is the only way to go, especially on such short notice and with your being in separate cities.”

“Actually, Mother, Helen and I have decided that she should move into the loft with me. She’s going to resign from her position at the school.” Torrance informed her.

“Oh? You’re okay with that, Helen?” Maria inquired curiously.

“It was my idea. I just think it will be easier. I’m supposed to be moving out of my apartment in a few weeks anyway, because my roommates are getting married. It just makes more sense to do it this way. Torrance and I have so much to do, and I can still work in New York doing modeling, so I’m not too worried about it.”

“Sounds like you two are well on your way to getting things resolved, but I’d like to give you some input if you two are up for it.”

“What’s that, Mama?” the brunette asked.

“I think you should have the reception at the Waldorf. It’s the perfect place, elegant and large enough to fit everyone.”

“We’ll consider it. We have to decide what kind of service we want to have first, and where to have it is also going to be an issue, because we have so many options.”

“Well, you know that anything you need you can just ask us for. We’d be happy to help.” Maria said for she and her husband.

“We know. Thank you for your generosity, Maria.”

Later that night as they began to change for bed, Torrance asked, “Helen, what would you like to do for our wedding? Do you have any ideas?”

The blonde pondered the question for a moment as she put on her pajamas. “I don’t know. I’ve always kind of wanted to be married outside maybe by the water somewhere. What do you want?”

“Honestly I’ve never thought about it, because I never considered the fact that I might someday do this. Outside sounds nice, especially if we decide on something in the summer. I can think of two places off the top of my head to do that, at my family’s estate or at your parents’ house. We’d have water and beaches in both places.”

“I’d have to see the grounds at the estate since I didn’t last time I was there. I remember you telling me how beautiful they were. As for my parents’ house, it’s great, but it doesn’t hold a special meaning for me or anything. I didn’t grow up there, so to me it’s just a house. I kind of think the place we marry should hold meaning to at least one of us, and I know you have fond memories of your grandparents’ house from your childhood. However I could possibly forego the water if we decided to do it right here though.”

“We’ll think about it. I need to take you back out to the estate, so you can see it. I think you’ll like the set up. I can already see it in my mind. Besides all of the family can just stay at the house. That would save everyone money on hotels and stuff. My grandmother would love to have everybody there.”

“Then I guess that will be the first thing we need to decide. We’ll figure out the place, and then work on the date. I think late August or early September will probably be best. That gives us time to plan.”

Giving her fiancée a sexy grin, the photographer growled playfully, “Also gives me almost seven months to knock you up. That’s what’s going to take the most time I think.”

“And that would be bad?” Helen joked coming to kiss the taller woman.

On Sunday evening Helen and Torrance got back to the blonde’s apartment around eight. Kelly and Mark were sitting on the couch engrossed in the tv when they walked in. “Helen, am I glad you’re back. This last minute wedding stuff has been a bear without you.” Kelly stated. “I’ll be glad when this is over.”

Helen smiled at her roommates. “Well, don’t get too used to it, because you’re going to have to help with another wedding this year.”

“Another wedding? Who’s getting married?” Mark asked.

However Kelly screamed excitedly understanding what Helen was saying. “I can’t believe it! Are you really?” she asked rushing to them.

“Yes, Helen’s agreed to put up with me for the rest of our lives. How I managed that I don’t know.” Torrance quipped.

“Let me see your ring.” Kelly took the teacher’s hand. Studying the diamond and emerald stones, she stated, “Torrance, this is absolutely beautiful.”

“Anything for my Helen.”

“Congratulations, you two.” Mark said as he got off the couch to hug them. “This is great. Kelly and I always hoped you would do this.”

“So, when’s the date?”

“We haven’t set one yet, but we’re thinking at the end of the summer. We have so much to do before then.”

“Well, have you decided where it’s going to be?”

“Not yet, Kelly. Helen is being gracious enough to entertain the idea of having it at my grandparents’ house out on Long Island, because I love it there. We wanted something outside, and that would be a nice place, but we haven’t made a final decision.”

“Well, have you even talked about where you’re going to live?” Kelly inquired.

Helen nodded. “Sadly I’m going to be leaving Philly, but Torrance has agreed to leave New York City as well. We’re going to live on Long Island, but that means we have to go house hunting. There is so much we have to do.”

“Well, when do you think you’ll be moving up to New York? Are you at least waiting until the end of the school year?” Mark asked as they all sat.

The model shook her head. “I don’t foresee a need to wait. After you two get married, I’d be moving out anyway, so we thought it might be best if I just moved up to New York right away. It will be easier if I was there.”

Kelly clutched the blonde’s hand as she clarified, “You mean you’re going to move to New York in less than three weeks? What about your job?”

“Yeah. I hope to be there by the time you get back from your honeymoon. I’m going to hand in my resignation tomorrow.”

“Helen, this is so sudden. I don’t know what I’m going to do without you.” Kelly said putting her arms around her friend.

“I’ll only be a short drive away. You and Mark can come up anytime.”

“Promise not to forget about us once you become a high society wife?” her roommate asked partly in jest.

“I could never forget you, Kelly. In fact I want you to be my maid of honor.”

Squealing with delight, the two women hugged. “I’d love to.”

Continued Part 11

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# ~ Love in Photographs ~

by Alex Tryst  
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## Part 11

Three months later found Helen and Torrance in an easy routine around the loft. Having taken Maria's advice, they hired a wedding planner to assist them with the details of their ceremony, leaving them much more time to focus on other issues such as their living situation. Since they were in agreement about the area in which they should live, they thought it would be rather easy to find a place to accommodate their needs, but as they began their house hunt, it became obvious that they had a difference of opinion of what constituted an acceptable house, leaving them no closer to reaching their goal.

One morning Torrance was up intently studying some photographs that she had taken at a shoot a few days before while Helen was up in the bedroom dressing for the day when there was a knock on their door. Before Torrance could even rise from the table, the blonde came rushing down the stairs to answer it, peaking the brunette's interest. She heard faint talking in the foyer before her fiancée came back to the kitchen.

"Torrance, honey, are you busy right now?" she asked.

Hearing the hope in the model's voice, the older woman looked up at her and smiled. "Well, it depends on what you want is to how busy I am."

"Well, I was just wondering if you had time to come upstairs and try to get me pregnant." she stated holding up the delivery for Torrance to see.

The photographer recognized the package from the fertility clinic. "Right now? We have to leave to meet the realtor soon."

"No, we don't. I pushed our appointment back a few hours, because I'm ovulating right now. Are you going to help me with this, or am I going to have to go it alone?" she teased.

"Um, let's see. Either I can stay here and work, or I can take you upstairs and make love to you. Tough decision there." Torrance joked as she rose from her chair. Taking the package from her fiancée's hands, she said, "You go on up and try to create some romantic ambiance. I'll bring this up with the rest of the equipment in a minute."

Helen smiled and stood on her tiptoes to kiss her lover. "Okay. See you in a minute."

By the time the older woman made her way upstairs with all the equipment in tow, she found her

blonde fiancée lounging provocatively on the bed wearing only her beaming smile. “Now that’s what I call a welcome.” Torrance growled sexily as she made her way over to the bed to kiss Helen’s mouth slowly.

“Come on, Torrance. Let’s make the conception of our child memorable. This time is going to work. I can feel it.” the blonde whispered already beginning to help the photographer out of her clothes.

Later that afternoon they arrived for their appointment with the realtor. As the three of them drove to the house they were viewing that day, the older woman couldn’t help but notice how radiant her fiancée appeared. The blonde was permanently wearing a content smile whenever their gaze met, assuring the brunette that if nothing else, she had satisfied her lover earlier that day.

“Now the house we’re seeing today I think will be a compromise for the two of you. It’s not too large as you like, Helen, but I think it’s large enough to suit your taste, Torrance. Not only that it’s on the water as you both liked with lovely grounds.” their realtor mentioned from the backseat giving Torrance directions to the house. The first thing that the photographer noticed as they pulled into the drive was that it was only a few miles from her parents’ house as well as the family estate. Slowly driving up the long winding drive, Torrance enjoyed the scenery of the grounds. As the house came into view, she noted that even though it was still smaller than those they had seen previously, she could see them living there. “Well, why don’t we start with a tour inside?” the realtor suggested as the car came to a stop.

Helen and Torrance followed her through the entire house taking in every detail. The blonde asked most of the questions as the brunette meticulously inspected every inch of every room. Once the inside was complete, they strolled on the lawn and through the garden down to the water. “Could we have a moment alone?” the model finally inquired after the extended tour. Once it was just the two of them, Helen looked up at Torrance. “Well, what do you think?”

“It’s nice. What do you think?”

“I love it.”

“Really? It’s not too big for you?”

“Well, big is a relative term. It’s rather large, larger than any other house I’ve ever lived in, but I know size is important to you. Don’t you think this is a good compromise? I mean I think ten bedrooms is more than enough. We could have all of both our families here at the same time and still have space. The master bedroom overlooks the water, and there is a fireplace in there.”

Embracing Helen around the waist, Torrance smiled down at her. “Who is trying to sell me here? Do you really like it that much?”

“Yeah, but if you don’t we’ll keep looking.”

“Can you see us raising our family here?” Torrance inquired. Helen nodded. “Well, I guess we’ll have to buy it then.”

“Really? You’re not just saying that because I like it, are you? I want you to love it too.”

“I do, Helen. It’s going to need some work, and we’ll have to get the place repainted and decorated top to bottom, but I do like the way it’s set up, and I especially like the master bedroom and bath. It has some of the same elements as my grandparents’ villa. I like that.”

“I figured you might. So, are we really going to buy it then?”

“I think so. We should go tell her of our decision. However buying it is the easy part. I don’t know when we’ll have time to get this place decorated. I guess we’ll have to hire someone for that too.”

“Well, we can always stay at the loft if it isn’t finished by the time we get married. I’m not adverse to a little more city living. I just don’t want it to be a permanent situation.”

That evening after their meeting they met Torrance’s parents for dinner out at their house on the island. Sitting down to their meal, Torrance announced, “Well, you should be happy to know that we found a house today.”

“Really? Where?” Thomas asked as he poured wine for he and his wife.

“Actually it’s not far from here, just a few miles.” the photographer replied taking the wine bottle from her father and pouring herself a glass before offering some to Helen, but the blonde declined.

“Helen, dear, wouldn’t you like some wine with dinner?” Maria inquired.

“No thank you. I’ve stopped drinking for the time being.”

“Why’s that? Are you pregnant?” Thomas teased lightly.

Helen cast a glance at Torrance before deciding just to tell her future in laws what she and her beloved had been planning. “No, not yet but we’re trying to get pregnant, so I just decided it was best not to drink for awhile.”

“So soon? You’re not even married yet. What’s the rush?” Maria asked.

“Mother, we want to have a baby as soon as possible. We talked about this a lot, and the sooner we can make it happen, the happier we’ll be. We’re both at an age where we’d like kids. The fact that we aren’t married yet is just a technicality.”

“Well, this is a surprise, but you know that we support you in whatever you want. I’ve always hoped I’d be a grandfather.”

“You will be, Dad.”

“Well, how are the wedding plans coming along?”

“Great. Grandmother is thrilled that it’s going to be at the estate, but we decided to have it in the garden instead of on the beach. Things will be neater that way, but the water will be in the background. The guest list is getting out of hand though. We never planned on having so many people. We wanted something a little more intimate.” Torrance mentioned.

“Well, maybe we can cut back on the number of people. The people we wanted to invite are just suggestions.” Thomas stated.

“Well, the list is already over three hundred people, two hundred of which are on your list. We have to do something about it before invitations go out. I don’t want three hundred people at the wedding. I wanted one hundred to one fifty tops. Helen and I have decided that if we don’t know them personally they are automatically coming off the list. Even then we’ll have to do some rearranging.” complained the photographer.

“We’ll help you, dear. We didn’t mean to be overbearing about the guest list. We just have a lot of friends, but I’ll help you weed people out if you’d like.”

“That would be wonderful, Maria. We don’t want to alienate your friends if they are close to you. I’m going to have to do the same thing with my parents. It’s not just you.”

“How are your parents by the way? Is your mother coming around?”

Helen shrugged. “She’s agreed to come to the ceremony, so I guess there have been improvements. I think she might have a breakdown though when we tell her we’re having a baby. That subject has never been broached, and I don’t think it will go over well.”

“It’s your life, dear. We, parents, can only do so much, and then the rest is up to you. I’m sure the fact that she’ll have a grandchild will give her happiness.”

After dinner that night, Maria and Torrance left Helen and Thomas alone for a moment, making the excuse that Maria wanted to ask Torrance about something. Going out onto the patio, Torrance looked at her mother. Seeing the seriousness on her face, she asked, “What is it, Mother? Is something wrong?”

Maria glanced back toward the house before taking a step toward her daughter. “Torrance, I wanted to talk to you about something serious, but I don’t want this to sound how it’s going to come out.”

“All right. What’s on your mind?”

“Torrance, I know you’re in love and blissfully happy, and your father and I are extremely happy



for you as well. However he and I think that you need to think about your future. I know you think that you and Helen will last forever, and we hope that you do, but the rate of divorce is so high. In the event that you two don't work out, we don't want you to suffer financially as well as emotionally. We think you should consider a prenuptial agreement." tentatively she proposed.

Torrance frowned at her. "Are you two crazy? There is no way I'm going to ask Helen to sign a prenup. That's like asking for our marriage to go bad. It's like saying to her that I only half believe we have what it takes to make it. No way." she growled irritably moving away.

Her mother held her back by the arm. "Torrance, I knew you would feel this way, but try to think about it logically. You have a lot of money, a lot of which you worked hard for. I would hate to see that go to waste if for some reason Helen decided the marriage wasn't what she wanted."

"Are you saying you think she doesn't love me?" challenged the brunette.

"Not at all, sweetie. I believe that she does. We're just concerned. I mean you two aren't even married yet, and you're already trying to have children. As your parents we don't want to see you get hurt if something were to happen. Does she even know how much you're worth?"

"No. I didn't tell her, because she doesn't like my money. She says it makes her uncomfortable, so I don't think a prenup will make her feel any better. That's just making money an issue between us."

"Torrance, a lot of people say that, but when a marriage goes bad, you'd be surprised how much that money begins to mean when someone's lifestyle becomes threatened. What if she leaves you? What if you leave her? Don't you think you should have a plan of some sort?"

"I don't like it. I asked her to marry me, Mama. That's forever, and I fully intend on staying with her that long."

"Please just consider it."

"No. Why should I? You and Dad don't have one. Why should this be any different?"

"Actually your father and I do have one, Torrance."

"But you both came from money. It's different. Helen doesn't have money, not like we do."

"Even more of a reason to protect yourself. Please, I'm just asking that you seek some legal advice on this matter."

"This discussion isn't going to end until I agree, is it?" the younger brunette inquired. Her mother shook her head. "Fine. I'll talk to my attorney. Are you happy now?"

"Thank you."

That night as the couple drove back to the city, Helen could tell something was bothering her fiancée. Torrance hadn't been her congenial self since she had returned from the talk with her mother, making the blonde wonder what was said between them. "Are you all right?" she asked.

"No. I'm irritated with my parents right now. My mother cornered me about my intentions regarding a prenuptial agreement, and she was surprised when I said I had no intention of getting one."

"Oh. Why not? Don't most people of your economic status have one?" curiously the blonde inquired, hoping not to agitate the older woman further.

"Apparently but I didn't know that. I think it's ridiculous though. Why would we have one? That's like asking for trouble."

"Your parents are just concerned about you, Torrance. If it would make them feel better, maybe we should consider one."

"Not you too. Can't people think of anything besides money? Why would you want one?"

"To prove to them and you one final time that I have no interest in your money. If you want one, I'll sign it. You don't have to give me anything either. The only thing I would ever ask for would be support for the children, but I wouldn't want your money for my personal use."

Looking over at her fiancée, Torrance smiled as she took the younger woman's hand. "Helen, you're so good to me. You're dealing with this better than I did when she proposed it. God forbid something ever happen, I wouldn't want you to walk away with nothing. I intend to love you for the rest of my life, whether you're with me or not."

"I feel the same way, Torrance. It's just a piece of paper, and if it makes them feel better, I'll do it."

"It would make them feel better, but I just don't like the idea of it."

"Then we won't deal with it. Just let our attorney do her thing. She can deal with this just like she's dealing with my legal name change. It'll be simple. All we have to do is sign something that says I get nothing, and it's done. It's no big deal."

"All right but you're not getting nothing. I won't stand for that."

"Fine. You decide, and I'll sign it."

"Je t'aime, Helen." the photographer whispered kissing the back of the blonde's hand affectionately.

Six weeks later the prenuptial papers were finished for them, and Torrance picked them up before meeting Helen at the loft after a long day. Reviewing them to make sure they were just as

she instructed, she was pleased to find them just as she wanted. When she walked into the apartment, she could smell dinner from the foyer. Setting her briefcase down, she took the papers into the kitchen to find her bride putting the last touches of their meal on the table.

“Hey there. Welcome home.” Helen stated with a large smile as she came to kiss the photographer. “What do you have there?”

“The prenup. I picked it up from the attorney’s office today.”

“Great. Let’s sign it, so we never have to bring it up again.” the blonde suggested going to get a pen out of one of the kitchen drawers. Deciding to just get it over with, Torrance placed two copies on the kitchen bar. Helen reached for the first document and began to read it when she noticed things were drastically different than she expected them to be. “Uh, Torrance, I thought we agreed that I wasn’t supposed to get anything.”

“No. We agreed that you would allow me to think of an appropriate figure, and after thinking about it for a long time, that’s what I decided upon.”

“And exactly how did you come up with ten million dollars as the appropriate figure?” Helen asked in shock.

“Well, I was trying to figure out what I might be worth later in life, but that was getting too complicated, because I’m the sole inheritant of both my parents’ separate estates as well as their joint one. Then I have a trust from my father’s side and some property in Italy, so it was just getting too messy. I finally decided just to go with half of my present worth, real estate not included, because that gets too hard to value. You’re one half of this relationship, so you should have half of the worth. Thinking about it that way made things much easier. I hope that’s okay. If you want more, you can have it. I made the provision for financial support of any children as you requested. If you want to make changes, please let me know, and I’ll see to them.”

“Are you kidding? I should be asking you if you’re sure about this.”

“Helen, I believe in us so deeply that I would give you everything if you wanted it.”

“Torrance, I don’t want any of this, but if this is what you want, I’ll sign it.”

Torrance nodded. “We better sign these before I call the whole thing off. It makes me feel weird to do this.”

“All right. We’ll both sign, and then we’ll never have to look at them again. They will get old and dusty in some lawyer’s filing cabinet, never to see the light of day again.”

“Agreed.” the photographer stated, quickly signing the documents after her fiancée. Putting them back in their folder, she said, “There. Now onto better things. This dinner looks great.”

“Come sit down. We have a lot to discuss tonight.”

“Such as?” the brunette inquired as she took her seat.

“In time. Let me serve the plates first at least.”

Torrance saw that Helen truly had something on her mind, so she respected her lover’s wishes. However once the plates were served, she asked again, “Well, what’s up?”

“Well, you know how we’re supposed to go on safari in Africa for our honeymoon?”

“Yes.” hesitantly the older woman stated.

The younger woman chewed on her lip a moment before suggesting, “What if we didn’t go and went somewhere else?”

“Helen, we’re getting married in six weeks. The trip is already planned. I thought you wanted to go. Have you changed your mind?”

“No, not at all. I really would love to go, but I don’t think this is the best time for a trip like that.”

“Why not?”

The model reached across the table to take the photographer’s hand. “Well, I just think going to a third world nation right now wouldn’t be wise. I mean it’s not necessarily the safest place for...”

“For?” Torrance prompted. The older woman saw the smile that transformed her lover’s face. It was the most beautiful thing she had ever seen, and for a moment her heart stopped at the loveliness of the creature sitting across the table from her.

“Well, for an expectant mother.” Helen stated with nervous excitement.

“What? You’re pregnant?” Torrance inquired in surprise.

“Six weeks. I wasn’t sure, so I went to the doctor. She confirmed it.”

“Oh my God! This is great! I can’t believe it!” Torrance exclaimed coming to Helen’s side of the table and kneeling to kiss her thoroughly.

After a few minutes, Helen backed away a little to continue the conversation. “Anyway, I thought since it’s so early in the pregnancy that it might not be the best idea for us to go to Africa. It’s a little too rough I think. I wouldn’t want anything to jeopardize this baby.”

“I understand, and I agree. We shouldn’t go. We’ll go somewhere nice and safe. Did you have a place in mind?”

“Would you take me to Paris? I’ve never been there.”

Torrance gave a grin. “Qui, Madame Whitfield.”

“Thank you. I promise that we’ll take that trip to Africa, just not within the next nine months.”

“All right. We’ll do it next year. I’ll take you to Paris instead. You’ll have a great time there. I’ll call the travel agent to book it for us.”

“Thank you, Torrance. You’re so good to me.”

“It’s the least I could do for the mother of my children.” Torrance said with a smile. Leaning in she placed a soft kiss against the blonde’s flat stomach in affection.

“Now that you know I was thinking that we could keep this to ourselves for awhile just to make sure everything is fine before saying anything. I thought maybe if things were still good come the wedding that we might be able to announce it there.” the younger woman suggested.

“That’s a wonderful idea. That way everyone can be a part of it. We’ll do that.”

“I love you, Torrance. You make me so happy.”

“I love you too, Helen, and I am going to spend the rest of my life making sure you and our child have everything you ever want.” Torrance whispered standing to take her seat again.

The meal continued with the talking about wedding plans, but then the model mentioned, “I heard from Kelly today. She wants to throw me a bachelorette party in Philly with all our friends from there.”

“That sounds like fun. When is that supposed to be?”

“Well, I wanted to check with you first before committing to do it. I mean I wasn’t sure how you would feel about me going all the way down there before the wedding.”

“It’s not like it’s that far. If Kelly wants to throw you a party, and you want to go, I think you should. It will be your last bash before becoming a married woman. You know it’ll be your last chance to sneak kisses from available women.” she teased.

Helen chuckled. “Like I would ever do that. I just thought it might not be a good idea, because I’ll have to spend the night down there with Kelly and Mark.”

“Hey, as long as you’re not sharing their bed, I don’t care. You and Kelly do what you want. Just leave Mark out of it. He’s got a thing about you, even though he doesn’t admit it, so no fulfilling his lesbian fantasies, but if the two of you want to get wild and crazy, go for it. Just remember to take video, so I can watch.” the photographer playfully quipped.

“I think it’s you that has a thing about Kelly that you won’t admit to, you pervert, but I can

assure you that I won't be sleeping with my best friend. You can just keep that fantasy in your sick little mind." she bantered with a grin.

"Seriously I think you should go if you want. It's only for two days. I can handle things."

"Maybe Morgan will throw you a party that weekend as well, so you won't be alone." Helen suggested.

"She's mentioned it, but somehow I foresee Morgan's idea of a bachelorette party being a little more wild than Kelly's. I can already see strippers in the arrangement, and I'm not sure I'm up for that."

"Why not? It'll be your last chance to see some hot naked women, because after I start showing who knows what is going to happen to my body."

Torrance shrugged. "I'll always love you, Helen, regardless of what you look like. You're carrying my child. That's the most beautiful thing there is. A few pounds are not going to sway my opinion of how attractive I think you are."

"We'll see." the blonde joked.

The weekend before the wedding Helen left for Philadelphia to attend party Kelly was giving for her, leaving Torrance in Morgan's hands for a party of her own. By the time the blonde arrived at her old apartment, most of her female friends were already there waiting on her.

"Well, if it isn't the future Mrs. Torrance Whitfield." Kelly greeted with a tight hug. "Only a week left. Change your mind yet?" playfully she asked.

"Not a chance. I'm really excited actually." Helen replied as she came inside.

After greeting all her friends with hugs, Kelly stated, "Well, it's just us girls tonight. We were trying to figure out if we should have strippers or not, but then there was the big question of whether or not it should be a woman or man, so we decided to forgo that. I figured you wouldn't mind."

"Not at all. I'm relieved actually. I didn't want to be put through that torture anyway." the model answered.

"So, that left us with the idea of dinner and then getting you smashed, which is never a bad back up plan. I've even agreed to be the designated driver."

"That's awfully big of you, Kelly." Helen said, wondering how she was going to get out of drinking for the night without telling them of her situation. As a glass of champagne was pressed into her hand, she weighed her options.

"A toast to Helen and Torrance." Kelly stated raising her glass. All their friends did the same

before taking a sip, but Helen just held hers. “Why aren’t you drinking?” Kelly asked curiously.

“Because I can’t.” the blonde said, deciding it would be easier just to tell them the truth.

“Why not? Torrance knock you up already?” her maid of honor teased, making the whole group laugh.

“Actually, yeah.” plainly Helen replied.

“What? You’re joking, right? I mean I know Torrance has a lot going for her, but she’s not a superwoman. You’re kidding, aren’t you?”

“I’m not, Kelly. I’m almost three months pregnant.”

“You’re serious?” she asked in disbelief. Helen nodded. “Wow. Why didn’t you say anything?”

“Because we haven’t even told our families yet. We were waiting until the wedding, so nobody can say anything. You all have to promise not to say a word, not even to your boyfriends or husbands and especially not to Torrance.”

“Fine. We won’t. I can’t believe this. This is great news.” Kelly said putting her arm around the blonde.

The evening progressed with a long dinner at one of their favorite restaurant before going to their favorite old bar where they all used to hang out before Helen left Philadelphia. As the women made their way up to the bar, Kelly put her arm around the blonde’s shoulders. “I can’t believe this is the last time we’re probably going to do this. Not only did you move to New York and decide to get married, you’re going to be a mother in half a year. It all just seems so fast.”

“I know, but it was time. We all have to grow up at some point. I’m not really into the bar scene any longer. Torrance and I spend most of our nights at home, and I’m fine with that. It’s the life I want.”

When the bartender approached and asked for their order, Kelly said teasingly, “I’ll have a Sam Adams, and get the not so virgin bride to be a virgin daiquiri.”

“You’re not going to let that go, are you? You really can’t believe that Torrance got me pregnant.”

Her matron of honor shrugged and smiled. “Hey, I knew she was one of a kind, but I never knew she could do it all. I assume she’s thrilled about this.”

“Yeah. That’s why we started early. We both want children so badly, and I’m not getting any younger. I’ll be thirty this year, and she’s thirty five. The time is right for us.”

“Well if it’s really what you want, I’m excited for you.” her ex-roommate said as the drinks were

set in front of them. After a few minutes of chatting with the rest of their company, Kelly leaned over and whispered, “Don’t look now, but we’ve got some uninvited company coming our way. I should’ve known better than to bring you here, but I was trying to be nostalgic.”

The model looked up to see her ex-boyfriend Richard and ex-friend, Tom making their way across the room obviously coming right toward them.

“Don’t worry about it. I refuse to let anyone ruin our party.”

“Ladies, how is everyone this evening?” Tom greeted. “Helen, it’s especially good to see you.”

“Hi, Helen.” Richard said.

“Hi, Richard, Tom. How are you?”

“Good now that I’ve seen you.” Tom answered.

“I’m fine. I haven’t seen you since Kelly and Tom’s wedding. How are you?” Richard inquired.

“I’m fabulous.”

Taking a nervous sip from his beer, her ex asked, “What brings you here? I heard through the grapevine that you had moved to New York.”

“Actually I did. I’m just back for this wonderful bachelorette party Kelly is throwing me.”

“You’re getting married?” Tom questioned in obvious surprise and irritation.

However Richard gave a pleasant smile. “Well, congratulations. Who’s the lucky fellow? I didn’t see him at the wedding.”

“Actually, she was at the wedding. I introduced you.”

“No way! You’re not actually marrying that dyke, Torrance Whitfield, are you?” Tom shouted.

“Yes, I am marrying Torrance, and I’d appreciate it if you wouldn’t call her a dyke. She’s a wonderful person, and I love her.”

“Really?” Richard inquired. “You sure did switch teams awfully quickly.”

Helen shrugged. “What can I say? I fell in love. I never expected it either, but it happened, and I’ve never been happier.”

“I can’t believe you’ve become one of them!” Tom carried on.

Shooting him a scowl, Richard admonished, “Cut it out, Tom. You’re way out of line.”



Tom glowered at him. "I can't believe you either. Your ex, the woman you thought you were going to marry and spend the rest of your life with, is telling you she's a lesbian. How can you be okay with that?"

Richard grimaced slightly, but he recovered quickly. Turning to Helen he gave a soft, supportive smile. "As long as your happy, Helen, that's all that matters. I wish you and Torrance all the happiness in the world. Now please excuse me. I didn't mean to intrude on your party. I just wanted to say hello. Come on, Tom." he stated yanking the other man away from the blonde.

As Helen watched her ex's retreating form, she heard Kelly mention, "Can you believe the nerve of him? Man, I'm glad we don't hang out with him any more."

"Yeah. Tom's a real asshole, but Richard... he looked sad."

"Because he realizes what he lost too late."

"I'm not so sure that's it. I'm going to go talk to him a minute. Be right back."

"Helen, be careful." Kelly warned in concern. "Don't be getting any ideas now. Leave the past alone."

"I just want to talk to him." the blonde stated moving off her stool. Going over to him, she asked if he wanted to go somewhere a little more private to talk. Finding an empty booth in the back of the bar, she said, "You didn't have to rush off."

"No. I was interrupting, and Tom was being a jerk. You shouldn't have to put up with that." After an awkward pause, he asked, "Are you really marrying that woman you introduced me to, the really tall, sort of androgynous looking one?"

"Well, I wouldn't call her androgynous. You can tell by her face that she's a woman."

"But the rest of her body isn't that defined as female. You have to admit that."

Helen conceded with a nod. "Yes, I am, Richard. We've known each other over three years, and I've loved her every moment of it. I never imagined I'd feel this way about a woman, but it happened. I'm so happy."

He nodded. "Then I'm happy for you, truly I am, because you deserve everything you want. It's just difficult to think about, because when we broke up, in the back of my mind, I thought we might have a shot later on down the road. I mean we didn't want the same things then, but we do now. I always imagined being with you in my older age, so it's hard to accept that the fantasy will never be. If Torrance can give you everything you want, the more power to her. She better make you happy too, or else she'll have to answer to me personally." he tried to joke, but Helen could see in his eyes the sadness.

“Well, thank you for at least understanding. I appreciate that you aren’t judging me.”

“Never. Torrance seemed really nice when we met. I guess I was just too dense to put it together. Maybe sometime when I’m in New York, the three of us could go out or something if Torrance would be comfortable with that. Maybe the two of you could find me a nice girl who’s into guys that is.” he joked.

Helen smiled. “Sure. I think she’d be fine with that. Thanks for what you said, Richard.”

“You’re welcome.” After a brief pause, he inquired hesitantly, “I don’t know if you even consider dancing with men any more, but would you like to, you know for old times?”

“Sure. That would be nice.” Helen answered.

With her consent he held out his hand for her to take. He led them to the floor before shyly encircling her waist with his arm. They danced in silence for a song before he asked, “Do you remember the first time you came to Philly to see me when you were still in school? We came to this very bar.”

“I remember. It was the first time you told me you loved me.” the blonde teased. “Here on this dance floor.”

He nodded. “Yes and that night was the first time we ever...” he stated, letting his sentence trail off before he mentioned their first intimate encounter. “It seems so long ago and yet like it was just yesterday. I remember thinking about how beautiful I thought you looked that night with your long blonde hair and that black dress.” he said unconsciously fingering her short tresses. Helen shifted uncomfortably at the touch as things suddenly began to feel more intimate. Looking up into his eyes, he saw the way he was gazing at her. It was the way he had so many times in their relationship when his eyes told of his adoration. “You’ve only grown more beautiful through the years, Helen.”

“Richard, please...” she admonished lightly.

“Helen, please let me say this. I may very well never see you again after tonight. We both know that. I’ll regret it the rest of my life if I don’t say this.” He waited until she nodded before continuing. “You really have only gotten more beautiful with age, Helen. I didn’t stop loving you simply, because we were no longer together. In fact I loved you from afar, hoping that one day you’d want to try again. I still feel that way, Helen. I still love you.” he confessed as his hand came off her shoulder and cupped her face in his hand.

“Richard, I belong to someone else.” she whispered even though her heart hammered wildly at his touch much to her confusion.

“I know, and she’s the luckiest woman in the world. I just wish things had worked out differently. I wish that I had gotten that second chance. In fact if I thought I could get away with it, I’d try to take it now. Just one chance, Helen.” he whispered as his arms pulled her closer. Her

breathing became erratic as she realized he was about to try to kiss her.

That evening Torrance went out with a bunch of her single lesbian friends her a party of her own. After hitting the usual bars, they all went back to Morgan's place for more drinking. Of course being mischievous, Morgan did invite strippers to the festivity. As Torrance sat in a chair in the middle of the room with two scantily clad women thrusting and grinding against her, she tried to keep her thoughts on Helen instead of all the toned flesh surrounding her. However even as much as she tried, she could feel herself becoming aroused at the sight of the attractive women shaking everything they had to offer in her face.

Suddenly the music stopped. "We've got a surprise for you, Torrance." Morgan announced with a drunken smile.

"What's that?" the photographer inquired trying desperately to ignore the fact that the strippers were both leaning their mostly bare bodies into her.

"Well, these fine women aren't just dancers, Torrance." she mentioned with a smile. "One of you girls better tell her what I mean."

Before the brunette could even respond the blonde stripper straddled her and took a seat in her lap, so they were face to face. Leaning in to the photographer's ear, she nibbled it playfully as her arms came around her. Torrance's heart leapt into her throat at the feeling of the hot little woman's body pressing into her own, but her hands remained at her sides at first. After a moment however the stripper took the brunette's hands and place them on her bare hips.

"Don't be shy." the dancer whispered. "Your friends told me you were a real tiger."

Torrance said nothing initially but moaned when the blonde started to kiss the right side of her neck. Then just as suddenly there were two mouths on her as the other one took in her opposite ear. Instinctively the brunette's eyes closed, but as soon as they did, Helen flashed through her mind. "Oh God, wait." she protested taking her hands off the woman in her lap.

"Maybe you'd like some privacy." Morgan suggested jokingly. "You can use my room. Just leave one of them for us."

Before Torrance could even try to explain herself, the blonde dancer grabbed her by the hand to led her in the direction that Morgan had pointed. As they went into the bedroom, the little woman closed the door before turning to the photographer. "This is better. I don't actually like doing that stuff with an audience."

"Doing what exactly?" Torrance inquired as the petite blonde came to encircle her waist.

"Satisfying my customers."

Nervously Torrance backed away saying, "I'm already satisfied. There's no need to continue."

“But I know when someone wants me. It’s okay. My services have already been paid for. Why not enjoy your present?” she asked moving in to the photographer’s space again. Unceremoniously the blonde slipped her g-string off her hips and let it drop to the floor, leaving her naked.

“I’m okay. Really. I’ve enjoyed my present enough. I don’t need the full treatment.” she insisted trying desperately not to look at the naked woman standing before her.

“You want me, Torrance. I can tell. You don’t have to play this game. I’m a sure thing. Just touch me.” she instructed taking the brunette’s hands and bringing the up to her large breasts.

The skin under her hands felt soft, but Torrance refused to give in to the temptation. Backing away more forcefully, she stated, “No. I can’t. I’m engaged.”

“So? Who has to know?”

The blonde moved in a third time, but this time Torrance took her by the shoulders to stop her. “I’m completely serious. I’m getting married in a week, and my bride is pregnant with my baby. There is no way I can do this. I can’t betray her. I’m sure you’re a nice woman, and under different circumstances this would be something I would’ve done, but I truly can’t.”

The little blonde gave a smile. “All right. I won’t try to force the issue. Morgan just thought for sure you’d find me attractive.”

“She’s right about that, because I do. You actually look a lot like my fiancée, but my heart is hers alone, and I could never be with anyone else.”

Giving a laugh the dancer asked, “You want to know something, Torrance? I do these kind of parties all the time for men and women, and the host or hostess always pays for whatever the guest of honor might want, but more people turn me down than take me up on my offer.”

“Really? How many people turn you down?”

“Most, I’d say thirty or so for every one that wants to screw me. It’s kind of nice to know most people still have morals.” she stated leaning down to pick up her thong. “Would you at least like a souvenir?” she joked twirling it around lightly. “You can at least show it to your friends after we leave to save your reputation.”

“Okay.”

“We should hang out for awhile at least before going back out there. Want to watch tv or something?”

“How about we just talk?” Torrance suggested gesturing over to the bed, being that it was the only place other than the floor to sit. Taking her button down shirt off so she was only in her t-shirt, Torrance said, “Here. Put this on.”

“Thanks.” the blonde whispered slipping it over her shoulders.

“So, what’s your real name? How old are you?”

“Kristina. I’m twenty.”

“And how did you get into this profession?”

The young woman shrugged. “I just sort of fell into it. I moved to New York in hopes of becoming an actress or model. I couldn’t get a lot of work, and I had to pay my bills somehow. I started making porn, and after that, this seemed a step up. Stripping isn’t that bad. The money is good, and it’s not often that I have to have sex with someone unless I want to.”

“But if you could, you’d rather model or act?” the brunette inquired.

“Yeah but enough about me. What about you? What do you do?”

“Actually I’m a photographer. Why couldn’t you get work? Did you have an agent?”

“Well, sort of but he didn’t do much for me, and then charged me more than what was fair. I didn’t know it at the time though.”

“That’s a hard way to learn the business. What about now? Do you do any modeling?”

“Not really. I fired him, but I haven’t found any one else.”

Torrance nodded. “You know I might be able to help you. I know several modeling agents. I’d have to be honest with you. You don’t have a long term career in modeling. As attractive as you might be, you’re too short to make it permanently. I hope that doesn’t come as a surprise or sound harsh.”

“No. I’ve been told.” she mumbled.

“But that’s not to say you can’t get decent work that would be better than this. Did you graduate high school?”

“Barely.”

“Did you go to college?”

“No. I left right after graduation to come here.”

“Would you be offended if I gave you some advice?”

“I know what you’re already going to say. I need to go back to school. I need to be able to

support myself while I'm school though. That's the problem."

"I understand. You feel like you're stuck, but if you had enough money to support yourself while you were in school, would you go back? The reason I ask is because someday you're going to need something to fall back on other than modeling. The industry is fickle."

"I know, and if I had to do over again, I don't think I would've done things this way. I know I would've been better off going to college, but I can't go back. My family wouldn't help me. I'd have to do it myself, and I can't."

"You can with help, and I think I can help you. As I said I know several agents. Why don't you give me your information? Do you have any photos with you that I can have? I'll pass them around."

"Why would you do that?"

"Why not?" Torrance responded.

Looking at her skeptically, Kristina asked, "And what do you want in return?"

Torrance grinned. "Spoken like a true New Yorker. Actually there is something I want from you."

"What's that?"

"An invitation to your college graduation."

"That's it?" she inquired in disbelief.

"I don't need anything from you, Kristina. If I can help you, I will. No strings as long as you give me your word to go back to school." the older woman stated leaning back against the headboard to make herself more comfortable.

A moment passed before Kristina crawled over to her and straddled her stomach. Their eyes met for a moment before the young blonde whispered in the brunette's ear, "Can I tell you something?"

"What?" Torrance inquired softly, not trusting her voice as the feeling of the young woman on top of her sparked her sexual appetite again. She felt the stripper's hands edging up the hem of her t-shirt to expose her abdomen. The photographer groaned at the feeling of the dancer's arousal against her stomach.

"You know I almost never get turned on by a customer when I dance for them, but there was something that drew me to you. You are the sexiest woman I have ever danced for. The truth is Morgan didn't ask me to try to seduce you, and she didn't pay me to sleep with you. I just want to, because you were making me so hot with the way you were watching me." she murmured as

her lips kissed along the photographer's jaw until their mouths brushed.

Torrance moaned but pulled back against her body's wishes. "I said no strings, Kristina. I meant it."

"I know. This is just because I want to." the blonde stated slipping the button down shirt off her shoulders, so she was naked again.

Late the following morning Helen arrived back in New York. Even though she had fun in Philadelphia, she had missed Torrance terribly, so after breakfast with Kelly and Mark, she headed for home. Coming into the loft, she noticed that all was quite, which was unusual since Torrance almost always was up early. Wondering if her fiancée was still in bed from her own party, she headed up the stairs to the master bedroom. She could smell the alcohol before she even opened the door, but nevertheless she cracked it just to see if her lover was still sleeping.

The room was dark, and the model could hear the signature snore of the photographer when she was truly exhausted before she could even see her. However as she opened the door a little further, she noticed a blonde head against her soon to be wife's shoulder. Helen could feel her breathing stop as she just stared at the bed in what was obviously two people, and mentally she scrolled through all their friends as she thought of which of them had blonde hair, but since most of them all had dark hair, her heart began to stop beating in anxious anticipation.

Never in her life did she think Torrance would be unfaithful, but there was no denying that someone was in bed with her. Coming to the bedside, Helen quickly yanked the covers down to the floor. Neither body moved. The photographer was dressed in a t-shirt and khaki pants that were open revealing her boxers, but the unfamiliar blonde was in one of Torrance's dress shirts, her body curled tightly into the brunette's side with one hand resting on the brunette's stomach.

Helen just stood there for a moment refusing to accept that her fiancée was in bed with another woman as emotions whirled through her. The anger struck first, especially when she saw a woman's thong on the bedside table. Going to Torrance's side of the bed, she clicked on the light as she screamed, "Torrance Whitfield, how could you do this to me?"

Torrance groggily opened her eyes at the sound of yelling. Focusing on its source, she saw Helen standing over her ranting. "Helen, what's wrong?" she asked in concern jumping from the bed to hold her fiancée.

"Don't touch me!" the model screamed pushing her away. "How could you? I leave for one night, and I come home to you in bed with another woman!"

Torrance looked toward the bed to see the stripper from last night starting to come to as Helen's raving continued. Torrance tried to remember everything that had happened the prior evening, but for the life of her she didn't know how she and the dancer had gotten back to her place or in bed together. "Wait, Helen. I can explain. Don't get upset. It's not good for the baby."

"Explain? What's there to explain, Torrance? You're in bed with a stranger a week before our

wedding! Was she worth it, Torrance? Was she worth ten million to you?" the teacher yelled.

Torrance looked at her incredulously. "How can you say that? You do care about the money! My mother was right!"

"No, I don't care about your money! Keep it for all I care!" she shouted before turning to leave.

"Helen, wait. Please don't go. Please listen to reason. This isn't what it looks like." Torrance exclaimed starting to come after her.

"Don't you dare leave her alone up here! It's bad enough she's here, but I don't want stuff going missing too! You get her out of our house right now! Then you and I have to talk! If you wanted out, you could've just told me instead of hurting me like this!"

"I don't want out!" the photographer screamed to her retreating form. Turning to the bed, she just stared at the woman wearing her shirt. "Um, is this what it looks like?" she inquired.

"No, Torrance. It's not, and I'll tell your fiancée as much if you want."

"How did we get here, and how did you get in my bed?"

"I brought you home, because everyone else was too drunk. Last night I tried to seduce you several times at Morgan's and even once we got back here, but you refused me every time. You passed out, and I didn't know how to lock up. I only intended to stay until you woke, but I guess I fell asleep too. I swear to God, Torrance, I didn't mean for this to happen. You were so nice to me, and I would hate to cause you problems after what you said you would do for me."

"What I said I would do?" she questioned as she thought about any promises she might've made. "Oh, you mean the modeling thing?"

"Yeah. Please. I'll go downstairs and tell your fiancée anything you want if you just promise not to take that away from me." she begged.

"My word is good, Kristina. I'm not going to take it back, but I could use your help with my fiancée. She's about to leave me if I don't come up with one hell of a story."

"I'll explain. Just give me one minute to get my clothes on."

"Come down when you're ready." Torrance said before rushing downstairs to find the model.

Helen was standing in the kitchen looking out the window when Torrance came in. She turned and scowled at the brunette. "Tell me the truth, Torrance. I don't care what it is. I just want to know." firmly she stated.

Torrance looked at the woman she loved. "The truth?" she questioned. "The truth is I love you, Helen. You and the baby mean more to me than anything. The truth is last night I was more



drunk than I have ever been except when I was a kid, and I have the worst hangover ever because of it. I don't know all the details of what went on. However I do know this. I would never have sex with someone else. You're the only one I want to be with that way."

"But I found you in bed with another woman! Both of you were half naked! How can you stand there and tell me nothing happened, especially when admitting that you don't remember?" she asked loudly.

The taller woman dropped her head forward. "Helen, I know it in my heart, and I would hope you do as well. I need you to believe me just because I said so. Can you do that?"

Before the model could answer they heard movement on the staircase. Kristina came into the kitchen and looked at Torrance before turning to Helen. "Lady, you have no idea what you have."

"I don't want to hear anything you might have to say! I want you out of my house!" the blonde yelled.

"Well, you're going to listen! You don't deserve a woman like Torrance! You're nothing but a high society bitch! Well, let me tell you something! It's women like you that drive people like Torrance into my arms! Torrance is the perfect example of fidelity! I didn't even know people like her still existed! She had the perfect opportunity to be sleep with someone else, but she didn't! She didn't put a hand on me, even as much as I tried to get her to! She refused time and again but for what? So she could be harassed by you for supposed unfaithfulness! Get it through your head! She didn't sleep with me or anyone else! I brought her home, because everyone else was too drunk, and she couldn't go alone! I helped her to bed, and tried to change her into pajamas, but she was too heavy, so I just left her as she was! Nothing happened!" Kristina shouted. Turning to Torrance she said more softly, "Torrance, I'm sorry for the trouble I caused you. I was only trying to help."

"I know, and thanks for getting me home safely."

Looking back at Helen, Kristina mentioned, "And just one more thing, blondie! I might be poor, but that doesn't mean I don't have morals! I might be just a stripper and a whore, but I'm not a thief! I'm offended that you would even suggest such a thing about me! You're not good enough for Torrance, and I hope she realizes that before it's too late! Now if that's all, I'm leaving!"

"I'll walk you out." Torrance mumbled as the dancer turned to go. The brunette looked at her beloved in silence for a moment before following Kristina to the door. They walked down to the street quietly.

"I really am sorry, Torrance." the young blonde apologized.

"Don't be. Thank you for bringing me home and for defending me just now."

"Well, I know you love her. Personally I don't think she's the right woman for you acting like

that, but it's your life. You deserve happiness, and if she's what you want, then I wish you the best."

"Thank you. She is what I want. She's not usually like that. I think she's just being weird, because of the hormones with the baby. I hope so anyway."

Kristina shrugged. "Well, I should go. Promise to call me about some modeling gigs?"

"I'll try. I'll definitely pass your information along, but I'm getting married in a week and then going on my honeymoon, so it might be a few weeks before you hear anything. Don't think I forgot about you."

"Okay."

After a moment of just standing awkwardly, Torrance asked, "Can you tell me what really happened last night now that we're alone? I need to know."

"Nothing."

"I don't believe that. I don't remember what happened when we got back to my place, but I do remember a lot of what happened at Morgan's. Something did happen between us in the bedroom, didn't it?"

Kristina touched her arm lightly. "Torrance, you didn't do anything wrong."

"I don't remember it that way. I remember you sitting naked on top of me touching yourself. Didn't I put my arms around you and help things along a bit?" she inquired as she recalled her actions of the previous night. When the dancer had taken off the shirt and started exploring herself as she sat straddled across Torrance stomach, the photographer's willpower began to crumble. Before she knew it, her arms were around the tiny woman guiding the stripper's hips, and she was whispering words of encouragement as the blonde brought herself to peak.

Kristina shrugged. "Torrance, had you come into my strip club and asked me for a private performance, you would've gotten the same thing. You never kissed me. You never touched anything but my hips. That's hardly infidelity. Had we danced together, you would've touched me more. Basically you just watched. There's nothing wrong with that. It's like watching a porn."

"Somehow I don't think she's going to see it that way."

"Don't tell her, Torrance. It's not worth it. You didn't do anything wrong. It's not worth what it will do to your marriage."

"I need to be honest with Helen."

"Well, good luck then. You know where to find me if things go horribly wrong. I'll be there for

you with open arms any time you need someone.”

“Thank you for the offer, and if I wasn’t already with someone, I’d take you up on it, Kristina. You’re amazing, and you have a lot to offer other than your body. Please try to use those other things.”

The blonde nodded. “I’ll see you around then. Take care of yourself.”

When Torrance returned back to the loft, Helen was still in the kitchen standing in the same place she had left her. “Well, I got the whole story from Kristina,” Torrance mentioned. “Seems that I did do something that you should know about.”

“What’s that?” hesitantly Helen inquired suddenly afraid of what Torrance might say.

“Apparently I let her sit on my lap naked and watched her as she brought herself to orgasm.” plainly the older woman stated. Helen’s heart sunk a little at the idea of Torrance being that close to another woman, but looking into the photographer’s face, she could tell that the older woman was being truthful. However before she could even offer any sort of response, Torrance asked, “Is there anything that happened to you on your adventure that I should know about?”

The blonde shook her head. “Nothing nearly as exciting, but I saw Richard. He tried to kiss me.”

“Did he succeed?” the photographer inquired stoically.

“No. We were dancing, and he leaned down to kiss me, but I stepped away. He told me he still loved me.”

“He’s not the only one.” the tall woman mumbled. “If you’ll excuse me now, I’m going to go upstairs and shower.”

“We’re not finished talking about us.” the blonde mentioned.

“Yes, we are. I love you, and I want to marry you. If you can’t accept my explanation of what happened, you have doubts about us getting married. I can’t marry you if you have doubts. It wouldn’t be fair to either of us. I told you what I did, and that’s all that I did. You need time to decide if you believe me.” quietly the brunette explained before turning to go up the stairs.

Heading into the master bath, Torrance stripped off her clothes and headed into the shower. She let the warm water cascade over her as she thought about the woman downstairs. She felt for sure that things were going to work with Helen, but suddenly she was filled with her own doubts. When Helen didn’t immediately believe her, Torrance wondered how they could possibly have a marriage with a lack of trust. As the possibility of their relationship coming to an abrupt end again struck her, Torrance felt herself becoming weak. She sunk down on the stone shower seat as her whole body trembled, and she suddenly began to sob. The life that she wanted flashed before her mind, she and Helen being married and having children, and the thought of never knowing the baby the blonde was carrying was more than she could take.

Helen stood in the kitchen long after Torrance had gone upstairs as she thought about all that had occurred since she had arrived home. Even with all the evidence leading toward Torrance's unfaithfulness, she knew in her heart that the photographer had told her the absolute truth. She wished Torrance had not allowed the events of the previous night take place, but she recognized that she couldn't let that one incident stand between her and the marriage she wanted. Helen knew with certainty that Torrance loved her as much as she claimed, and through all the years they had known each other, the brunette had never given her reason to doubt her unwavering loyalty and faithfulness, making it easier to decide to accept the photographer's actions as one last drunkenly wild night of fun. Resolved to forget about the whole event, she went upstairs to try to smooth things over with her lover.

As she went into the bedroom, she heard wailing coming from the bathroom over the sound of the shower. Concerned Helen rushed in there to find Torrance crumpled on the slate floor of the shower sobbing. Instantly the only thoughts the blonde had were to comfort her beloved, and she opened the glass door to step in, forgetting that she was fully clothed. Dropping to her knees, she pulled the taller woman into her arms. "I'm sorry, Torrance." she softly stated. "I believe you completely."

"You do?" the green-eyed photographer inquired hesitantly.

"Yes. I know in my heart you would never be with someone else."

"So you're not leaving?"

"Never. You just had one last night of being single, and I'm going to forget it even happened. It's not worth giving up all that we have to look forward to, especially when it was my idea in the first place."

"What do you mean?" Torrance asked in confusion.

"I'm the one who said it was your last chance to see some hot naked women, and you told me Morgan would probably hire a stripper. It was all in drunk fun. I know it won't happen again, because I know you would never be with someone other than me."

Sighing in relief Torrance whispered, "Thank you for believing me, Helen. I thought for sure I had lost you."

"I'm not going anywhere, Torrance. You're stuck with me for life." she teased lightly as she brushed back the brunette's short wet locks away from her face.

Torrance gave a tentative smile before noticing that her fiancée was fully dressed. "You're all wet." she stated.

Helen looked at herself and realized she was soaked from the spray of the shower. However giving Torrance a sexy smile, she said seductively, "Not yet but I could be getting there. Maybe

you'd like to finish up in here, and then I could give you a real show, not one Morgan has to pay for. That is if you think you can handle it in your hung over state."

"I'm feeling better already." Torrance replied playfully as they both got to their feet. Helen turned to leave, but the brunette slipped her arms around the petite woman's waist. "Don't go yet. Stay awhile. You're already wet." she suggested as her fingers began to open the blonde's drenched top.

Feeling the taller woman's mouth against the nape of her neck, Helen moaned as her hand came up to cradle Torrance's head. "I can never say no to you." she whispered.

The following Saturday morning Torrance awoke early too excited to sleep any longer. Even though the previous evening had been a late festive one with a large reception in Torrance and Helen's honor in town, the photographer was too anxious about her wedding day to stay in bed. As she got out of bed, she walked over to the window that looked over the guesthouse on her grandmother's property and thought of her bride. Maria had made such an issue of them not being able to see each other before the wedding, that they agreed to sleep apart to pacify her. Torrance had spent the night with the rest of her family up at the house while the blonde stayed with hers in the guesthouse.

Feeling the need to do something to rid herself of her nervous energy, she decided to go for a long run in the neighborhood, so she changed clothes and headed outside. However she ran into her mother on the back porch.

"Too excited to sleep?" her mother asked playfully.

"Yeah. I can't believe it. Today I'm actually going to marry Helen. This has been such a long wait."

"But now it's over. Run along. Work all your nerves out. We'll see you in a bit for breakfast."

When Helen awoke that morning she felt terrible. Her stomach was churning making her nauseated, and she barely made it to the bathroom before relieving her stomach of its contents. Sinking down onto the tile bathroom floor, she moaned miserably as waves of dizziness hit her. After a few minutes she heard a soft knock on the door before Kelly called, "Helen, are you okay?"

"No." she mumbled.

"What's wrong? May I come in?"

"Sure."

Her matron of honor entered the bathroom. "What's wrong, sweetie?" the married woman inquired coming to kneel next to her friend.

“I don’t know. I just feel so sick. I want Torrance.” she pouted pitifully.

“You can’t see Torrance before the ceremony. Now what are your symptoms?”

“I just feel nauseated and sick to my stomach. I’m sweating but cold at the same time.” she mumbled brushing back her matted wet fair hair.

Kelly gave a sympathetic smile. “It’s probably just nervousness and morning sickness.” she replied.

“I don’t care. I want Torrance here now. Go get her, Kelly.” she whined.

“No. Her mother will pitch a fit. You know that. I’ll tell you what though. I’ll go call up to the house and get her on the phone. You can talk to her for a few minutes, but then we have to start getting ready. Morgan is going to be by soon to do your make up and hair. Why don’t you get back in bed for a little bit while I make the call?” she suggested helping her friend to her feet. She escorted the blonde back to bed and tucked her in before taking a seat next to her. Picking up the phone, she made the call up to the house and got Torrance on the phone.

“What’s up, Kelly? You need something?” the brunette inquired.

“I have someone here who desperately wants to speak to you.” she replied before handing the phone over to Helen.

“Torrance.” the model stated softly.

“Helen, what’s wrong, honey?”

“I’m sick, and I want you to come over here to hold me.”

Torrance chuckled lightly. “I wish I could. I’m sorry that you’re not feeling well. What’s wrong?”

“Morning sickness decided to start today. I feel awful.”

“I’m sorry, baby.”

The conversation last a few more minutes before Kelly took the phone away. “Sorry, Torrance, but Morgan will be here any minute, and I have to get your wife in the shower.”

“Okay. Take care of her, will you?”

“Of course. Just because you’re marrying her doesn’t mean she’s not still my best friend. We’ll see you soon.”

A few hours later everyone was lining up for the service procession. There had been many

discussions about who would be standing up next to the couple, and after long talks, the two of them decided to have Kelly stand with Helen and Mark with Torrance, being that they were instrumental in bringing them together but not having anyone else up there with them, because their list of choices had gotten too overwhelming. Torrance processed first and alone since Helen wanted to walk alone as well, but as she stood at the end of the aisle awaiting her cue, her legs felt impossibly heavy. However when the music began, she focused on the minister who was waiting on her at the other end, hardly even seeing the guests in attendance. Getting to the end, she turned to watch the rest of her group, beginning with her parents and then Helen's parents. Meeting eyes with Diane Melbourne for a moment, she could see the discomfort in her future mother-in-law's eyes, but Torrance took consolation in the fact that she was still in attendance. Kelly and Mark were the next to walk, both of them smiling brightly at her as they moved to their places. Helen's two nieces played the parts of the flower girls before there was a momentary pause before Helen's music began. Torrance took a shaky breath as Helen came into view. She had never seen the blonde more beautiful as she was in her wedding gown carrying her simple bouquet of flowers and slowly gliding down the aisle toward her. The model's elegance made her weak, and she could feel herself almost dizzy at the sight before her. Meeting eyes the older woman saw her bride blush slightly as she graced her with a smile.

Helen only had eyes for her beloved as she came down the aisle. Torrance was dressed in an expensive black suit, looking sexier than she had ever seen her, and the thought gave her a sudden rush of arousal. Without even realizing it, her thoughts strayed to taking the suit off her lover, but she had the grace to flush when she noticed where her thoughts had strayed. She observed that Mark hastily put a hand on Torrance's back to steady her, making her realize she was having the same effect on the tall woman that the photographer was having to her. Finally she arrived next to her beloved and took the offered hand.

"You are so beautiful." Torrance whispered in obvious awe. "I love you."

"I love you too, Torrance." she replied giving her lover an adoring gaze.

The rest of the ceremony passed quickly, and soon they were socializing with all their guests at the reception. As the evening wore on, Torrance and Helen decided that as they were leaving was time they make their big announcement. Just before they were getting ready to take off in their limo, the two of them asked everyone to settle down for one final toast. Curving an arm around Helen's waist, Torrance stated, "Helen and I just want you all to know how glad we are you came today. You have helped make this a special day for us, and we will never forget it."

"And because you have made it so wonderful, we've decided to share a secret with all of you." Helen said. "As some of you know, Torrance and I have been planning an African safari for our honeymoon, but we had to cancel those plans. I'm making her take me to Paris instead."

Torrance smiled down at her as she teasingly continued, "It seems that Helen and I got ourselves into a little trouble by starting our honeymoon early, and we're actually expecting our first child now because of it, so we had to decide on someplace more civilized." A chorus of yelling and hollering could be heard as the couple glowed under the support of the closest friends and relatives.

Breaking their gaze Helen looked back at all their friends and family. “Anyway, thank you for making this day the best of our lives, and we look forward to seeing you when we get back from our trip to Paris.”

Slowly making their way toward their limousine, they bid farewell to everyone as they passed. Getting to their parents however, they stopped to receive hugs from the four of them. John was the first to speak as he affectionately laid his hand against his daughter’s mid-section. “I can’t believe it. I’m going to be a grandfather again.”

“Yes, Daddy, and maybe with some luck we might have a son. I know you’ve been dying for a grandson.”

“I don’t care. I’m just thrilled for the two of you.” he said hugging them both before Maria came to embrace them as well.

“Well, Torrance, I guess all your dreams really have come true now.” she said.

“They sure have, Mama.”

Breaking in to the conversation, Thomas asked, “When are you two planning on coming back from Paris?”

“We’re scheduled to arrive back on September 10th. Why?”

“Then you and I need to have breakfast on the 11th. I want all the details.” he said with a smile.

Torrance gave a nod. “I think I can manage that. Now you have to excuse us. We have somewhere we’re supposed to be.” the photographer teased.

“Not anywhere that you haven’t been before.” John joked.

“Daddy!” Helen exclaimed as she flushed deeply at his inference, but Torrance laughed.

“I was just kidding, sweetie. You kids get out of here. I think Torrance would rather be alone with you right now.” he mentioned with a smile.

“We’ll talk to all of you when we get back.” the tall woman said before taking her wife’s arm and leading her to the waiting car.

Torrance’s grandmother’s driver was standing at the back door of the limo waiting for them. “Ms. and Mrs. Whitfield.” he said with a nod as he opened their door. Once they were settled, he moved to the driver’s seat. “Mrs. Whitfield, are we still going to the Waldorf?”

Torrance smiled at the fact that James addressed Helen that way. However when the blonde didn’t respond, she said, “You know, honey, James just asked you a question.”



“Oh, I’m sorry, James. I thought you were talking to Torrance. Yes, we are still going to the Waldorf.”

“Very good, Mrs. Whitfield.” he replied with a small smile before putting the divider up between them to give them privacy.

The model grinned at the photographer. “It’s going to take me a little while to get used to being called that.”

“James will call you whatever you would like for him to. If you’d prefer he call you Helen, he will.”

“No. I like Mrs. Whitfield. I like everyone knowing that I belong to you.”

Torrance gently caressed her wife’s stomach. “We belong to each other, all three of us. Thank you for making me whole, Helen.” she whispered before leaning to kiss her bride.

Concluded Part 12

## **The Athenaeum's Scroll Archive**

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# **~ Love in Photographs ~**

by Alex Tryst

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## **Part 12**

"This last section deals with the events of September 11, 2001. If you are uncomfortable reading about this particular subject, please stop here. Thank you, Alex Tryst"

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Two weeks later the couple returned from their trip to Paris. Since Thomas wanted to have breakfast the following morning, Torrance made a quick call to her parents to confirm the time with him, but Maria asked to speak to Helen to invite her to go shopping the next morning as well. What the brunette had intended to be a ten minute conversation turned into an hour, but finally she forced them to hang up.

As she and Helen stood in the kitchen of their loft after the call, Torrance chuckled. “Man, I have nosey parents.” she joked.

Helen came to embrace her around the waist. "They just love you and want to be involved in your life. I hope that we are parents just like them."

The photographer nodded. "We will be. You are like my mother in many ways, Helen."

"That's a real compliment ." the blonde replied snuggling into her wife's chest.

"Well, do you want to call your parents as well and let them know we're home?"

"No. I'll wait until tomorrow. Right now I just want to go to bed." the little blonde whispered leaning up to kiss her beloved under the jaw.

"Bed or sleep?" the dark-haired woman asked softly with a seductive raise of her brow.

"Follow me upstairs, and you'll find out." Helen answered moving away. Turning to go she pulled her blouse off and tossed it over her shoulder at her lover. "And turn on the air conditioning, will you? It's hot in here."

Torrance did as she was told, moving to the thermostat before going up the stairs. However finding the blonde's clothing creating a path for her to follow up the staircase, she smiled to herself, knowing that sleeping was the last thing on her lover's mind. Torrance picked up each piece as she slowly made her way toward what was sure to be an amorous encounter. Coming to the bedroom door, she paused to look at her wife who was pulling down the covers on their bed. As she studied her, Torrance could see that where the blonde's flat abdomen used to be there was a slight curvature where their child was growing inside of her. The photographer's heart fluttered at the beauty of her bride. Moving into the room, she came up behind the teacher and put her arms around her bare waist.

"I love you, Helen." she whispered.

"I love you too, Torrance."

"You're starting to show a little." the brunette mentioned resting her hand along the soft skin of her lover's stomach.

"I know. It's a good thing your mother and I are going shopping actually. My clothes are beginning to be too small."

Absently Torrance nodded in response as she kissed along her wife's shoulder. "You're so beautiful, Helen."

"Thank you, even though I don't feel like it when I'm bent over the toilet every morning." she joked lightly.

"Even then you're still the most beautiful woman in the world to me, because you are voluntarily

putting your body through that to bring our baby into this world. That's a gift I will always treasure. The fact that you love me enough to have a baby with me is beyond anything I can comprehend. I'm just feel blessed that you chose me."

Helen turned in the photographer's arms and gazed up at the tall woman. "And I feel blessed that you found me, Torrance. Now enough talk. I feel bad about being sick most of our trip, but it's time to make up for that. I want you to love me tonight like you would have if I had given you more chances on our honeymoon."

"Helen, it would be my pleasure, but only if you stop worrying about trying to fulfill my desires. I'm content. You're having terrible morning sickness, and I want to be understanding to your needs. I have the rest of my life to love you when you're feeling a little better."

"Right now I need your love, Torrance. I have a feeling that your hands will work wonders as far as curing my nausea." Helen stated beginning to work open her lover's shirt.

Torrance allowed the blonde to remove her clothes before gently guiding the smaller woman onto the bed. Careful not to put all her weight on the teacher's body, Torrance propped herself up on her arms as she laid in the cradle of her wife's thighs. Fondly she gazed into the green eyes she loved as she softly traced the contours of her blonde's face with her thumbs. Stroking the fair brows, Torrance faintly kissed along the blonde's forehead, down her nose, before planting a delicate kiss on her full supple lips. "Thank you for letting me love you, Helen." she whispered before leisurely beginning to explore every inch of her lover's bare frame. Torrance took extra time along the model's mid-section, lightly dusting it with kisses of adoration before moving lower to the place she knew would bring her wife the most pleasure. Long into the night Torrance and Helen loved each other before falling asleep in each others arms.

Early the next morning Torrance got up to dress for her breakfast with her father. Even though Helen was awake, her nausea kept her in bed as she fought the urge to regurgitate all that she had eaten the night before. When Torrance was finally ready to go, she moved to the bed and took a seat next to her wife. She gave a sympathetic smile as the green-eyed model looked up at her pitifully.

"I don't want you to go today. Stay here." Helen requested.

"I can't. I already told Dad I would meet him at the World Trade Center at nine. It's just after eight now. I have to go. Besides my mother will be here any minute to pick you up."

"I know. I just wish you would stay here in bed with me and hold me. I'm tired of this morning sickness. I feel terrible and look even worse."

Giving a laugh Torrance affectionately smoothed the matter blonde hair away from her lover's face. "You're always beautiful in my eyes, Helen."

"You have to say that, because you're married to me."

“Listen to me, honey.” the photographer said taking the model’s hand in her own. “You are beautiful inside and out, and you are the best thing that has ever happened to me. You’re a gift from God, and everyday I thank him for giving me the blessing of your love. If I died today, I would die a happy woman, because you have made all my dreams come true.”

Helen sat up and pulled her wife into a hug. “I love you so much, Torrance. You’re my life.”

“As you are mine.”

“Do me a favor, will you?” Helen inquired with a smile.

“Anything. What is it?”

“Don’t die today. I’m planning on having you around for at least fifty years or more. Okay?” she teased lightly.

“No problem. I promise you no dying today or any other day in the near future. We have years of living to do with each other first.” Just then the doorbell interrupted them. “That’s Mother. I have to go now. Call me on my cell phone if you need anything. I’ll see you later.”

Helen nodded before leaning in to receive a kiss. “I love you, Torrance.”

“I love you too.” she replied heading off to answer the door. Opening it she saw her mother standing there.

“Welcome home, newlywed.” Maria said with a smile as they hugged.

“Thanks. Helen is still upstairs in bed. Her morning sickness is really bad. Do you think maybe you could help her through it? I don’t know what to do for her.”

“Sure. I’ll go see if I can do anything. You take care of yourself today and no getting into trouble.” she joked.

“Me? Never.” Torrance answered with a smile.

“Run along now. I’m sure your father is anxious to see you.”

“All right. I love you. You and Helen call me if you need anything.”

“Love you too. See you later.”

Helen was lying in bed when she heard the knock on the open bedroom door. Looking over she saw Maria standing there looking concerned. “Hi there. Torrance says you’re not feeling well.”

Helen shook her head. “I didn’t know morning sickness was this bad. I’ve felt terrible everyday since the wedding.” she said as her mother-in-law came to take a seat on the bed. “I feel bad for

Torrance actually. It wasn't the kind of honeymoon that either of us wanted. It's hard to be romantic when you're retching all morning long for two weeks."

"Don't even worry about that. I'm sure Torrance hasn't given it another thought. That woman is so deeply in love with you that there is nothing you could do in her eyes to diminish her feelings for you. She truly believes you walk on water. Don't concern yourself with something you can't control. Now is there anything I can do to help you?"

Helen shook her head. "No. I just have to deal with it the best that I can. I'm going to get up now and try to get dressed."

"All right. Take your time. We aren't on a schedule. Just take it easy. I'll just wait downstairs for you. Call me if you need anything."

"Thanks, Maria."

Once her mother-in-law left the room, Helen eased herself out of bed. Fighting the dizziness she felt, she made her way into the master bath. She began with her new ritual of relieving her stomach before going about dressing for the day. After a long shower, most of which was spent seated on their shower bench trying not to faint, the teacher moved to dry her hair and put on her clothes. She was just finishing her make up as she thought of her wife when she heard a wail come from downstairs. Instantly curious and concerned, Helen headed out to the second story landing as she called, "Maria, are you all right?" Looking over the railing, she saw her mother-in-law crumpled on the floor in front of the television. Rushing down the spiral staircase, Helen asked, "Maria, what is it?"

The older woman didn't answer at first instead mumbling through tears, "Oh dear God."

Sinking to her knees, Helen embraced Maria as she looked to the tv. Her own heart stopped as she saw the city of New York enveloped in a white cloud as the correspondent said something about the World Trade Center collapsing. "Torrance." the blonde whispered in fear.

"Thomas." Maria whimpered.

"Oh God. What happened, Maria?" the teacher inquired clutching the older woman tighter. Maria didn't have to answer as CNN just then began to replay the video of the second tower being struck by an airplane. Both women sat glued to the television as the buildings came crumbling to the ground. "Oh God. I have to call Torrance." the model stammered racing to the phone. Hurriedly she dialed her wife's cell number but couldn't get through, because all the circuits were busy. Frantically she tried Thomas with the same result. "Come on. Please God. Let me get through." she begged out loud repeatedly trying each number several times.

Having no success she moved back into the living room to find Maria sitting on the couch rocking back and forth as she sobbed and stared at the tv. Coming to the older woman, Helen fell onto the sofa as well. Instinctively they embraced. Neither said anything for a long time as they just watched the drama unfold on television. Every few minutes the teacher tried her lover and

father-in-law's numbers, but she never could get through to either of them.

"Oh God, Helen. I can't lose Thomas. He's my life." Maria admitted. "And Torrance is my baby."

The model nodded. "I know. I'm sure they're fine. I bet they just can't call to tell us so, because everyone is trying to call people." she stated, trying to justify why they couldn't reach their loved ones. Helen didn't even dare voice her own fears that something had happened to Torrance.

Hours passed and shopping was forgotten as the two women sat preoccupied with each new piece of information that came on the tv. Finally around noon the phone rang. Instantly Helen grabbed it. "Torrance?" quickly she asked.

"No. It's me, sweetie." her father stated. "I've been trying to get through all morning long. Are you all right?"

"Oh, Daddy, Torrance and Thomas were in the towers." she whispered as she began to get choked up on her own tears.

"Oh, baby girl." he replied. "Have you heard anything at all?"

"No. I keep trying their numbers but can't get through to either of them."

"All right. Maybe I shouldn't tie up this line in case they try to call.

Are you okay, though? Are you alone?"

"Maria is here with me. Daddy, Torrance was there." she sobbed suddenly not being able to control her emotions any longer.

"I'm sure she's fine, honey. You just have to have faith. Believe that she's safe, Helen. Pray that she is."

"If I lost her, I couldn't go on." she confessed weeping into the phone.

"Helen, don't think that way. Torrance is fine. She made it out." he stated.

"Then why hasn't she called?" she rhetorically inquired.

There was silence a moment before John asked, "Do you want me to stay on the line with you for awhile?"

"No. I need to see if I can get through to either one of them."

"Do you want me to come up there? I'll get in the car right now." he proposed.

“No, Daddy, but thank you. Maria is here. I should go now and see if I can reach one of them.”

“All right. Call me in a little bit and let me know what’s going on?”

“Sure.” Helen replied.

“Helen, have faith. Try to stay positive.” he stated softly.

“I’ll call you later.” the blonde mumbled. “I love you, Daddy.”

“I love you too, sweetie. I have to go call your siblings and tell them what’s going on now. I’ll talk to you in a bit.”

Once she had hung up with her father, Helen dialed the two numbers she had been trying all morning but still couldn’t get through. Both women looked at each other. Easily they could read the other’s thoughts and fears, but neither said a thing as they sat clutching to each other on the sofa. Hours passed like days. By early afternoon Helen began to fear the worst for her beloved and father-in-law. Neither of them had called nor could the blonde get through to them live.

As the possible reality of never seeing the woman she loved again, Helen began to lose the grip she had on her fear. Suddenly the idea of being a widow after only two weeks of marriage and carrying her lover’s child made the blonde start wailing inconsolably. “This can’t be happening!” she screamed as her mother-in-law wrapped her in consoling arms.

Just then there was a faint knock on the door. Both women jumped startled at the sound but raced to answer it. As Helen flung open the door, they saw Thomas standing there leaning against the doorframe and looking extremely exhausted. Maria instantly flung herself at him. “Oh thank God you’re all right!” she exclaimed clinging to him tightly.

“I’m all right, just tired. I had to walk all the way here. I tried to call but couldn’t get through.” he explained holding Maria in a strong embrace. “Where’s Torrance?” he asked Helen. Neither woman answered at first. “Have you heard from her?” Thomas questioned.

“No. We can’t get through to her phone.” Helen stated. “Did you see her this morning?”

“No. I was waiting on her when the first building was hit. I evacuated as soon as the fire department got there. I called her and got her voice mail when it first happened. I wanted to tell her not to come.”

“She left just after eight to meet you.” Helen explained.

Giving a nod Thomas put his arms around his daughter-in-law. “I’m sure she’s fine, Helen. She probably just can’t get through on the phone.”

The blonde gave a feeble nod, wanting desperately to believe his words, but the nagging doubt began to overwhelm her again. As tears cascaded down her face, her in-laws guided her to the

kitchen table. "You know, you haven't eaten all day, Helen. I should fix you something." Maria suggested.

"I'm not hungry. I can't eat right now. I feel sick."

"I know, but you have to think about your child. Torrance would want you to think about the baby right now, not her." Maria gently stated. "I'm going to fix all of us something."

Thomas nodded as he took a seat next to Helen at the table. Silence prevailed each of them off in their own thoughts until the phone rang again. Helen leapt for it, answering anxiously. However it was her father again instead of her wife. Unable to update him on the situation, she handed the phone over to Thomas, taking a seat at the table once again and staring blankly out the window. Thomas talked to John for several minutes, but once he had hung up, Helen mumbled, "Other people are getting through. Why hasn't she called?"

"I don't know." softly Thomas replied giving a long sigh.

"Here, Helen. Try to eat something. This will help your stomach." Maria said putting the soup and bread in front of the model.

"I can't take this waiting. God, where is she?" the young petite woman questioned aloud.

Since neither Thomas or Maria had the answer, they both just remained quiet as they all sat around the small table. After several minutes of just watching the teacher play with her food, Thomas said, "I'll try her phone again." Making the call he didn't reach her live. "Voicemail." he stated after several rings before proceeding to leave a message.

As the afternoon passed into evening, the three of them remained thoughtfully quiet as they watched tv. With each call from family and friends, Helen became more distraught, because it was clear that others were getting through on the phone, but Torrance still hadn't called. Even though no one voiced their own fears, Helen silently admitted to herself that something had happened to Torrance. She knew for a fact that if her wife had been able to call, she would have already. Torrance would have kept trying until she got through regardless of how long it took.

"Maybe we should try to call the hospitals." Maria finally proposed.

"Yeah, let's do that. There is a possibility she was injured. I'll use my cell phone. You use the land line, Maria." Thomas said. Flipping open his phone, he noticed that he had a new message. "Wait a minute. I have a message that wasn't here earlier." he mentioned.

Helen watched nervously as her father-in-law dialed in to retrieve his message. Seeing the slight smile grace his face, she knew that it was Torrance. However as the moments passed, his face grew more and more serious making the model's heart stop. Thomas became unusually still before bowing his head and taking a deep breath.

"Thomas?" Maria called going to put her arms around him.



“I think you better listen to this, Maria.” he whispered as tears freely streamed down his cheeks.

Helen sat on the sofa and watched as her wife’s mother listened to the message. When the older woman had the same reaction, the model knew with certainty that something was horribly wrong. “What is it? Is she...?” She couldn’t even bring herself to finish her sentence.

Maria came to the couch and took a tentative seat next to her. Extending the phone to the blonde, she softly stated, “I think Torrance would’ve wanted you to hear this.”

Even though Helen was afraid of what she was about to hear, she took the cell phone from her mother-in-law and replayed the message. She smiled as she heard her wife’s voice. “Hey, Dad. It’s me. It’s almost nine, and I’m just getting out of the subway right now. Sorry I’m running late, but Helen felt terrible this morning, so I stayed with her a little later than I should have. She’s having awful morning sickness and has since the wedding. Poor thing could barely make it through the day without throwing up while we were in Paris, but believe it or not, I didn’t mind one bit. I can’t help it. I just love that woman more than anything else in this world. Sick or not she’s the most beautiful thing I’ve ever seen. Anyway I’m in the lobby now, and something’s going on. People are everywhere. The fire department is here, and I just heard someone saying something about the building being on fire. They are trying to evacuate. I hope you’ve left the building, Dad. This seems serious. I guess I’m going to have to go outside and wait for you to call me. Give me a call as soon as you get this, and we’ll have that breakfast.” Just then a thunderous sound could be heard in the background. “What the hell is that noise?” Torrance inquired into the phone absently before there was only terrified screaming and then the line was lost.

Helen dropped the cell phone from as she began to weep. “She’s dead! Oh God! If only I hadn’t made her stay with me this morning, she’d be alive! She promised me!” she wailed.

Both Thomas and Maria embraced her as the petite blonde sobbed. “She may have gotten out.” Thomas said.

Helen adamantly shook her head. “If she had we would’ve heard from her! My life is over!” the teacher bawled.

“Helen, you have to try to stay calm. You have a child to think about.” Maria said softly trying to settle the woman in her arms.

“A child that will never know it’s mother! It will never know Torrance’s gentleness or compassion! It will never see her green eyes gazing at her in adoration and love! Oh, why did this happen? Why, God?” she screamed turning her eyes heavenward. Picking up the phone again, the teacher replayed the message of her lover’s final moments. “Oh, Torrance.” she mumbled.

Maria and Thomas just sat next to her silently as the blonde kept playing the message repeatedly. They exchanged helpless glances over the young women’s head as they held her. Helen was

obsessed with the sound of her beloved's voice, the gentleness of her tone when the message began, the tender words she spoke of her, and even the piercing shriek of fear of her wife over all the other screams as the building collapsed around the photographer. Each time she heard it, Helen became more despondent as the reality that she was now alone struck with a force she had never felt, and yet she felt as long as she kept hearing Torrance's voice, the brunette was still with her.

Finally Thomas put his hand on the blonde's. "I think that's enough for now, Helen." he said reaching for the phone

"No! I can't hang up on her! She'll be gone!" Helen yelled.

"You can listen later. I won't erase it. I swear. I'll even make you a copy of the message if you want, so you can listen to it whenever you want." he suggested trying to keep the young woman as calm as possible.

"You'd do that for me?"

"Of course. I'll do it now. I'm sure Torrance has the equipment, but you have to give me the phone first."

Reluctantly the teacher relinquished her hold on the cell phone. Getting up from the sofa, Thomas went off in search of something to copy the message onto for Helen, leaving her and his wife alone together. Maria looked at her watch and noted that it was after eight that night. "It's been a long day, Helen. Perhaps you'd be more comfortable in bed. You've had a rough day, and you have to keep your strength for the baby."

Helen shook her head. "I don't want to be alone." she whispered.

"Thomas and I will stay with you." she assured the younger woman. "Come on. Let me take you upstairs."

"I can't go to sleep without her." insistently the model stated, but she stood when Maria tried to assist her to her feet.

"All right. We'll just lay down for awhile." Maria took her by the hand up to the bedroom. "Let's get you into your pajamas." she suggested beginning to help the blonde out of her clothes. Helen allowed herself to be undressed by her mother-in-law like a compliant child. In fact Helen had no energy to fight the older woman. All her strength was suddenly gone, and as soon as her pajamas were on her body, she collapsed onto the bed as her tears began anew. Maria climbed onto the bed next to her and wrapped her arms around the distraught woman.

"She promised me." the teacher mumbled. "She promised she wouldn't die today. How could she do this to me?"

"What do you mean?" Maria questioned in confusion.

“This morning before she left she said that if she died today she would die a happy woman because of me, but I made her promise she wouldn’t die. She promised.” Helen explained through her distress.

Quietness reigned as Thomas came into the bedroom and slid onto the king sized bed to cradle the young woman in his arms. “I put the message on a tape for you, Helen. She’ll never be gone now.” he whispered. Helen simply nodded clinging tighter to the two people who had brought her beloved into the world, and the three of them wept themselves into an exhausted sleep.

The following morning as Helen began to wake, she instinctively reached out for her lover to cuddle against her, but as her head landed on the chest of the body next to her, she realized that the hardness of the photographer’s frame had been replaced with a smaller softer form, making the blonde open her eyes. Lifting her head she noted that she was curled into Maria and sandwiched between her in-laws as they both held her. Suddenly she realized that the previous day had not been a horrible nightmare but a brutal reality and that her wife was gone. Just then the phone rang. She quickly picked up the cordless that Thomas had brought upstairs, so that they could sleep longer. Sliding out of bed, she greeted the caller emotionlessly.

“Helen, you never called me back yesterday. I’ve been worried.” Kelly stated in concern.

“Sorry.” the blonde mumbled moving out of the bedroom and toward the staircase to go downstairs.

“Did Torrance finally make it home?” her best friend asked.

“No.” Helen replied slowly moving through the living room out to the balcony.

“What do you mean? Did you even hear from her?”

Helen stood on her balcony looking over downtown New York and seeing the gaping hole where the World Trade Center had been. Smoke still billowed where the institution once stood. Trying to remain strong, she answered, “We heard from her. Actually she was leaving a message for her Dad when the towers collapsed. She was in the lobby.”

There was a long silence between them before Kelly quietly inquired, “Are you sure she didn’t make it out?”

“Kelly, I listened to that message more times than I can count. I heard everything. I even heard her scream as it collapsed. She was inside when the building fell. My life is over, Kelly.”

“Oh, Helen, I’m so sorry.” the auburn-haired woman whispered obviously beginning to cry by her wavering voice.

“I don’t know what to do, Kelly. I don’t know where to go.”

“Come here. As soon as you can, get out of that city. It’s not good for you to be alone right now. Mark and I want you to come stay with us.”

“Thanks. I couldn’t exactly go home with the way things are with my mom and the baby, and I just can’t bear the idea of staying here alone or with Torrance’s parents.”

“I understand. Come here and stay with us for awhile. We’ll help you decide what to do. Did Torrance leave some sort of will concerning you and the baby?”

“Yeah. I get everything, but what’s the point of that? I want Torrance, not money.” the blonde cried.

“I know, but I was just checking to see if you and the baby would be taken care of financially.”

“Yeah.” the teacher mumbled. Turning away from the skyline, she went back into the loft. Moving toward the kitchen, a incongruency on the table caught her attention. She went to it and picked up the mangled article covered in white powder. “Oh my God.” she gasped. “How did this get here?” she asked aloud staring down at the photograph. It was from the shoot where she and Torrance met, and she recognized it as coming from the brunette’s wallet.

“What is it, Helen?” Kelly anxiously inquired.

“A picture from Torrance’s wallet. She always carried it, and it’s on the kitchen table.” she explained as her eyes hastily scanned the kitchen. A trail of white footprints tracked over the floor, and the photographer’s wallet rested on the bar. Helen’s heart froze. “Torrance?” she called out cautiously.

“Helen, what’s going on?” her best friend asked in concern.

“I don’t know, but I have to call you back. I think Torrance is here. I’ll call you later.” she rushed before hanging up the phone. Running in the direction of the footprints, she called again, “Torrance?” Coming into the entry way, her steps halted as she saw the photographer’s body lying stretched out across the floor. She was covered from head to toe in dust, debris, and blood from a head wound that had dried and caked to the brunette’s hair and clothing. “Torrance!” the blonde screamed running over and dropping to the floor next to her. The tall woman was unresponsive at first. Unsure of other possible injuries, Helen touched her lightly on the shoulder. “Torrance, baby?” gently she whispered.

The photographer’s face twitched before a strangled voice replied, “Helen?”

The blonde’s tears began anew hearing her lover’s response. “Yes, sweetie, I’m here.” she assured her.

“I promised.” the photographer mumbled as her eyes slowly opened.

“I know.” the teacher answered. Seeing the older woman trying to move, she instructed, “Don’t

try to move, Torrance. You're hurt."

"No." the brunette argued trying to roll onto her side. With the petite woman's assistance, she made it and looked up into the green-eyes she loved shining with wetness. "Je t'aime, mon petite chou. (I love you, sweetheart)" she confessed.

"I love you too, Torrance, so much." the blonde replied. "How did you survive? How did you get here? Why didn't you call? I was so worried."

Closing her eyes the photographer took a deep breath. "I was on the phone walking out when the building fell. I saw it. I tried to run, but there were so many people. I don't know what happened."

"You were hurt. How did you get home?"

"Don't know. The last thing I remember was running, and then waking up just now. What happened?"

"Terrorists attacked us. They flew two hijacked planes into The World Trade Center. They also hit the Pentagon with one, and they had a fourth, but the passengers brought it down before anything else was hit." Unable to control herself any longer, Helen pulled the older woman to her and held her tightly. Torrance responded in kind, wrapping her strong arms around the woman she adored. "I thought I had lost you." the blonde whispered.

"No. I said I'd come back. I promised you."

"Thank you for keeping it." the teacher sobbed in relief.

"Always, love. I'll never leave you." Torrance stated softly.

Helen wept into Torrance's shoulder, the journey of the last day finally coming to its conclusion. There would be time to try to understand what had taken place, but all she cared about at the moment was the woman who held her heart was safe in her arms. The mother of her child and her wife was home where she belonged. "I love you, Torrance." she said as the two of them laid on the floor of their foyer, clinging to each other as if their very existence depended on it.

"I love you too, Helen." Torrance replied as she sighed. Even though their world had been shaken to the core, they had survived, and all that really counted to her was that she was home where she belonged. "I love you too."

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Author's Note: I've been hesitant to write about the subject of September 11 since it happened, because of the profound impact it had on my life. Living only a few miles from the Pentagon and having worked at The Trade Center in the recent past, I was filled with a sense of dread that day, as many of my friends were, because we all knew of people in both places. The waiting for that

phone call or lack thereof was enough to test the faith of even the strongest person, and the idea that you may simply never know what happened in the final moments in the life of someone you cared about was too much to bear for some time. However now that some time has passed, I wanted to try to put onto paper the feelings of that fateful day that forever changed so many lives. It is a delicate subject matter for many still, and even I still struggle with it, so if you have any negative commentary in regards to the final chapter of this book, please know that this is only my perspective of what happened to me and my feelings of that day.

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