

~ Persistence ~

by Alex Tryst

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Disclaimers/Warnings: These characters are all mine. This is a story about women trying to find their places in the world and does include sexual scenarios between consenting adult women. Some violence is involved, including one (although not graphic) sexual assault. Additionally there is some derogatory, homophobic language used. If this kind of stuff offends you or is illegal where you live, it's best to turn around now. I feel compelled to mention here that the name of one of the main characters was borrowed from the book *Lolita* by Vladimir Nabokov. For those of you who have read this classic novel, I think you will find my young maiden aptly named. If you'd like to drop me a line concerning the story, you can e-mail me at alextryst@hotmail.com. Please know that I am a sensitive soul and harsh criticism will immediately be deleted. However constructive comments are welcome.

Dedication: To my wife, you are my fondest wish.

Now on with the show.....

Thirty seven year old sheriff, Drew Bailey, parked her truck in her dirt driveway, having come home from the local grocery store. Looking towards the barn, she saw the familiar vehicles of the horse boarders parked along the fence. Thus far it was a typical Saturday morning. Hearing a car coming up her drive, she turned to see a beat up, yellow Volkswagen Beetle slowing to a stop behind her truck. The passenger side window rolled down as Drew approached wearing a large smile. Bending to look into the car, Drew greeted the two women. "Morning, Lola, Kate. Kate, I'm surprised to see you here."

"Oh, my car's in the shop, so I have to use Lola's while she rides. You want a hand with your things?" she inquired.

"Yeah, that'd be great. Gives us a chance to catch up on things while the little one rides." Drew stated, playfully jibing Lola.

"Watch who you call little, old lady." Lola bantered.

"Lola, I can't believe you. Take that back." her mother Kate demanded.

"Oh, don't fuss, Katherine. I'd be the first to admit it's true. In the eyes of any seventeen year old, I'd be over the hill already." As Kate got out of the car, Drew smiled at Lola. "Try to stay out of trouble, young lady."

Mockingly, Lola saluted. "Yes, ma'am, Sheriff Bailey." she answered tearing off down the hill in her car.

“She’s gotten a mouth on her, Drew. Ever since her father died, she’s been so disrespectful with adults. I get complaints from her teachers all the time.”

“You want me to talk to her? Maybe all she needs is someone other than her mother to talk to.”

“You don’t mind?”

“Of course not. You know I’d do anything for your girls. By the way, how’s Natalie?”

“Fine. She’s adjusting well to college, better than I thought she would.”

“Glad to hear it. How are you doing? I haven’t seen you much since the funeral. I’m sorry about that. I should be doing a better job as a friend.”

“You are being a friend, Drew. You’re helping bring Paul’s killer to justice. Under the circumstances, that’s just about the best thing you could do.” Kate whispered wiping a tear from the corner of her eye.

Drew embraced her. “It’s all right, Kate. Everything’s going to be okay.”

Kate recovered quickly enough to help with the groceries before they sat at the kitchen table with coffee to discuss other things. After an hour Kate mentioned that she had to get going, so Drew walked her to Lola’s car down at the barn.

“Listen, why don’t you and Lola have lunch with me when you come back? I’ll even make those cheeseburgers she loves so much.”

“All right. You want a ride back to the house?”

Drew shook her head. “I’m going to hang around here for while. See you later.”

Going into the barn, Drew began talking with some of the boarders before stopping into the office to check on the two person staff. Much to her surprise she found the younger one, Steve, talking with Lola alone. They didn’t notice her at first, but she definitely noticed the way Steve kept touching Lola at every possible moment. However, she grew concerned that Lola seemed uncomfortable. “Hey y’all.” Drew said getting their attention.

Steve jumped at her voice. “Drew, what are you doing down here?” Lola asked immediately moving closer to her.

“Wanted to talk to you. Do you have a minute?”

Walking side by side towards the stall where her horse was kept, Lola inquired, “What’s up?”

“Something going on between you and Steve?”

“No. He’s cute, but something about him gives me the creeps. I don’t know what it is, maybe nothing. I just don’t feel comfortable alone with him. Anyway, you didn’t come down here to ask me that.”

“Well, I was wondering if you weren’t busy after riding if you’d like to join your mother and me for lunch?”

“Are you going to make those cheeseburgers? You know how much I love those.”

“If you’d like.”

“Then I’ll definitely be there.”

“Good. Listen, I was talking with your mom, and she mentioned that you were having problems in school. You want to talk about it?”

Lola shrugged. “School sucks this year. I thought senior year was supposed to be the most fun.”

“Is cheerleading bad?”

“No. It’s all right. The squad’s pretty good.”

“How are your grades?”

“Usual.”

“Then what seems to be the problem?”

“Homecoming. I was nominated for queen.”

“Well, that’s great news, isn’t it? You’re mom will be thrilled.”

“It’s just that the court gets escorted by their fathers.” she mumbled.

“Oh, I see.” Drew replied pulling Lola into her with one arm. “That’s got to be hard for you, but maybe we can think of a solution. Is there someone else you’d like to take?”

“There’s only one person other than my father that I would want to take, but I can’t.”

“Who? Why can’t you take them?”

Lola looked up at Drew with her hazel eyes. “Drew, my father was never around much when I was younger. You know that. It seemed like you and mom raised Natalie and me. The older I got the more I realized he cared more about his job than us.”

“Lola, your father loved you. He just wanted to see that you were taken care of financially. He

was a good man.”

“Drew, when I needed someone, you’ve always been there for me.”

“Lola, I love you dearly. You know that.”

“Well, I was wondering if you would help me now. I want you to be my escort to the Homecoming game.” Lola proposed hopefully.

“Me? What about your mother? If you’re going to have a female escort, don’t you think your mother would be more appropriate?” Drew inquired suddenly feeling uneasy with the request.

“Drew, the whole town knows the situation with my dad. They also know you’re one of my parents’ best friends. You’re a sports hero at the school. Everywhere you turn, your name is on a plaque somewhere. Please, Drew. It’s not that big of a deal.”

“How’s your mom feel about this idea?”

Lola looked at the floor, kicking at the dirt with the edge of her riding boot. “I haven’t told her yet.”

“Okay, I’ll tell you what. Let me talk to her about it. I just don’t want to do this if it’s going to hurt your mom’s feelings. I really think she should be the one to escort you, but if you really don’t want her to, I will. Just let me make sure she’s okay with it first?” Drew asked. Lola nodded her agreement. Quickly kissing her forehead, Drew pulled away saying, “I’ve got to get started on some chores. Come up to the house when you’re finished, and we’ll talk some more.”

Kate returned a couple of hours later, before Lola came up from the stable. As soon as she walked into the kitchen and saw Drew, she asked, “Something wrong? You look preoccupied.”

“I spoke to Lola after you left. Did you know she was nominated for Homecoming queen?”

“No, she didn’t tell me. Oh God, who’s going to be her escort? With Paul gone I guess maybe I should.”

“Well, that’s what I suggested, but she had other ideas.”

“What do you mean? Who does she have in mind?” Kate asked beginning to wash the lettuce sitting on the counter.

“Me.” Drew flatly answered.

“You? Why?” Kate inquired with confusion.

Drew shrugged. “I don’t know, but I’m not exactly comfortable with it. I wouldn’t want her to suffer consequences because of me. She deserves to be queen, but if people find out I’m her

escort, they might not vote for her.”

“Drew, listen. Lola knows nothing about you being a lesbian. What makes you think her peers would know?”

“Because we went to school with their parents, Kate. They know, or have you forgotten your senior year when we met?”

“I could never forget that. People did horrible things to you, Drew, and they said horrible things to me for being your friend.”

“Exactly. I don’t want that to happen to Lola, and I don’t want it to look like I’ve replaced Paul in your life. You know rumors will start about us again. I wouldn’t want that for her.”

“So what do we do? Do you want to tell her the truth about you?”

“She looks up to me, Kate. If I do this for her, she’s got to know the truth first. She needs to decide for herself how she feels about this issue. She’s old enough.”

“Fine. Tell her. You’re right. She is old enough to decide this on her own.”

“I’d rather do it alone, though. Maybe I’ll take her out if she’s free this afternoon.”

Over lunch no one spoke of Homecoming, but as the meal came to a close Drew invited Lola to go shopping in the city, knowing the teenager couldn’t resist. That afternoon Drew and Lola enjoyed each others company, while trying to improve Drew’s wardrobe. Then they went to dinner and a movie before heading home. On the ride back, Drew contemplated how to approach the Homecoming subject with Lola.

“You’re being unusually quiet.” Lola mentioned changing the radio station.

“Yeah, just thinking about Homecoming.”

“Did you talk to Mom?” Drew gave a small nod. “Is there a problem?”

“Not exactly. Look, Lola, we need to talk about this seriously. You may not think this is a big deal, but it really is.”

“I don’t see why.”

“I know, sweetheart. Your mother and I have talked about it and decided that I need to tell you something important that might affect how you feel about me.” Lola’s face showed confusion.

“Lola, your mother and I have been friends for a long time, and I’ve known you all your life, but there’s still something you don’t know about me.”

“Well, what is it? It can’t be bad.”

“No, it’s not bad, Lola. God, this is harder than I expected. Okay. I’ll just start at the beginning. Your mom was a senior in high school when I moved here. I was a sophomore, and we became friends. Well, I was a total jock and wore my dad’s old clothes. Some kids, who are now parents of your peers, got the idea that I was a lesbian. Rumors flew about your mother and me, and I think she ended up losing the election for Homecoming queen herself because of her friendship with me. To make a long story short, I was verbally and physically assaulted on numerous occasions by my peers. It’s ironic that I am now the sheriff of this town, and they pretend to look up to me, but I know under it all, your mom is one of my only true friends.”

“What’s this have to do with me?”

“Well, the kids that did this to me are now parents of the kids at your school. I wouldn’t want them to be mean to you because of me. You see, I am gay, but I’ve always tried to keep that as far out of light as possible. I just don’t want them to hurt you, because of what I am. Your mother’s always known, and we’ve decided that you were old enough to know as well. If you want to rethink Homecoming, I understand. I personally think you should. We just don’t want you to get hurt.”

“You’re gay, Drew?” Lola asked as they came to a stop in front of her house. Drew nodded. “Why didn’t you ever tell me before? I thought we were friends.”

“We are friends, Lola. That’s why I’m telling you now. You need to know now. You didn’t before.” explained Drew.

Shaking her head angrily, Lola stated, “I wish one of you had told me! I feel like I don’t even know you! For seventeen years you’ve kept this from me!”

“You were just a child. You’re still young, but you’re old enough to know this. Maybe you just need some adjustment time. Think about Homecoming some more. I think you should take your mother instead.”

“I can’t believe this.” Lola mumbled opening the passenger’s door.

Drew touched her arm, but she shrugged out of it. “Lola, I’m sorry if you’re upset.”

“I feel betrayed, Drew, by you and Mom!” she yelled slamming the door. Drew just watched her scurry inside instead of going after her.

Chapter 2

The following Saturday night Drew was sitting on her porch watching the setting sun. Looking toward the stable, she saw Lola’s yellow Beetle. They hadn’t spoken since the previous weekend. Checking her watch, she noted that Lola didn’t normally stay that late. Seeing her car and Steve’s truck were the only vehicles, she thought about Lola’s comment from last Saturday. An overwhelming urge struck her to check on them, so she set her beer on the table before

heading down the hill. Opening the barn door, it was quiet, too quiet for her comfort, so she called their names, heading toward the office. When she was within a few feet of the door, she heard a muffled sob. Yanking the door open, she felt her stomach turn.

There on the ground were Lola and Steve physically struggling, Steve winning being so much larger. Angrily Drew grabbed a wooden chair next to her. “Hey asshole!” she screamed breaking the chair over Steve’s head. He landed with an unconscious thud onto Lola’s body. Dragging him off Lola, she checked his vitals. “Lola, call 911 for me. Tell them we need the police and an ambulance.”

While Lola was on the phone, Drew went to the barn to find some rope in order to tie Steve up until authorities arrived on the scene. Having restrained him Drew turned her attentions to Lola. “Let me look at you. Are you hurt?” she asked raising Lola’s face. “Oh God. Look at you. Let me get you some ice for the swelling. You just sit down.”

Drew quickly went to the freezer in the stable to grab an icepack. Coming back she knelt in front of Lola. Holding the ice to Lola’s cheek with one hand, Drew gently brush back Lola’s long, golden hair with the other. “You’re safe now.” Drew whispered kissing her tears away.

When police arrived Steve was still unconscious. “Sheriff Bailey, do you have any idea of the situation?” they questioned. Drew gave them all her information before they questioned Lola, who gave the same account.

Once they were alone, it was past dark. “Sweetheart, do you want me to take you to the hospital?”

Lola shook her head. “No. I’ll be fine. It’s just bruising. He hit me pretty hard, but I’ll be fine.”

“Why don’t we go up to the house so I can call your mom?”

“No. Don’t call her just yet. I don’t want her coming over here.”

“But she’d want to know something happened to you.”

“Please, Drew.” Lola pleaded.

“All right. I won’t call her just yet. Let’s go up to the house. I’ll fix you some dinner.”

Quietly they had supper before sitting down to a movie. Half way into it, Lola stretched out on the couch placing her head in Drew’s lap. Absentmindedly, Drew began to play with her hair for a few minutes before Lola turned onto her back. Their gaze met. Drew was transfixed by Lola’s eyes. They were filled with an emotion Drew had never seen on her face before. “You all right?” she asked, her hand stroking Lola’s good cheek. Lola didn’t answer, but brought Drew’s hand to her lips, kissing it softly.

“What’s that for?”

“Just a thank you.” Lola huskily replied turning her attention back to the tv.

Drew was taken back by Lola’s tone, but dismissing it, she turned to the movie as well. Around 11:00 that night, Drew asked, “Don’t you think you should call your mom? She’s probably worried sick about you. I just want her to know you’re safe.” Reluctantly Lola rolled off the couch to call her mom.

After a half hour conversation, Drew spoke to her.

“Are you sure it’s okay if Lola stays with you tonight? I mean I’ll come over and get her if she’s in your way.”

“It’s fine. Lola’s always welcome here. You know that. We’ll talk to you tomorrow.” Drew replied covering for the fact that Lola had invited herself to stay. Going back to the living room, Drew sat back next to Lola on the couch. “Well, I hope you really are planning on staying here since that’s what you told your mother.”

“Oh, Drew. I’m sorry. I just don’t want to go home where she’d keep vigil over me.”

“It’s fine. You can stay here whenever you want.”

“Great. Let’s finish movie. I’m starting to get tired.”

Once the movie was over, Drew locked up the house for the night, before escorting Lola upstairs. Sometime during the night, Drew awoke abruptly to screaming. Running into Lola’s room, she found her in the throes of a nightmare. Kneeling next to the bed, Drew gently tried to wake her. When she had succeeded, Lola clung to her.

“You’re okay, honey. It was just a nightmare.” Drew assured her.

“It felt so real.”

“I know, but it was just a dream. Go back to sleep now.”

“Don’t leave me, please. Hold me until I fall asleep, Drew.”

Complying with the request, Drew slipped under the covers next to Lola, who immediately wrapped her body around Drew’s. Drew’s breath caught in her throat. Lola had never acted this way before, and it concerned her.

Drew awoke early the following morning feeling a body snuggling closer to hers. Looking over Drew saw Lola still sleeping, her blonde hair strewn wildly like a halo around her head. The bruises Steve had inflicted were already fading.

Gazing at her Drew thought back to Kate at that age. She and Lola had an amazing resemblance.

Drew remembered how painful it was to realize that she was in love with Kate her sophomore year of high school, but she had always kept it to herself. Even to the present day, she had never spoken of her first love to anyone. Eventually her heart moved on, but she always held Kate in her memories as her first beloved. "Sweet angel." she whispered kissing Lola's temple before rising from bed.

A couple of hours later she heard Lola coming down the stairs. "Morning, sleepy." Drew greeted still buried in the paper. Lola plopped down in a kitchen chair next to Drew. Propping her head on her hands that were folded on the table, she stared at Drew.

Briefly peeking over the top of the paper, Drew mentioned, "You look so much like your mother right now."

"Drew, may I ask you a question? Last week you mentioned that there were rumors about Mom and you being together. Were they true?"

Drew laughed off her unease. "If they were true, then they wouldn't be rumors, would they?" she replied.

"Did you want to? You know, be with my mother?"

Drew lowered her paper looking at Lola seriously. "Lola, your mother and I have been friends for over twenty years, just friends. That's all we've ever been. I'll say this. You're mom was very attractive, still is, but I never would've ruined our friendship by trying to change the dynamics of our relationship."

"Have you dated a lot? I mean I would've thought I would've seen you with women."

"Not in a few years."

"Must get lonely." Lola mentioned.

"Enough about me. Tell me. Are you interested in anyone? You haven't spoken of anyone in awhile now."

"There's no one. I guess I'm just in a dry spell."

"Come on. A beautiful girl like you doesn't have a dry spell."

Lola blushed. "You think I'm beautiful?" she asked shyly.

"Of course you are. You're the daughter of Katherine and Paul Emerson. You couldn't be anything but beautiful. Your whole family is."

Lola nodded in agreement. "Drew, I've changed my mind about Homecoming. You're right. I should take my mom."

“Good. I think that’s a wise choice.”

“I want you to come, though.”

“I wouldn’t miss you being crowned queen for the world, Lola.”

“If I am.”

“You will be. I know it. You’re beautiful, intelligent, caring, popular. Everything is in your favor.”

“Thanks for the confidence, even though it is biased.”

A little later Lola decided to go, leaving Drew to her paper. Slipping into Drew’s lap, Lola kissed Drew on the cheek. “Thanks for everything, you know coming to my rescue, being my knight in shining armor, and all. I love you.”

“Love you too. Have a good day.” As soon as she was gone, Drew touched her cheek, feeling the kiss lingering on her skin. Lola was acting strange, and it puzzled her. Calling Kate, Drew relayed her concern.

“Well, you know, Drew, she’s always looked up to you.”

“I know, but I’m telling you this is different. She’s clinging to me more than usual. Just observe her for a few days. If she continues to do it with others, you might want to talk to her. This might be in reaction to the incident.”

“All right. I’ll keep an eye out for her. By the way, do you want to go out tonight? I’m sure Lola will be out with her friends, and I don’t feel much like being alone.”

“Sure. Sounds good. I’ll pick you up.”

That evening Drew arrived at their house around 7:00. When Kate answered the door, Drew presented her a bouquet of tiger lilies with a smile.

”Oh, Drew, my favorite.” she said. “Thank you.” Kate pulled her into a hug.

“I figured you could use a little sunshine. Just seeing you smile is worth it.”

Blushing Kate replied, “You always did know how to make me feel special, Drew.”

Just then Lola walked into the living room. Instantly spotting the flowers, she gave Drew a skeptical glare. “Oh to be so lucky to get flowers from you, Drew. Maybe one day, I’ll be the lucky one.” Lola and Drew shared a silent stare. “Don’t wait up.” Lola instructed pinching Drew on the arm before waltzing out the door.

“See what I mean?” Drew asked.

“What do you think she meant by her comment?”

“I think your daughter is under the impression that you and I...”

“But we aren’t, never were.”

“That’s what I told her, but it’s obvious she has other thoughts.”

“I can’t let her go around thinking that.”

“Why not? What would it really change for her to think that?”

Kate shrugged. “I just don’t want her to think I loved her father any less. If she’s under the impression that we have a history, she might think that I didn’t love Paul.”

“Listen, Kate. Lola knows you love Paul with everything that you are. Hey, I just had a great idea. Why don’t we get a case of beer and get wasted just like we did in high school?” Drew suggested with enthusiasm.

“Don’t you think we’re a little old for that?”

“Come on. It’ll be fun. We’ll get drunk and stay up all night telling our darkest secrets.”

Kate laughed. “Oh all right, but if I have a hangover tomorrow, I’m going to hurt you.”

After dinner that night, they went back to Kate’s with two six packs of beer. Grabbing an old blanket, Kate escorted Drew to the back field. They reclined quietly looking at the stars and drinking. Most of the conversation centered around the girls, but the more they drank, the more nostalgic they became. As the night became cooler, Kate wrapped her body around Drew’s as they laid on the ground.

“Drew, do you remember the night before I left for college?”

“How could I forget? It was a night just like this.”

“Yeah, it was. You had just turned sixteen, and I was nineteen. We were doing the exact same thing too. Who would’ve thought that twenty one years later, we’d still be lying here next to each other?”

“Pretty amazing, isn’t it?” Drew commented.

Propping up on her elbow, Kate looked down into Drew’s dark eyes. “Drew, if I tell you something about that night, will you promise not to be upset or embarrassed?”

“Kate, it was twenty one years ago. I’m sure it’ll be all right.”

“That night when I laid next to you and wrapped my arm around you, I felt your heart jump. It began to race out of control.” Drew put a hand over her face and groaned. “You wanted me, didn’t you?” Drew delayed in her answer.

“Please, Drew. It’s important to me. Tell me the truth.”

Breathing deeply Drew mumbled, “Yes, Katherine, I did. I didn’t think you ever realized it.”

“That’s when I finally did. You know, I had enjoyed your company regardless of the rumors, but that night something happened. I don’t know if I was just drunkenly curious, but I began to wonder what it would be like to be with you.”

“Why are you telling me this now?”

“Because I guess I just wanted you to know that I shared your love. I think I wanted you just as badly as you wanted me. It actually pained me the first time we embraced, and I didn’t feel your heart pounding against my chest, but we both grew up I guess. I found Paul, and the rest is history.”

“Why did you wait this long to tell me?”

“For the same reason you did. I was scared of losing your friendship, but tonight when you brought those flowers, it all came back to me.” Kate whispered tucking a piece of Drew’s hair behind her ear. Kate’s hand trailed down Drew’s jaw as their eyes questioned the others. After a moment of silence, Kate inquired huskily, “Would you kiss me, Drew, if I asked you to?” Drew closed her eyes feeling Kate’s mouth hovering over hers. Leaning up Drew caught Kate’s lips with her own, her tongue slowly probing into the treasured cavern of Kate’s mouth. Kate whimpered pulling away. “Come inside with me, Drew.”

“Let’s stay here.” Drew suggested pushing Kate onto her back. Taking in the sight of Kate’s chest rising and falling erratically, Drew gazed into her eyes. “God, you’re still so beautiful, even after all these years. If I could only be sixteen again.”

“This is our chance to relive the past. Be sixteen again, Drew. Show me how much you loved me. Make love to me.”

Drew’s eyes began to water. Pressing her face into Kate’s clothed breasts, Drew inhaled deeply, taking in her distinctive scent. “God, Katherine. I never thought I’d hear those words from you, and I can’t believe I’m about to say this. As much as I’d like to do this, I don’t think it’s right. You mean too much to me to take you in a drunken stupor. I’d much rather wait to see if this really is something we want to do sober. I wouldn’t want to regret it or lose your friendship. Please, try to understand.”

“I do. You truly are a wonderful person, Drew. We’ll wait. For now though, come to bed with me. I want you to hold me tonight.”

Drew was awakened late in the night by the sound of the front door. Noting the time, she realized it was past Lola’s curfew. Sliding out of bed softly, as not to wake Kate, Drew opened the bedroom door in time to see Lola’s close. Drew went up to the door and knocked.

Lola yanked it open surprised to see Drew standing there in only a t-shirt and boxer shorts. “Drew, what are you doing here?”

“It’s a little past your curfew, isn’t it?”

“Oh please. It’s not like Mom even misses me with you around. So, what’s the deal? Give her flowers and get an invitation to bed?”

Stepping into the room, Drew closed the door behind her. “How dare you speak about your mother like she’s some sort of tramp? She’s hurting, Lola. I’m just being her friend. I don’t want to replace Paul in her life or yours.”

“Then stop acting like it!”

“I’m not. I’m just trying to be a friend to your mom and to you.”

“Well, maybe that’s not what I want! Did you ever think of that?”

Drew stared at Lola with hurt and confusion. “Then what is it that you want from me, Lola? If you could have your way, how would I fit into your life? You’ve been acting strange with me for a week. What’s wrong? What do you want from me?” Drew asked holding out her arms in frustration. They stared at each other for a few moments before Lola’s eyes grew wet. Instantly Drew embraced her. Their eyes were still locked, Drew’s questioning the emotions of Lola’s. Suddenly Drew felt Lola’s mouth sensuously lock with hers. Instantly Drew pulled away. “What’s with you? Have you been drinking?”

“Drew, please.” Lola begged holding Drew by the arms.

“Please what? Why did you just kiss me?”

“Because I’ve always wanted to.”

“What? Lola, you’re the daughter of my best friend. What do you mean you’ve always wanted to?”

“Drew, I never knew what I was feeling for you until you told me about being gay. Then suddenly it made sense.”

“What did?”

“I want to be with you, Drew.”

Pulling away completely, Drew crossed her arms protectively. “I’m not hearing this. Lola, listen to me. You’re confused about your sexuality. That’s okay. We can deal with that, but how do I fit into this picture? I’m old enough to be your mother. What would I tell your mom, my best friend? You’re seventeen. I’m the sheriff of this county. Plainly you can see why this could never work.”

“I don’t care about any of that, Drew. All I know is what I feel. I want to feel you, Drew. I want to feel you touching me.” Lola tried to pry Drew’s arms open but to no avail. Trying desperately to calm her erratic heart, Drew firmly stated, “I can’t, Lola. I’m sorry, but it’s not possible.” Roughly Lola pushed Drew away and collapsing on the bed, she began to sob. “Look try to get some rest. You’re obviously drunk and don’t know what you’re asking of me.”

Lola glared at her with anger and hurt, a look Drew had never seen Lola cast at her before. “Of course I know what I’m asking, Drew! I’m not a child! I’m asking you to take me! I want you to hold me and make love to me! How much plainer can I make it? I know what I want!”

“God, please don’t say that, Lola.”

“Get out! Go back to my mother’s bed! That’s where you’ve always wanted to be! I don’t want you in here!”

Drew withdrew from the room. Going into the living room, she fell onto the couch. Lying alone Drew thought about Lola’s proposition. It was obvious that this had been brewing for some time, longer than she’d known about Drew being a lesbian. Drew wondered how she could’ve missed the signs. Distressed over what to tell Kate, Drew stayed up most of the night restlessly tossing on the couch.

Chapter 3

In the morning she awoke to Kate in the kitchen. Following the smell of coffee, Drew made her way into the kitchen, falling into a chair. Kate glanced up from the stove. “Drew, I woke up and you were gone. Want some coffee?”

Drew nodded sleepily. “I couldn’t sleep, so I laid on the couch.”

“Did you hear Lola come in?” Drew nodded. “She was late again.”

“So she was.” Drew mumbled sipping the coffee Kate had set in front of her.

“You okay?” Kate asked hearing Drew’s tone.

“Just tired.”

“Uh huh and I was born yesterday. Spill it.”

Drew shrugged stalling for time. She didn't know how much she should tell her friend.

“Actually, I confronted Lola about being late last night. We ended up in an argument. She said some things to me in anger about being too much of a parental figure. She accused me of trying to fill Paul's void in her life and yours on a more intimate level. Confronting her in only my pjs didn't help. Maybe she's right. Maybe I have overstepped my boundaries.”

“I don't mind, Drew. The girl needs guidance.”

“I know, but she's beginning to resent me. I think this whole sexuality issue confused her as to where I fit in her life. She feels like you and I have hidden this for ulterior motives, and she feels betrayed.”

“I guess it's time for a heart to heart. She needs help, and I can't give it to her. Maybe I should send her to a professional.”

“I think that's a good idea. I'll even help get references for you. I think she has a lot to say that maybe she can't say to us.”

“You're probably right. Let's forget about it for now though and enjoy breakfast.”

“All right, but I want to get out of here before she wakes up. After last night I think it might only add fuel to the fire.”

That morning Drew decided to help out at the barn since she hadn't found a replacement for Steve yet. Going about chores in the stable, she tried to forget about Lola. Beginning to work up at sweat, Drew tore off the flannel shirt leaving her in only jeans and a t-shirt. Wiping the sweat from her hairline with her flannel, Drew closed her eyes momentarily. An image of Lola flashed in her mind.

She had to admit that even as shocking as it was to feel Lola's lips on hers, dormant desires had been awakened in her soul. Lola looked so much like Kate at nineteen. She hadn't had a serious relationship in over ten years, but after being propositioned by the two most beautiful women in her life, Drew ached for intimacy. Throwing her shirt into the corner in frustration, Drew stated to the horse standing next to her, “I wish I could just get laid.”

“Is that an invitation?”

Drew jumped at the sound of Lola's voice. Turning toward her, Drew looked at her awkwardly. Lola was dressed in tight jeans and a long sleeved white dress shirt tied up to expose her midriff. Her long blonde hair was pinned back off her face, and she was leaning provocatively against the stall door. Drew stepped back putting more space between them, but Lola responded by stepping closer. Drew crossed her arms trying to keep distance.

“Drew, I'm sorry for yelling at you last night.”

“I’m sorry too. I had no right to bust you for curfew or drinking. I’m just concerned about your safety. I didn’t tell your mom about the drinking, but she does know you were late.”

“Thanks for covering for me.”

“I didn’t like doing it, Lola, and I don’t want to have to do it again.”

Lola nodded. They gazed at each other for a moment, and for the first time Drew could clearly see desire in Lola’s eyes. Breaking the eye contact uncomfortably, Drew turned away taking deep breaths. Lola took the opportunity to wrap her arms around Drew’s waist. “I’ve always loved it when you were sweating, your strong muscles pulsing from exertion. I want to know if you’re this enticing in bed.” Lola whispered erotically, leaning her forehead into Drew’s back between her shoulder blades.

Drew willed her heart to stop thumping by reminding herself that this was Lola saying these things, even though it didn’t sound like the little girl she knew. It was the voice of a woman laden with sexual passion, but this was the little girl she had held at birth, changed her diapers, and patched her scraped knees. This was the little girl she’d taken camping and swimming, and she was the one Drew had taught to ride a horse and drive a car. Drew was desperately trying to recall those memories when she faintly became aware of Lola’s hands roaming under her untucked t-shirt. Drew heard Lola’s labored breath as she felt the hands of a woman raking across her bare abdomen putting her on sensory overload.

Yanking away, Drew cursed, “Dammit, Lola! If you weren’t my best friend’s daughter...”

“What? If I wasn’t Kate’s daughter, what?”

Drew felt her stomach turn at the realization of what she wanted to say. An awkward silence passed as Drew felt Lola staring at her, expecting an answer. “I can’t, Lola. I just can’t. Please, don’t ask me again.” she whispered hoarsely, leaning a heavy head and heart against the bars of the stall. She heard Lola slip away quietly before breaking down into tears.

Did she really mean what she was about to say? Did she really want to be what Lola longed for in her? “She’s Kate’s daughter.” Drew repeated to herself like a mantra, but she had to face the fact that if Lola wasn’t, things might’ve been different. However, she was Kate’s and off limits. Drew groaned in anguish, her physical needs beginning to simmer just under the surface, and she yearned for relief that could only be found in the arms of a willing woman. Need getting the better of her, Drew ran up to the house. Quickly showering, she jumped into her truck and headed off toward the city. She had a few friends there who could direct her to what she sought so desperately.

By late afternoon she found herself in the bed of a twenty three year old waitress who had previously taken obvious interest in her at social functions between mutual acquaintances. At 11:00 that night Drew had finally caught up on her ten year abstinence. Falling exhausted onto the body under hers, Drew took several cleansing breaths. “God, Drew, seven hours! I’ll be

walking funny for a week! You're better than I ever imagined." A soft voice said, caressing and soothing her soul.

"Lisa, I hate to do this, but I have to get going. At this rate I won't get home until almost 1:00, and I have to be in the office by 7:00."

"No, stay a little longer, Drew." Lisa pleaded, stroking Drew's short graying brown hair behind her ear.

"I really can't. I'm sorry." Drew replied slipping out of bed to get dressed. Lisa laid there pouting. "Listen, I'll make it up to you. Why don't you come out to my place this weekend?"

"Really?" Lisa asked with renewed hope. Drew nodded hiking on her jeans. "I'll have to check my schedule to see if I can get someone to switch with me. I have to work Saturday night and Sunday lunch, but I'm free Friday."

"Well, let's make it Friday then. You can just stay at my place."

Lisa smiled. "All right. It's a date, Friday night."

"Great. I'll call you later this week. Now I really have to get going."

Lisa got out of bed, pulling the sheet around her to walk Drew to the door. "Thanks for coming over, Drew. I had a wonderful time." Lisa said blushing.

"So did I. Thanks for the invitation." Leaning down, Drew kissed her quickly. "I'll call you."

The following Friday Drew and Lisa spent much of their time in the bedroom, finally falling asleep around 4:00 in the morning. Knowing Lisa wanted to leave by noon to go back to the city, Drew woke her at 10:00. They spent an hour talking over breakfast before spending more time exercising together in the shower.

At noon Drew walked Lisa out to her car. They stood for a long time embraced, kissing on each other, but soon Lisa gently pushed Drew off. "Someone just pulled up behind my car and is staring at us." she whispered uncomfortably. Drew looked over and saw the yellow Beetle.

Breaking away, Drew took Lisa by the hand, pulling her towards Lola's car.

Kate rolled down the passenger's window. "Morning ladies. Car in the shop again, Kate?" Kate nodded. Lola silently glared at Lisa. "Oh, Kate, Lola, this is Lisa. Lisa, this is my best friend, Kate, and her daughter, Lola. Kate, why don't you just borrow my Jeep until your car is fixed? That way Lola doesn't have to be without a car."

"You wouldn't mind?"

"Of course not. Come inside. We'll have coffee." Kate agreed getting out of the car. "Have fun

riding, Lola,” Drew said. Lola just rolled her eyes before speeding off down the path. “Why don’t you go inside, Kate? I’ll be right behind you.” Drew suggested.

Once they were alone again, Lisa kissed her deeply. “I’ll miss you. Call me soon.”

Going inside Drew found Kate at the kitchen table drinking coffee. “How old is that child?” she asked.

“Twenty three.”

“Drew, what possessed you to do that? She’s too young for you.”

Drew shrugged. “I guess I was just lonely. It’s been too long since I’ve had anyone.”

“So you choose a child? Are you having an early midlife crisis?”

“Kate, I just wanted some sex. Okay?”

“You talk like such a man sometimes, Drew.” Kate stated in obvious disdain.

“Well, what’s wrong with wanting sex and going out to find it? If I remember correctly, you did the same thing just last week.”

Kate blushed. “Oh, all right. I concede to your point. She’s just so young. I mean she’s not much older than Natalie and Lola.”

“I know, but she was available. Can we just drop this? Obviously this upsets you.”

“I doesn’t.” Kate protested, but Drew stared at her in disbelief. “Oh, okay, it does. I mean last week we talked about us venturing into a sexual relationship. I guess I just feel a little over the hill, having to compete with a twenty three year old.”

“Since when was this a competition?”

“It’s not. I’m sorry. You have a right to do what you want. I guess I’m just feeling a little insecure with myself today, and it’s been such a long time since I’ve seen you with anyone.”

A few minutes passed before Drew asked, “How’s Lola doing?”

“I think she’s upset with you. Last Saturday I found her ripping down all the pictures of you in her room, which is quite a lot. She wouldn’t talk to me about it. You two get into an argument?”

“Same stuff as usual. Hopefully a counselor can help her. I don’t think we can.”

“I hope so. I don’t like seeing her in pain like this.”

Drew nodded in agreement. “So, Homecoming’s only two weeks away. Did Lola get a dress yet?”

“Yeah. Look, I just wanted to tell you that I appreciate you talking her into taking me as her escort.”

“This is a special moment for her, and you, as her mother, should be apart of it.”

“Well, thank you. Are you going to come to the game with me?”

“Actually, I’ll be working the game, directing traffic and patrolling. Most of my people went to school there, so they all want to go to the game. I’ve tried to accommodate as many as possible. I’m sure you’ve got friends going, though.”

“But they’ll all be with their husbands. It’s going to be a long night without Paul.”

Taking her hand, Drew said, “I’ll be there if you need me. Things will be all right.”

Chapter 4

The night of the Homecoming game Drew spent most of her time patrolling around the field while the game was in progress. Going to the concession stand, she got herself a coke and watched the crowd from afar. She saw Lola on the field with the other cheerleaders gossiping. Looking towards the stands she noticed a stunning beauty walking up to her.

“Wow. You look great, Kate. New dress?”

Kate gave a blushing nod. “When do you get off tonight, Drew?”

“After the game. Why?”

“Will you give me a ride home? I’ve had just about all I can stand of my present company. I’m really missing Paul.”

“Of course I will. Just keep your chin up and no crying. Wouldn’t want to ruin that pretty make up.” Drew mentioned making Kate laugh.

“I better get going. It’s almost half time.”

Just as Kate walked away, Drew heard a voice call out, “Sheriff Bailey.”

Drew turned to see the principal of the school and one of her former peers coming toward her. “Drew, I was wondering if I could talk to you a moment?”

Drew nodded walking them out of earshot of people. “What do you want, Franklin?”

“Well, it’s customary that the sheriff crown the queen. I was wondering if you would do it tonight?” he asked faking a smile.

Drew snarled. “We both know you don’t want me crowning any queen, Franklin, or you would’ve asked me earlier! Now stop trying to kiss up!”

“All right! I don’t want you crowning any queen, you fucking dyke, but I’m in a bind! The fact is the former sheriff canceled on me. I just thought since you and Kate Emerson were still good friends after all these years that maybe you’d like to crown her daughter!”

“You’re such prick, Franklin! Fine, I’ll crown her!”

“Good. The presentation will be starting in about ten minutes. Don’t tell anyone you know the results!”

“I wouldn’t dream of it, asshole!”

“Too bad she was the one that got away from you. I always did think she’d be such a sweet lay.” he jeered angrily.

“You know, you have always had something against me, Franklin! You hated the fact that Kate preferred to be with me than you! You just couldn’t face the fact that you weren’t man enough for her, and you never will be! You couldn’t even fight me one on one for her! Instead you had to gang up on me with two other guys, and I still kicked your asses! If you ever speak about Kate that way again, it would be a pleasure to give you another reminder of what a weakling of a man you really are!” Drew yelled storming away.

As the group began to assemble at the end zone at half time, Kate approached her again. “What are you doing? Did they finally come to their senses and decide to let you do the crowning?”

Drew gave a huge grin. “Something like that.”

“You know something. Did she win?” Kate pressed.

“Get back to your daughter. It’s almost time.”

Principal Franklin made introductions of the girls and their escorts that evening as Drew stood by him. They put on a front for the crowd that things were fine between them. After the announcement of the two senior princesses, three girls were left. Lola looked at Drew, who gave her a wink and a smile.

When Lola’s name was announced, Lola and her mother both began to cry as they hugged tightly. Lola beamed at Drew as she approached with the crown. Drew placed it on her before looking into her eyes. “You’re absolutely stunning, Lola. You make a fine queen.”

In her excitement Lola grabbed Drew, hugging her fiercely. “I love you, Drew.” she whispered

into Drew's neck.

"I love you too, sweetheart. Your court is awaiting you."

"I could stay in your arms like this forever."

"Lola, don't do this in front of everyone. Let go of me." Lola released her, and their eyes met. Touching her under the chin, Drew said, "Smile, my queen. This is your moment."

After halftime Drew went back to leaning against the concession stand when Kate came up to her. "You knew the whole time." she accused lightly.

Drew nodded. "It was the only way that asshole, Franklin, would let me on the field. He's such a jerk."

"What did he say to you, Drew?"

"Nothing new. You know, you would think after twenty years, people would grow up."

Kate gave a nod looking off toward Lola. "She looks so beautiful."

"She certainly does, just like her mother." Drew mentioned taking a sip of her drink. Kate blushed. "Well, I've got to get back to work. I'll be directing traffic after the game, but you can always wait for me in my squad car."

"Okay, I will."

As Kate began to walk away, Drew called her back. "I just wanted you to know that you also look stunning this evening. As usual I find myself being the envy of many men. I'm honored that I have a place at your side."

Kate gave a shy smile. "See you after the game."

Back at Kate's house, Drew decided to stay for awhile. Taking off her weapons, she hung them in the closet. "You want something to drink?" Kate asked from the kitchen.

"Sure. I'm going to start a fire if that's all right." Drew answered.

Kate entered a few minutes later. Drew had Kate's favorite jazz CD on the stereo with all the lights off. Kate laughed at the ambiance. "Always were the romantic." she commented extending a bottle of wine and an opener to Drew. "I'm going to change into something more comfortable."

A few minutes later Kate came back in. Drew noted the flowing autumn frock that Kate had slipped on. Handing her a glass of wine, Drew raised her glass. "To Lola, the most beautiful queen our school has ever seen."

“To Lola.” Kate replied sipping her wine.

Setting her glass down, Drew extended a hand to Kate. “Dance?” she asked.

“I don’t think we’ve ever danced together before.” Kate mentioned taking Drew’s hand.

Leaning to Kate’s ear, Drew whispered, “There’s a first time for everything, Katherine.”

“What are you wearing?” Kate asked feeling the unusual hardness of Drew’s chest.

“Bulletproof vest.”

“It’s uncomfortable. Take it off.” Kate demanded.

Drew looked down into Kate’s hazel eyes as she untucked her shirt. Kate’s hands joined Drew’s in working open the buttons. Neither spoke as they stared deeply into each others eyes before being drawn into a gentle kiss. The shirt was soon forgotten as their mouths communicated latent needs. Suddenly they heard the front door open. Kate quickly dove onto the couch, turning on the light on the table, but Lola and her friends walked in on Drew trying to button her shirt. Lola looked at her mother trying to lounge casually before glancing at Drew, who had given up on the buttons and was just standing there, arms folded across her chest.

“I thought you were going to a party.” Kate mentioned, bring Lola’s attention back to herself.

“We are. I just came home to change. What are your plans for the evening?” she asked looking at Drew.

“Not much. I’m probably going to just go home. I gave your mom a ride back after the game. We were just chatting about my bullet proof vest. She mentioned that she had never seen it on me, so I was just showing her.” Drew said, poking herself in the chest.

Lola gauged her friends’ reactions. Sensing that they bought the lame story, she ushered them to her room. Drew went into the bathroom to take off her vest and uniform shirt. Hanging them in the closet with her weapons, she came back to the living room and took a seat in the chair furthest from Kate until the girls left half an hour later.

Once they were alone again, Kate said, “Thanks for covering for us. I’m sure it looked bad.”

“Why did you panic, Katherine?” Drew asked coming to the couch.

“I don’t know. I guess I’m just not sure about what we’re doing. I know it could be great, but I’m not sure it’s the right thing for us. I don’t want either one of us to get hurt, and I don’t want to lose your friendship, Drew.” Drew nodded pulling Kate into an embrace. “I miss Paul.” Kate wept after a few minutes.

“I know you do.”

“Every night I go to bed aching for him, Drew. I miss the feeling of him lying next to me. I miss the feeling of waking up to his kiss.”

“It’ll take time, Kate. You’re going to miss him for a long time.”

“I’m so sorry, Drew. I don’t know what I’ve been thinking putting you through this. You deserve a woman who knows what she wants. I’m just not her.”

“Maybe you should see a counselor too?” Drew suggested. “It might help you.” Kate nodded. “Why don’t we just lay here? Let me hold you.”

Drew covered them with a blanket, and they were silent the rest of the evening. Neither had realized that they had fallen asleep until Lola came in at 2:00. “I should get going.” Drew mentioned sitting up to put on her shoes. “Let’s put you in bed. Lola can lock up behind me.”

Seeing Kate to bed, Drew went to Lola’s room. “Just tell me the truth, Drew. What are your intentions toward my mother?”

“I have none other than friendship, Lola. I promise you.”

“It just looked bad to walk in on you two tonight. I’m just glad my friends actually believed that dumb story.”

“Me too. I just wanted to let you know how wonderful it was to crown you tonight. I’ll always cherish the memory.”

“So will I.” Lola mentioned coming to Drew. They hugged for a moment. “Drew, your friend Lisa...”

“Lola, I’m sorry you had to see that.”

“Why her? Am I not beautiful enough?”

“Oh, Lola, you are so beautiful. Actually, I just needed some relief, and I knew she’d willing give it to me.”

“I don’t understand. You know I’m willing. Why not me? Why can’t you see me as anything more than a little girl?” Lola asked looking up to Drew’s face. She backed out of Drew’s arms and gestured to her own body. “Is my body so unappealing to you?”

“Lola, sweetie, you’re in a transitional phase right now. Sometimes I look at you and see a little girl and other times a woman. As a child you’re easy to dismiss, but that day you cornered me in the stall, you were a woman. It scared me, Lola.”

“Why? Tell me, please.”

“I’m so ashamed of myself. Your touch was evoking emotions I hadn’t felt in a long time. I was on fire with need. I couldn’t believe it was you awakening my senses. I had to keep reminding myself that you’re Kate’s daughter. It would ruin my friendship with your mother if I ever caved to temptation. You have to understand that.”

“But...”

“No buts, Lola. No exceptions. I can’t, and that’s all there is to it. Now I have to get out of here. Come lock the door behind me.” Drew turned to walk away, but Lola held her firmly. Raising up on her toes, Lola leaned to Drew’s mouth, hovering lightly. Drew felt the jolt in her body as Lola’s mouth brushed sensuously into hers. Drew’s mouth opened to protest but found her voice muffled by Lola’s tongue plummeting into her mouth. Drew groaned forgetting herself momentarily, but as their mouths met a second time, realization dawned. Pulling away, Drew rested her head on top of Lola’s mumbling, “Oh God, this can’t happen.” She felt Lola’s lips on her neck. “God, why are you doing this to me, Lola?” she moaned.

“I want you, Drew.” Lola seductively whispered.

“But I can’t. You’re seventeen. Please, spare me this agony. I can’t take it.” Drew begged desperately.

Lola reluctantly pulled away. “I’ll walk you out.” she mumbled not meeting Drew’s eyes. Stepping onto the porch they hugged. “Drew, please reconsider me before running to Lisa.”

Drew touched Lola’s cheek brushing back an errant strand of blonde hair. Instead of responding, Drew simply kissed Lola’s cheek whispering, “Good night, sweet angel. You’re a queen in my heart always.”

“See you tomorrow. I want you here for pictures before the dance.”

“I wouldn’t miss it.”

The next evening Drew showed up as promised with a white rose in hand. “Lola’s still getting ready.” Kate mentioned letting Drew into the house.

There was a young man sitting nervously on the couch. Drew eyed him closely. “Hi there. You must be Lola’s date. I’m Sheriff Drew Bailey.” she introduced herself extending her hand to him. He stood and shook it timidly as he greeted her. “I’m just going to let Lola know I’m here.” Going into Lola’s room, she found her standing in a full length black dress primping in the mirror. She smiled brightly at Drew. “A rose for the queen.” Drew stated extending the flower, feeling unusually shy for a moment in front of this breathtaking creature.

“Oh, Drew, you’re so sweet. Thank you.” Lola replied nonchalantly kissing Drew quickly on the lips. Drew could feel her face growing warm, another unusual occurrence for her.

Fighting the blush Drew complimented her outfit. “You have become quite a lovely young lady, Lola, beautiful, charming, intelligent, and you look amazing in this dress. Your date is a lucky guy. Tell me. Is he a love interest?”

“Would you be jealous if he was?” Lola asked playing with her hair. When Drew didn’t answer, Lola looked at her directly.

“I just want to know, because if he is, I want to put the fear of God and the law in him. I just want him to know that I have a gun and a shovel if he hurts you in anyway.”

Lola chuckled. “You have nothing to worry about, Drew. He’s harmless.” Lola turned to get final approval.

“Wow. I’d swear you weren’t seventeen in that outfit.”

Lola came up to Drew and playfully tugged on her collar. “Drew, you’re my only love interest. I could never be unfaithful to you. Share a dance with me right here, right now.” she said bringing Drew’s hands to her waist.

Drowning in those hazel eyes, Drew felt her resolve slip away as she gently guided Lola around the bedroom. After a song, Drew mentioned, “You’re date is waiting.”

“I could care less. Right now all I care about is being here in your arms. Of course, if I had my way, I’d let my fantasy continue.”

“I’m not sure I should know where your mind leads you.” Drew said beginning to pull back.

“But I want you to know. My favorite fantasy is that we’re dancing just like this, and we begin to kiss. Ever so slowly we proceed to get more involved in each other. You sweep me up into your arms taking me to bed where you make love to me, turning me into a real woman. I can almost feel it if I try, the feeling of your body on mine, you touching me in places where no one has before.” breathlessly Lola explained.

Drew’s breathing matched Lola’s as her mind envisioned the fantasy. “God, you’re a virgin too.” she moaned.

“I told you I knew what I wanted, Drew. I’ve been waiting for you.”

“What would I tell Kate? Ask her to continue to be my best friend while I sleep with her daughter? I could never do that to her. Now come on. Your date’s been waiting.”

Pictures took half an hour and then Drew found herself alone with Kate.

“Are you worried about her?” Kate asked.

“Yes. I just don’t want her to act in a way she will regret later. She wants to be a grown up now.”

“Do you think she’ll do something wrong?”

“I hope not.”

“I don’t like the way you sound. Has she confided something in you? Is she planning on drinking or having sex with someone?”

“Not with him.”

“Oh good. You were beginning to scare me.”

“It’s just that she thinks she’s ready for a sexual relationship. I’m afraid she’ll pick the wrong person. I don’t want her to get hurt.”

“Did she give you a name, Drew?” Drew hesitated, but then slowly nodded.

“Who?”

“She told me in confidence. I don’t want to break that, but I’ll say this. I don’t think it’s a good choice.”

“Then you know him. Do I?”

Drew gave another nod. “She’s a virgin, Kate. I just hope she decides to stay that way a little longer.” Changing the subject Drew asked, “How are plans going for her surprise party?”

“Pretty good. I can’t believe my baby’s going to be eighteen in two weeks. Where did the time go?”

Chapter 5

Two Sundays later was Lola’s birthday. As usual Lola went riding at Drew’s. However it was Drew’s responsibility to keep her occupied until at least 6:00 that evening. Kate had dropped her off at the barn at noon pretending that her car was having trouble again, so Drew knew Lola would ride until at least 4:00. They had arranged for Drew to bring Lola home after riding, so as 4:00 approached, Drew wondered how she would stall for two hours. Sitting on the back porch, Drew spotted Lola coming up the walk toward the house. Drew couldn’t help herself from appraising Lola’s outfit, boots, jeans, and a flannel she’d stolen out of Drew’s closet years before. As she watched she noted the way Lola’s hips swayed as she walked. Drew grinned knowing Lola was performing for her. Taking another sip of her beer, Drew continued to stare slowly realizing she was enjoying the show more than she should. Drew sighed heavily.

Things were definitely changing between them. Lola was steering their relationship into dangerous waters regardless of how much Drew resisted. Drew admitted to herself that Kate was the real reason she had tried to divert Lola, but it was obvious that Lola didn’t want to be

dissuaded. When Lola got to the porch, she sat on Drew's lap. "You never give up, do you?" Drew asked referring to Lola's boldness. Secretly Drew was beginning to delight in Lola's attention.

Lola shook her head with a sexy smile. "I think I'm starting to get to you. Why would I give up now?" Lola teased running a finger along Drew's neck.

Drew didn't even realize she'd gulped until Lola laughed softly. "Happy birthday to me." she breathed into Drew's ear before biting the lobe. Drew growled jumping from the chair, effectively suspending Lola in mid air. Noting the change of position and Drew's unstable breathing, she smiled.

"So that's how to jump start you. Good to know."

Drew gently set Lola down. "You're incorrigible. I'm going to have to be committed because of you."

Lola laughed. Swatting Drew's rear, she headed into the house saying, "I have to shower before you take me home."

"Okay. Anything you need?"

Lola looked over her shoulder and raised a brow. "Only you." she answered continuing inside.

Drew's legs went weak as she sank into her chair. "Damn, that woman could drive one to drink." Drew stated to no one in particular as she took a big swig of her beer.

Closing her eyes, Drew relived the past few minutes in her mind. Lola was desperately trying to work her into a sexual frenzy, one she had no chance to control, but Drew wondered how Lola really felt about her. If she was in love, Drew knew it would be wrong to pursue her, but there was definitely a sexual attraction. Drew then remembered the look on Lola's face as she turned to go inside. A strong willed, sensual, wanton woman had given her those eyes, not a little girl. Drew resolved to speak to her after her shower.

Finishing her beer, Drew went inside, picking up Lola's present off the kitchen counter and proceeding upstairs. Drew found Lola fresh from the shower, dressed in only Drew's robe, brushing her long, wet, golden tresses. Drew felt heat stirring within her as she watched Lola, who, with her closed eyes, seemed unaware of Drew's presence or how enticing she was. Drew felt her own heart fluttering at the arousing display, and she couldn't help but wonder if she was feeling the first stirring of love, especially when she heard her name escaped Lola's lips. When Lola was finished, she pulled her hair over one shoulder and sighed, opening her eyes. She turned to see Drew frozen against the door frame with sexual tension etched clearly across her features.

"Lola, I want to talk to you about something serious."

“What about?” she asked coming to Drew and wrapping her arms around Drew’s neck.

Drew pulled Lola’s hands down and held them in her own close to her chest. “Us.” she sighed.

“I think I like the sound of that.”

“Lola, please. Stop with the games for one minute. This is serious. If you want to be with me, you’ve got to learn how to talk to me. You don’t have to give me an answer right now, but I want you to think about something. I want to know how you really feel about me. Are you in love with me? Are you just sexually attracted to me? Are you just curious and want to experience this with someone you trust? Just think it over, and when you’ve decided, come talk to me. We have to know each other’s feelings if you’re serious about us having a relationship.”

“Does this mean we can?” Lola asked hopefully.

“This means we can talk about it. That’s all. Now why don’t you get dressed? Then you can open your present.”

“No, present first. Where is it?” Drew pulled the box out of her pocket and held it out to her. Lola ripped the wrapping off before opening the tiny box. “Oh, Drew.” she whispered pulling the necklace out to inspect. Rolling the diamond back and forth in her cupped hand so it caught the light, she stated, “It’s beautiful! Help me put it on.”

Stepping to her Drew took the necklace from her hands. Lola leaned her head close to Drew’s chest, so Drew could clasp it around her neck. Kissing the top of Lola’s head, Drew whispered, “Happy birthday, angel.”

Lola looked up at her as Drew straightened the chain, centering the diamond. They both felt the electricity as Drew’s fingers grazed the skin of Lola’s neck. Grabbing Drew by the wrist with both her hands so she couldn’t pull away so easily, Lola slowly guided Drew’s hand down through the top of her robe. Drew went rigid as she tried to pull away, but Lola’s grip was stronger. Lola pushed Drew’s hand over her breast and held it firmly there.

“God, Lola, please.” Drew begged but for what she wasn’t sure.

Lola held Drew’s hand firmly with one of her own as the other cupped the back of Drew’s head, bring their mouths together passionately. Drew groaned deeply, her hands taking on their own mind. Slipping both into the robe, Drew caressed Lola’s bare back with one as the other cupped the breast she’d touched, brushing her thumb across the peak causing Lola to whimper. The sound drove Drew mad with desire. Claiming Lola’s mouth harshly, Drew yanked open the robe, pushing it off Lola’s shoulders. Breaking away for a second, Drew looked over Lola’s offering and groaned in approval.

In a voice Drew didn’t even recognize as her own she growled, “God, you’re so sexy! You really do want me to make you a woman, don’t you?”

“Please.” Lola begged thrusting her chest up into Drew’s body.

Drew captured Lola’s mouth in a lustful kiss beginning to back her up towards the bed. Pushing her back onto it, Drew pinned Lola’s naked body down with her own wedging her torso between Lola’s legs. Meeting Lola’s eyes with hers, Drew instantly thought of Kate.

“Oh my God. What am I doing?” Drew growled in anguish, dropping her head onto Lola’s bare chest.

Lola stirred beneath her. “Drew? Drew, are you all right?” she asked caressing Drew’s dark hair.

“Just hold me.” Drew whispered feeling the tears spring forth, splashing Lola’s bare skin. They laid in silence, Lola’s naked limbs enveloping Drew as she wept for almost an hour. Finally Drew rolled off of her. Not meeting Lola’s gaze, she mumbled, “You need to get dressed. I told your mom I’d have you home by 6:30.”

“Drew, are you all right?” Lola reached for her, but Drew held her at bay.

“Just go.” Once she was alone, Drew put an ashamed hand over her face. She didn’t know what she was going to say to Kate, but her mind was quickly overpowered by the vision of Lola’s naked body. “Dammit!” she cursed repeatedly.

Little did she realize that she dozed off until she felt movement on the bed. Opening her eyes, she jumped slightly seeing Lola straddling her hips. Lola smiled brightly, leaning down to Drew’s mouth. They kissed slowly. Drew’s hands found their way to Lola’s blue-jeaned backside. Squeezing the globes gently, Drew elicited a moan from Lola.

Lola pulled away. “You have given me the best birthday presents I could have ever asked for, Drew, and I cherish each one.”

“The necklace looks good on you.” Drew complimented as Lola dismounted.

“I think you look good on me, Drew. You felt so good. I just hope that there’s more where that came from.”

“Come on. Let’s get you home.” Drew said ignoring the statement.

When they got to Lola’s, Drew escorted her to the door, sensing that Lola was oblivious to what was about to happen, but as soon as she opened the door and was surprised, she slapped Drew in the arm. “You sneak!” she teased in mock anger.

During the party Drew helped Kate play hostess, but as the group gravitated to the back field, they stayed behind on the porch.

“That necklace you gave her is really something, Drew. You shouldn’t have.” Kate mentioned.

“Well, I gave Natalie a pair of diamond earrings and roses for her eighteenth birthday, and I remember Lola saying that’s what she wanted too, so I delivered. By the way, did her roses arrive?”

“Yeah. They’re in her room, so she hasn’t seen them yet. They are stunning.”

“Good.” Drew answered quietly.

“Drew, are you all right? You seem upset.”

Drew shrugged. “I’ve just got a problem that I need to work out on my own.”

“You sure you don’t want to talk about it?” Kate inquired staring at her with concern.

Drew crumbled under the gaze. “Lola asked me to have sex with her.” she blurted out under the strain of Kate’s eyes.

“What?” Kate asked in shock.

“Lola told me that she was glad I was a lesbian, because she wanted a sexual relationship with me.” Drew stated slowly.

“I’m sorry. Did I hear you correctly? You just said Lola asked you to go to bed with her?” Drew nodded. “What did you say, Drew?” Drew paused long enough for Kate’s eyes to shoot open. “Do I want to know what’s about to come out of your mouth, Drew Bailey?” she asked with controlled hostility.

“I told her no, Kate. After all, she was only seventeen at the time, and she is your daughter.”

“I have to talk to her.”

“I haven’t told you everything yet.”

“There’s more? I’m not sure I could take it, Drew.”

“I know, but I have to tell you. Ever since the assault, every time we’re alone together, she has tried to seduce me. She’s been everything from subtle to obvious, but the fact is she is determined to have me.”

“Drew, I’m so sorry. This must be awkward for you. I’ll talk to her about it.”

“No don’t. I don’t want her to know that I told you. I don’t want her to resent me for the rest of her life. For now, I think I have it under control.” she lied.

Kate saw through it. “You’re keeping something from me, Drew, and I’m afraid to ask what. Have you taken her? Have you given her what she thinks she wants?”

“No! I haven’t had sex with her, Kate!” emphatically Drew emphasized. “But…”

“But? But what? What have you done with my child?”

“She’s gotten into kissing me. At first I kept trying to stop her, but she keeps coming. I haven’t been able to stop her with my words.”

Kate scowled at her. “I want to know everything, Drew! Tell me, or I’ll get it out of Lola!”

“Okay. Today she came on to me with another oral assault, and I couldn’t stop her. I caved to it. I’ve felt so horrible since it’s happened. I feel like I betrayed you.”

Kate’s eyes were shooting daggers at Drew. “Let me see if I have this right? You have touched my daughter sexually? You have had your hands on her in intimate ways? That’s what you’re saying, right?”

Drew could hear the anger in Kate’s voice. “Katherine, please don’t be upset.”

“Upset? I’m a little more than upset, Drew! I’m so angry with you, I don’t know what to do! She’s a child and even worse, my child!”

“She’s an adult by law.” Drew feebly pointed out.

“I don’t care about your law, Drew! You can take it and shove it up your ass for all I care!” Drew moved to touch her arm, but Kate swatted Drew’s hands away. “Don’t touch me! Don’t ever touch me again! I trusted you!”

“Kate, I’m sorry. You have every right to hate me right now.” Drew stated beginning to feel Kate’s friendship slipping away from her grasp.

“Hate you? Oh, I hate you all right!”

Drew gulped holding back tears. “Maybe I should just go. I’ll just tell Lola good bye and then I’ll be on my way.” Drew said standing.

“No!” Kate yelled jumping from her chair. “You stay away from her! Don’t go near her! You don’t see her! You don’t talk to her, and you sure as hell don’t ever touch her, or I swear I’ll make you suffer!”

Meekly Drew nodded. “Fine. Good bye, Katherine. I love you.”

Drew scurried down from the porch and walked around to the front of the house where her truck was parked. Leaning into the driver’s side window, Drew wept uncontrollably, mourning the turn of events. She had no idea how long she had stood there, and to her it didn’t matter. All that did matter was the fact that her beloved friendship with Kate was gone. She never even heard a car

pulling up behind her but felt a disorienting blow to the back of the head. She tried to recover but felt a punch to her kidney, shooting pain throughout her entire body. Her assailant grabbed her by the shoulder to turn her around. Her eyes were so blurred by tears and the knock to the head that she couldn't see the punch to the jaw. There was an audible crack as Drew went face first into the window before falling to the ground. Gaining enough sense, Drew reached for her gun in her side holster but found it empty.

“Looking for something?” the familiar male voice mocked.

“Steve?” Drew mumbled through a broken jaw. Then she heard the sound of gun fire as pain pierced through her chest.

Continued in Part 2

The Athenaeum's Scroll Archive

~ Persistence ~

by Alex Tryst

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Disclaimers/Warnings: These characters are all mine. This is a story about women trying to find their places in the world and does include sexual scenarios between consenting adult women. Some violence is involved, including one (although not graphic) sexual assault. Additionally there is some derogatory, homophobic language used. If this kind of stuff offends you or is illegal where you live, it's best to turn around now. I feel compelled to mention here that the name of one of the main characters was borrowed from the book *Lolita* by Vladimir Nabokov. For those of you who have read this classic novel, I think you will find my young maiden aptly named. If you'd like to drop me a line concerning the story, you can e-mail me at alextryst@hotmail.com. Please know that I am a sensitive soul and harsh criticism will immediately be deleted. However constructive comments are welcome.

Dedication: To my wife, you are my fondest wish.

Now on with the show.....

Chapter 6

When Drew awoke her eyes took a moment to focus. There standing over her were her parents. Confused as to how they got there, she tried to open her mouth but found it immobile. “Mom? Dad?” she mumbled.

“Try not to talk too much, sweetheart. You've broken your jaw.” her mother explained.

Drew looked at her dad. “You gave us quite a scare there, tiger.” her father mentioned.

Drew could see both her parents’ faces showing tears and obvious relief. “Where am I? Where’s Kate? Is Lola okay?”

“Kate’s in the waiting room, and Lola’s fine. She’s at school right now. She’ll be by to visit you later.”

“But it’s Sunday, her birthday.”

“Drew, tiger, listen. You were in a serious fight. You were shot. The doctors weren’t even sure you’d pull through. Lola’s birthday was ten days ago. You’ve been in a coma.”

“Kate.” Drew mumbled.

“Okay, we’ll get her for you. She said she wanted to talk to you alone when you woke. Are you up to it?” Drew gave a weak nod. “Okay, but don’t wear yourself out. We’ll be right outside if you need anything.”

A few minutes later Kate entered the room. It was obvious she’d been crying by her smeared mascara. Slowly Drew raised a hand to her. Kate was instantly by her side. Leaning down she kissed Drew lightly on the mouth. “Don’t ever do that to me again. I couldn’t bear if I lost you and Paul.”

Pulling Kate’s body as close as she comfortably could, Drew whispered, “I’m so sorry.”

“I am too, Drew.” They held each other silently for awhile before Kate sat up. “Drew, I want to talk to you about Lola when you’re feeling better. She’s going to come by after school. After all that’s happened, you two need some time alone together.” Drew looked at her with confusion. “I know I said I didn’t want you around her, but over the last ten days, I’ve realized I may have overreacted a little. Lola helped me see that. She needs you, Drew, just as much as I do. We’ll talk more later. Right now I have to go back to your place and help your mom clean for when you get home. She was complaining about what a mess it was.” Drew smiled. “I’ll be back later tonight. I want to give you and Lola some time and space.”

That afternoon Drew was resting with her eyes closed when she heard the door to her room open. Drew immediately recognized the perfume as Lola’s. Resisting the temptation to open her eyes, Drew just listened as Lola made her way to the bed. Lola sat next to her and was silent for a few moments.

Finally Drew felt her take one of her hands. “Oh Drew, there’s so much I want to tell you. I’m afraid that if I don’t say it now, I’ll never get the chance. I don’t know how long I have before someone comes in, but I’m glad for this moment alone with you.” Lola paused. “The day of my birthday I did something I now regret. I had planned all along to confront you in only a robe. I thought if I could just show you what I had to offer, you might be enticed, and you were, at least

for a few minutes, but once we were in bed, you started to cry. I've never seen you like that, and I didn't understand until later what that was about. Mom sat me down and told me what you had said to her. You told her it was a mistake, and you were ashamed for doing it. That's when I realized your tears were agony. It was a mistake, Drew, my mistake. I've been selfish, and I've deeply hurt you and the friendship you and Mom share. I never wanted to do that.

You know, on my birthday you asked me how I felt about you, and because of this horrible incident I've had to face those feelings. I want to tell you what they are now, because I believe that you can hear me. Drew, for as long as I've been conscious of what it means to have intimate relationships, I've felt something for you. I didn't know what it was or what it meant at the time, but as I progressed into high school, I realized what I wanted. I wanted you the way my friends wanted boys, and I was scared of what that meant for us. I went out of my way to try to hide it from you, but secretly I savored every touch, every embrace, every kiss we ever shared. Then the thing with Steve happened. I was so afraid. I kept screaming for you hoping somehow you'd hear me. I kept thinking if I could just fight him long enough, you'd save me. As frightening as it is to admit, I know I would've been raped if it weren't for you. I have you to thank for that.

That night when we were on the couch, and I was lying in your lap, I decided I couldn't keep the secret to myself any longer, especially since I then knew about you being interested in women. I began trying in anyway I could to interest you, but you turned on me and went running to Lisa. I was so hurt by that. That's when I devised the robe plan. I wanted to make sure that would never happen again, but it backfired horribly. I hurt you, Drew, and I regret that. Mom and I have had many talks over the last week about you. She finally admitted to me that she knows how I feel about you, because she once felt that way too. I always suspected it, but I never expected her to admit it. She said she knew that you were in love with her in high school and that she shared those feelings. Then she met dad and closed the door on you forever. She adamantly denies having feelings for you now, and I want to believe her, because I couldn't bear losing you to my own mother. Drew, I love you with all my heart, and I am completely in love with you with every fiber of my being. However, I now know I can't push that on you. You don't feel that way about me. I just wanted you to know finally. I would rather you hear it from me than Mom. I'll always love you." she whispered in tears.

Leaning down, she kissed Drew's mouth. Drew began to cry as she wrapped her hand around the nape of Lola's neck. Lola quickly sat up, shocked to see Drew awake. "Hey, angel." Drew mumbled.

"Oh my God. How long have you been awake?"

"Since you walked in."

"So you heard everything? I was pouring my heart out to you, because I thought you were still unconscious."

"I know, but once you started talking, I couldn't stop you. I wanted to hear what you had to say."

"If you weren't already hurt, I'd slap you."

“Save it for later, love. I’m sure you’ll have reason to do it some other time.” Drew replied with a smile.

“Did I just hear you right? It’s hard to tell with that broken jaw. Did you just call me love?”

“I did, and I meant it. I talked to your mother today. She and I have a lot to talk about, but she does understand where you’re coming from, and I need to tell her my feelings.”

“What are your feelings, Drew?”

Drew tentatively took Lola’s hand. “I could easily fall in love with you, Lola. That’s what scares me. I’m afraid you’ll go off to college and realize I’m not everything you want. My heart couldn’t take that. The last person I loved so dearly was your mother, and even though there was no physical relationship, it still hurt when she met your father. Now you are here, Kate reincarnate, asking me to love you. It’s like I have a chance to relive part of my life. I know my heart would love to take the plunge, but my mind is fighting it. I’d want to fall in love with Lola, not Kate at eighteen again. Does that make sense?”

Lola nodded. “Are you in love with Mom now?”

“No. I do love her, and I always will, but I’m not in love with her. Furthermore, she’s not in love with me. She’s in love with the idea of me. She’s hurting over your father’s death. It was so sudden and unexpected. She hasn’t come to terms with it yet. The physical affection is what she misses most about him. She wants the physical intimacy that she shared with him, and since she and I have always been physical, she’s looking to me in her moments of desperation to fulfill the void. In her heart she knows it wouldn’t be the same. We’ve talked about it, and we know it wouldn’t be right for us to become lovers.”

“You know, that night when my friends and I walked in on the two of you, I really thought we had caught you in the middle of foreplay. I thought you had had sex when I came home, and that hurt me so much.”

“I’ll be honest with you, Lola. Had you not come home, I think we would have, and it would’ve been a mistake.”

“Do you want her sexually?”

“No. It was just the moment. We both were longing for physical love, she out of missing her husband and me out of trying to deny my desires for you.” Lola looked at her with peaked interest. “Lola, I admit that I’m physically attracted to you. How could I not be? I just don’t want to fall for you for the wrong reasons. I really need to talk this out with Kate. I need her to tell me it’s okay to feel this way about you before I proceed, and if I do proceed, I have to do it with extreme caution for both our sakes.”

Lola leaned in to kiss her softly. “I love you, Drew.” she said putting her head lightly on Drew’s

shoulder.

Drew held her gently whispering, "I love you too."

Once Drew was released from the hospital, her parents stayed with her at the house. Her routine for a couple of weeks was monotonous. After drinking the breakfast her mother had made, Drew dressed for the day. Her father helped out in the barn, and her mother tended to the house. Every other day Kate would drive her to the office, and Lola would pick her up after cheerleading practice. However after three weeks, Drew adamantly insisted that her parents go, knowing they were contemplating not going on their annual cruise.

The morning they were scheduled to leave Drew and her mother were talking quietly after breakfast. "You know, dear. This might not be any of my business, but are you and Lola actually dating?"

"That's hard to say. We're very slowly heading in that direction I think."

"What does Kate think about her daughter and ex-girlfriend dating each other?"

"Mom, you know Kate and I never dated."

"You know you should've. It was so obvious that you two were in love with each other."

"Maybe but it was years ago. Besides, if we had, I think it would've killed me when she met Paul. It was hard enough as it was."

"Speaking of Paul, can you tell me what's going on with the case?"

Drew shrugged. "Not much to it. Pretty cut and dry really. The guy was charged with vehicular homicide, because he was DUI. With his history of moving violations, he'll go away for a long time. However, it'll never replace Paul. He's gone forever."

Her mother nodded. "Anyway, back to the question at hand. How does Kate feel about you two?"

"We actually haven't talked about it. The day I told her was the day Steve shot me. We've never had an opportunity to discuss it. I think she and I are both worried about what's going to happen when Lola leaves for college. Right now she thinks she wants to be with me. What happens if she goes away and decides she doesn't?"

"Sounds like you're the one with problem, Drew. You're insecure in your abilities to keep her happy, because you don't want to end up broken hearted again. She's not Kate, Drew."

"I know that, Mom."

“Are you in love with her?” Drew shrugged not really wanting to admit that to anyone just yet. “You know you’ve never been good at opening your heart to people. Based on your past, I can understand why, but do you want to be alone forever? Drew, you’re thirty seven years old. Don’t you think it’s time to give love a chance?”

“You wouldn’t object to me being with someone nineteen years younger than myself?”

“Not Lola. Maybe someone else but not her. I’ve known her as long as you have, and I’ve seen the signs. She’s not confused, Drew. She really is attracted to women. I knew that even when she was a toddler and small child. I know you probably never even noticed it, but when you would come home from college, she would want to be with you. She wanted to go everywhere you went. I think even at that age, she knew how to grab your attention, and you let her. At age two she single handedly managed to alienate all your girlfriends, and you didn’t care. You preferred her company as she preferred yours.”

“I’m not sure I like where this is going. Are you saying that you knew all along that Lola and I would end up together?”

“By no means. What I’m saying is that from day one you’ve been soul mates. I know you think Kate is your soul mate, but she isn’t. Lola is. You’ve always complimented each other. As a matter of fact, I think Lola was ten or twelve before I noticed her sexual awakening was occurring. I saw the way she looked at you. It’s always been plainly written on her face. She’s continually wanted it to be you that gave her that first taste of physical love. I’m surprised it’s taken you this long to figure out.”

Drew shook her head. “I’m scared, Mom. I don’t want to be alone, but I don’t want to be hurt either.”

“Drew, I don’t know the future. I don’t know what’s going to happen with Lola. I do know this, though. Regardless of whether she meets someone in college or she ends up with you, you will forever be soul mates. It’s my opinion that she will go through some trying college times. She’s going to need time to find herself and find where she belongs in the world. She will do a lot of experimenting, but I think she will become my daughter-in-law within the next 5 to 10 years, and she’ll provide me with beautiful grandchildren.”

Drew looked at her mother in shock. “What makes you so sure?”

“I’m not, but I have an instinct. I will tell you that she’ll do some exploration before she’s ready to settle down with you. She will have other girlfriends, but it’s always been you, Drew. It’ll be a long, bumpy ride if you decide to undertake it, but I believe that she will want to be with you when it’s all over.”

The week after her parents left, Drew got her jaw unwired. In celebration Kate took her to

dinner, since Lola was at a football game. Drew knew the conversation about Lola was coming, so she decided not to wait on Kate. “Kate, over the last few weeks I’ve had a lot of time to think about what I want from Lola.”

“Good. I’ve done some thinking too. Tell me what you’ve decided.”

“If it’s all right with you, I’d like to have a relationship with your daughter.”

“And if it’s not?”

Drew shrugged. “Then I guess we’ll still have one. Kate, I love her.”

“Well, she loves you, Drew. I just don’t want either one of you to get hurt. After all she’s my daughter, and you’re my best friend. Nursing either of your broken hearts would be difficult.”

“I know. I’m afraid of being hurt myself, but I want to take the chance. Please tell me I have your consent.”

“Consent, yes but not my blessing. I’m going to have to learn how to deal with this. I need time to adjust. For now, please keep the physical aspect out of my house. I don’t want to walk in on you two in my home.”

“Fine. I understand. You have my word.”

“Promise me something else.”

“Anything.”

“Promise me that I’ll still have my best friend alone from time to time.”

“Of course. You mean the world to me, Kate. I’ll always have time for you.”

“And one other thing.” Drew looked at her expectantly. “Try your damndest to make her happy.”

“I will. I promise.”

“Oh, I also expect the same rules to apply to you as with anyone else. She has a curfew. She won’t be breaking it, and she won’t be spending the night at your house. I’m not going to promote a sexual relationship between the two of you.”

Drew nodded. “Anything else?”

Kate shook her head. “The rest we’ll adapt as we go along.”

Once dinner was over, Kate took Drew home. Watching Drew make a fire, Kate reclined further into the couch. “So, what are your plans for the evening?” Kate inquired.

“Actually, Lola’s supposed to be coming over after the football game. She should be here by ten. It’s only 8:30 now.”

Kate nodded. “I’ll be sure to be out of here by then. I wouldn’t want to interrupt anything. I’m sure you two have a lot of talking to do.”

“Kate, I don’t want you to feel that the three of us can’t spend time together.”

“I know, but knowing Lola, she’ll be anxious to have you alone. If it were any other woman, I’d do the same thing.” Kate pointed out.

As promised Kate left shortly before Lola rang the bell. Opening the door, Drew smiled down at her, looking over her outfit. She was still in her cheerleading sweater and skirt with her letter jacket wrapped around her shoulders.

“Hi.” she softly greeted leaning up to give Drew a light kiss, but Drew caught her mouth in a more intimate greeting. As soon as Drew’s tongue slipped into Lola’s mouth, Lola pulled away in surprise. “You got your jaw unwired?” she asked.

Drew opened her mouth to let Lola see for herself. “Now may I give you a proper hello kiss?” Drew inquired pulling Lola’s body closer. Their lips met again, their tongues doing a slow, provocative dance within each others mouths.

“Wow.” Lola whispered when it ended.

Escorting her inside Drew mentioned, “I had dinner with your mother tonight. We came to an understanding concerning you.”

“Oh really? What understanding was that?”

“I get to date you, but I don’t get any special privileges. She’s going to consider me like any other girlfriends, which means you can’t break curfew with me or spend the night here. We also can’t do anything at your house. She doesn’t want to have to see it.”

“I guess under the circumstances that’s pretty good.”

“Yep. So, it’s 10:00. What shall we do for the next two and a half hours?” Drew inquired opening the refrigerator to look for a beverage.

Gently embracing her from behind, Lola tentatively touched Drew’s gunshot wound on the outside of her shirt. “How are you feeling?”

“Better now that I can actually eat real food again. My chest does ache a little though. I’m sure it’ll be awhile before it’s completely healed.”

“I’m sure. It’s only been six weeks. You shouldn’t push yourself.”

Drew turned around giving Lola a mischievous grin. “Guess that means no sex for awhile.” she teased.

Lola showed obvious disappointment. “Well, I’m going to go change. This uniform gets uncomfortable after awhile.”

It was Drew’s turn to look disappointed. “But I’ve always had this fantasy of seducing a cheerleader.”

“You can seduce me any time, Drew.” Lola whispered leaning up to kiss her. Drew’s hands found their way under Lola’s skirt. “I want you so badly, Drew.” Lola gasped as Drew dove into her neck.

“I want you too.”

“Then take me to bed.”

Drew caught Lola’s eyes. “If I didn’t love you so much, I would, but I do love you. I love you enough to wait. I want to make you feel good, and there are many ways to do that without sex.”

“Show me.” Lola begged.

“You are so anxious.” Drew mentioned escorting her to a chair. Taking a seat, she pulled Lola into her lap. Lola took the opportunity to face her. “Why are you so anxious to try me on, Lola? Are you this easy for everyone or just me?”

“Just you. I swear it. I just feel like we’ve had weeks of foreplay.”

Drew softly chuckled. “Oh boy do you have a lot to learn. We haven’t even started serious foreplay. That was just all flirting. I’ll tell you what. I’ll let you set the pace with the understanding that we are not having sex. I’m not fully recovered.” Lola nodded. “So, tell me. What do you want?” Drew inquired slipping her hands under Lola’s sweater to her bare waist.

“I want you.” she answered.

“No. You can do better than that. Tell me what you want. I want to hear you say it.”

“I can’t.” Lola shyly said.

“Why not? Lose your inhibitions. Listen, love. I think it’s sexy when a woman is confident enough to tell me what she wants from me. Would you rather I start by telling you what I want?” Lola nodded. “Well, I don’t know if you’ll do what I ask of you, so if I say something you don’t want to do, just tell me.” Lola gave another nod. “All right.” Drew began leaning back in the chair and closing her eyes. “I want you to unbutton my shirt and ever so lightly caress my chest. I want

to feel your nails lightly raking over my skin as you tenderly kiss along my jaw and neck.” Drew smiled when she felt Lola’s lips on her neck as her hands slowly worked open Drew’s shirt.

“You feel so good.” Lola said softly.

“So do you. Please tell me what you want me to do.” Drew whispered relaxing with each of Lola’s caresses.

“I want you to kiss me all over. Slowly undress me and kiss every inch of my body, Drew. I want to feel you inside of me, making me a woman, your woman, Drew.”

Drew groaned deeply at Lola’s words and hands. Opening her eyes, Drew gave Lola an unguarded lustful look. “Your wish is my command, my queen, but remember no sex until I’m healed. However, I will kiss you all over and make us both yearn for the day I’m well enough to make you that woman you long to be.” With one quick movement, Drew removed Lola’s cheerleading sweater.

“Stand up and turn around, sweetie.” Drew cooed. Timidly Lola complied. “Close those pretty eyes. I promise it’ll be even better if you just feel me.” Drew breathed as her hands worked on the zipper of Lola’s skirt. It fell to the floor. “Why, aren’t you the sultry one? Are these for me?” Drew inquired twirling her index fingers in the waistband of Lola’s black g-string. Lola whimpered. “I’m sorry. I didn’t hear you. Could you repeat that?” teased Drew, beginning to relax into her dominating role. Drew usually avoided games of domination and submission, but she knew this had hot potential with such a willing submissive partner. Drew was brought out of her thoughts by Lola’s voice.

“Yes, Drew. They’re for you.”

Drew pushed them off her hips letting them fall to the floor. “Nice matching bra too.” she mentioned beginning to unclasp it, making sure to have as little body contact with Lola as possible. Once Lola was naked, Drew stepped back to admire her for a moment. She was beautifully vulnerable.

“Has anyone else had the pleasure of seeing your body like this?” asked Drew quietly beginning to pull off her own shirt and bra.

“No, only you. It’s all for only you.” Lola answered obviously getting into the swing of her role.

Once the top half of her body was bare, Drew stepped back to Lola. “Keep your eyes closed, love.” she instructed brushing Lola’s long hair over to one side to feast on the nape of her neck. Drew wrapped one arm around Lola’s waist while the other hand ventured up to her breasts. Lola cried out softly at the combination of Drew’s mouth, hands, and bare torso against her back. “That’s it. Let me hear you.” Drew’s hands and mouth gave Lola’s backside a through inspection before her fingers found their way into Lola’s wet nest of curls. They both groaned.

“God, Drew.” Lola whimpered.

“You’re so wet.” Drew growled. Turning Lola around Drew ravaged her breasts with fervor as her hand continued its teasing pattern. Drew knew Lola would start begging at any moment, and Drew also knew she wouldn’t deny the request. Pulling away momentarily Drew shed the rest of her clothes. Then she set Lola on the kitchen table as her hand went back to work on Lola’s pleasure.

“Drew, please. I can’t take any more.” Lola pleaded. “I have to feel you inside of me now. Please make love to me.”

With the desperate plea, Drew’s resolve slipped away. Climbing onto the table, she pushed Lola onto her back and plummeted into her tight depths. Lola screamed, arching herself into Drew’s body as she clung to Drew’s naked frame. The table creaked beneath their weight and movement.

“God, you feel so good, Lola.” Drew moaned.

“Drew, Drew.” Lola called out softly. Drew blinked her eyes, slowly coming back to reality. Lola was curled up in her lap. “You must be tired, babe. You went to sleep on me. Must have been some dream.” Lola teased.

Drew realized she was still sitting in the chair with Lola playing with her shirt. “Oh yeah.” Drew whispered. “I’m sorry. It just felt so good to have you rubbing my chest. I guess it lulled me to sleep. I’ve had a long day. I had to help out at the barn, go to the doctor, the office, then out to dinner with your mom. I’m sorry. I guess I’m just a little worn out.”

“Well, you shouldn’t push yourself. Why don’t I put you in bed and keep you company until I have to go?” Lola suggested.

Pulling Drew to her feet, Lola led the way up to the master bedroom. As they ascended the stairs, Drew watched Lola’s hips and wondered if Lola would be an active participant when they finally made love. Drew knew it was only a matter of time before she caved to Lola’s wiles, but she hoped that their love making wouldn’t be one-sided.

Drew prepared for bed in her bathroom while Lola changed clothes. Settling into bed, they began to watch a movie. Lola kept looking over at Drew curiously until Drew whispered, “What?”

“Nothing. I was just wondering about your little dream downstairs. Must have been action packed, lots of moaning going on.”

Drew flushed. “All right. Enough of the harassment. It was a fantasy about taking you on the kitchen table. Okay? Now give a girl a break.”

“You dreamed about having sex with me on the table?” Lola inquired in surprised. “Well, maybe we can make that dream a reality soon. I’d like to.” Lola mumbled turning back toward the tv.

Drew glanced over at Lola with growing lust in her eyes. Drew unfortunately knew her mother was right. She was falling for the eighteen year old vision. “Lola, I wanted to talk to you about something. I was wondering what your college plans were. I know you’ve applied to several schools. Is there anyone in particular that is your favorite?”

“Well, American University and Georgetown are my two favorites, but they are both long shots. If I don’t get in either of those, I’ll probably end up going to George Mason University.”

Drew nodded. “You know, there are hundreds of colleges in the country. Is there a reason you picked three within a two hour drive from home?”

Lola shrugged. “They’re all good schools.”

“I know that. I just can’t help but wonder if your mother and I are holding you back. We’d never want to do that. We both want you to have the college experience, to live your life as your own.”

Lola smiled. “Drew, I love you and Mom, but let me assure you. I haven’t chosen schools just so I can be close to you. It was really hard to decide what I wanted, but I picked these schools before you and I ever became an item.” she teased.

Drew laughed. “Is that what we are?”

“I’d like to think so. I just wish I could share this happiness with my friends.”

“So, you haven’t told them? That’s probably for the best. I wouldn’t want history to repeat itself. You don’t deserve that close-minded discrimination. Nobody does.”

“That’s another reason why I chose the schools I did. They seem more diversified.”

“Have your friends questioned why you’re spending so much time away from them?”

“Well, yeah, but for now it’s easy. They know about the incident and that you’re a family friend. I just told them you needed some help until you recovered. I guess when the time comes I’ll have to think of something else.”

When it was time for Lola to leave that night, Drew walked her out to her car. “I don’t really want to go.” she confessed as they hugged closely.

“I know, but you have to. The easier we make this on your mother in the short run, the more accepting she will be. It’ll pay off. I promise you.”

They kissed quickly before Lola said, “I’ll call you when I get home.”

“Fine. I’m timing you. Drive safely.”

Half an hour later, Drew had just begun to drift to sleep when the phone rang. She mumbled a

sleepy greeting.

“Hey. You miss me yet?” Lola teased.

“Of course.” Drew yawned.

“Well, I just wanted you to know that I was safely tucked away in my bed. Too bad I’m alone.”

“Yeah, too bad.”

“You want to know what I have on?”

“Sure.” Drew mumbled.

“Your old UVA t-shirt. It’s so thread bare it’s like I’m naked.”

“Anything else?” Drew asked suddenly becoming more interested.

“No. That’s all. It barely hangs below my hips, and I have nothing underneath.”

Drew moaned as the image formed in her mind. “Is your light on or off?”

“Off. I’m in the dark longing for you. I wish I could be wearing you right now.”

“God, you’re such a temptress. I’d like that too.”

“What would you do if you were here right now?” Lola seductively whispered.

Unsure of whether she wanted to venture into this game with Lola right then, Drew gave a vague answer. “Everything you wanted me to.”

Lola’s breath caught in her throat. “Oh, the things I want you to do.”

The desire dripping from Lola’s voice pushed Drew further. Unable to resist she asked, “Like what? Like lying you on your back and sliding my naked body between your thighs? Like gliding my hands under the hem of your shirt up your firm body to your voluptuous breasts?”

“Yes.” Lola growled. “Please, don’t stop, Drew.”

Closing her eyes, Drew pictured the scenario as she remembered the excitement of times long past, times when she was younger and lived a more adventurous life. “Then I’d slowly work your shirt over your head, so we could feel each others skin. My mouth would move from yours methodically down to your neck where I’d leave a several day reminder of our passion. Meanwhile I can feel your body anxiously rocking under mine as my fingers continue to tease the peaks of your breasts. Your whimpering tells me you want to venture further, and I oblige enveloping one of your breasts in my mouth.” Drew paused to calm her breathing but found it

impossible with Lola's matching her own.

"Please." Lola begged urging Drew to continue.

"I'd let my mouth stroke and explore every contour of both of your breasts. Your hips are steadily rocking into my abs now, and I can feel how much you're enjoying my attention."

"God yes." moaned Lola.

"Feeling a deeper need driving you, I slip down your body, kissing along your stomach as my hands stroke your thighs. I kiss your wet heat teasingly making you cry out with longing. You're pleading with me to stop my torture."

"Oh, Drew, please. I have to feel you inside me now." Lola begged.

Drew's body was on fire with passion she hadn't felt in years. As she listened to Lola's labored breathing, she realized Lola was acting out the fantasy as they spoke. The thought of the young goddess pleasuring herself while dreaming almost put her over the edge as the first twinge of climax tingled in her stomach. "Lola." she groaned deeply.

"Drew, almost there. Please don't stop." Lola panted.

Responding to the urgency in her voice, Drew whispered, "Oh God. I can feel your thighs quivering and your body arching to meet mine as I push my way into you. You're so tight and wet and hot. I feel your muscles contracting around me as I push deeper, claiming you, making you the woman you've always wanted to be."

Drew heard Lola calling out her name repeatedly signaling her peak. The sounds shoved Drew over her own edge as waves overtook her. There was only strained breathing for several minutes.

Finally Lola whispered, "Drew?"

"Hmm?"

"I love you."

"I love you too, baby."

"Drew, did you..."

"Yes. I didn't stand a chance against the sound of you reaching climax."

"Good, because I don't want it to be just about me. I want to bring you pleasure too."

"You do, Lola, you do. Why don't we try to sleep now? It's late."

“Okay. Good night, Drew. I love you.”

“Love you too. Good night.”

The next morning Drew was having coffee in her kitchen when she saw two familiar figures waking up to her back porch door. Smiling brightly she waved them inside. “Morning, ladies. To what do I owe this pleasure, Kate?”

Drew inquired noting the radiance that surrounded Lola. Recalling last night Drew squirmed in her chair as her sexual core began to pulse.

“Well, I have a favor to ask of you, but I’ll tell you after a make a quick phone call.” she stated.

Drew nodded. “Why don’t you use the phone in the office?” As soon as they were alone, Drew stood to embrace Lola. They kissed slowly. “God, I missed you.” Drew whispered making Lola giggle.

“I had so much fun last night. I can’t wait to do it in person.” Lola stated pulling Drew’s head down into another lip lock.

Quickly Kate was forgotten as they physically reminisced about the previous night. Drew inched into Lola’s neck to taste her sweet flesh. “You taste so good, Lola.” Drew groaned.

Lola moaned throwing her head back to allow Drew further access. Lola’s blonde hair was cascading down her back, and Drew was firmly gripping the seat of her jeans, pulling and grinding their hips seductively against each other. After a few moments, Lola growled, “Take me, Drew. Make love to me on the table just like in your dream.” Drew open her eyes to reply but saw Kate fear stricken in the doorway. Instantly Drew pulled away. “What’s wrong, baby?” Lola asked trying to embrace her again, but Drew staved her off, pointing behind her. Lola turned to see her mother. “Oh.” she mumbled before an awkward moment passed between the three of them. “Well, I’m going to go on my ride. I’ll see you later.” she told Drew quickly kissing her cheek.

Once she was gone, Drew and Kate just stared at each other silently. It took several minutes before Kate finally moved from her spot. “So, about that favor.” she began. “I bought some antique furniture, so I was wondering if you’d drive me over in your truck to pick it up.” she stated nervously.

“Yeah, sure. No problem. Let’s go.” Going out to the truck, Drew mentioned, “I have to run down to the barn quickly to let Lola know there’s been a change of plans.”

Kate gave a quiet nod and waited in the truck while Drew went off to find her daughter.

Lola was in the process of saddling her horse when Drew encircled her waist. “Baby, I’ve got to go on an errand with your mom. I’m not sure when I’ll be back.”

“But I thought we’d get to have some time alone today.” Lola pouted.

“I know, but try to work with me on this. Your mother is visibly upset by earlier. I promise to make it up to you somehow.”

“Okay. Go do what you need to. I’ll try to call you later. I’m going out with some friends tonight.”

When Drew got back in the truck, there was silence except for Kate’s directions. Drew wasn’t sure if she should approach the subject, so she remained quiet until Kate stated, “I guess that was bound to happen sometime, but no mother is really ever prepared to see their baby acting that way. I mean I know I was a flirt at that age, but I never propositioned anyone for sex. It just wasn’t done.”

“Times have changed since we were kids. Give her a little credit. She’s at least waited this long, and she is now a legal adult.”

“She’s not my baby any more. The person I saw in your kitchen was a woman. It’s just awkward for me. It’s undeniable that she’s a woman in your arms, but I still wish she were my little girl. It’s hard to see her acting so wild. If it were any other woman, I’d think she was a tramp for acting that way, throwing herself at you and flaunting her body. It makes me uncomfortable to think that even with a proper upbringing she could still act like that.”

“Kate, she claims to be in love with me. As I recall, I saw almost the same behavior with you and Paul when you were only nineteen. Obviously you two had sex at least once before you were married. Otherwise you wouldn’t have been two months pregnant with Natalie on your wedding day.”

“Drew, I’m not saying that she shouldn’t have sex until she’s married. I admit I had a sexual relationship with Paul before we were married, but I was twenty-one years old. Paul and I had been dating for a year and a half and were already engaged before having sex the first time, and before you ask, you know he was the only one I’ve ever been with intimately. I wasn’t sleeping around in college like other people. The situations are very different, Drew.”

“All right. So they are, but she’s dreamed of this for years. She’s sure this is what she wants, and it’s damn hard to resist such persistence. If it were any other eighteen year old, I would have already taken the plunge.”

“You mean you haven’t?”

“Not that I should tell you, but no, we haven’t. Being so much older, I’m trying to be the voice of reason. It’s too soon. If we’re both serious about this, it can wait.”

“Are you serious?”

“I’m cautious, Kate. There is so much at stake emotionally for all three of us. I have to know it’s

right before committing myself to her intimately, and I'm not sure of that yet."

Kate showed some relief. "This is just weird. I wonder what Paul would think if he were still alive."

"I think he'd be more upset about Lola claiming to be a lesbian. That's not an issue you've seemed to address yet."

"Well, obviously I don't think it's wrong. That part doesn't bother me. I'm just in shock I guess. I mean Lola is one of the most beautiful girls in the county. Don't get me wrong. I'm not saying beautiful women can't be gay. After all, you were quite the looker in high school and you still are. However you were always obvious. I've never seen any inclination from her towards other girls. I think I'm experienced enough by watching you to know what I'm looking for."

"I never saw it either. I think I've misread her so many times, because I never imagined that she was thinking of me that way. How could I think that? How could I look at a twelve year old and think she was having sexual thoughts about anyone but especially me? Now I know differently. Looking back I remember times when I should've noticed. My mother even noticed. She said she knew what was going on from the beginning. I wish I had."

"I wish she had told one of us." Kate stated.

"Well, she said she didn't want to upset either of us or disrupt nature's course. She even thinks Lola and I will go as far as getting married and having children."

"She actually said that? What do you think about it?"

"Well, it was unnerving to say the least to have my mom feel that way all along and not say anything until now."

"But do you think there is any merit to her words?"

"Well, this is all new for me. My love for Lola is changing quickly. There's depth that I never imagined there could be in just a short amount of time. I haven't felt this way in years, twenty-one to be exact."

Kate met Drew's gaze as she interlocked her fingers in Drew's resting on the stick shift. "Is it too late to ask for forgiveness? I knew, and I hurt you anyway, because I was scared."

"You know I've forgiven you. It's history. Besides had it happened, Natalie and Lola wouldn't be with us, so in a way I guess I'm glad."

"You think so?"

"I know so, Katherine. Paul never would've been able to pry you away from me. I would've made you happy, but seeing as how I couldn't have given you children as you had always

desired, it was for the best.”

“I know you would’ve made me happy, Drew, but I suppose you’re right.” A moment passed before Kate looked out the windshield and mumbled, “Although sometimes I regret not having not having that experience.”

“Me too.” Drew confessed.

“If it weren’t for Lola, do you think we would have eventually acted on those feelings?”

“Yes. I think your bed would’ve been a regular stop for me and probably the only one, but the feelings wouldn’t have been the same as they were twenty years ago. We’ve both changed. Lola is in the picture, and I’m not going to do anything to hurt her if I possibly can.”

“What an ironic twist of fate.” Kate stated looking out the window again. “I can’t believe my own daughter took your heart. For so many years you’ve given me affection, and I thought I’d always have that. Guess I took it for granted. When Paul was killed, I thought for sure you’d pursue me, but instead my youngest child came right under my nose and stole you.” she mentioned with stinging hurt in her voice.

“I didn’t realize I was yours or that I was stolen. I think you might be feeling a little bit jealous.” Drew stated feeling defensive.

“Jealous? Of my daughter? I don’t think so.” Kate sharply replied yanking her hand away from Drew’s. “I have no reason to be jealous of Lola. She’s a kid. She doesn’t know what she wants. She’s going to hurt you, and that upsets me, because you deserve better.”

Both sat in silence stewing over the conversation, neither really understanding where it was headed. The rest of the afternoon followed in awkwardness. When they arrived back at Kate’s, Lola was home, but Drew ignored her as she moved the furniture.

Once it was finished, Kate offered her some lunch. “It’s the least I could do for you, Drew.” she stated.

“No thanks. I’d rather just get going if it’s all the same to you.” Drew replied earning her a curious stare from Lola.

“All right. Would you like to get together this evening?”

“No. I’d rather not, not tonight. I’m sorry.” Drew answered letting Kate know she wasn’t over their earlier disagreement. Kate reached to touch Drew’s arm, but she pulled away quickly.

“Well, all right. You know where I am if you change your mind.” Kate mumbled walking into the other room.

“Walk me out, will you, Lola?” Drew asked moving toward the door.

When they were outside, Lola inquired, “Are you all right? Did you and Mom get into a fight?”

“Yeah, kind of, but don’t go in there and pick a fight with her. It’s between us. We’ll work it out eventually.”

Around 9:00 that evening Drew was relaxing in front of a fire when her doorbell rang. Thinking it might be Lola, Drew rushed to answer it. However Kate was standing there. “What are you doing here?” Drew asked letting her into the house.

“I came to talk to you about today, but I didn’t want to do it over the phone.”

“Well, come in. Sit down.” Drew suggested gesturing toward the couch.

They both sat for a moment before Kate said, “I don’t really know what upset you today, or why I got upset. I guess I am jealous that Lola has you. It’s not so much that it’s you, though. I guess it’s just that I wish I had someone in my life who made me feel as good as you make Lola feel. She loves you, and I can see that the feeling is mutual. You both deserve to be happy, and if it’s with each other, I should be supporting you. It’s pointless for me to try to stop a relationship between you two. After today I know it’s going to happen regardless of what I think.”

“I’m glad you realize that, but I’m sorry that I upset you. I know this is hard being without Paul. I can’t even imagine the pain you’re going through.”

Kate gave a weak nod as tears began to flow down her cheeks. Drew embraced her closely, and they were quiet. After Kate had composed herself, she mentioned, “Lola’s lucky to have you, Drew.”

“We’re both lucky to have you being so understanding about this.”

“I should get going. I don’t want to be here when Lola arrives. I don’t want her to see me like this right now. Would you mind if she stays with you tonight?”

“You sure you’re okay with that?” Drew inquired suspiciously.

“Yeah. I just need to be alone right now. I know she’ll be in safe hands with you. I won’t have to worry.”

“All right. I’ll tell her when she comes over, but you call me if you need anything.”

“I will. Tell Lola that I expect her to be at church on time tomorrow. Maybe we could see you too.”

“I’ll think about it.”

At about 10:00 the phone rang. “You still up for some company?” Lola inquired.

“Yeah. Listen. I talked to your mom. She wants you to stay over here tonight. She says she’ll meet you at church in the morning.”

“She said that? Is everything okay?”

“She just needs to be alone for awhile. She’s been in mourning most of the day.”

“Well, okay. I have to stop by home and get some things for church. I’ll see you in a little bit.”

When Lola appeared at Drew’s, Drew asked, “Everything all right at home?”

She shrugged. “You were right. She’s upset, but she said she’d see me in the morning.”

“Okay. Well, it’s kind of late, and we have church early. We should probably get some sleep.”

“You’re going with us? You only go on holidays.”

“I know, but I thought I’d give it a try. I get to spend more time with you that way.”

As Drew and Lola settled into to bed for the first time as a couple, they were quiet as they cuddled. “It is so nice to be able to hold you like this, Lola.” Drew confessed.

“It is wonderful. I’m glad I’m here with you.” Lola mumbled.

Drew sensed Lola’s sadness in her far off voice. “You okay, sweetheart?”

Lola shrugged, but soon the dam of tears broke, and she was weeping into Drew’s chest. Drew held her tightly as sobs racked Lola’s petite body. “I miss my daddy.” Lola sniveled clinging tighter to Drew.

Drew hadn’t heard Lola use such a tiny voice since she was a little girl, and her heart ached hearing her pain. Slipping back into a parental role momentarily, Drew held her tighter whispering words of sympathy. “I know, baby. Just let it out. I know you’re hurting. Cry it all out. I’ve got you.”

“She’s hurting so much, Drew. I can’t stand to see her like this. Why did this happen? How could God take my father away? It’s not fair.” she whined.

“No. It’s not fair, and I don’t know why this happened. I wish it hadn’t.” Drew replied softly caressing Lola’s blonde locks. Lola continued to weep until she cried herself to sleep, leaving Drew holding onto her protectively.

Chapter 7

Christmas time proved to be interesting for the Emerson and Bailey families. Drew’s parents had

gotten in on the fifteenth and were planning on staying through the twenty-seventh, and Natalie was scheduled to come back in town on the twentieth of December, the same day Paul's parents were arriving. The day of the arrival, Kate asked Drew to pick up Paul's parents since they were coming into a different airport than Natalie to which Drew agreed, even though she wished she could be picking up her goddaughter whom she hadn't seen since she'd left for school.

By the time Drew returned to Kate's with the Emersons, the girls were home. Instantly Natalie ran to Drew, embracing her tightly. "Wow, Natalie. You are quite the young lady, aren't you? You look wonderful."

"Oh, Drew, I missed you." she said as they hugged again.

After hugs, Drew watched Natalie and Lola snuggle up to each other on the couch and start chattering, making Drew smile. Even as children Drew remembered them to be incredibly close. The bookends she used to call them, because they were almost identical with the exceptions of their one year difference and Natalie's dark hair. Drew sat watching them giggle with each other like she had so many times before as she wondered if Lola had told her sister about their growing relationship.

Finally breaking into the conversation, Drew inquired, "So, how's school going? You liking California?"

"Oh it's so great! I love it there, but it's so expensive. School's good too. I've made lots of friends, and I met the coolest guy! He's so cute! I think he might actually come see me for New Year's."

Drew attentively listened to Natalie carry on about her new boyfriend for several minutes before checking her watch. "Oh my. It's getting pretty late. I need to get going. I'm sure my parents are back from their party by now." she mentioned standing.

Both girls sprang to their feet when Drew stood. Saying good night to everyone, Drew headed toward the door followed closely behind by her two favorite teenagers. Going out to the Jeep, the three of them spoke for a few more minutes before Drew mentioned, "You two better go inside. You'll catch colds being out here without coats on." Natalie gave a nod moving to hug Drew good night before turning to the house. However when Lola didn't follow her, she turned to look at her younger sister.

"I'll be right in. I just want to talk to Drew for a minute." Lola stated wrapping her arms tighter around Drew's waist.

Natalie eyed them suspicious. "Lo, something going on?" Lola shook her head in denial, but obviously Natalie didn't buy it. "Oh come on. Something's going on. What is it?"

"Nothing. I just wanted to tell Drew good night in private." emphatically she replied.

Natalie's gaze went back and forth between the two for a moment taking in the situation. "Oh my

God.” she suddenly stated. “You two are...”She pointed between the two of them not finishing her sentence at first.

“What?” Lola inquired, trying to act innocent.

“You know, a couple.” Lola’s face showed her surprise at being caught so easily. Natalie laughed. “It’s true then?” she asked in delighted surprise.

“How did you know? Did Mom tell you?”

“Mom knows? Cool. Look, Lo, I’ve seen a lot my first semester at school. I know how to spot a couple, same sex or not.”

“Then you’re okay with this?” hesitantly Lola inquired clinging tighter to Drew.

“Oh sure, yeah. I have lesbian friends at school. It’s no big deal to me. I’m just glad you finally found someone. That goes for both of you. I am surprised, though. I never would’ve imagined this. How long has this been going on?”

“A couple of months.” Drew answered feeling Lola relax in her arms.

Natalie smiled. “That’s so cool. Well, I’ll let you say good night then. Lo, you have to give me all the dirt later tonight.”

Once she was gone, Lola looked up at Drew. “I’m glad that went well. Makes me feel better.”

Drew nodded in agreement. “With your grandparents around, we have to be careful, though. I don’t know if they would react to this really well.”

“As long as I can steal you away for a few moments, that’s all I care about.”

Drew smiled. “You should get back in the house. It’s cold out here.”

“But we haven’t had any time together today. I want to be with you for awhile. Please don’t go yet. Come back inside. Nana and Gramps already went to bed. They’ll never know.”

“I can’t. I promised your mother we wouldn’t do anything in her house.” Lola moped playfully. “Well, we could sit in the Jeep for awhile and talk.” Drew suggested caving to Lola’s pouting lower lip.

Lola gave victorious smile. “Oh, I hope we can do more than talk.” she whispered coyly opening the back door to the Jeep.

Both of them slid into the backseat, and Lola was instantly in Drew’s lap as they kissed softly at first. However their need became more apparent as their kissing became deeper and more intimate. Drew’s hands slipped Lola’s sweater off of her body, leaving her in one of Drew’s old

denim shirts. Yanking it out of the jeans, Drew found her tiny waist and kneaded her lower back as they continued their sensuous tongue tango. Lola finally pulled back meeting Drew's gaze. Ever so slowly she unbuttoned her shirt but held it closed to watch the growing desire in Drew's dark eyes. Provocatively Lola opened her blouse as if to present herself for Drew's inspection. Immediately Drew filled her hands with lace covered malleable flesh as she dove into Lola's neck.

"God, I love your breasts." Drew growled feeling the crests harden under her fingers.

"Well, they love you." Lola erratically panted reaching back for the clasp. As soon as they were freed, Drew seized one in her mouth causing Lola to whimper her name.

"Lie down." Drew instructed gently pushing Lola's back onto the seat and wedging between her thighs. Drew was fascinated with Lola's responses. Even though she was regularly exploring Lola this way, Lola still responded like it was the first time in vocal awe and satisfaction. Drew cupped the apex of Lola's thighs, pressing her palm into her with persistence, but her body was needing more. Leaning up to Lola's mouth, her hands started to work open Lola's belt.

"What are you doing?" Lola inquired with surprise.

"Please, Lola. I have to feel more of you." begged Drew.

"Oh God, yes." Lola replied assisting Drew in her efforts to unzip her jeans.

When they were open, Drew kissed her again passionately as her hand slipped between the folds of denim. It was the first time she'd ever touched Lola this way, and she was not disappointed by the flood awaiting her searching hand.

"God, you're so wet." Drew growled into Lola's neck.

"I want you so much, Drew." Lola admitted cradling Drew's head deeper into her chest.

Drew focused on Lola's pleasure as she worked her fingers slowly over Lola's throbbing core. Lola responded wildly, her chest heaving as her moaning became constant and her hips bucked fiercely to increase the pressure. Drew was patient in her play, enjoying the sight, sound, and feeling of her lady's unfolding fervor. Lola was by far the most erotic creature she'd ever laid eyes upon. Drew could feel herself swiftly moving toward climax just by watching her. Drew moaned Lola's name deeply.

"Don't stop, Drew." Lola implored digging her nails into Drew's bare back in an effort to bring their bodies closer. One of Lola's hand traveled down Drew's back, over the seat of her jeans to palm the wet crotch of her jeans from behind.

Drew growled Lola's name as that tiny action sent them both over the peak. Heavy breathing was the only sound for several minutes as they settled back into reality. Finally Drew withdrew her hand from Lola's jeans. Lola watched in wide-eyed surprise as Drew brought each finger to

her mouth to clean them of excess fluids. Lola whimpered as her hips rocked insistently at the sight.

Drew grinned. “Well, Miss Emerson, I really should get going before this gets out of hand. Much more and I don’t think I could control myself.”

Lola nodded in consent as they moved to straighten their clothes. Once they were presentable, Drew got into the driver’s seat, and they whispered their good nights as they kissed gently.

Upon reaching home, Drew tried to sneak in quietly in case her parents were already asleep, but as soon as she locked the door, her mother called to her. “Lola’s on the phone for you.” Drew came into the kitchen where her mother handed her the cordless phone before squeezing her shoulder.

“Your father and I are going to bed. See you in the morning.”

“Good night, Mom.” Drew mumbled kissing her cheek. Bringing the phone to her ear, she said, “Hey, hon. Miss me already?”

“Yeah. Hope you don’t mind me calling. I just wanted to hear your voice once more before I went to bed.”

“Aren’t you the sweet one? I miss you too.”

“Well, Natalie is dying to use the phone to call her boyfriend, so I should go. Sweet dreams, Drew.”

“You too, love. Good night.”

Over the next few days Drew spent most of her time with Lola and Natalie shopping for Christmas presents. Kate’s parents arrived on the twenty-third making the house overcrowded with company. Reluctantly Kate agreed to allow the girls to stay with Drew.

Drew’s house was lively that night as everyone came over for dinner. As the older women fussed over the meal in the kitchen, Drew tended to the roast outside on the grill. She’d been alone for a few minutes when she felt Lola’s presence. Drew turned to see Lola walking toward her, hands behind her back. Drew eyed her suspiciously but said nothing. Once Lola’s body brushed into hers, Lola pulled out the mistletoe, hanging it over Drew’s head.

Drew laughed lightly. “Naughty woman.” she whispered as they kissed. Momentarily they forgot their company as their mouths warmed each others in the cold night air. They never even heard the door open.

“What the-what’s the meaning of this?” Paul’s mother exclaimed in shock.

“Nana!” Lola screamed in shock as she jumped out of Drew’s embrace. “Nana, it’s okay.” she

tried to assure her.

“It certainly is not, Lola Emerson!” Nana yelled. “Drew Bailey, how dare you take advantage of my granddaughter! Katherine is going to hear about this!”

“Mrs. Emerson, she already knows.”

“Surely she doesn’t condone this behavior! You’re coming with me, young lady!” Nana yelled taking Lola by the arm.

Lola resisted looking to Drew for help. Drew’s heart twinged at the fear in Lola’s eyes. “Go with your grandmother, Lola. I’ll be right behind you.” she stated in defeat, knowing she couldn’t resist Mrs. Emerson’s authority if things were going to turn out all right in the end. Drew followed them inside.

“Katherine, you will not believe what I caught this poor excuse for a woman doing to my granddaughter!”

Kate’s eyes met Drew’s. Shaking her head in obvious disappointment, Kate mumbled, “I can probably guess.”

The screaming had gathered everyone into the kitchen to investigate. “This spawn of Satan has corrupted my grandchild!”

“Hey! That’s my daughter you’re talking about.” gruffly Drew’s father interrupted.

“Dad, no.” Drew warned. “I guess since everyone is here and seems to be interested, I might as well try to explain.”

“You’ve done enough, Drew!” Nana scoffed.

“Then I’ll explain.” Kate stated. “First of all, take your hands off Lola. She’s not in trouble and shouldn’t be treated like she is.”

“But...”

“No, buts.” Kate sternly stated. “Now let go.” When Nana had released her, Lola scurried into Drew’s arms. “Now no one has said anything to anyone, but since you brought it to everyone’s attention, we might as well address it, because I know they are tired of sneaking around everyone’s back. Mr. and Mrs. Bailey, Mom and Dad, you’ve always known Drew was a lesbian. We all knew, except for the Emersons and the girls. Well, about two months ago when Drew almost died in a gun fight, I learned that she and Lola had feelings for each other. Needless to say, I was shocked and upset at first, but it was my own daughter who convinced me to allow this relationship. It’s become more obvious to me as time passes that they really do love each other, and for that reason alone, I’ve allowed it.”

“But it’s immoral and wrong!” Nana protested.

“Don’t tell me about immoral! All you have to do is look at them to see this is not wrong! Have you ever seen either of them so happy? It’s not wrong to love someone else so deeply.” Kate said looking at her daughter and best friend. Lola moved to her mother’s embrace.

“Paul would never have agreed with this, and you know it!”

“Maybe, maybe not, but he’s gone, and I have to go it alone now. This is Lola’s life. These girls have had a proper upbringing. Drew is the kindest, most compassionate woman I know. She’s a good person and has a sincere heart. Personally, I think if Lola has concluded this is who she is, I know she’s in good hands with Drew. I know Drew would never intentionally hurt her, and that’s my greatest fear for my children, being hurt maliciously. At least I know that’s not going to happen in this case.” Kate stated grabbing Drew’s eyes. Drew was misty-eyed as she smiled her appreciation.

“Well, I don’t agree with it. Surely you agree with me.” she stated looking to her husband for support.

He shifted on his feet as all eyes went to him. “Lola, honey, I want you to be happy. You have to understand. The way I was raised this was wrong, very wrong. That’s what I’ve always believed, but I’ve never had to face it. I’m not sure how I feel about this, but I’m willing to try for your happiness. I’ve never seen you this happy before, and I had wondered what had caused it. If this is what you truly want, I’ll do my best to support you. I’d rather rethink my values than lose you. Just give me time to adjust to this idea?” he quietly asked.

“Of course, Gramps. Thank you for understanding.”

All eyes fell on Nana. “I can’t believe any of you!” she huffed storming out to the porch.

“Everyone just leave her alone for awhile. She’ll be fine.” Mr. Emerson stated.

Once everyone had dispersed back to their original activities, Gramps extended his hand to Lola. “Come here, sweetie. I want to talk to you privately.”

When Kate and Drew were the only ones left in the kitchen, they embraced. “Thank you.” Drew simply stated.

“I guess you just never know how family is going to react. I better do damage control on my parents. They were too quiet.”

Drew stared out her kitchen windows to the porch. Mrs. Emerson was standing close to the grill shivering in the chilly night. Drew went to get a coat and then softly opened the porch door. “Mrs. Emerson.” she called to get her attention. When she did, she extended the coat to her.

“Thank you.” she mumbled putting it on. Moments passed as Drew idly poked at the meat,

hoping to get the older woman to speak. A few minutes passed before she did. “What are your true intentions toward my granddaughter?”

“To make her happy.”

“And you don’t think she could find that happiness with a nice young man?”

Drew heard the bitter tone, and decided to try to disarm it with an honest answer. “I think Lola’s life would be easier with a man. With that I can’t argue, but she wouldn’t find the happiness she deserves.”

“How do you figure that?”

“Well, Lola could’ve chosen to go against her feelings. People do it all the time. She could’ve chosen the easy way, married a man, had three kids, and a little white picket fence, but she decided not to go down that path. She decided to be true to her feelings. Her heart tells her that she needs the company of a woman to make her feel complete and happy. That can be hard for anyone to accept, especially an eighteen year old. However she’s accepted that, and she’s fully aware of what that means. She’s giving up a lot to follow her heart. She knows what could happen. Kate can tell you the things that have happened to me. Lola’s aware they could happen to her, but she’s willing to risk that for what she believes.”

“What’s happened to you?”

“Well, people cursed at me and beat me up when I was younger. I still get the cursing today at times. I’ve grown accustomed to it, so it doesn’t bother me any more, but it hasn’t always been easy.”

“I would never want that for Lola.”

“Neither do I, Mrs. Emerson. That’s why I will do everything I can to protect her. Whether she’s with me or someone else, she will always have my protection. She needs it from those that care about her, her family, her friends.”

“What if it’s not enough?”

“I can only pray that it is.” Drew answered. “She’s going into this with open eyes, Mrs. Emerson. She knows it’s a battle field, but she wants to walk into it anyway. She’s showing great strength, far beyond her years. She needs support.”

“Regardless of that, she’s been raised as a Christian. The Bible says it’s wrong. You know that, don’t you?”

“Mrs. Emerson, I know about the Bible. Not many people know this, but I had a minor in religion in college. I know a lot about many religions, including Christianity. If you’d like to have a religious discussion concerning the Bible’s view on homosexuality, I’d be happy to do so,

but I must tell you I've spent extensive time researching the subject. Based on that research, I've concluded that it's not defined as immoral. If you want to go down that road with me, we can talk about this in depth. It would be my pleasure."

"You're that sure of your research?"

"Yes, but you have to go into it with an open mind, without your preset ideas."

"All right. I can try to do that, for Lola's sake."

"Good. We'll talk about this in depth later. Right now I have to take this meat inside. You coming in?"

"In a minute." Drew turned to leave, but Mrs. Emerson called her back. "Thank you for trying to protect her, Drew."

Drew simply nodded before going into the house. She was just about to start cutting the meat, when she heard Mrs. Emerson's voice ask, "Need help with that?"

Drew grinned. "Sure. You can help me." The two worked in companionable silence for several minutes before Mrs. Emerson inquired, "What's the latest news on Paul's case? Have they set a trial date yet?"

"Not yet."

"I still can't believe he's gone. My baby boy was just ripped away from his family for no reason." she stated in disbelief.

"I know. I'm so sorry that happened. It's been rough on Kate and the girls. I've tried to look out for them just as Paul asked, but it hasn't been easy."

"When did he ask you that?"

"Right before he died. I still remember it vividly, coming up on the scene of the accident. It haunts me. I guess it always will. The sight of him lying on the ground, glass and metal everywhere. He was barely conscious. I held him in my arms and talked to him, trying to keep him awake, but he wouldn't do it. I tried everything I knew." Drew's voice began to shake in emotion. "I couldn't save him. He died in my arms, and I couldn't do anything to bring him back." she sobbed.

"You did everything you could." Mrs. Emerson whispered touching Drew's arm.

"It wasn't enough! Lola and Natalie are without a father! Kate is without a husband! You're without a son! All because I couldn't help him!"

"No. It's not your fault, Drew." Mrs. Emerson tried to reassure her as her own tears began to fall.

“You tried to save him. You held him and comforted him in his final moments. When he needed someone the most, you were there.”

Neither realized Kate had been listening in the doorway until she came and wrapped an arm around each of them. “It’s going to be okay.” she stated quietly comforting her mother-in-law and her best friend.

“I’m so sorry, Kate.” Drew whimpered.

“No. You have nothing to be sorry about, Drew. You did everything you could for him. I know that. At least you were there at the end, so he didn’t have to die alone. I’m sure it brought him great comfort to be in the arms of a friend.”

Drew continued to cry quietly for several minutes in the arms of her best friend. For so long she had held in her feelings for the sake of her loved ones around her, but once the tears began, she couldn’t stop. Mrs. Emerson was the first to recover as she gently touched the back of Drew’s head. Drew gazed at her with pained eyes as Mrs. Emerson cupped her cheek gently. The stare lasted several moments. Seeing as that no words could describe the emotions of either woman, Mrs. Emerson grabbed Drew pulling her into a tight embrace.

Finally in a strained whisper, Mrs. Emerson said, “Thank you for being with him at the end. You’re a kind spirit, Drew Bailey.”

Once the women had recovered enough to continue meal preparation, there was no tension between Drew and Mrs. Emerson. In fact they spent most of the evening in one on one conversation, and when the evening came to a close, she hugged Drew good bye at the front door.

“Way to go, tiger. You’re on your way to turning her into you greatest champion.” her father mentioned as she settled down in the living room with her parents and the girls.

“Well, that’s what I’m hoping for, but I didn’t do anything. She made the first step. After that I just made sure we didn’t lose her again.”

Lola curled her arms around Drew, whispering, “Thank you.”

“You’re welcome. Just give her time, Lola. I think she’ll be your advocate.”

At bedtime that night, Drew held Lola as she slept. Looking down on her, Drew thought about the direction of their relationship. Drew had come to accept that she was in love with the eighteen year old. However the thought of losing her to school cast dark insecurity in her heart. She knew she had lived an eventful life in her twenties and early thirties, and she didn’t want to deprive Lola of the opportunity to explore the world’s options. She knew she would only hinder her if she tried to hold on too tightly. She had to give Lola space to grow. Drew knew there were trying times ahead, but the idea of finally having a chance at a lifetime partner was enough for Drew to put her heart at risk. She did wonder how deep Lola’s commitment extended, though.

Would she ever consider Drew as a mate, or was this part of her coming of age process? Drew feared the later, but she knew looking into those hazel eyes, she was powerless to resist.

The day of the twenty-fourth was fairly uneventful. Kate asked the girls come home, leaving Drew with just her parents. Her mother worked on the Christmas meal to take to Kate's the following day while Drew spent time in the office and her father worked in the barn. That evening Drew's family met Kate's at church, but instead of taking her usual place next to her parents, Drew sat between the two girls. Drew tried to concentrate on the sermon, but her mind kept drifting to the beauty sitting beside her. Casting a sideways glance, Drew noticed Lola sitting with her legs crossed, hands covering her knee as she dutifully focused on the preacher. Drew's eyes trailed down Lola's slender neck to her oversized holiday sweater, past the swell of her breasts to her hips before settling on her thighs. Lola was wearing a free flowing black skirt. She look so beautifully feminine it made Drew ache with desire. In the past few months, Drew had been shy about escalating their sexual involvement. Once Lola had gotten over her initial need to rush into things, she seemed content with the pace at which they were progressing.

Drew's eyes settled on her own legs. As usual she was dressed in a dark pants suit. She couldn't even remember the last time she had worn a dress, figuring it had been Kate's wedding almost twenty years ago. It had caused a big fight between she and her best friend, but finally Drew had given in, knowing how much Kate wanted her to be in the bridal party.

Moving her gaze back to Lola's legs, she gazed longingly, letting herself fantasize about the soft, smooth skin of Lola's inner thighs that she knew would be waiting if she had the courage to touch her there. Drew didn't even realize she gave a labored breath until Lola nudged her in the arm. Their eyes met, Lola's questioning Drew's. Drew leaned into Lola's ear and whispered softly, "You look so sexy. I want you so much right now. You have to come home with me after church."

Blushing profusely, she replied, "I can't."

"Please, honey. See if you can get away for a few hours." begged Drew.

At the end of the service, Drew hung around her Jeep waiting for Lola. She could see Kate and Lola discussing the matter on the far side of the parking lot before Lola strolled over to her.

"I'm sorry, Drew. I can't come with you. I wish I could." Drew leaned into her car door, sighing deeply trying to reign in her raging desire. "Are you okay?" Lola inquired stepping closer.

"I just really needed to be with you for awhile tonight. I'm aching for you, Lola."

"You know I want that too. I want to come with you, but Mom would kill me."

Just then Kate pulled up in the car with the family. "Let's go, Lola. You'll see Drew tomorrow."

Lola looked up at Drew before her mother. "I'm not coming." she stated firmly, obviously surprising Kate.

“Young lady, get in the car. We’re going home.” Kate demanded.

“Katherine, let her go. It’s fine with us.” Kate’s father said.

Kate looked at her parents, then at Paul’s. “It’s obvious she wants to go. Let’s not have a family feud on Christmas Eve.” Nana stated.

“All right. I want you home by 11:00, or else you’re grounded. Do you hear me?”

When they got to Drew’s, her parents settled themselves in the den. “Lola and I are going to go down to the barn.” Drew informed them picking up a present off the kitchen table.

Taking Lola’s hand, they walked silently to the stable. Drew escorted her through the office to the back room that served as a break room for riders and staff. Pulling the string to the overhead light, it clicked on harshly. Lola sat on the old twin bed that had been pushed into the corner and was now used as a couch. She patted a spot next to her, which Drew took. Nervously Drew twirled the ribbon on Lola’s present.

“I wanted us to be alone when I gave you this. I hope you like it, but if you don’t, I can always return it.”

“I’m sure I’ll love it.” Lola assured her taking it out of Drew’s lap. Lola quickly opened it. “Oh my.” she whispered pulling out the red, silk chemise by its spaghetti straps.

“There’s a matching robe too.” Drew mentioned pointing into the box. Lola just nodded as her eyes were transfixed on the negligee. When Lola didn’t comment at first, Drew anxiously stated, “Maybe it was too soon to give you a gift like this. I saw it, and I knew it would look so beautiful on you.”

“No, Drew. Don’t apologize. This is the most beautiful piece of clothing I’ve ever been given. I’m just surprised. I never expected something like this. I love it, and I love you. I can’t wait to wear it for you.” she said leaning into Drew for a kiss.

Their mouths met slowly, deeply, communicating rising need. Drew quickly was becoming aroused again as she pulled Lola in further for a probing kiss. Lola’s body felt so good pressed into hers. Drew slowly put Lola’s present back in the box without ever breaking their kiss before knocking it off her lap to the floor. Pushing Lola’s body back onto the bed, Drew slid between the cradle of her thighs. Her hand worked under Lola’s skirt to her outer thigh as the kissing became more intense. After several minutes Drew pulled away to gaze questioning Lola’s eyes, seeking permission to venture further.

“What is it?” Lola asked softly cupping Drew’s face.

“I want to make love to you.” Drew confessed, her voice cracking with sincerity.

“God, you don’t know how long I’ve dreamed of you saying those words to me, Drew.” she replied leaning up to meet Drew’s mouth gently. “But it’s getting late. You have to take me home in less than an hour. I don’t want to feel rushed.” Drew dropped her head as she tried to slow her breathing, knowing she was right. “Drew, look at me.” Lola tenderly demanded raising Drew’s chin to meet her eyes. “I want you so badly, but I want us to take our time. I want our first time to be leisurely, to take all night. I want to feel you deeply within me. I ache for that but only when we have time to explore each other completely.”

“I know you’re right. We’ll wait and do it however you want. I want it to be perfect for you.”

“It will be, because it’ll be you loving me.” Drew nodded rolling off of her onto her side. Lola curled up into her, and they just held each other until it was time to go.

When Drew dropped Lola off that night, she walked her to the door. “Well, I’ll see you tomorrow. Sleep well.” Drew whispered embracing her.

Lola moaned at the full body contact. “Good night, Drew. I’ll be dreaming of you. I am looking forward to the holidays being over. Then we can spend some real quality time together. I want so much to open myself up to you physically. I’m on fire for you. Every time I look at you, I just ache for you all the more.” seductively she growled biting Drew’s earlobe.

Drew groaned. “Don’t torture me like this, Lola. Much more and I’ll be leaving a puddle on your mother’s porch.”

“And what if I do this?” quietly she asked running her hand up Drew’s inner thigh to the crotch of her slacks and squeezing gently.

“Lola.” Drew grunted bringing their hips together in earnest.

“I can feel how wet you are.” Lola teased. “That’s all for me, huh?”

“You know it is.” Drew growled, in the back of her mind thinking she might enjoy Lola being aggressive more often. “If you don’t stop that, I’m going to start begging.”

“Oh? What if I do this?” Lola teased unzipping Drew’s trousers and sliding her hand into them.

“God, Lola. You better stop. Please. I can’t control myself much longer. I’m going to have to have you right here and now.” Drew’s eyes focused intensely on Lola’s letting her know she was serious.

“Oh all right. I guess I don’t really want to lose my virginity on my porch. Soon though. Promise me soon.” she demanded zipping Drew back up.

“Oh I promise. I’m going to give you a night you’ll never forget, little lady, but after the holidays when we have time.”

“I’m counting the minutes.” Lola whispered desperately.

“Me too.” Drew admitted as they gave each other a final kiss before parting ways.

Chapter Eight

Valentine’s Day that year fell on a Saturday. Drew picked Lola up early that morning for their excursion into Washington, D.C. Knocking on the door, Drew prepared her best smile. When Kate answered, Drew greeted her sweetly extending a dozen yellow roses. “Happy Valentine’s Day.”

“Oh thanks, Drew. You’re always so sweet.” she said kissing Drew’s cheek. “Lola’s still getting dressed.”

“Katherine, would you mind if I kept Lola with me all day today and dropped her off at church tomorrow?”

Kate looked at Drew seriously. “I suppose you have a reason for wanting to do that.”

“Yes.”

“Do I want to know about it?”

“Probably not.”

Kate looked to the floor for a moment. “You know, Drew, you might be ready to take this relationship to the next level, but she’s still very young. Be careful with her. Don’t push her into something she’s not ready for.”

“You know I would never do that, Kate.”

Kate nodded. “She needs to be at church at 9:00. Don’t do anything that would make me regret this.”

“I’ll take care of her. Don’t you worry.”

“I am worried, Drew. I know full well how Lola feels about you. I know what she thinks she wants. I don’t want to see her get hurt.”

Drew simply nodded mumbling, “I’m going to let her know I’m here.” Drew knocked on her door before entering. “Hey, beautiful. Happy Valentine’s Day.” Drew stated extending a dozen red roses to her.

“Wow. Thank you. They’re beautiful.”

“Listen. You’re mom said you could spend the night at my place tonight, so you might want to

pack a bag for church tomorrow.” Lola’s eyes flashed in excitement. “I’ll just wait for you in the other room.”

The first part of the day they just hung out in Du Pont Circle, window shopping before having lunch. After that Lola expressed interest in spending the rest of the afternoon back at Drew’s in front of a fire. By the time they reached Drew’s, snow had begun to lightly fall outside.

Drew started the fire while Lola made hot chocolate for them. Turning to the couch, Drew saw Lola reclining comfortably. Drew sat on the far end, bringing Lola’s socked feet to her lap for a massage.

“Ah, this is heaven. Can’t get too much better than this.” Lola mumbled closing her eyes. “How did you convince Mom to let me spend the night?”

“I asked. Although she did lecture me about moving too fast with you. She thinks I wanted you here for sex.”

Meeting Drew’s gaze Lola hopefully inquired, “Don’t you?”

Drew smiled. “Lola, honey, I do want you, but I have to be honest. I have serious reservations about taking us to the next level.”

“Why?” Lola asked in concern. “Don’t you love me?”

“Yes, of course I do. It’s just that we’re in two different places in life. I’ve realized that I want to settle down, maybe even start a family. You’re so young with so much ahead of you. When you go off to school, there will be so many things to experience. Right now you think I’m everything you need, but you could go off and find out that’s not true. I wouldn’t want you to regret giving yourself to me.”

“That would never happen, Drew. I love you. I always have. I couldn’t regret anything between us, and I want the same things you do. I want to be the one you chose to settle down with if you’ll have me.”

“But how can you be sure when there is so much you haven’t experienced?”

“I just know, Drew.” she whispered moving toward her. Lola kissed her tenderly. “Please, Drew. Make love to me. I want you so much. I need to feel you.”

Drew groaned as they kissed again. “You want to go upstairs?” she asked after a few minutes of kissing.

Lola shook her head mumbling, “Let’s stay here by the fire.”

Lola pulled Drew down to the floor in front of the fireplace as they methodically undressed each other, the feeling of skin on skin pushing them both further toward the point of no return. Drew

took her time moving over Lola's body kissing and caressing it leisurely, enjoying the throaty moans issued forth from Lola's lips. Lola was gently thrusting her breasts up toward Drew's mouth until Drew began to lavish them with undivided attention. Dipping lower Drew traced a path down Lola's abs past her navel. Lola's hands were on Drew's shoulders urging her further until Drew felt the wet heat radiating from Lola's core. Drew closed her eyes as her mouth instinctually moved with Lola's hips in needful time. Drew directed her body slowly to peak, encouraged by the urgency in Lola's whimpers of delight. As much as Drew wanted to be inside of her, she ignored her own desire and committed herself to giving Lola the ultimate pleasure. She felt Lola's climax in her quivering thighs and as it erupted through her, ending with Lola screaming her name as she clung to Drew tightly.

They were silent for several minutes as Drew rested her head against Lola's stomach. Feeling Lola's body shiver under hers, Drew sat up to retrieve a throw from the couch, and spooning her body into Lola's back, she draped the blanket over their bodies. They watched the fire in contemplative silence.

"That was... earth-shattering." Lola whispered as her body shuddered into Drew's.

Drew smiled into Lola's neck. "Glad you enjoyed it as much as I did."

After a few moments, Lola spoke again. "Drew, as mind-blowing as that was, why didn't you go inside? You know I wanted you to."

"I know, but we have all night for that. There's no rush. I want us to take our time."

Lola nodded snuggling closer. "This is nice. I love feeling your skin on mine."

Neither noticed how much time passed as they watched the flickering fire as snow fell outside. After awhile Lola turned in Drew's arms so they were facing each other. Drew watched the blanket fall down to Lola's waist as she propped onto her elbow. Their eyes met in a long gaze as Lola moved her hand to Drew's stomach, tracing over it lightly. Drew wondered what Lola was thinking until she felt Lola's hands move up to a breast. Drew sucked in a quick breath as Lola's fingers flicked over the peak. Lola leaned into her neck kissing it sensuously before dipping lower into Drew's chest. Drew's first feelings were of panic. She had never allowed Lola to touch her this way before, and furthermore, no one had been this intimate with her body in years.

"Lola, do you have any idea what you're doing to me?" hoarsely Drew whispered.

"No, but I hope to find out." Lola mumbled as her head disappeared under the blanket.

Drew groaned feeling Lola's mouth shower her chest with kisses. Lola shifted her weight between Drew's thighs, rewarded with the wetness she found there. Drew's eyes rolled closed as Lola moved her hands and mouth over her frame. Feeling Lola's mouth move past her abs, Drew threw back the blanket to see her face inches from its final destination. Lola locked eyes with her as she lowered her head towards its prize. They both groaned at the feel of Lola returning the attention Drew had given her. When Drew felt her tongue explore curiously, she moaned deeply.

Drew knew she couldn't fight against the feeling any longer, nor did she want to. Longing and love seared through her body, shaking her to the core, and she no longer questioned Lola's sincerity in her pledges of love and devotion. Knowing she would fulfill Lola's long standing fantasy once she had finished her probing, she let herself relax and enjoy the caressing, murmuring loving encouragement to her young lover. Drew felt her body teetering on the edge of oblivion as she worked her hips harder to reach its peak, but the final push came when she suddenly felt herself be deeply and fully filled. Drew screamed at the invasion as the crescendo of pleasure shook her. When she finally floated back to earth, she felt her emotions slip as tears trickled out of the corner of her eyes.

"Oh God, Drew. Did I do something wrong? Did I hurt you?" Lola inquired in worry.

Drew shook her head as she crushed Lola's head between her breasts. "No. I just never thought, never imagined it could be this way."

"So does that mean I did okay?" nervously she inquired.

"Oh it was more than okay, baby. It was-God, I love you so much, Lola. No one's touched me that way in a very long time."

"I'm glad you're pleased, Drew. That's all I've ever wanted to do, please you in every way I can. I love you so much."

"I love you too. Where did you learn that?"

"Just used my imagination. I've only been dreaming of this moment for six years, you know." she teased meeting Drew's eyes.

"That long, huh? Well, time to make those dreams come true." Drew whispered rolling Lola onto her back. Settling between her thighs, Drew gazed at her longingly. "I want to make love to you, Lola. I have to feel you. I want to make you the woman you've always wanted to be if you'll let me."

Taking Drew's hand, Lola moved it into position so all Drew had to do was slide in. Holding Drew's gaze Lola softly confessed, "I'm yours, Drew, always have been. Take me. I want to feel you inside of me."

Drew leaned down to give Lola a deep, reassuring kiss as she made that wish come true. Lola cried out faintly as her innocence slipped away with Drew's tender entrance. Drew shuddered at the feel of her from the inside and was humbled and honored to know she was the first to touch her this intimately.

"You're so tight and wet." Drew moaned. "Let me know if I begin to hurt you. I don't want you to feel any unnecessary pain."

Lola nodded clutching Drew's back tighter as her muscles stretched to accommodate Drew's

gentle manipulation. Drew worked her steadily knowing the worst pain would come when she finally push through the thin barrier that separated Lola from womanhood. Every time Drew pushed against it, even in the slightest, Lola jumped in anticipation. Trying to distract her from it, Drew began to kiss over her bare torso. Lola quickly approached fulfillment, and Drew knew the moment Lola has longed for was at hand. Looking to Lola's face, she met her hazel eyes to see the love that mirrored her own.

Drew lingered momentarily until Lola urgently begged, "Please, Drew."

Resolve slipping away, Drew pierced through to claim her as Lola had always dreamed. Drew saw the pain in Lola's face quickly be replaced with pleasure as spasms rocked her body, draining her. Drew remained deep within her until all the contractions subsided. They were both crying softly as she pulled out. Their wet eyes met.

"I love you, Lola Emerson." Drew confessed.

"I love you too, Drew Bailey." Lola replied pulling Drew's body down into her own.

"I hope I lived up to your expectations." Drew whispered.

"It was even better than I imagined, Drew."

"I'm glad." Several minutes of silence passed. "Well, I think I'm going to start on diner. I'm pretty hungry. Is there anything special you'd like?"

Lola shook her head. "Whatever you want is fine. I'm just going to go to the bathroom."

Drew helped Lola to her feet and watched her form retreat up the staircase before grabbing the blanket off the floor. As she wrapped it around her waist, she noticed the evidence of their passion slightly discoloring the rug beneath her feet. Drew smiled as her mind replayed the moment. She hadn't felt this wonderful with a woman in her entire life. Sighing with content, she sauntered into the kitchen to start dinner. After several minutes Drew heard Lola descending the stairs. Turning she saw her young love wearing her Christmas present. "Wow. You look really good in that, very sexy." Drew commented with a smile as her eyes appreciated the way the chemise clung to Lola's curves.

"You look pretty sexy yourself." she teased nodding at Drew's bare torso. "I brought you your robe in case you were cold."

Drew took it, slipping it over her shoulders. "Thank you. It's nice to be looked after. I could get used to this."

"So could I." Lola mentioned. "I'm going to pick up our mess in the den." When she returned to the kitchen, she cuddled into Drew's back. "Sorry about the rug. I tried to clean it up, but it wouldn't all come out." she mumbled in obvious embarrassment.

Drew pulled her into a loose embrace and tilted Lola's head up to meet her eyes. "I'm not sorry, and I never will be. You've given me so much, Lola, and I'm honored to be the one you want to be with. You complete me in a way I've never known."

"I love you so much, Drew. I knew this could be wonderful."

"Well, you were right."

After a quiet but content supper, Lola suggested they watch a movie upstairs in bed, so they spent the rest of the night wrapped in each others arms watching tv and exploring their new love. In the morning Drew escorted Lola to church to meet Kate. One look between Drew and Kate, and Drew knew Kate realized the transition that had taken place.

"Drew, nice of you to make it." she stated turning to her daughter. "Have fun yesterday, sweetie?" Lola simply nodded and smiled as she shifted closer to Drew. Drew returned the smile curving her arm around Lola's back. Kate shifted uncomfortably a moment before suggesting, "Why don't we get out seats?"

Once church was over, Drew left Lola in her mother's care. Drew was down at the barn later that day checking on the horses and reminiscing about the most passionate love making she'd ever experienced when she heard the barn door slide open. Assuming it was her lover, she prepared her best smile as she stepped out of the office. However she was met by Kate's expressionless face.

"Tell me you didn't have sex with my daughter." Kate spoke. Drew dropped her head with a sigh. "Tell me!" she demanded.

"I can't, and I won't." Drew mumbled.

Kate's eyes watered. "Why, Drew?"

Drew lifted her head and smiled with a far off look. "I don't know if words could possibly explain what happened to me over the past twenty-four hours, Kate. I've never really known the love of a woman until now. I have never felt my heart so filled with joy and happiness in my entire life. I have been blessed to have such an angel by my side. I am totally and completely out of control, and for the first time I don't care." Drew's smile grew larger as she continued, "I finally know the happiness my parents have and told me was out there. It's like free falling without ending. The exhilaration and the pounding, tightening feeling in my chest when she's near is such a rush. I am so blissfully in love with a woman who returns it whole-heartedly for the first time in my life. For the first time my soul feels like it's found its missing piece."

Kate dropped her head. "Drew, if it was anyone else, I'd be the happiest for you, but I can't."

"What happened between Christmas when you gave Mrs. Emerson that big speech and now?"

"What happened?" rhetorically Kate inquired. "Drew, you had sex with my eighteen year old

daughter, my sweet, innocent, eighteen year old! She doesn't know what love is! She only thinks she does! You robbed her of her innocence!"

"I didn't rob her of anything! Lola is not a child! She's an adult, and she can make her own decisions!"

"Not as long as she lives under my roof! As her mother it is my duty to protect her, even if it's from herself! I trusted you with my child, Drew!"

Drew took a deep breath trying to remain calm. "You know, Katherine, you can say all you want, but I will never feel bad about what happened yesterday. There's nothing you can say to make me regret the way I feel. It's obvious you can't handle this new development, and I'm sorry for that.

I thought our friendship was stronger than anything else, but maybe I was wrong." she stated before exiting the barn. Drew made her way up to the house and settled in front of a fire where she remained until the phone rang several hours later.

"Hello there." Lola whispered.

"Hey. How are you?"

"What are you doing?"

"Nothing. You?"

"I'm at the end of your driveway but don't feel comfortable driving my car through all that unplowed snow. Will you come pick me up?"

"Yeah. Be right there." As Drew slowly made her way up the driveway in her Jeep, she saw Lola emerge from her yellow Beetle in her cheerleading uniform and letter jacket. Coming to a stop, Drew rolled down her window and grinned ferally. "You want a ride, little girl?" she inquired making an obvious show of perusing Lola's body.

"How do I know if I can trust you, beautiful stranger?" Lola flirted shyly.

"Oh, you can trust me. Trust that if you get in, I'll take you on the ride of your life."

"You wouldn't try to take advantage of me, would you?" she asked moving toward the Jeep.

"Only if you want me to." Drew whispered.

Lola smiled before making her way to the passenger's side. Hopping in she asked, "So what's your name?"

Drew grinned deciding to see how far Lola wanted to take this game. "Most people call me

Bailey. What about you?"

"You can call me Lo."

"All right. Lo it is."

"I guess it's a good thing I broke down where I did." They made their way back to the house.
"Nice place. Yours?" Lola asked keeping up the charade.

"No. Actually it belongs to my wife."

"Oh? She here?"

"No, she's out of town on business."

"Lucky me." Lola whispered just loud enough to Drew to hear.

"So what about you, Lo? You have a boyfriend or girlfriend?"

She shook her head. "I've never been on a date."

"A beautiful girl like you? I don't believe it. That mean you've never been kissed?" Lola shook her head as she turned her back on Drew. Drew stepped closer, one hand touching Lola's hip the other her long blonde hair. "Ever wanted to know what it was like to kiss a woman?"

Lola brushed her back into Drew's body whispering, "Yes."

Drew dipped her head to nibble her neck until Lola moaned softly. "You like that, Lo?"

"Yes."

Drew turned her whispering, "How about this?" Drew descended onto Lola's mouth gently.

"Oh, Bailey." she moaned, making Drew grin.

"You want more?"

"Please." Lola begged.

Scooping Lola up into her arms, she walked up to the bedroom. An hour later they lay naked on the bed entwined in a close embrace.

"That was fun, babe. Thanks for playing along." Lola mumbled.

"That was fun. I think I'm going to like having a playful girlfriend."

“We’ll play all the games you want.” seductively Lola whispered.

“I love you, Lola Emerson.”

“I love you too, Drew.”

“So, what’s up with the cheerleading outfit? Part of the game?”

“Well, cheerleading is officially over, and I should’ve giving it back two weeks ago, but I kept hanging on to it just in case. I always had a fantasy of you taking it off me.”

“That makes two of us. Thanks for dressing appropriately then.” she teased.

“You want dinner? I’m starving.” Drew asked after a few minutes.

“You always going to be hungry after we make love? I should know now to make sure the refrigerator is stocked at all times in the future.”

“We’re going to be making lots of love then?”

“Any minute I can get you in bed is a minute well spent.” Lola teased.

Rolling Lola onto her back, Drew kissed across the slopes of her breasts as she inquired, “Seriously, are you hungry for dinner?”

“Not yet, but since you’re hungry, I’ll volunteer to be the appetizer.”

“Believe me. I’m going to take you up on that.” Drew replied diving into Lola’s mouth as her hand found its way home between Lola’s thighs again.

Continued in Part 3

The Athenaeum's Scroll Archive

~ Persistence ~

by Alex Tryst

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Disclaimers/Warnings: These characters are all mine. This is a story about women trying to find their places in the world and does include sexual scenarios between consenting adult women. Some violence is involved, including one (although not graphic) sexual assault. Additionally there is some derogatory, homophobic language used. If this kind of stuff offends

you or is illegal where you live, it's best to turn around now. I feel compelled to mention here that the name of one of the main characters was borrowed from the book *Lolita* by Vladimir Nabokov. For those of you who have read this classic novel, I think you will find my young maiden aptly named. If you'd like to drop me a line concerning the story, you can e-mail me at alextryst@hotmail.com. Please know that I am a sensitive soul and harsh criticism will immediately be deleted. However constructive comments are welcome.

Dedication: To my wife, you are my fondest wish.

Now on with the show.....

Over the next several months Drew and Lola explored this new aspect of their relationship but at the expense of Drew's friendship with Kate. Drew had made an effort to keep things positive between them, but it was obvious Kate was withdrawing further into a world of her own. Half way through the summer Lola flew to California for two weeks to visit Natalie. Knowing Kate was probably lonely, Drew gave her several calls but only got the machine. The anniversary date of Paul's death was during Lola's second week. Drew spent most of her day holed up in her office at work in solemn remembrance, but around three that afternoon, she received a call from Kate.

"Drew, I want to talk to you."

"Okay."

"Can you come over at 5:00 today?"

"Of course, Katherine. Are you okay?"

"No but I will be when I see you."

"Should I come earlier?"

"No. Five is perfect."

"All right. I'll see you then." Drew pondered Kate's call for the next hour. There was something about Kate's calmness that struck her as unnerving. Deciding she would go to Kate's early, she headed off to the house, arriving around 4:30. Drew rang the bell but got no answer, so she proceeded to knock. Thinking maybe she had gone out, Drew peeked into the garage window but saw Kate's car. Uneasiness came over Drew as she made her way towards the porch. As she came up the sliding glass door, she saw Kate standing in the kitchen draining the end of a bottle of vodka. Drew knocked on the door but was ignored. She then tried to open it but found it locked. Banging louder Drew yelled, "Katherine, open up." Drew saw Kate look over at the lock but didn't acknowledge that Drew was there. Suddenly Drew caught a glimpse of what was in Kate's other hand as it came off the counter. Drew's eyes grew wide in fright as she noticed Paul's .45. "Katherine, let me in or I'll break down this door!" Drew yelled. Once again she was ignored, so Drew took a running start at the door barreling through it with her shoulder and

stumbling onto the floor. When she rolled over to rise, she found the gun pointed between her eyes.

“Dammit, Drew! I said 5:00, not 4:30! You’ve ruined everything!”

“Katherine, I don’t know what you’re about to do, but I suggest you put down the gun. Killing me will only make it worse.”

“I don’t want to kill you, Drew! I was supposed to be dead by 5:00! You were supposed to find my body, but you ruined it!” Drew gulped. “Doesn’t matter, though! I’ll be dead soon enough!” she screamed taking a few steps back from Drew.

“Kate, have you taken something that I should know about?” Drew’s eyes scanned the counter and saw several bottles of pills. “Okay, Kate, I’m going to stand up now.” Drew slowly got to her feet. “Will you please put down the gun?”

“No! I don’t want you trying anything either!”

“Katherine, you don’t want to die. Think about your family, children, friends. Think of the pain it’s going to cause them to know you’re gone. Your daughters are too young to be without a mother.” Drew stepped toward her. “Please, Katherine. I love you. Let me help you.”

“I can’t go on, Drew. It hurts too much.” Drew noticed her body start to sway. “I’m so tired.” she mumbled lowering the gun to her side.

“I know. Why don’t you sit down?” Drew suggested stepping to her. Kate didn’t move, so Drew pulled the gun away as she collapsed into Drew’s arms. Immediately Drew put her on the floor and called for an ambulance.

“Drew, I don’t feel good.” Kate mumbled incoherently.

“I know, sweetie. Help’s on the way. Hang in there. I won’t let anything happen to you.”

Several hours later Drew was kneeling at the bedside of her unconscious best friend weeping. Kate had been stabilized, but her condition was critical, and the doctors were unsure of the damage that had occurred. Hearing the door open, Drew rose to her feet as the doctor entered. “Is she going to be okay?” Drew inquired after the doctor examined Kate.

“Hard to say, Drew. With all the drugs and alcohol in her system, it’s uncertain at this point. However, I think you got to her before the drugs kicked in and what we’re dealing with was alcohol induced.” Drew dropped her head and sighed deeply. “Drew, you saved her life today. From what you told me, she would’ve died had you not been there. Because of you she will live to see another day.”

“But what favor did I do her if she isn’t going to be all right?” Drew mumbled.

Changing the subject the doctor asked, “How are you doing?”

Drew followed the doctor’s eyes to her shoulder that had received stitches from glass shards from the sliding door. “I’ve had worse.” she stated.

“Have you contacted her family yet?”

“No. I know I have to tell them something, but I don’t want her children to know she tried to take her own life. They just lost their father a year ago today. They don’t need this now. I think I’m going to tell them she had an adverse reaction to the medication she was taking because of the alcohol. Is that close enough to the truth without describing the finer points?”

The doctor shrugged. “Well, if they asked me, I’m bound to give them the official prognosis, but I’ll bear in mind their ages when I do it. They are young.”

“Then I’ll just make sure they don’t ask you. Hopefully Kate will be well enough to be home before they come back in four days. Think there’s a chance?”

“Possible. Depends on Kate, though. She has a fight ahead of her.”

Drew stayed by Kate’s side and with a little good fortune, Kate regained consciousness and was released the day before the girls were to arrive home. Drew took Kate home and stayed the night with her. Out of her respect for Kate’s privacy, she never asked why Kate had tried to take her own life. She figured she had a good idea anyway, so the two old friends just sat in silence. The day the girls were to arrive, Drew asked Kate if she wanted to go to the airport with her or stay at home. Kate wanted to go even though she was still weak. Drew dutifully helped Kate to the gate to wait on the plane.

“Drew, what am I going to tell them?” Kate softly asked after they had been sitting for a few minutes.

“Leave it to me, Kate. I’ve already figured it out. They don’t need to know unless you want them to.”

“I don’t want them to.”

“I’m just going to tell them you had an allergic reaction with your medication and the alcohol, but you’ll be fine.”

As soon as the girls stepped off the plane and spotted them, they raced up to their mother. “Mom, what’s wrong? You look really sick.” Natalie mentioned in concern.

Drew gave them the agreed upon response. Even though both girls seemed to buy the story, they were still concerned for their mother’s health. Once Drew dropped the three of them off, she headed home herself. Changing into a tank top and shorts, Drew went down to the barn. She’d only been there half an hour when she sensed Lola close by. Turning around she saw Lola at her

horse stall, petting him but looking at Drew. Drew smiled as she made her way over. Since there were other people in the barn, they didn't embrace, but Lola brushed her hand over the bandage on Drew's shoulder.

"What happened?"

"Work hazards."

Lola eyed her closely. "Seriously, how did you hurt yourself?"

"I was on duty and fell through a glass door."

"Would that be the glass door that was replaced at our house?"

"How did you know that door had been replaced?"

"There's a new frame."

"Oh, well, yes. It was your door. I didn't exactly fall. I broke it to get into your house."

"But don't you have a key?"

"Yes but I didn't have it on me at the time."

Lola scrunched her brow in thought. "That still doesn't explain why you broke in."

"Look. The day you mom had the reaction, I had come over. I knocked, but there was no answer. I noticed her car was there, so I got concerned. I went around to the back and saw your mother almost passed out on the floor, so I had to break in to get to her."

"Wow. She was that bad off?"

Drew nodded. "I was lucky to find her." she mumbled.

"You saved her life." Lola stated, throwing her arms around Drew.

"I was just glad that I was there." whispered Drew, holding to Lola tightly.

When they broke apart, Lola coyly asked, "You want to go up to the house, so I can thank you properly?"

Drew nodded in enthusiasm. They walked up to the house without touching until they got inside. Once they were in privacy, they kissed frantically. "I've missed you." Drew whispered. "It's good to hold you."

Lola smiled up at her. "It's good to be home where I belong." Drew just continued to stare at her

fondly for a few minutes until Lola motioned to the back staircase with her head and inquired, “You want to go upstairs?”

The last few weeks of summer passed without incident, and finally the day that Lola was supposed to move into the dorm arrived. Kate and Drew both drove her to school. Drew knew Lola was excited and put on a strong front, even though she knew she would miss her young lover fiercely.

Over the course of the morning, Drew was just a quiet background fixture, being polite to anyone who came to Lola’s door. She got the general sense that there was a misconception of the relationship between Kate and herself, but since Lola said nothing to the contrary, Drew went with it. At last when it was time to depart, Lola walked them to Drew’s jeep and gave them both hugs and kisses before they left.

“Well, she seems happy.” Drew mentioned as they pulled onto the highway to take them home.

“Yes, she does.”

“Although she’s left people with the impression that her mother is a lesbian and had her girlfriend with her.”

“I noticed that too, Drew. Although I can think of worse things than being linked to you. Did it bother you that she never told anyone you were her girlfriend not mine?”

Drew shrugged. “She was just showing her age. I can’t expect an eighteen year old to act like an adult all the time. She’ll find her own comfort level as far as being out to her peers. She’s on her own now, and she has to find her own way.” Kate nodded in agreement. “Listen, Kate. I’ve been thinking. Now that Lola is out of the house, you’re alone. Maybe we could sort of be roommates. I mean we’re both used to being with her at least half the time. We’re both going to go through withdrawal. Maybe we could just ease into it instead of going without. What do you say?”

“Actually, I was kind of afraid of being completely alone. I would love to spend as much time with you as I could.”

“Great. I propose you move in with me, or we alternate houses.”

“Sure. I’m willing to try it.”

A month passed with Kate and Drew living at Drew’s farm. Lola hadn’t come home yet, but she announced that she would be the upcoming weekend and was bringing a friend. On Thursday over dinner Drew and Kate discussed the visit.

“Look, Kate. I’m not sure how this is going to work. I don’t want to make you uncomfortable. Maybe it would be best if the three of you stayed at your house.”

“Since she’s bringing someone with her, I definitely think that would be best, especially since we don’t know what Lola has told her friend about you.”

“You’re right, but let’s do the meals here. Tomorrow I’ll make her favorite cheeseburgers for dinner.”

“Sounds good. I’m sure she’ll love that.”

The next day Drew and Kate were on the back porch with their drinks when Lola and her friend arrived. After hugs Lola introduced Jess to them. Drew shook her hand as she subtly eyed her. She was a little taller than Lola with shoulder length brown hair. She had an athletic build and by the way she was dressed, Drew figured she was probably a lesbian. Drew regarded Lola momentarily. In just a short month she had already changed in some ways. She seemed more sophisticated but every bit as lovely as the last time Drew had seen her. “Welcome girls. Have a seat. I’ll get you two some drinks. Coke okay?” Drew asked. They both nodded.

Lola gestured for Jess to sit. “I’m just going to run into the bathroom. Sit down. I’ll be right back.” Drew followed Lola into the house. She was going to stop in the kitchen to get the beverages, but Lola led her by the hand around the corner out of eye sight. Backing Drew into the wall, Lola smiled sexily. “Well, now for a proper hello.” she whispered leaning to kiss Drew softly. Drew moaned as she embraced Lola. Drew knew she had missed her lover, but with one kiss the magnitude of how much she loved the woman in her arms struck her.

“Oh, Lola, I’m glad you’re here. I’ve missed you so much.”

“I’ve missed you too, Drew.” she replied snuggling closer for a moment.

Once they returned outside and had a few minutes of talk, Lola said she wanted to go on a ride before dinner. “Okay but be back in an hour. Dinner will be ready then.” Kate informed them.

Drew watched the girls disappear into the barn before asking, “What do you think?”

“Jess is nice.”

“Think she’s gay?”

Kate shrugged. “Obviously you do, or you wouldn’t have asked.”

“I saw her sneaking glances at Lola. She either has a crush on her or is shy and looking to Lola as her lifeline.”

“She doesn’t seem shy to me. When you two were inside, she was quite chatty. You’re not feeling jealous, are you?”

“No. Lola has a right to be friends with whomever she wants. Jess does seem nice. Well, why

don't we start on dinner?" Drew noticed Lola and Jess coming back from their ride forty-five minutes later.

She and Kate were setting the table and placing the food down, when Kate suggested, "Why don't you run down to the barn, and tell them it's ready? I'll finish this."

Drew sauntered down to the barn to do Kate's bidding. The barn door was open enough that Drew could step through without opening it further. As she rounded the corner to the row in which Lola stabled her horse, she stopped short in shock. Lola was leaning against the stall door, her arms around the young brunette's shoulders. Jess was leaning into her, and they were exchanging a methodical kiss. Drew felt her stomach lurch. They didn't notice her presence, so she quickly retreated back to the barn door. Even though she felt pain searing through her, she knew she couldn't let on that she knew anything. Slamming the barn door open as loud as she could she announced herself. This time as she rounded the corner, the girls were just casually standing next to each other looking at Lola's horse. Drew saw Lola cast a guilty glance at Jess, but she didn't comment on it. "I just wanted to tell you that supper was ready, so hurry up." Drew turned and left without waiting for a response. As she came up to the porch, she was met by Kate.

"You okay?" she asked.

"Yeah. I just got a call from work. I have to go. It's an emergency." Drew lied.

"Do you have to? Can't it wait until after dinner?"

"No. I'm sorry. You three have a nice evening. Just put the leftovers in the fridge, and I'll eat later." she said before going inside. She collected the things she needed to make it look like she was going to the office before getting into her jeep and driving away. Drew just drove aimlessly for a couple of hours as she allowed herself to feel the pain. She never realized how much she had been planning a future with Lola in her subconscious until she knew it wouldn't be. She knew the teenager owed her heart. Finally she pulled into a parking lot of a bar she had passed many times before but never been in. Walking inside she made her way to the bar. She ignored the murmurs of the male patrons as she slid onto a bar stool and ordered a beer. Drew downed her sorrow in a never-ending bottle as she watched sports on tv until her cell phone rang.

"That must've been some emergency you had to go to. You didn't even show up at the office. I called the station looking for you, because you seemed upset when you left. My suspicions were confirmed when they told me you never came in. You lied to me, Drew." Kate stated evenly.

"Yes, I did."

"Why? I thought you would've wanted to spend time with Lola. Where are you?" Drew told her. "So, are you going to tell me why you lied?"

"I don't see how you can still be my friend after what I've done in the last year, Katherine. I'm a fool for thinking a relationship would work with Lola. I never should've laid a hand on her. Why

didn't you make me listen?" Drew pleaded.

There was momentarily pause before Kate asked, "How long do you think you are going to be at the bar, Drew?"

"Don't know. Why?"

"Are you going to be all right getting home?"

"I'll manage. If that is all for twenty questions, I need to go." After the call, Drew went back to her beer and tv. She blocked out the rest of the world until about an hour later when someone slipped onto the stool next to her. She knew without even looking up that it was Kate.

Kate ordered herself a beer and sat quietly for a moment. Drew didn't look at her in fear that she couldn't hold herself together. It was only after Kate put a hand on Drew's bicep in mid-sip that she turned cast her a glance. "How many have you had?" Kate inquired.

Drew shrugged. "I lost count."

"Do you want to talk about Lola?"

"Not really. I just deceived myself by thinking it could work. I never would've guessed that it would be me that regretted sleeping together. I hadn't given my body but even more my heart to anyone in such a long time. I should've know better than to give it to a teenager to trample."

"Do you think this is an overreaction to Jess?"

"No. This isn't about Jess at all really."

"Did you and Lola get into a fight?"

"No."

"Then what happened to make you come to this conclusion?"

"I saw Lola and Jess kissing in the barn."

"Did they see you?"

"No. I walked out and then came back in like I hadn't seen them. I don't want you to tell Lola I saw them. Okay?"

"Okay, if that's what you want."

"You know when they first arrived, and Lola and I went into the house, she kissed me like she had missed me and told me how wonderful it was to be in my arms. She lied to me, Katherine. I

wish she had just told me the truth about Jess. It would've been hurtful, but it would be better than this."

"What are you going to do?" Kate inquired.

Before Drew could answer, a man approached Kate. Drew rolled her eyes as he gave Kate his best line. She declined his offer, but he persisted.

After a few minutes, Drew tapped the man on the shoulder. "The lady is with me." she informed him.

"Well, she ain't going home with you." he snarled.

"You want to bet?" Drew asked sliding off her stool.

"Drew, don't." pleaded Kate. Turning to the man, Kate said, "She's right. The only one in this bar I would go home with is her."

He glared at them for a moment before turning to leave. "Damn dykes." he mumbled under his breath.

Drew grabbed him by the collar. "Hey! That was uncalled for! You better apologize to her!" demanded Drew.

He shoved Drew off yelling, "What if I don't?"

Drew pushed back. "You'll be sorry you ever came over here!"

"Hey!" the bartender broke in. "I don't want any trouble! I don't want to have to call the law in here!"

"I am the law!" Drew screamed pulling her badge from her pocket. Everyone began to back off when they saw it. "Now, are you going to apologize for being such a bigot?"

"Whatever. Sorry." he mumbled walking away.

"Come on, Drew. I'll take you home." Kate stated.

The ride was quiet on the way back to Drew's. Kate helped Drew, who was having difficulty walking up to her room. Kate leaned Drew into her footboard for some support as she began to undress her. Drew gave her a drunk, lustful gaze. "I love you, Katherine."

"I know you do, Drew, and I love you."

Drew leaned into Kate's neck nuzzling her ear as she whispered, "You're so beautiful."

“Thank you, but you’re dating my daughter.” she warned when she felt Drew lick her earlobe.

“She’s cheating on me.”

“And that gives us the right to sleep together tonight? I’m her mother, not some friend of hers. I could never do that to her.”

“Tell me you don’t want me right now.” Drew challenged peering into Kate’s eyes.

“I don’t.”

“Liar.”

“Okay, maybe I do, Drew. It is tempting, but I’ll wake up tomorrow full of regret. You don’t want me to feel that way, do you?”

“Of course not. I’m sorry. I don’t know what I was thinking.”

Kate smiled gently. “You’re thinking with a broken heart. It happens. Let’s just drop it and get you in bed.”

Once Drew was settled under the covers, Kate sat next to her. Drew took her hand. “Stay with me tonight.”

“I’m not having sex with you, Drew.”

“No, of course not. I just don’t want to be alone tonight. Please, Katherine. I really need my best friend right now.”

“All right. Just let me change.”

The following morning Drew awoke to the feeling of faint kisses all over her face. “Katherine.” she moaned as became aware of the throbbing in her head. A body rolled on top of her straddling her hips. Drew opened her eyes expecting to see Kate, but it was Lola sitting on top of her looking down at her in confusion. Just then the bathroom door opened. Both of them turned to see Kate standing there in revealing red silk underclothing. Drew’s eyes shot open as her jaw dropped. She hadn’t seen Kate in so little since college, and time had done little to her friend’s incredible figure. To Drew she looked like Lola’s older sister, not her mother.

Lola scowled at Drew. “How could you?” she yelled. Turning to her mother, she screamed, “Mother, how could you do this to me? How could you sleep with my girlfriend?”

“Lola, I didn’t have sex with Drew. I would not do that to you. You’re my daughter, but Drew is my friend. She was in need of some company last night, so I stayed here with her. Nothing happened.”

Lola looked down at Drew, who was still staring at Kate's body. "Hey! That's my mother!" Lola yelled bringing Drew's attention back to her. "Is that true?"

"Yes. I didn't have sex with your mom."

"Where's Jess?" Kate inquired.

"Downstairs. She asked the funniest thing about the two of you. She asked if you were a couple."

Kate frowned. "I don't think that's amusing, Lola, especially since Drew is supposed to be your girlfriend."

"Kate, please let me handle this." Drew said.

"Fine." she said returning to the bathroom.

"Lola, what did you tell her when she asked?"

"That you were just friends."

"Is that all?" Lola nodded. "Lola, are you out to anyone at school?"

"Not really."

"What about Jess? Does she know?"

"I haven't said anything."

"She's a lesbian, isn't she?"

"Yeah. I guess."

"You guess?" Drew yelled. "What gave you the first clue? The fact that she was playing tongue hockey with you in the barn?" Drew inquired in annoyance.

Lola's face showed surprise. "Don't even try to deny it. I saw you." Lola looked at Drew with watery eyes, and Drew's anger dissipated. Even as hurt as she felt, she didn't like making Lola cry. "So how long has this been going on?"

"About a week." Lola mumbled meekly.

"Do you have feelings for her?" Lola shrugged. "Then why?"

"I don't know. She's cute. She likes me. She's there."

"Have you had sex with her?"

“No.”

“Do you think you will?”

Lola looked at Drew in bewilderment. “What kind of question is that? Do you want me to?”

“I want you to do what makes you happy, Lola. That’s all I’ve ever wanted for you.”

Lola slid off Drew and into the bedside chair. “What are you saying, Drew?”

“Lola, when you first left for school, I was concerned about what might happen. Now it appears that those concerns were warranted.”

“It’ll never happen again, Drew.” Lola started, but Drew put up a hand to stop her.

“Lola, you’re young. You have a lot of things yet to experience. I always thought I might be holding you back, and I don’t want to do that. I think it would be best if I let you go, and let you be a college student.”

“Are you breaking up with me?” hesitantly Lola inquired.

“Yes. We’re not ready for commitment. I don’t want to hold you back, Lola. You need to find your own place in life separate from me.”

“But, Drew, I love you. I don’t want to be without you. Please!”

“I know you believe that you love me, but that is different from commitment. It was easy for you when you lived here, because I was the only lesbian you knew. There are others you know now. You need time to figure out where you stand, and you can’t do that with me hovering over you.”

“Drew, I’m sorry! Don’t you love me?”

“I know you’re sorry, and I do love you. I love you enough to let you go live the life college kids were meant to have.”

Lola dropped her head. “I wish I had never met Jess.” she whispered.

“If it wasn’t Jess, it would’ve been someone else.”

“You’re not doing this so you can sleep with my mother, are you? I couldn’t bear to lose you to her.”

“Lola, your mother and I will never be anything more than friends.”

“I don’t know what to say.”

“There’s nothing to say, Lola. Now you better go. I’m sure Jess is wondering what happened to you.”

Without another word, Lola left, closing the door behind her. When she was gone, Kate came out of the bathroom fully dressed.”So, what happened?”

“You mean you weren’t eavesdropping?”

“I tried not to.”

“We broke up. It’s for the best. I don’t know why I thought it would work in the first place.” Drew stated rolling over onto her stomach and putting a pillow over her head. She let her tears flow. The pain and loss she was feeling only rivaled that of when Kate told her she was marrying Paul all those years ago. She knew she had done what was best for Lola, but she wasn’t sure it was best for herself. She felt Kate get into bed and wrap herself around her in comfort.

“I’m sorry she hurt you, Drew.” Kate whispered.

Drew said nothing as she cried herself to sleep. The next time she awoke was early afternoon. She dressed for the day before going downstairs. The house was completely quiet. Kate had left a note that Lola had taken her to pick up her car and to call if she needed anything.

Chapter 9

Four months passed with Kate and Drew still living together except during the holidays when Lola was visiting. Drew made a point to try to act unaffected by Lola’s absence from her side, and Lola never spoke of their relationship when they were together. Even though the family knew, no one mentioned it during the holidays.

The evening of Valentine’s Day Drew arrived home close to dinner time. Kate’s car was in the driveway. Drew smiled to herself as she gathered her things, including the flowers she had gotten for her friend and went into the house. “Honey, I’m home.” she joked coming into the kitchen. She stopped in the doorway when she saw Kate standing there in an elegant red dress smiling at her fondly. The table that included candles and champagne had been set for two. “Hi. Happy Valentine’s Day.” Drew said moving to her. She extended the white roses.

“Thank you.” Kate said taking in their scent.

Drew looked at the table. “You expecting someone?”

“You. How was your day?”

“Fine. The snow caused some problems. It’s still snowing actually, but it was fine. How was yours?”

“Good now that my Valentine is here.”

“This is all for me?” asked Drew.

Kate nodded. “I just thought it would be nice to get dressed up and have a good meal.”

“That does sound nice. Tell you what. I’ll start a fire and then change into some nicer clothes.”

“Okay. Dinner’s almost ready.”

Drew took a quick shower and then dressed in her best suit. She returned just as Kate was putting the food on the table.

Drew pulled out Kate’s chair for her. “This looks wonderful, Katherine. Thank you.”

They shared a leisurely meal, including most of the champagne, as they talked. Once the meal was over, Drew did the dishes as Kate put the leftovers away. Then she disappeared into the family room. Drew joined her when she had finished.

Raising a glass in toast, Kate whispered, “Happy Valentine’s Day, Drew.”

Silence prevailed for awhile as they drank their champagne and watched the fire as they listened to soft music. Finally Drew extended her hand to Kate in invitation to dance. “You look absolutely beautiful, Katherine, and you smell incredible.” Drew whispered as their eyes met.

“Drew, there’s only one thing missing to make this perfect.” she mentioned softly.

“What’s that?”

Kate said nothing as she brought her hand up to Drew’s face. She tucked some of Drew’s graying hair behind her ear before her hand moved to cup Drew’s cheek. Drew saw the answer in Kate’s eyes. Slowly she leaned down and gently claimed Kate’s lips in a tender kiss. It was full of softness at first, but just as Drew was pulling away, Kate’s tongue licked Drew’s lower lip before sliding into Drew’s moaning mouth. It left them both breathless momentarily.

“Do you know what you’re doing?” Drew hoarsely inquired.

“Yes.”

“And you’re sure.” Kate stared deeply into Drew’s eyes. “I’m sure. Twenty-four years has been enough of a wait, don’t you think?”

Drew’s heart quickened as she realized what Kate was saying. “Yes, it has.” Drew answered.

They began to kiss again, and Kate pushed off Drew’s jacket before beginning on the buttons of her shirt as Drew’s fingers found the zipper of Kate’s dress. The foreplay was gentle and

methodical. Once Kate was down to her undergarments, Drew's hands came up to cup Kate's breasts through her silk bra as her head dipped to taste the flesh of Kate's cleavage.

Kate whimpered softly. "Drew, Drew, take me to bed." she begged.

Drew hoisted Kate up, so Kate could wrap her legs around Drew's waist. They continued to explore each others mouths as Drew ascended the stairs to the bedroom. Drew laid Kate against the bed. "May I turn the light on? I want to see you, Katherine."

"Yes."

Drew turned the bedside lamp on low and gazed over at Kate lying there, wantonly staring at her. Kate sat up keeping her eyes glued to Drew's. Her hands worked open her bra before slowly pulling it from her shoulders, baring herself to Drew for the first time. Drew sucked in a sharp breath. "You are...wow. I never knew you still looked like that after all these years. You're... magnificent."

Taking one of Drew's hands, Kate guided it to one of her soft mounds, seductively whispering, "Touch me, Drew."

Drew gave her a dreamy smile. "Anything you desire is yours, darling Katherine." she replied pushing Kate down into the mattress.

Kate smiled up at Drew. "Drew, call me Katie like when we were kids."

Drew nodded whispering, "Anything for you, Katie."

Morning found them lying entwined, basking in the afterglow of pleasure. Drew was on her back with Kate's head on her shoulder, one of Kate's legs separating hers. One of Kate's hands was gently stroking the skin of Drew's flat lower abdomen. Even though both were awake, neither spoke of what had transpired. Drew just focused on the beating of Kate's heart so close to her own. Suddenly the alarm began to beep. Drew groaned in displeasure hitting the snooze button. Kissing the top of Kate's golden head, she asked, "How about a shower?"

Kate looked up at her. "It's too early. Why don't we just stay in bed?"

Drew chuckled. "I wish I could, but I have to get to work." she mentioned trying to untangle herself from Kate's limbs. "Why don't you just stay here?" she suggested smoothing the covers out and tucking Kate in. Kate gave a sleepy nod. Drew showered and dressed in her uniform before going to tell Kate good bye. She was sound asleep holding one of Drew's pillows. Drew smiled before kissing her forehead and quietly leaving.

Drew spent most of her free time thinking about the previous night. She wondered if and how their relationship would be affected. As wonderful as Drew thought it was, she wasn't sure they should pursue anything other than friendship. She was a little anxious about going home that evening, but she knew she had to see where Kate stood. When she got home, Kate was in the

kitchen making dinner.

“Hi. How was your day?” Kate asked.

“Okay. Yours?”

“Fine. I was wondering if I could convince you to put these steaks out on the grill.”

“Yeah. Sure.” Drew replied. They worked in silence a moment, and once Drew got the steaks on the grill she stood staring out the sliding glass door.

Kate embraced her from behind. “What are you thinking about, Drew?”

“Last night.”

“Do you regret what we did?”

“No. Do you?”

“No.”

“I guess I was just wondering where we stood.”

“Drew, we’ve been friends for almost twenty-five years. That’s a long time. I’ve always been curious what it would be like, and after all this time I now know. I don’t think this should affect our friendship. We had sex, Drew. It was hot, mind-blowing sex. It was some of the best I’ve ever had, but we’re friends.”

Drew glanced over her shoulder and grinned. “It was pretty hot.” she agreed. “My fantasies didn’t live up to reality.”

“Neither did mine.” Kate said. After a slight pause Kate stated,

“Something’s been on my mind today. Now that we’ve been together, I was wondering, well, did I stand up well against my competition?” nervously she inquired.

“Your competition? I wasn’t aware you had any competition.”

“I mean Lola.” shyly she clarified.

“Kate, do you really want to know?” She nodded. “Well, your similarities with Lola are in body only. You’re both different. That’s not to say one is better than the other.”

“I can finally see why Lola was so drawn to you physically. I now know why she was so happy.”

“Yeah, well, the sex obviously wasn’t enough. Can we stop talking about Lola? I’d rather get

back to us.”

“What about us?”

“Where do we go from here? Was this a one time thing, or do you want to continue to do this?”

“What do you want, Drew?”

“What I want might not be what’s best for us.”

“Then you want to continue?”

“Only if you do. If you don’t, I can respect your decision. Your friendship means more to me than the sex. I just don’t want it to potentially ruin things if either of us met someone.”

“I understand, and I agree. Your friendship is the most important one in my life, but if you want to, and I want to, we should and worry about the consequences later. We’re both adults.” Kate said with a smile. Drew turned to embrace her fully. “Kiss me, Drew.” Kate demanded.

Drew smiled before complying. Backing Kate into the table, Drew began to kiss her deeper. Dinner was forgotten as Drew had her way with Kate on the kitchen table. When it was over, Kate began to chuckle.

“What’s so funny?” asked Drew.

“The steak is probably ruined.”

“Oh, yeah. You’re probably right. I’ll try to salvage it.” Drew returned a few minutes later with steak in hand. She was laughing as she showed it to Kate. Kate snickered before Drew threw it in the trash. “Should we try again?”

Kate shook her head. “I think you should take me out to dinner.” Drew nodded in agreement.

The following Saturday Drew was down at the barn cleaning out stalls while Kate was running errands. Drew was off in her own thoughts, so she didn’t hear anyone come into the barn, but she sensed someone behind her. Assuming it was Kate, she asked, “What’s up, Katie babe? You miss me already?” When there was no answer, Drew turned to see Lola standing there watching her.

“Lola, hi. I thought you were your mother.”

“I’ve never heard you call Mom Katie or babe before.” she mentioned.

Drew shrugged it off. “I used to call your mom Katie when we were younger.”

“And babe?”

“I was just joking. What brings you here?”

“I just came to visit Mom.”

“Oh, well, she’s out doing errands right now.”

“Mind of I hang out until she gets back?”

“Of course not. How’s school?”

“Good. I like my classes.”

“How’s Jess?”

Lola shrugged. “I don’t know. We don’t see each other much anymore.”

“Oh, sorry to hear that. You seeing anyone then?”

“No. I’m not interested in that anymore. Are you?” hesitantly she asked.

“No. I’m not dating anyone. I guess I’ve lost interest too.” Drew answered risking a glance at Lola before turning back to her work. “You know, you could wait up in the house for your mom.”

“Am I bothering you?” Lola inquired.

“No. I’ve just got a lot of work to do. I wouldn’t want you to be bored.”

“There was a time when I could watch you work for hours, Drew. We didn’t even have to talk. Do you think we’ll ever have that again?”

Drew shrugged. “I don’t know, Lola. You used to watch me for hours when you were younger, but I never knew what you were thinking at the time. You were fantasizing. There’s no need to do that anymore. There is no mystery there. You had the reality. I personally thought it was pretty good.”

“It was good, Drew.” she admitted.

Drew stopped working and turned around. “Lola, I’m in an unusual position here. Usually when a relationship is over, I don’t speak to that person again. It’s better that way for me, but obviously that can’t happen here. Your mother is my best friend. Your sister is my goddaughter. I’ve known you your entire life. I always thought of myself as more of your aunt and friend than anything else. I never thought those feelings would change, but they did. I loved you more than all the other women combined. I know the time for me to be the aunt again has come, but I’m finding it difficult. I have more knowledge of you than what is good for an aunt to know.”

There was a moment of silence before Lola said, "I don't want you to be an aunt or friend to me, Drew. I want you to be my girlfriend again. I still love you."

Drew was silent, but her heart was pounding out of control. Every fiber of her being wanted to take Lola back except her pride. "I can't do that, Lola."

"Why not? Don't you love me?" she asked stepping closer.

Drew could feel the heat and magnetism passing between them, but she resisted. "Lola, I make it a point not to date the same woman twice. I don't want to start now. Now please go up to the house, so I can do this work."

Drew spent the rest of the day in the barn. When she returned to the house there was a note from Kate on the table saying that she was spending the night at her own place since Lola was visiting. For the first time in several months Drew found herself alone. She made herself dinner as she thought over the past few months. Whenever she had gotten home, Kate was preparing their supper. They usually spent the rest of the evening in each others company. Drew realized how a custom she had become to having her beautiful counterpart around. The recent development of them being physically intimate made her feel even more at peace. It seemed that she had finally found all that she wanted.

Drew settled into bed alone that night with a movie. She was almost finished with it when the phone rang. "Hi there. I wanted to talk to you before you went to bed." Kate said.

"Well, you have pretty good timing. I was just finishing a movie."

"I was just thinking about you. It feels strange to be in my own bed at home."

"It feels weird to be without you, Kate."

"Listen. Lola seemed a little upset today, but she wouldn't tell me what was going on. I was wondering if you talked to her."

"I saw her briefly in the barn. We talked for a few minutes."

"What about?"

"She told me she was still in love with me and asked me to take her back. I said no. That's probably why she was upset."

"Oh. Why did you say no?"

"I can't take her back, Kate. She's not capable of giving me what I want."

"What do you want, Drew?"

“I want a woman who is there when I come home at night, someone I can be around without necessarily speaking. I want permanence in my house and in my life. I want a wife. I’m too old to be single.”

Kate hesitated a moment before inquiring, “Where do you think I fit into that picture?”

“It’s funny you should ask that. I was thinking about that earlier. You are as close to perfection as I’ve ever gotten.”

“Including Lola? If she wasn’t nineteen, would you still feel the same?”

“I don’t know, but it doesn’t matter. She is nineteen.”

“I guess you’re right. Well, I should let you go. I know you have to work early tomorrow.”

“Yeah. Sleep well, Katherine. I look forward to having you back. I love you.”

“I love you too, and I look forward to coming back. See you tomorrow night.”

The following evening Kate returned to Drew’s. Drew was anxiously awaiting and greeted her with a passionate kiss that left them both breathless and disoriented. Finally coming out of the daze, Kate whispered, “I haven’t been kissed senseless in years. That was incredible.”

Drew giggled into Kate’s neck. “I wanted to take you out to dinner tonight.

How does that sound?”

“Or you could just have me for dinner.” suggested Kate coyly.

“For dessert definitely but I’m starving. The sooner we eat the sooner we’ll get back for dessert.”

Dinner between them was full of tension. Both were quickly eating in an obvious attempt to speed up the process. However once they were back at the house, their frantic need subsided as they tenderly made love. Lying in the cradle of Kate’s thighs, Drew looked deeply into Kate’s brown eyes.

Even at age forty-one, she was the essence of beauty. Her light, golden hair was almost to her shoulders. Her youthful looking eyes were only betrayed by the faint lines forming at the corners that could be seen when she laughed or smiled. Her skin was smooth and soft all over her body. The figure she has when she was a young woman and had been passed to her daughters was still with her, the generous mounds of femininity, naturally firm, flat mid-section, and tiny waist and hips. She had been and still was the envy of her peers.

Drew gently traced over Kate’s blonde brows with her fingers before trailing down her cheeks and over her open lips. “You are so beautiful.” she whispered in awe.

“You make me feel beautiful, Drew.” Kate replied rocking her hips into Drew’s stomach to increase the contact between them.

Drew moaned at the action. “I’ve always dreamed of this moment, Katie, to see the way you are looking at me right now, the love, the passion.”

Kate’s eyes grew misty as she stroked Drew’s jawline. “I’d give you the rest of my life, Drew, if I thought we could make this work. Being with you like this is as close to heaven as I’ll ever get on earth.”

After a brief pause, Drew whispered, “Katherine, marry me. I will make you happy if you let me try.”

Kate’s smiled through her tears. “I know you will, because you already do. I will marry you, Drew. You deserve happiness too, and I’ll do my best to give you that.” she answered bringing Drew’s mouth down to her own.

Monday morning came early for Drew. As usual she left Kate asleep in bed and went to work. However she thought about the previous night and her proposal for most of her shift at work. Instantly thoughts of Lola flooded her mind. She knew it would devastate that young woman if she found out about it, and she knew that Kate would not hurt her daughter intentionally. Deciding that it wouldn’t do any good to think about things until she and Kate had a chance to talk, she tried to focus on her work.

That night when she got home, Kate had dinner waiting. “Welcome home, dear.” Kate greeted kissing Drew quickly. “Dinner’s ready when you are.”

“Great. I’m starving.” As they sat down to eat, Drew took note of how happy Kate seemed, but she knew she had to know where Kate stood concerning Lola, so she began, “Kate, I want to talk to you about something important. Last night I proposed to you.”

“Yes, you did.”

“And you said yes.”

“Yes, I know.”

“We haven’t really discussed what this means for our families. Have you thought about that at all today?” Drew asked seriously.

Kate’s countenance matched Drew’s. “Yes, I have. It will be complicated.”

“That’s an understatement. Paul’s only been gone a year and a half. Your girls might not be ready for a step-parent, especially me. Your daughter is still in love with me. This could potentially destroy her. She’s always said she’d never be able to handle it if you and I became a

couple.”

“I don’t want to hurt her.”

“Neither do I, Kate. I truly believe that we could have a great marriage. I know we could make each other happy, but I think if we told Lola right now, we’d lose her.”

“You’re right, Drew. I couldn’t handle losing my daughter. You understand, don’t you?”

“I do. What do you want to do, Katherine? The ball is in your court.”

“Let’s see what happens after some time passes. Lola will move on, and then we can talk about this again. For now we’ll just keep this between us.”

“Does that mean this is still something you want?” Drew asked to clarify.

“Yes but not at the expense of my daughter. For now we’ll pretend that we’re still just friends. When we think the time is right, we’ll talk about telling people. That is of course if you still want to marry me.”

Drew took Kate’s hand and kissed the back of it. “I promise to do everything in my power to make you the happiest woman in the world.”

“There is one thing I wanted to ask you about, Drew. I know that you’ve always wanted children. I have two grown girls already. If I didn’t want to go through that again, how would you feel?”

“I hadn’t thought about that. I always figured I’d have a wife that wanted children too. Does that mean you don’t want to be pregnant again or that you don’t want to raise another child at all?”

“I’m certain I don’t want to be pregnant. It was difficult enough then. I couldn’t even imagine now more than twenty years later. I haven’t considered adoption. I need some time to think about that.”

“Okay. Take all the time you need. I think it’ll be awhile before we can even announce our engagement to the families. I guess that gets me out of buying you a ring for awhile.” Drew joked trying to lighten the mood.

Chapter 10

Months passed into years, and Drew and Kate continued to have their relationship in secret. Whenever the girls were visiting, Kate still went back to her own home to stay with them in order to keep up the charade, but both of them were anxious to get on with their own lives. For Natalie’s graduation from college, the family flew to California. Since everyone was there, it made it relatively easy for Drew and Kate to sneak away for some alone time.

As they entered the suite that night, Drew inquired, “Do you think the girls are going to be

suspicious that we took the king bed and left them with the two doubles?”

Kate shrugged. “We’ll just tell them that’s how it worked out, and we wanted to make sure Natalie was rested for her big day. We just thought they wouldn’t be comfortable sharing a bed.”

The following morning Drew was up first as usual. After showering and dressing, she went into their kitchen area to start a pot of coffee. She was sitting on the couch when she saw the girls’ door open, and Natalie walked out. “Good morning. How did you sleep?”

“Fine. You?”

“Good. You want a cup of coffee?”

Natalie shook her head. “Drew, I was wondering if I could talk to you.”

“Of course. What’s on your mind?”

Natalie looked back at her closed door before suggesting, “Maybe we could go out on the balcony for some privacy.”

Drew followed Natalie out. “So, what’s up, Natalie? You seem so serious. Do you have mixed feeling about graduating tomorrow?”

“Yeah but that’s not what I wanted to talk to you about.” hesitantly she answered.

Drew sipped her coffee before inquiring, “Then what is it?”

Natalie shifted uneasily before asking, “Are you and Mom dating?”

“Why would you ask me that? You know your mother and I have been friends for years.”

“Last night Lola and I got back kind of late. She went off to bed, and I said I was going to let you know we were home. I saw the light on under your door and heard the tv, so I knocked. Neither of you acknowledged it, so I thought you had fallen asleep. I quietly opened the door so not to wake you.” Drew remained silent and kept a neutral face. Sensing that Natalie would continue if she were quiet, she just stood there staring at her. “A daughter never needs to see their mother in the position in which I saw mine last night.”

“What position is that?” Drew inquired calmly even though she knew they had been caught. She just wanted to know the damage that had been done.

“You were both in bed. There was too much movement under those covers to think you were asleep. I heard my mother giggling, and you called her Katie, which I’ve never heard you say. It doesn’t take a genius to figure out what was going on in there.”

“Look, Natalie, just because your mother and I are older, doesn’t mean we don’t have needs like

everyone else. We have a unique relationship in which we can help each other with those needs.”

“Does Lola know?”

“No. We didn’t think it was necessary to tell you girls. I would ask you not to tell your sister. This is your mother’s sex life, and she has a right to her privacy. Besides there are some other complicated issues involved.”

“Lola’s still in love with you, you know.” mentioned Natalie.

“Even more of a reason not to tell her, don’t you think?”

“How long have you and Mom been this close?”

“About two years. Can we have your word that you won’t tell Lola? It would mean a lot to everyone involved.” Natalie hesitated before finally nodding slowly. “Thank you. We appreciate your discretion.”

When Kate awoke that day, Drew immediately told her about the conversation with Natalie. Kate was obviously embarrassed by being caught by her daughter but was relieved that Natalie agreed not to tell Lola. The rest of the weekend passed without incident, and then the four of them headed back east.

Being that Natalie was home and Lola on summer break, they lived in their house while Kate traveled between hers and Drew’s. Things were getting more difficult for Drew and Kate’s relationship, and with much sadness they decided that it would be better if Kate didn’t spend any more nights at Drew’s while the girls were living at home. Two months into the summer Natalie found herself a job and apartment near the city, so she moved out to begin her new life. Lola spent a lot of time at Natalie’s, giving Kate and Drew a little more freedom.

One afternoon in late August Drew found herself home early. She saw Kate and Lola’s cars in her driveway. Drew entered through the garage and into the kitchen. She spotted them lounging on the back deck. Drew smiled to herself as she took in the beauty of mother and daughter. Kate was in one chaise wearing a thin cotton top and flowing wrap skirt. Lola was lying in the other in a bikini top and tiny jean shorts. Neither wore shoes. Drew found herself studying Lola longer than she should have, a common occurrence lately, before opening the door. “Well, if it isn’t my two favorite women.” Drew greeted.

“Drew, hi. We thought we heard the garage. You’re home early. I was just telling Lola that I was going to visit my parents next weekend. I’ll be gone for a week.”

“Oh? You going too, Lola?”

“No. I think I’ll stay with Natalie. I want to spend more time with her before school starts up again.”

“Sounds good. Well, can I get either of you anything from inside?”

They shook their heads, so Drew stepped back to go inside, but as she did she noticed Lola playing with the button of her shorts. Drew watched as Lola unzipped them before slightly raising herself to slip them off her hips. Then she rearranged the small patch of material of her bikini bottom that covered her most private area. Just then the spell was broken by Kate saying she'd had enough sun and was going into the house.

“Drew, before you and Mom go in, do you think you could put some lotion on my back?”

Drew and Kate exchanged a look as Lola flipped onto her stomach. “Yeah, sure. No problem.” Drew sat next to Lola on the chair as Kate disappeared into the house. She picked up the bottle of sun screen as Lola moved her hair off to the side. Lathering up her hands to warm the liquid, Drew put her hands on Lola's shoulders. Methodically she moved over Lola's soft smooth skin. Drew's mind began to drift to all the times she has used a back rub in her ploy to seduce the young goddess. A light moan escaped Lola when Drew dug her thumbs into her back on either side of her spine. Drew's thumbs dipped under the hem of Lola's suit to reach the lowest part of her back before moving up again.

“God, that feels good.” Lola groaned. The confession was enough to break Drew out of her own daze, and she stopped. “Why did you stop?” questioned Lola looking over her shoulder.

“Your back is finished.” Drew replied standing. Lola looked up at her. For a brief moment they each could read the others emotions. The flame of love that had burned hotly for this young woman had been extinguished Drew thought, but in one look a spark lit a tiny flicker of light and hope of reconciliation. It caught Drew completely off guard. Quickly Drew went inside to make sense of what had just transpired between them.

Kate was in the kitchen pouring herself a drink. “Well, that was quite a show you two put on.” she mentioned. Drew just looked at her quizzically. “Come on, Drew. That was the most palpably sensual moment I've seen you two share in years. I don't like necessarily seeing my daughter use her body that way, but she definitely got your attention, didn't she?”

Drew dropped her head as she nodded guiltily. “I'm so sorry, Kate. I don't know what came over me. It won't happen again.”

“The tension between you is thickening, Drew. It has been all summer. You're going to have to address it.”

“Katherine, I don't know what to do. My feelings are all jumbled. I'm so confused.”

“Drew, I know. You've been pulling away from me over the summer, and I've been letting you go, because I've seen the way you've been looking at each other. We're friends, Drew, and even though I love you, I'm not in love with you. There are unresolved feelings for Lola, and as your friend and her mother, I can't stand in the way of that. It would be a mistake to get married when you feel this way. I was hoping by leaving town you two might have a chance to get all this out

in the open.”

“I’m scared I might want to be with her again, but I don’t want to get hurt, Kate.”

“I know, but it’s a chance you have to take. You’ll always be my friend, regardless of what happens with Lola.”

Drew nodded. “Thanks, Kate.” she mumbled, looking out the sliding glass door at Lola.

Monday night when Kate was gone, Drew made plans to meet Natalie and Lola in the city for dinner. When she arrived at the apartment, Lola let her in. After their initial greeting, Drew asked, “Where’s Natalie?”

“Oh, she had to work late tonight. She said she didn’t know when she’d be home but to go ahead without her.”

“Are you sure?” Lola nodded. “Well, okay. Did you have a place in mind?”

“Actually, yeah. There’s this great Chinese place nearby.”

“Okay. Lead on.”

When they got to the restaurant, they were seated immediately in a tiny booth, so small Drew could feel Lola’s legs brushing hers under the table. Lola just smiled before looking at the menu. When their waitress came to the table. Drew ordered an import beer and appetizer for them before looking to Lola for her drink order. She gave her a strange look when Lola also asked for a beer.

“What? I’m of age.” Lola mentioned.

“I know. Sometimes I just forget that you’re an adult now. You and Natalie grew up much too quickly. I mean I never imagined the day she’d be starting a life of her own, and you are only two semesters from doing the same. Have you thought about what you’re going to do?”

“I don’t know. I’ll probably live with Natalie and find a job.” Drew shook her head lightly. “What?” Lola asked.

“Oh, I was just thinking. Natalie is the same age your mom was when she had her. I can remember stories of you two as children. I could probably tell you about every major event of your lives.”

“I remember things too, Drew.” Lola whispered as she rubbed her bare calf along Drew’s khaki pants leg. Before Drew could respond the waitress returned with their drinks and asked for their order.

During the meal Drew tried to find neutral subjects such as Lola’s summer job, upcoming

classes, and living with Natalie for the last year of school.

When they were not talking about romantic relationships, Drew found it easier to talk with Lola than in the past. It was almost as if they had gotten passed the post-breakup awkwardness and returned to their prior friendship much to Drew's happiness.

Once their meal had come to a close and Drew had paid, Lola suggested they go buy ice cream and walk along the river front. Drew conceded to the request, so after getting two small cones, Lola led them toward the boardwalk. There was a quartet of musicians they briefly watched before Lola took Drew's arm, taking them a little way off the main strip to a more secluded area. They could still hear the melodies of seductive jazz but had a quiet bench to themselves. Lola hoisted herself up onto the top of the back of the bench, placing her feet against the seat while Drew stood nearby. Both were quiet as they looked out over the water. Clouds hid the stars making the evening seem dark and imposing. Drew sensed the imminent summer storm that for now kept at bay.

Suddenly Lola turned toward Drew and stated, "I want to dance. Dance with me, Drew." Drew's body was screaming yes, so she tentatively nodded. Lola hopped off the bench and moved to Drew, loosely wrapping an arm around her shoulder as she held her ice cream in the other hand. Drew placed an arm around Lola's waist. They did little more than sway to the rhythm of the music as they continued with their desserts. "Is yours good?" Lola inquired.

"Yeah. You'd like it. Have a bite." Drew said holding hers up to Lola's mouth. Lola's hazel eyes met Drew's dark ones. Drew watched Lola's tongue slide over the cold sweet sensually. Drew had to breathe deeply to remain in control. When Lola was finished sampling Drew's, she offered Drew some of her own to which Drew declined. Just as they were finishing their ice cream a light sprinkle began. "Perhaps we should go." Drew suggested, throwing their napkins in a nearby trash can.

"Oh, it's just a little rain. One more dance."

"Okay. One more and then we should go."

This time Lola draped both her arms around Drew's neck as Drew encircled her hips. Drew closed her eyes, letting the music guide her. Several songs passed, and the rain began to get stronger finally forcing them to seek shelter in the car.

When they arrived back at the apartment, Natalie was home lounging on the couch involved in a movie. After Drew greeted her, Lola asked, "Why don't you let me dry your clothes in the dryer for awhile, Drew? That way you don't have to be wet on the way home."

"That's okay. I don't want to trouble you."

"Nonsense. It's no trouble. I'm sure I probably have some of your old sweat pants and t-shirts you can wear while you wait."

“Well, okay. Show me what I can wear.”

Lola took Drew into her bedroom and began rummaging through her drawers. She pulled out some of Drew’s old clothes and then left her to change. Once Drew’s clothes were in the dryer, the three of them sat on the couch with Drew between the girls. Natalie immediately propped her feet up in Drew’s lap as Lola leaned into her shoulder. Drew grinned to herself as her little bookends, as she commonly referred to them when they were young, flanked her. The tension she and Lola had been experiencing had dissipated in front of Natalie, so the three of them sat silently until the end of the film. After catching the news, Natalie stretched and leaned over to kiss Drew’s cheek as she informed them that she was going to bed.

“Well, I need to go. I’ve got a long drive.”

“You don’t have to. You could stay here.” Lola mentioned.

“Oh no. I’m a little too old to be sleeping on the couch. I need a bed.”

“You can sleep in my bed, and I’ll sleep with Natalie.”

“I don’t want to put you out.”

“Don’t worry about it. You know she sleeps like a rock. She’ll never notice me.”

“All right, I am a little too tired to drive and don’t plan on going in early anyway.”

“Good. Now let’s get you settled. I’ll get your clothes, so you have something fresh to wear in the morning.” Drew followed Lola into the bedroom and took a seat on the double bed while Lola gathered her pajamas and robe.

“Good night, Drew. Let me know if you want or need anything.” she softly said from the door before closing it behind her.

Drew fell back onto the bed shaking her head in disbelief. Kate was right. The mutual feelings Drew and Lola had once shared were slowly creeping back into her heart. However Lola seemed different, more mature in her approach. Although she was still flirtatious and seductive, Drew felt as though Lola’s moves were more subtle. It almost seemed as if she knew patience would get her much further. Lola hadn’t pushed for any sexual interaction, hadn’t even mentioned it, even though it was thick, leaving Drew with a longing. Sighing Drew stripped off her clothes and slid under the covers. She immediately smelled Lola’s essence on the pillows and sheets and groaned thinking it would be a long night.

Drew awoke the next morning to quiet whispers. She was lying on her side facing the wall when she heard Natalie and Lola talking. She feigned sleep when she realized she was the topic of their conversation. “I wish you two would get back together.” Natalie mentioned.

“I know. Me too but I can’t force her into it. I have to know she wants that too, and I haven’t

seen for certain that she does. Last night was a start, but we still have a long way to go.” Lola said. “She’s so sexy, though. Look at her, that strong back. I’ll have fantasies for weeks knowing she slept naked in my bed.”

Natalie stifled a giggle. “Well, I’ve got to get going. See you tonight.”

Knowing they were now alone, Drew rolled over onto her other side still pretending to be asleep. She heard Lola moving hangers in her closet, so she slightly opened her eyes. Lola was standing there in only her underclothing trying to figure out what to wear. Drew took in the shoulder length blonde hair, smooth back, and tight posterior. Drew watched as Lola dressed for work, and then quickly shut her eyes when it looked like Lola was about to turn around. Moments later she heard Lola whispering her name. Drew acted as if she was waking as she opened her eyes and stretched. Not even bothering to cover her naked torso, she gave Lola a sleepy smile. She could tell Lola was having difficulty focusing on her face when the upper half of her body was completely bare.

“Uh... I’m leaving for work in a few minutes. You can stay and sleep longer if you want.”

“Oh, I should get going myself.” Drew replied flinging the covers off her body to stand.

This time Lola couldn’t help her wandering eyes. “Well, I’ll... I’ll... I’ll just leave you to dress then.” Quickly she fled the room making Drew chuckle to herself.

A few minutes later she found Lola in the kitchen drinking coffee and eating a bagel with cream cheese and strawberry jam. “That looks good.” Drew mentioned taking in the vision of Lola sitting at the tiny kitchen table, the light streaming in from behind her, outlining her in a warm glow.

“You want one? I’ll make you one.” Lola stated.

“No. That’s quite all right. I just want a bite.” Lola held the bagel up to Drew’s mouth, and Drew slowly took a bite, lightly nibbling the tip of Lola’s finger as she retracted her breakfast from Drew’s lips. Chasing it with a sip of Lola’s coffee, Drew smiled. “That was perfect. Hit the spot. Well, I’ll get out of your way now.”

“Just wait a couple of minutes, and I’ll walk out with you. I’m almost ready.” When Lola had finished her bagel and put her cup in the dishwasher, she grabbed her purse and keys. They walked to their cars, pausing in front of Lola’s. “Thanks for dinner last night, Drew. It was a lot of fun.”

“I had a good time too. Listen. Maybe you’d like to come out to my place for dinner tonight.”

“Yeah. That sounds good. I’ll call Natalie and see if she can come.”

“Okay. Just come on out after work. If I’m not there, just let yourself in.”

That evening when Drew went home, Lola's old Beetle was in the driveway. Going into the house, she saw Lola on the couch watching tv. "Natalie couldn't make it tonight, said it was too far to drive since she was working early in the morning."

"I see, but you still came." Drew mentioned.

"I don't have to work until two tomorrow."

"I see. Well, how about that dinner? I was thinking I could do some chicken on the grill with some corn on the cob and salad. How's that sound?"

"Sounds great. How can I help?" Lola asked standing.

Together they worked on dinner and then ate out on the deck to watch the sunset. As they talked the subject moved towards Lola's horse. "You haven't been down to the barn much lately, have you?"

"No, and I miss it. I miss not being able to ride everyday."

"Well, you could spent the night and take a ride in the morning before you have to leave for work if you wanted."

"Oh, that would be great, Drew. Thank you."

"You know you're welcome here anytime, Lola. You don't even have to ask. We could even go down there right now to visit the horses."

Lola nodded in agreement, so they strolled down the hill to the barn. Lola spent a lot time talking to and petting her horse as Drew just watched. "You know, I have a lot of memories of this barn." Lola said looking around in thought. "I remember you teaching Natalie and me how to ride, and Daddy buying me a horse for my birthday. It was here in this barn when I was twelve that I saw you working, and something opened up in me. It was like I was really looking at you for the first time. I knew that I wasn't like all my friends, but I didn't really know why I was different. I just knew that I was."

"Well, I think you've found your identity over the past few years. College has a way of doing that."

"You've helped me become the woman that I am, Drew. I'll always be thankful for that. Because of you I have such a wonderful, open relationship with my family. You single-handedly turned Nana into my greatest supporter."

Drew shrugged. "She had a lot to do with that. She didn't want to lose you."

"If my dad were still alive, do you think he would be proud of me?"

“Your father was always proud of you and Natalie, and if he were still with us, he probably would be the proudest father in the world.”

“Drew, may I ask about the night he died? I know you were there.”

“I was there. I held him as he took his very last breath. Even then he was thinking about you girls and Kate. Your father loved you tremendously, Lola.”

“It must have been hard for you to see him like that.” Lola mentioned.

Drew nodded. “Paul was a friend to me for twenty years. It was especially difficult knowing you three would be without him.” Drew confessed. A moment passed, and Drew leaned into the stall door whispering, “I still have nightmares about that night sometimes.”

Lola stepped closer sensing that Drew was having a vulnerable moment. Touching her gently on the arm, Lola replied, “I never knew that.”

Drew nodded. “I wish they would go away. I just don’t know how to get rid of them. I have to say that I don’t have as many as I did the first year after he died, but there are still nights when I see him so clearly in my dreams.” Silently Lola embraced her. No words were needed for several minutes. Finally Drew pulled away slowly saying, “Let’s let these horses get some sleep. We should probably start cleaning up before the insects get the best of our leftovers.”

Quietly they cleaned up their dishes before settling on the couch. “Drew, since this seems to be the night of revealing secrets, there’s something I’ve always wanted to ask you.” Drew gave a hesitant nod, unsure of what Lola was about to ask. “The summer before I left for college Mom was really sick. Do you remember that?” Drew nodded. “You told Natalie and me that Mom had an allergic reaction to her medication and alcohol. Remember?”

“Yes. What’s your question about it?”

“Well, Natalie and I have talked about it on several occasions, and we think you didn’t tell us the truth.”

“What makes you think that?”

“Just the circumstances surrounding the incident. Mom isn’t a big drinker, and it sounds like she was out cold, because you had to break in to save her. Coincidentally it was around the anniversary of Dad’s death, and she was so fragile mentally after that. Not only that she’s been living with you ever since.”

“Well, if you think I lied, then you must have your own theory.”

“She tried to kill herself but failed, because you were there save her life.”

Drew dropped her head and sighed. “Lola, you have to understand that I had everyone’s best

interest at heart. You and Natalie were so young and had just lost Paul.” she began, but Lola stopped her.

“I do understand, Drew. You wanted to protect us and her. I just never really got a chance to thank you for being there. I don’t think Natalie and I could’ve handled losing her too.”

“Me neither. She means the world to me. I’ve never had a friend like your mother.”

Lola nodded. “How’s the living situation between you? You’ve been roommates for almost three years now.”

“It’s nice. I like having someone to come home to everyday. She enjoys it too, because she’s not alone.”

“Have you two ever...you know?” curiously Lola inquired.

“Why are you asking me that? This is your straight mother we’re talking about here.”

“Oh, she’s not that straight. I think if the opportunity presented itself for her to be in the arms of a loving, tender woman she might consider it. Besides both of you have admitted to being attracted to each other.”

“Years ago.” Drew commented.

“Well, maybe living together and seeing each other all the time those feelings resurfaced.”

“Lola, your mother and I are just friends.”

“You mean to tell me in three years you two haven’t had sex? There’s never been one cold, lonely night that you found comfort in each other?”

“For arguments sake, let’s say we have. How would you feel about that? Wouldn’t you want your mother to be happy?”

Lola shrugged. “I would want her to be happy, Drew. She deserves it, but...” Lola hesitated.

“But what?” asked Drew.

“It would be weird, Drew. I mean you know me that way. For you to know my mother that way too would be strange.”

“Why? You’re both incredibly beautiful, caring women. To think of you in your separate identities as just ladies, not at mother and daughter, it would be easy to desire more from Kate. The problem is I find it difficult to forget as does she.”

“So, you haven’t?” clarified Lola.

“What do you think? You wouldn’t be asking if you thought we hadn’t. I think you know the truth already.”

They both sat silently for a moment. Lola dropped her head into her hands. Drew watched as Lola began to rock back and forth before breaking into sobs. Not knowing what else to do, Drew tried to embrace her, but Lola pushed her away roughly.

“Don’t touch me!” she yelled. “I can’t bear it!” Drew sat there feeling helpless as Lola wept. Looking up Lola met Drew’s eyes. “I’ve loved you my whole life, Drew. Those nine months that I was yours were the best of my life. In three years no one has been able to replace you in my heart. I know you don’t love me that way any more, but if you and my mother share those feelings, I wish you both happiness. Of all people you two deserve it the most, but know that I won’t be around to witness it. I couldn’t put myself through that torture even for the two of you. I’ll just have to live without the love of my life and my mother. I hope she makes you happy, Drew.” With that Lola proceeded to stand.

“Wait. Where are you going?”

Lola turned to face her. Her body and countenance showed defeat. “I’m leaving, Drew. I can’t compete against my own mother, and I won’t. All I’ve ever wanted is for you to take me back. Every woman I go out with I compare to you. I can’t even be intimate, because your touch is the only one I want. Now I know there is no hope for us. There’s no point in my hanging around deluding myself into thinking you feel the same. I guess I misread you the past few weeks in hopes you did return my feelings. I’m sorry. I won’t bother you again.”

As Lola gathered her things, Drew’s mind and heart raced. She panicked knowing if Lola walked out that door she would lose her only chance. Suddenly her heart overrode her brain, and she cried out, “Lola, wait. Please.”

Lola turned to face her with tears glistening in her eyes. “Why?”

Drew tentatively stepped to her and wiped the tears from Lola’s cheeks. Lola closed her eyes, indulging in the light touch. “You weren’t misreading me.” Drew confessed.

Lola’s eyes flew open in surprise. “What are you saying?” hesitantly Lola inquired.

“Lola, there’s a lot left to be said. Please let me tell you everything before you walk out of my life.” Drew pleaded. Drew saw the spark of hope light Lola’s wet eyes as she nodded. Drew pulled her into a tight embrace. She took a deep breath trying to figure out where to begin. Deciding on the honest, poignant approach, Drew said, “Kate and I are friends, Lola, but we have had a sexual relationship for almost three years now. In fact at one point we even discussed getting married.” Instantly Lola tensed and tried to pull away, but Drew’s grip was stronger. “We couldn’t do it because of you, Lola. You see, Kate and I would’ve been happy except for the fact that we knew we would’ve lost you. You mean more to us than anything, so we agreed to just keep being friends, giving each other sexual fulfillment as we needed it. Throughout this summer

I've come to realize that I still have feelings for you. As much as you hurt me, I still loved you. I tried to push you out of my heart. I really did, but over this summer I realized I had failed miserably. Kate noticed it first, and we talked about it. I told her I was so frightened of being hurt by you, that I didn't think I could handle a relationship with you again. She said I had no other choice but to try. Quite frankly I'm petrified of being hurt by you, Lola, but I can't help my feelings for you."

Lola began to cry again as she clung tightly to Drew. It took several minutes before she was in enough control to ask, "What happens now?"

"I don't know. It depends on what we want to happen from here."

"I want us to give each other another chance." Lola stated definitively.

"But under some conditions." interjected Drew. "We have to move more slowly. It takes a long time to rebuild trust after it's been broken, and I think we both did. We both have to be sure this is what we want, and we have to talk about our goals and desires. Communication can't break down like it did last time."

"You have to promise not to have sex with my mother any more. If we're going to give this another chance, you can't be tied to her physically."

Drew nodded. "I give you my word, Lola. Likewise you need to promise me you won't see other people on the side."

"I promise, Drew."

"Okay then. I guess it's settled."

They spent the rest of the evening lying on the couch snuggling in contemplative silence. Drew was lying on her back with Lola's body on top of her. Lola's head was almost on Drew's shoulder, her legs tangled in Drew's as Drew gently stroked her back and hair. Time passed quickly and before Drew even realized it, she was yawning.

"You're tired, Drew. I should let you get to bed."

"You're staying, aren't you? I thought you wanted to go riding in the morning."

Lola smiled as they got off the couch. "Honestly, Drew, I don't think I should stay. The only place I'd want to be is in your arms, and I'd never get sleep in the guestroom knowing you were so close."

Drew chuckled. "I know what you mean. It was torture for me sleeping in your bed last night." They both laughed softly. "Are you okay to drive, though? You're not tired, are you?"

"No. I'm too happy to be tired. I have tons of energy right now."

Drew walked Lola out to her car, and they exchanged smiles. “Drive safely, and call me when you get there, so I know you made it.” Lola nodded. An awkward second passed as neither knew if they should kiss. “Maybe you’d like to go out on Friday night. Your mom gets back on Saturday.”

“Yeah. I’d love to.”

“Great. We’ll talk about it later. You better get on the road now.” After another awkward moment, Drew embraced her in a hug and kissed her on top of her blonde head.

When Friday evening rolled around, Drew was nervous. She opted to wear dark, charcoal slacks with a black short sleeved dress shirt. She remembered Lola commenting once on how sexy she thought Drew looked in it and hoped it would have the same effect that night. Going up to Natalie and Lola’s apartment door, Drew hid the roses behind her back as she knocked. Natalie answered obviously just having been home a few minutes.

“Hi, Drew. You look nice.” she mentioned as they hugged. Natalie peeked around Drew’s back to see what she was hiding. “Trying to impress her, huh?” she teased. “Nice touch. I’ll let her know you’re here. Sit down.” Drew hovered in the living room, swaying nervously on her feet until Natalie returned. “You can sit, Drew. She’s almost ready. You want a drink?”

“No thanks. I’m fine.” Drew was off into her own thoughts until she heard Lola’s bedroom door open. Her head snapped up to see Lola entering the room. She was wearing a pale blue, linen sun dress and sandals. In her hands she had a matching cardigan sweater. Drew’s feet were lead for a moment as she took in how beautiful and almost shy Lola looked. Finally getting her legs to move, she crossed over to her and presented the deep red roses. “You look lovely, Lola, stunning.” she stammered, nerves getting the better of her for the moment.

Lola blushed, her hands trembling slightly as she accepted Drew’s gift. “Thank you for the flowers. You look-I’ve always loved that shirt on you.”

“I remember. That’s why I wore it.”

“Um...Lola, maybe you’d like me to put those in a vase for you.” Natalie mentioned breaking the mounting tension.

“Oh, yeah. Thanks, sis.” Lola replied as if she were coming out of a trance.

Drew extended her arm to Lola. “Your chariot awaits, mademoiselle.” Drew stated jokingly further calming them. After escorting her to the car and helping her into her seat, Drew moved to her own seat.

“So, where are we going?”

“Well, I made reservations for us at this restaurant I know you’ll love. Then I thought we might

just stroll around Du Pont and do whatever we find of interest. How does that sound?"

"Sounds like fun."

Over dinner once they had been left to their meal, Drew smiled at Lola and reached for her hand across the table. When Lola put her hand in Drew's, Drew pulled it up to her mouth, letting her lips lightly brush the back of it. "You really do look beautiful tonight, Lola. I'm blown away."

Blushing Lola whispered, "Thank you. That means a lot coming from you. How's that steak and lobster of yours?"

"So good. Some of the best I've had in a long time. How's your chicken?"

"Excellent. The wine is perfect. The atmosphere is wonderful, but what makes this evening is the company." Drew smiled in response.

Once dinner was complete, they walked a few blocks to Du Pont. Being a Friday summer night, everyone seemed to be out. Lola and Drew leisurely shopped many of the gay oriented stores on the strip before getting coffee at one of the many cafes. After Drew had paid for their drinks, Lola took her hand suggesting they sit outside. Drew consented, allowing Lola to lead her across the street into Du Pont Circle, which served as a local park. It appeared that all the benches were taken, but they managed to find some space on the edge of the fountain. As they slowly drank their coffee, they discussed the architecture of the fountain and surrounding buildings.

"I'm having so much fun tonight, Drew." Lola mentioned taking Drew's hand.

"I am too. I don't really want the evening to end, but it's starting to get late. I should probably be getting you home soon."

Lola consulted her watch. "It's not even midnight yet."

"I know, but I have a long drive home."

"Well, come on then. Let's go back to the apartment." The place was empty when they returned. "You want to watch a movie?" Lola suggested.

Drew knew she should be getting home, but she was having too much fun to refuse. "Sure. You pick one. I just need to use the bathroom first."

When Drew returned Lola had lit candles for ambiance and was settled on the sofa. They cuddled throughout the movie before Drew stated that she really had to go. "Why don't you stay here tonight? You're too tired to drive, and you have to come back into town in the morning to get Mom anyway. Just stay here. I'll sleep with Natalie like I did last time."

"Are you sure?" Lola nodded. "Okay. Thanks. Saves me time in the morning." Drew and Lola went to bed separately, but about an hour later, Drew was awakened by movement in the room.

“Lola?” she whispered.

“Yeah?”

“What are you doing? Why aren’t you asleep?”

“I’m just getting a pillow and blanket for the couch. Natalie kicked me out of her room.”

“Why?”

“She has company. I’ll be out of your way in a second.”

“Nonsense. Just come get in bed. Don’t sleep on the couch.”

“Are you sure?”

“Yes, I’m sure. It’s no big deal.” Lola complied, sliding into the full bed next to Drew. Each of them kept to themselves but after a few minutes loud moaning broke the air. “Oh God.” Drew groaned in displeasure. Lola giggled.

“I can’t believe I have to listen to my goddaughter having sex.” she grumbled.

“You want me to turn on some music or the tv?”

“No. That’s okay. I’ll just try to ignore it.” Drew replied, putting her head under a pillow. She could still hear the sounds, so she decided to concentrate on something else. Her thoughts immediately went to the woman next to her. With the sounds and the close proximity of their bodies, it wasn’t long before Drew was entertaining thoughts of loving the young woman lying next to her. Drew could feel her own body warming at the idea, and she hoped Lola wouldn’t notice.

Just then Lola turned on her side facing Drew. “Drew, are you awake?”

“Yeah.”

“What are you thinking about?”

“Anything but what’s going on in that room.”

“You seem really warm.” Lola mentioned touching Drew’s arm. “Do you want me to turn the fan on?”

“Only if you want to.”

The rest of the night was uncomfortable for Drew, even after silence prevailed, and she got little sleep. Nevertheless she got up and dressed before the girls. Natalie was the first to arrive into the

living room.

“You look tired, Drew.”

“I have you to thank for that. Guess a good set of lungs runs in the family. Like mother, like daughter, like sister.” Natalie blushed at the teasing. “I wouldn’t have stayed had I known you were having a visitor. It kind of put Lola and me in a weird position. I wasn’t really ready to be sharing a bed with her again.”

“Sorry about that.”

“So, tell me. You and Mr. Wonderful been seeing each other long?”

Natalie laughed. “Actually, Drew. Mr. Wonderful was really Ms. Wonderful.” she admitted.

“What? You were with a woman?”

Natalie nodded. “Like mother, like daughter I guess. I was just curious to see what the attraction was. Did I ever find out.”

“Sounds like it. So, what now? You think you might do it again?”

Natalie smiled. “Well, it was good, but I don’t think I’m cut out for a relationship with a woman. I kind of enjoy my men too much, but if I was bored and the opportunity arose, I might just for fun.”

“Definitely like your mother then. You’re young. Just be careful. Safe sex is still important.”

“I’m always careful. How did things go last night? Do you think there’s a real chance for you and Lola to get back together?”

Drew grinned. “I think things went about as perfect as they could’ve gone. I believe we both want this to work, but we have to move slowly. As far as I’m concerned, she’s the one, but she truly needs to feel the same. I’m forty-one, Natalie. I’m ready to settle down, maybe even have a few kids. If it’s not with Lola, it’s not going to be.”

“Well, you don’t have to worry about her. She feels the same.”

“But she needs to see if she can handle this responsibility. I know her intentions are good. She’s matured tremendously. I think it could work.”

“I know it will.” confidently Natalie stated.

When Drew picked Kate up at the airport, Kate was smiling brightly as they hugged. “I take it you had a good trip.” Drew said as they broke apart.

Kate nodded. "How was your week?"

"It was good. Lola and I went out a couple of times."

"Really? Tell me. Is the chemistry still there?"

Drew nodded. "Yes, Katherine, it is. I think we both recognize that we have a second chance. We're just taking it easy for now, but I think it'll work."

"I knew it. So, do you think she's really it?"

Drew smiled at Kate's excited mood. "What's with you, Kate? I haven't seen you this giddy in years. Did something good happen to you?"

"Actually, I met someone." she admitted shyly.

"Oh? Tell me about him."

"Well, his name is Jim, and he lives in the area. He's fifty-five, divorced, has three adult children, and has his own law firm."

"I see. Where did you meet? What's he look like?"

"Well, we met on the plane on the way down actually. He was on business, but he called me twice this week. He's about 6'2" with salt and pepper hair and gorgeous blue eyes."

"Well, that's great, Kate. I'm happy for you. You deserve more than I could give you."

"You deserved more too, Drew. I'm glad things are looking up with Lola. I want both of you to be happy. Guess this means we won't be sleeping together any more, huh?" she joked.

"Guess not but it was great while it lasted. Speaking of which I told Lola about us. She asked, and I couldn't lie about it."

"How did she take it?"

"Well, she flipped out at first, but it actually was the catalyst in getting us to talk about our feelings. I promised her that we wouldn't be together any more."

"Sounds fair. I'm so glad you two talked it out."

A couple of weeks later Kate invited Jim out to the house for the afternoon. Since Drew was off, Lola and Natalie both decided to come out as well. Kate and Drew were sitting in the kitchen while the girls were out on the deck sun bathing when Jim arrived. After introductions the adults sat in the kitchen talking. After awhile Drew excused herself and went upstairs to the bathroom. When she returned she found Jim alone in the kitchen standing near the glass door, staring out at

Kate's daughters.

"Beautiful, aren't they?" Drew inquired taking Jim by surprise.

"What?" Jim asked turning toward Drew.

"I said they are beautiful girls, aren't they?"

"I'm sure my son would think so." he commented turning his back on them completely. "Kate tells me you've known each other since high school. That's a long time."

"Yes. Twenty-seven years is a long time."

"What was she like?"

"The same as she is now, sweet, caring, smart, funny, stunningly beautiful.

She has two copies in Natalie and Lola. You'll never find sweeter women than the Emerson girls."

"I'm surprised they haven't been taken then."

"Well, Natalie is a more independent, so I don't think she'll settle down any time soon, but Lola is another story. She truly is a cookie cutter image of Kate. She wants to be domestic and have children. One of her greatest aspirations is to become a mother."

"And that's the one you're dating?" he asked curiously.

"Kate told you?"

He nodded. "I admit that I was shocked. It's a complicated situation, isn't it?"

"Yes but it's true that Lola and I are together."

"Well, Kate approves, so who am I to judge? I guess it's the age difference that shocks me the most. My youngest son is gay, and although I've come to accept it, I still think I'd have a hard time if he brought someone your age home."

Drew nodded. "Kate struggled with it. We all did, but I think I had the hardest time out of all of us. I've been a part of these girls' lives since they took their first breaths. When Lola approached me, she basically made it clear I was what she wanted and would stop at nothing to have me. That was quite a shock."

Just then Kate reappeared ending their conversation. "So, Drew, do you think we could go ahead and get started on those burgers? I'm starving." Kate mentioned.

“Yeah. Sure thing, Kate.”

“You need any help?” Jim inquired politely.

“No thanks but if you want to keep me company, you could.”

Jim looked at Kate. “Go on. I’ll just be in here working on the salad.”

Drew and Jim headed outside to the grill. The girls ignored them for a few minutes before Drew called over to them. “Ladies, why don’t you go help your mother?” she suggested.

“We’re fine just where we are.” Lola answered turning onto her stomach.

“Go on now. Don’t make me have to hose you down.”

“You wouldn’t, not in front of company anyway.” Natalie challenged also turning over.

Drew smiled at Jim as she picked up the two glasses of ice water the girls had sitting on the table. Standing between their chairs, she dumped the water onto their backs. Both of them screamed as they quickly scampered to their feet.

“Drew!” Natalie screamed.

“What? I warned you. Now go on in. Too much sun is bad for you anyway. If you’re good the rest of the evening, I’ll take you two out later.”

Lola pointed at Drew and playfully said, “You’re in trouble, Drew. We’ll get you when you least expect it.” Lola and Natalie laughed together before going into the house. Dinner passed with easy conversation, and once everything had been put away, Lola mentioned, “Drew didn’t you promise to take Natalie and me out?”

“Yeah. Where do you want to go? We could see a movie, go to the bar, go to the pool hall. It’s up to you.”

“Let’s go play pool.” Natalie suggested.

“Fine with me. Kate, Jim, you want to join us?”

“No thanks. I think we’ll stay here. Are you sure you can handle the two of them?” she inquired as she watched her two girls go inside to change.

“Sure. I’m used to dealing with drunken men hitting on women. If anybody touches those two though, I’m breaking their fingers. I better go get changed now. Excuse me.”

Ten minutes later Drew returned to the deck to find Natalie and Lola more conservatively dressed in jeans and cotton tops. They all bid Kate and Jim a good night before piling into

Drew's jeep. When they arrived at the pool hall, it was still early, so there wasn't a wait for a table. As Drew paid for it, the girls went to get beers for all of them. They played a few games before Drew asked, "So, what do you two think of Jim?"

"I liked him, thought he was nice." Natalie answered preparing to take her shot.

"Yeah. He seems to really like Mom, and she's happy. That's what matters. What did you think?"

"He seems like a good guy. He does like your mother a lot. He is interested in her, and he even asked me about you two. I think there's potential there.

He told me he has three kids of his own, two boys and a girl, which one of his sons is gay. Apparently your mother told him about us, Lola. It's didn't seem to bother him too much. I think that's a positive thing."

They spent several hours out, but when they got back to Drew's, they noticed that Jim's car was still in the driveway. The three of them walked in to find the living room aglow with candles, soft jazz music playing, and Jim and Kate standing in the middle of the room embraced in a deep kiss. They all gave a collective gasp breaking the romantic mood and surprising the older couple.

Kate and Jim both jumped. "Oh. I thought you'd be gone longer." Kate fumbled.

"Kate, even been gone for four hours already." Drew mentioned.

Jim made a move away from Kate as he said, "I should probably get going, Katherine. I have a long drive home."

"All right. I'll walk you out."

Turning to the three of them, Jim said, "It was nice meeting all of you."

When Kate returned several minutes later, she said nothing about Jim. "I'm getting tired. I think I'm going to go up to bed. Why don't you girls stay here tonight, and we can visit more in the morning?"

"Sounds good." Natalie mentioned turning to Lola.

"Sure. Why not?"

"Great. Come on upstairs with me, and I'll get you some pajamas to wear."

The girls followed their mother leaving Drew by herself. She fetched herself three beers from the kitchen expecting them to return momentarily before settling down on the sofa. She had no idea how long she sat there with her eyes closed listening to the music and letting the alcohol lull her into relaxation as she continued to drink. Faintly she became aware of movement behind her and

then hands on her shoulders gently squeezing them. She moaned softly mumbling, “That feels good.” Lola rubbed them for a few more minutes before sitting down next to Drew. “I thought all of you had gone to bed.” Drew mentioned, putting the last of the three now empty beer bottles on the coffee table.

“No. We just got to talking with Mom.”

Drew opened her eyes and looked around mentioning, “This is a pretty romantic atmosphere, huh?”

Lola nodded. “Makes me feel like dancing.”

Drew smiled at her before extending her hand. Guiding her to the center of the room, Drew embraced her as they began to dance. A few songs passed before Lola looked up into Drew’s eyes.

“I love you, you know.” she whispered playing with Drew’s short gray hair.

“I know, and I love you.” Drew replied cupping Lola’s face in one hand.

A moment passed before Lola asked, “Are you going to kiss me or not?”

Drew grinned before leaning down to Lola’s mouth. The memory of Lola’s supple lips she had held for the past five years paled in comparison to the real thing as her passion sprang to life. Drew pulled her closer grinding their hips together as the kiss deepened. Lola moaned trying to increase the pressure of their bodies. They went on for several minutes before Drew pulled away slightly. “I think I might be a little too drunk to be thinking clearly.” she admitted.

“Why do you say that?”

“I want you in my bed tonight desperately, Lola, but I know we shouldn’t.”

“Why not? I want you just as much, Drew.”

“Your mom, your sister. We haven’t been together that long. I want this to be forever this time.” she said allowing the alcohol make her confession easier.

Sensing that Lola smiled at Drew pleasantly. “Maybe you’re right. Maybe we shouldn’t, but I would love to fall asleep in your arms.”

“I’m not sure I could control myself.” Drew whispered.

“Will you try for me?” Drew nodded. “Good. Come on then. Let’s go upstairs.” Lola turned off the music and blew out the candles before leading Drew upstairs. Going into the bedroom, Lola began to help Drew out of her clothes, but Drew was much too interested in kissing on Lola to help. At first Lola just giggled at Drew’s advances as she worked Drew’s shirt off her shoulders,

but when Drew moved into her neck, her laughing became whimpers and then moans as Drew persisted. Drew tried to get Lola's top off, but her inebriated state made it difficult for her to work open the buttons. Finally realizing it, Lola pulled Drew's head up to meet her gaze.

"You really are drunk. I've never seen you like this. Come on now. Let's finish getting you out of your clothes."

Drew allowed Lola to unzip her jeans and push them off her hips before pushing her onto the bed to pull off her boots. Once Drew's socks and jeans were off, Lola reached around Drew's back for the clasp of her bra only to find herself in another embrace as Drew pulled her down onto the bed. "Want to get naked with me?" Drew growled flipping them over, so she was on top of Lola. Hurriedly she pushed Lola's shirt over her breasts revealing the soft flesh. She reached for them as she brought her face down to Lola's cleavage.

Lola cried out gripping Drew's shoulders. "Wait. Slow down there, tiger." Lola said pulling Drew's head away from her chest. "My mother is just across the hall and my sister next door. I don't think we should do this."

"But don't you want to?" Drew asked with a pout.

"Oh, Drew. You know I want to but not tonight. Trust me, Drew. You'll be thanking me tomorrow if you even remember." she said pushing Drew off her. "I'm going to go change. Do you want pajamas?"

"No." Drew defiantly pouted. "I'm staying like this."

"Fine. Suit yourself."

Drew was under the covers lying in the dark when Lola climbed into bed. As soon as she settled herself, Drew rolled over on top of her. Lola smelled the beer pouring off Drew's breath as the older woman leaned to kiss her. "Drew, be good." she warned feeling Drew's hands under her night shirt. "I would hate to have to call one of your deputies out here, and don't think I won't handcuff your wandering hands to the bedpost if you don't stop." she said half-heartedly as Drew's mouth took in the length of her neck.

"I love you, Lola Emerson. I want to marry you. I want you to be the mother of my children." Drew declared meeting Lola's eyes in the dark.

"Drew, I love you too, but we have to go to sleep now. Please." Lola begged in complete seriousness.

Drew gave a resigned nod rolling off her girlfriend back to her side of the bed. Facing away from Lola, Drew proceeded to pass out promptly.

Drew awoke the next morning to a knocking on the bedroom door. She groaned in displeasure as she opened her eyes. Her head was throbbing. Sitting up slightly she noticed she was alone.

“Yeah?” she mumbled.

Kate poked her head into the room. “Good morning. You feeling all right?” softly Kate inquired.

Drew shook her head. “I don’t know what I was thinking having that much to drink. I feel like I’ve been run over by a stampede.” she grumbled.

“Yeah, that’s what Lola figured. Here. I brought you some aspirin.” Drew sat up to take the pills and water from Kate. “So, I guess you showed Lola a good time last night.”

Drew gave her a confused look. “What are you talking about?”

“Drew, come on. You had sex with Lola last night. I heard her in here.”

“No. We didn’t.” Drew said.

Kate looked at her skeptically. “Do you even remember last night?”

Drew thought about it for a few minutes. “There was no sex. We messed around a little, but we didn’t have sex. At least I don’t think we did.”

Kate shook her head at Drew. “Serves you right for drinking so much.”

Changing the subject Drew asked, “Where are the girls?”

“Oh, they went for a ride.”

Drew and Kate were sitting at the kitchen table when the girls returned from the barn. When they came in the sliding glass door, Lola looked at Drew seriously. “How are you feeling?” she asked.

“Next time I do something this stupid you have permission to put me out of my misery.”

“Maybe some food will help. I’ll start on lunch. Why don’t you two get cleaned up?” Kate suggested.

Drew made her way to the couch in the living room. She curled up onto it and closed her eyes. She wasn’t sure how long she had been there when she felt a presence near by. Opening her eyes she saw Natalie standing over her looking concerned.

“You all right?”

“I’ll be fine. Sit down.”

Natalie took a seat on the floor near the couch. “So, you really laid the charm on thick last night.”

“What?” Drew inquired.

“All that stuff you said to Lola, you know, about wanting to marry her, how you wanted her to have your children. The girl is already head over heels in love with you. You didn’t have to go that far just to get laid. Asking her politely to sleep with you probably would’ve been enough.”

“I haven’t the slightest clue what you’re talking about, Natalie.”

“What do you mean? You saying you didn’t say that or that you don’t remember?”

“It’s possible that I don’t remember. Honestly I don’t even know how I got into bed last night.”

“Oh. Well, Lola said you said all those things to her.”

“Great.” sarcastically Drew mumbled.

“Drew, it doesn’t matter if you remember it as long as you mean it. You’ve always said what you mean. Do you think maybe you said that, because you’d be too afraid to do it sober?”

Drew shrugged. “Maybe.”

“Well, to your advantage, she doesn’t think you remember either.”

“Did she say if we... um... had sex?”

“She didn’t mention that.”

“Man, I don’t know what I’m going to do now.” Drew mumbled shutting her eyes. “I guess that’ll teach me never to drink so much again.”

“Relax, Drew. She probably won’t say anything.”

They heard Lola coming downstairs ending their conversation. When she walked into the room, Natalie excused herself to go help her mother leaving the two of them alone. Lola took the spot Natalie had just vacated. She looked deeply into Drew’s eyes in a long silence.

“What is it?” Drew asked.

“I was just looking for something.”

“Did you find it?”

Lola sighed as she nodded. “Yes. Although it’s not what I had hoped to find.”

Drew was confused by her statement but let it go as she said, “Listen, Lola. About last night, I believe I owe you an apology. I think I may have said and done some things out of line, and I

just wanted you to know that I'm sorry if I in anyway hurt or offended you.”

Lola stared at her closely. “You really have no idea why you are apologizing, do you?”

Drew shrugged. “Honestly, I just got the general sense that in my drunken state I may have tried to take advantage of the situation. I just wanted you to know that’s not me, at least that behavior hasn’t been me in years.”

“What gave you the idea that you tried to take advantage of me?”

“Well, Natalie led me to believe I had done so.”

“You mean you don’t remember your behavior.” Lola said. It was not a question.

Drew hung her head in shame but answered truthfully, “No. I don’t remember that much about last night. However I have been given the highlights.”

Lola dropped her head. “Well, now that you know I would like to talk to you about it, but I don’t want Mom and Natalie around when we do talk. I think you did try to take advantage of the way I feel about you and my eagerness to have a serious relationship again. I never thought you would do that to me, but you made me feel as if all you cared about was what was between my thighs, and you used my feelings against me to try to get me to have sex with you. Then to make it worse, when I wouldn’t, you tried to guilt me into it by pouting, then manipulating my emotions, and then finally giving me the cold shoulder when I still refused. I can’t even begin to tell you how hurt I am.” Just then Kate called them to lunch, so Lola looked at Drew again as she stood. “I want you to think about what was said, and I’m going to do the same. When we talk there’s only going to be one thing on my mind. Is what you said true, or were you using that as a line to get me to sleep with you? That’s all I need to know. You think about it.”

Continued in Part 4

The Athenaeum's Scroll Archive

~ Persistence ~

by Alex Tryst

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Disclaimers/Warnings: These characters are all mine. This is a story about women trying to find their places in the world and does include sexual scenarios between consenting adult women. Some violence is involved, including one (although not graphic) sexual assault. Additionally there is some derogatory, homophobic language used. If this kind of stuff offends you or is illegal where you live, it’s best to turn around now. I feel compelled to mention here

that the name of one of the main characters was borrowed from the book *Lolita* by Vladimir Nabokov. For those of you who have read this classic novel, I think you will find my young maiden aptly named. If you'd like to drop me a line concerning the story, you can e-mail me at alextryst@hotmail.com. Please know that I am a sensitive soul and harsh criticism will immediately be deleted. However constructive comments are welcome.

Dedication: To my wife, you are my fondest wish.

Now on with the show.....

Chapter Eleven

The last few weeks of summer flew by, and then Lola began her last year of school. Lola and Drew had yet to have their discussion due to their conflicting schedules, and Kate had continued living with Drew. Over dinner one night, the two were discussing their love lives when Kate asked, "So, what's going on with you and Lola?"

Drew shrugged. "We are supposed to talk about things, but we haven't done so yet. I don't really know what to do here."

Kate placed her hand over Drew's. "Drew, you should just tell her the truth. You know you love her. You know she's the one you want to be with. You need to say that."

"But what of it's too soon?"

"Drew, if you deny your feelings to her, it's over. I think it's best just to be forthright about the way you feel."

"Perhaps you're right. I'm just afraid."

"Then you tell her that too. Put everything out there on the table, Drew. Trust me on this one. I know you two. It'll be for the best."

"I'll think about it. What about Jim? Things seem to be going well."

"They really are."

"You know, sometimes I feel bad, because you two don't have privacy here."

"Actually, I like it that way. Since I still don't know him that well, I like having my best friend, Sheriff Bailey, close by."

"As long as you're okay with it. I just wanted to check."

As Drew settled down to bed that night, she decided to call Lola, knowing they had to talk about things. When Lola answered she greeted her warmly. After the greeting, Drew said, "Listen,

Lola. We still haven't had that conversation. I was wondering if we could do that this week. I really want to get things out in the open."

"Yeah. I think we should. I've been preoccupied with it, so it's probably best if we do that." Lola replied neutrally.

"How about I come into the city one evening? I'll take you to dinner. What day works best for you?"

"Tomorrow if you can pick me up at school."

"Yeah. I can do that. Just tell me where and when."

The next evening Drew was wandering Lola's campus looking for the science building when she saw Lola in the distance with some friends. As she got closer, she noticed there was one boy in the group of five that was draped over her girlfriend's shoulders, but Lola didn't seem to notice or care. When Drew was within a few feet, Lola saw her.

"Hey, Drew. Where have you been?" she asked moving toward her.

"Sorry I'm late. I got a little lost." she answered making no move to touch Lola in front of her friends.

Lola however took her hand and led her over to the group. "Everyone, this is Drew."

"Oh? So, you're Drew? Lola's told us all about you." one of the girls mentioned.

"I hope most of it was good." Drew stated uneasily.

"Oh, it was good all right." the girl teased coyly. Drew felt her face warming at the comment.

"Well, we should be going." abruptly Lola interrupted. After both of them bid Lola's friends good bye, they walked away.

Drew cast a glance over her shoulder to see them all watching their departure. "Was she flirting with me?"

Lola nodded. "Certainly seemed that way."

"Well, as I walked up I saw that guy hanging all over you."

"Yeah. He has a bad habit of doing that."

"Does he know you're not his type?"

"I've told him."

“Well, can’t blame the guy for trying. You certainly are a magnificent woman.” Drew mentioned.

Lola blushed. “That’s sweet. Thank you for thinking so.”

“So, where are we going?”

“Oh, there’s this Thai place a few blocks from here. I thought we’d go there if that was all right with you.”

“That’s fine. Wherever you want to go.”

One they got to the restaurant and had ordered, Lola asked, “Do you want to have this talk now?”

“I’d rather wait until after dinner if that’s okay with you.”

“Okay. Sure. So, tell me what’s been going on.” Lola said changing the subject.

Dinner passed pleasantly before Drew suggested they go for coffee. Sitting outside at the café nursing their drinks, Drew took the initiative. Taking a deep breath she inquired, “Would you like to start, or shall I?”

“Actually I would like to make sure you really know what this conversation is supposed to be about. In my mind it’s about the things you said to me when you were intoxicated.”

“Yes, I agree that’s what this is about.”

“Do I need to tell you what was said since you don’t remember saying it yourself?”

“No. I think Natalie probably gave me an accurate description. She said I propositioned you for sex and basically told you that I loved you, wanted to marry you, and have children with you. Is that what happened?”

Lola nodded slowly with tearful eyes. “Drew, I asked you to think about those things for our talk. Did you?” Drew nodded. “Well, are they true, or were they just lines to get me into bed?”

Drew stared directly into Lola’s hazel eyes. She knew this moment would forever change her life. Drew sighed. “Lola, this is a complicated issue, but in all honesty I have to say...” Her sentence faded as she just looked at Lola a moment longer. Her heart was pounding painfully in her chest, and she could feel sweat beginning to run down her back. Her head dropped forward as she looked at the trembling hands in her lap. Knowing she had to face her feelings, Drew made eye contact again. “They’re all true.” she stated in a quiet calmness. Lola gasped in surprise as she took in the simple confession, but before she could even respond, Drew continued, “However I also have to say that I’m scared of putting my heart in your hands again. You shattered it last time. I don’t have the trust for you that I used to in this area.”

Lola nodded her head guiltily. "I know I hurt you, Drew. I wish I could change the past."

"Well, we can't. What's done is done."

"What happens now?" she inquired.

"First of all, I'd like to know how you feel."

Lola smiled. "I love you, Drew. I always have. It's my greatest wish to someday be your wife and mother to our children."

Drew nodded. "You know, Lola, when I was your age, I had a great wish too. It was for your mother to decide she'd rather be with me than your father. I honestly believed that's what I wanted. Twenty-five years later I got my chance, and then I realized it wouldn't work. How can you be sure at your age that you want to spend the rest of your life with me?"

"Drew, I don't know if I can answer that except to simply say that I know deep down in the depths of my soul that I belong with you. I know I can make you feel things no other woman has."

"That's certainly true. No one had ever made me feel higher or lower than you. It's those lows that scare me, Lola."

"They scare me too, Drew. You've contributed to some lows for me as well. You hurt me too, but I'm willing to try again if you are."

Drew took a moment to answer the implied question. Nodding slowly she said, "I'm willing too."

Lola gave her a soft smile as she tentatively reached for Drew's hand across the table. Drew responded putting her hand in the young blonde's. They walked back to Drew's jeep in companionable silence still holding hands. When they got to the car, Lola stood at her car door waiting for Drew to unlock and open it for her. Drew dug into her pocket for her keys as she cast a glance at Lola. She could feel all her pent up sexual frustration for this woman begin to unleash itself and settle between her thighs as she allowed her mind to remember the wonder of Lola's body. Drew noticed Lola look over her shoulder when Drew hadn't opened the door after unlocking it, but then she slowly turned to face her. To Drew's surprise, Lola gave her a coy smile as if she could read the older woman's thoughts. Playfully she ran her fingers up Drew's bare forearm, along the short sleeved knit polo, and over her shoulder. Her fingers skimmed up Drew's neck before her thumb brushed over Drew's open lips.

Softly Lola whispered, "I love it when you look at me like that."

"Like what?" needlessly Drew inquired wrapping one arm around Lola's waist.

Lola leaned in, letting her breasts rub up against Drew's lightly. Drew could feel Lola's breath against her ear and then teeth nibble at the lobe as Lola replied, "Like you want to ravage me like a wild animal. It makes me so hot for you, Drew. I want you to desperately. I've been waiting for you."

Drew groaned in delirium. "God, it's always so hard to resist you, Lola."

"Don't, Drew. You don't have to." Drew met Lola's eyes. Lola gave another smile before pulling Drew's head down into a fervent kiss. After a moment Lola broke away slightly and pulled open the back door of the jeep and gave Drew a questioning brow. Drew climbed into the backseat, and Lola followed, locking them into the car. Neither realized how long had passed as they made out like teenagers until there was a sharp knock and light shined into the window.

"Campus security." the male voice announced loudly. "You need to be moving along." Drew groaned, and Lola giggled into her shoulder. When they didn't move, the voice yelled, "I know someone's in there. There's enough fog on these windows to be San Francisco." Reluctantly they both sat up and straightened their clothes. They knew by the light that the guy was still standing there. Lola opened the door and slid out with Drew right behind her. Obviously the young man was surprised but seemed to know Lola. "Lola." he mumbled in shock, looking at Drew. "I... I... I thought you had a boyfriend."

"No. No boyfriend but I do have a girlfriend. This is Drew."

"You're Drew?" he croaked as he turned red in embarrassment. "I feel so dense. I had no idea. Man, do I feel stupid."

"It's okay."

"I guess, but I'm still embarrassed. I mean, you could've told me. I wouldn't have kept asking you out. I feel so dumb."

"Honestly it's fine. It was flattering, but now you see why I'm not interested." He nodded looking at Drew again. "Well, are we free to go?" Lola inquired.

"Oh, yeah. Get out of here." Drew opened Lola's door for her before turning to go to her own side, but he stopped her. "You truly are the luckiest woman on this earth." he stated looking at Lola.

"I'm beginning to realize that now. Good night." As they drove off, Drew mentioned, "You must be the most popular woman on campus. Guys love you."

Smiling playfully Lola answered, "What can I say? I'm irresistible."

"You got that right." Drew growled, glancing at her hungrily.

When they returned to Lola's apartment, they continued from where they had left off in the jeep

as Lola tried to unlock the door. By the time she got it open, they practically fell through it in their rush. Deciding to help the process, Drew picked Lola up. Lola immediately locked her legs around Drew's waist as Drew propped her against the wall. Lola cried out softly as Drew attacked her neck just under her ear.

"God, I love it when you make that sound." Drew groaned.

"I love you, Drew."

"I love you too, Lola, so much."

Lola moaned as Drew's assault continued on her clothed breasts. "God, Drew, please. Take me to bed."

"Anything for you, baby." Drew answered beginning to move them toward the bedroom. However as soon as they stepped into the living room, they were greeted by a huge surprise. Sitting on the couch were Kate and Jim with Natalie in a nearby chair. Drew almost dropped Lola when she met Kate's eyes. "Oh, God." she stated in complete embarrassment. "What are you all doing here?" she inquired, setting Lola onto her feet.

"Jim and I just went out to dinner, and I asked if we could stop by here for a moment. Sorry to have messed up your date." Kate stated.

"It's okay." Drew mumbled in an obvious lie. Lola excused herself for a moment, so Drew took a seat. They all talked for a few moments when Jim mentioned they should go, because of the long drive. "Well, I could take Kate back with me." Drew offered.

"Are you sure, Drew? I didn't want to assume you were heading home anytime soon." hesitantly Jim said.

"I have to work early, so I should go soon. It's doesn't make sense to make you drive all the way out there when I'm going to the same place."

"Drew's right, Jim. I'll ride with her. I know you have an early meeting."

"If both of you are okay with it." he clarified.

"It's fine." Kate insisted.

"All right. Will you at least walk me out?"

Once Kate and Jim were gone, Drew went back to Lola's room. "Are they gone?" Lola asked when Drew closed the door behind her.

"Actually, no. Your mom just walked Jim out. I'm going to drive her home since it's so far for him."

Lola made a pouting face whining, “You’re kidding, right? You can’t leave now.”

“I need to, honey. I have to work early. Besides I think we were starting to get carried away. We really should work on us first. The next time I make love to you I want it to be with full knowledge that we’re in this together forever. Do you understand what I’m saying?”

Lola nodded. “Maybe we should just wait until we’re married.” Lola mentioned. “After all we’d have the rest of our lives together. I just want so much to be with you, Drew. I’d marry you tomorrow if you asked me to.”

“You have to finish school first.” Drew said temporarily overcome by the emotions she was feeling.

The ride home was quiet between Kate and Drew. Drew was deep in thought over the evening’s events until Kate inquired, “So you want to talk about it?”

“About what?”

“Whatever has you so quiet.”

“Oh, I was just thinking about my night. It took an interesting turn.”

“I’ll say. I didn’t think I’d see you two like you were.”

“Actually, that wasn’t exactly what I was thinking about. Just before leaving Lola told me that she thought we should wait until we were married to have sex. Then she said she was ready and willing to become Mrs. Bailey.”

“That’s not much of a surprise on the second part, Drew, but, what did you say to the part about sex?”

“Well, I said we should wait awhile. I didn’t mean until we were married, but I guess if she’s set on the idea, I’ll manage.”

“And what did you say about the marriage?”

“I said we had to wait until she finished school. Part of me feels like she cornered me into saying that, but at the same time that’s the way I really feel anyway.”

Kate smiled. “I’m happy for you, Drew. Truly it’s what you both deserve. I’m glad you took the chance. She belongs with you. She’ll give you everything you ever wanted, and she’ll make you happy.”

“I guess that means we would have your blessing then.”

“Yes. Seeing you two together tonight was a reminder to me of what a perfect match you really are in every way. Lola can give you things no other woman can. I want you both to be happy, and you will be happiest together. As her mother and your best friend, I give you my support.”

“Thanks, Katherine. That means a lot to us both.”

A few months passed with Lola and Drew seeing each other twice a week. Over the course of time, Lola began spending her weekends at Drew's. The first time it seemed awkward sleeping next to Lola when Kate was just across the hall, but without discussion Kate began to sleep at her own house during those visits. During the holidays the family took note that Drew and Lola were once again a couple, but no one said anything at first about it until Christmas Eve. After church everyone was settled in Drew's living room around the Christmas tree watching the fire and talking when Paul's mother looked over at Lola curled up in Drew's lap, idling playing with Drew's shirt collar as Drew held her tightly, looking at the younger woman as if she were the only other person in the room. “Drew.” Nana said getting Drew's attention away from her granddaughter.

“Yes, Mrs. Emerson?”

“So, tell me. When do you intend on marrying my granddaughter and making an honest woman out of her? I could really use some great-grandchildren.”

“Uh...” Drew stuttered in embarrassment as all eyes focused on her in interest, including Lola's. Drew could see the playful twinkle in her girlfriend's gaze assuring her. “Well, Mrs. Emerson, I have to make sure she'll have me first. She hasn't give me any indication so far.” she joked.

Lola pretended to be offended. “That's so not true, Nana. Drew deserves to be given a hard time for stringing me along the last four years.” she teased.

“I think so too.” Drew's father piped in.

“Dad! You're supposed to be on my side here.” Drew protested light-heartedly.

“Well, we'd all like to know what your intentions are.” he mentioned.

Drew could feel all the eyes begin to grow serious as the moments passed. Drew looked at Lola in a silent plea for help. “You know, we should lay off, Drew. I'm sure Drew's intentions are good, and I don't need a ring to know that.” She looked at Drew who smiled appreciatively. Snuggling into Drew's shoulder, she whispered so only Drew could hear, “Too bad there isn't any sex until then, though.” Drew jerked back in surprise meeting Lola's gaze. The blonde just smiled innocently.

As Lola and Drew prepared for bed that night, Drew contemplated the night's events. Drew was in bed when Lola came out of the bathroom wearing long flannel pajamas. Sliding into bed Lola

turned off the light. Drew curled up behind her, curving her arm over Lola's waist. "Honey, I wanted to ask you something. Did you really mean what you said about not having sex until we were married?" Drew inquired hesitantly.

"At first I wasn't, but I've given it some thought, Drew. We haven't had sex in almost three years. When we do, I want it to be like the first time. I think it would be better to wait."

Drew sighed but answered, "Okay. If that's what you want." Drew rolled away onto her back, trying to end the discussion.

Lola turned to face her. "You disagree." she said needlessly.

"I just never thought you were serious. I guess it'll take some time to get used to the idea. Good night, Lola." Drew flatly stated.

Morning found them with an undercurrent of tension from the previous night. Drew knew she was being foolish, but she was put off by the fact that Lola had just decided what was best for them without consulting her. Drew was cleaning up after breakfast and was off in her own thoughts when she heard Mrs. Emerson's voice ask, "Do you need any help?" Drew shook her head. "Drew, I sense some unhappiness in you this morning. I hope that my teasing last night didn't cause you stress. I know that you love Lola and have only honorable intentions toward her. I was only joking."

"I know, Mrs. Emerson. You've been good to Lola and me over the years. It wasn't you. Lola and I just had a disagreement after everyone left."

"I'm sorry to hear that. I shouldn't have asked."

"It's all right. It's good to know someone cares enough to at least ask."

"Well, I'm sure you'll work it out. Relationships are full of compromise. It's best to learn that early." Drew shrugged turning back to her duties. "Tell me in all honesty, Drew. Do you really see this relationship going to the next level? Do you think you and Lola will have a ceremony of some sort?"

"Yes."

Mrs. Emerson patted Drew on the arm. "Then I'm sure whatever is troubling you will pass."

The next few nights passed with similar tension between them, but once the family was gone, they were left alone in their discontent. That first night over dinner Lola mentioned, "I can't believe you're still pouting over the no sex thing. I didn't realize you were so focused on it."

"I'm not pouting, Lola, and I'm not focused on sex."

"Then what's wrong?"

“I’m just upset that I wasn’t involved in the decision or even the discussion. I respect the decision you’ve made, but in the future if I’m involved in the decision, I’d like to be consulted. If we’re going to be married, we have to be a team.”

“Drew, it’s my body and my choice.” she defended.

Drew rolled her eyes. “I don’t take issue with that, Lola. My point is that you could’ve at least told me of your intentions. I would’ve accepted it.”

“Why do I have to tell you everything?” she snipped. “I’m not a child. You’re not my mother.”

Drew sighed. “Lola, I don’t know what’s going on with you. I simply wanted to talk about this. I’m not trying to change your mind. I just want to know of decisions that affect me. Is that unreasonable?” Lola didn’t respond at first. “Lola, with the way you’re acting, I’m having doubts about us being ready for the next step. If you’re not ready for marriage, you can tell me. I’m not going to make you do something you don’t want or aren’t ready for. I just see you exerting your independence here possibly as an act of trying to free yourself and remain in control. I’m not trying to take that independence, Lola, and I don’t want to take control of our relationship completely. You can do whatever you want if it makes you happy. We’re in this as a team.”

Lola’s eyes began to water. “Oh, Drew. I’m sorry. I don’t know what my problem is. Lately I’ve just been overwhelmed with things. You know, my friends at school are starting to make their post-graduation plans, planning their careers, their futures. I just feel lost. I want to be with you, but I’m just not sure of the role you expect me to play. I guess I was just getting scared that I’d lose myself.”

“Oh no. I would never do that. I want you to do whatever makes you happy, Lola. If you want to work that’s fine, and if you don’t, that’s fine too. Financially speaking I could support us and our children if we decide to have any. I want you to pursue your dream just as I have pursued mine. You are your own woman, Lola, and I want to be your equal partner, nothing more, nothing less. I will never expect you to follow me. I want us to walk through life together side by side.”

“Oh, Drew.” Lola whispered coming to sit in Drew’s lap.

“As far as the sex thing is concerned, I accept your reasoning and decision. I guess I just need to propose to you, so we can start on wedding plans.”

“You had a beautiful start just now. Why not finish? Just ask me.”

Drew smiled. “I want to do it right, darling, ring in hand, down on my knee. You deserve that, but I’ll tell you what. Why don’t we start looking for rings? After all you will be wearing it for the rest of your life. You should have a say. We’ll go tomorrow.”

“Really?” Lola asked with a beaming smile. Drew nodded. “I love you, Drew.”

“I love you too, Lola.”

Drew and Lola spent the next few days of vacation looking for rings. Lola and Drew finally decided on a set they both liked, but Drew didn't buy them that day, saying she wanted to surprise Lola. Little did Lola know that Drew ordered them over the phone the next morning while she was still asleep.

Lola's second and final semester began with Lola and Drew perfectly content. During the last week of January, Drew took Kate out to dinner. Over the meal she kept thinking about what she wanted to say until Kate broke her thoughts. “I know something is on your mind. What's up, Drew?”

“Actually, I wanted to talk to you about something important. I know you've supported Lola and me in the past, and you knew this day would someday come. As Lola's mother, I just wanted to officially ask for your daughter's hand. I intend to propose to her next week if I have your approval.” she said with a nervous smile.

Kate gave her a warm smile in return. “Of course you have my approval and blessing. Did you get her a ring yet?”

“Yeah. Actually I brought it with me. Figured you want to see it.” she mentioned pulling the box from her pocket and putting it on the table.

Kate cautiously opened it. “Oh, wow. This is beautiful. I love the setting. That's a lot of diamonds. How many karats?”

“About three and a half.”

“Three and a half in a platinum setting? That must have cost a small fortune, Drew.”

Drew shrugged. “So what? I don't plan on buying another one ever again. She's worth it.”

“Does she have any idea?” Kate asked in excitement.

“She's the one that picked this design. The diamonds are larger than the one she tried on. I think that one was two karats.”

“It really is lovely. Have you decided on how you're going to ask her?”

“Not really. I want it to be a private moment, not a restaurant or anything. Have any ideas?”

“Well, let's think. What about places of significance in your relationship? First kiss?”

“Your house.”

“First date?”

“A restaurant in Du Pont Circle.”

“What about the first time you told her you loved her?”

“The hospital after I was shot.”

Kate sighed. “You don’t have much to work with here. Not that I need to know this, but what about place where you first... well, you know?”

“My living room. I have no idea what to do here.”

“What about taking her away for a weekend? Take her to a cabin in the mountains or something.”

“That’s a thought. That might take some planning though, and I wanted to do it soon.”

“Well, how about for a night on the town and staying at a nice hotel in the city?”

Drew nodded. “That’s probably better for our schedules. Thanks for the idea.”

The following weekend Drew made plans for them on Saturday night. She arrived at the hotel early to set up for the evening before getting dressed. She had hired a limo for the evening, so once she was satisfied with her appearance, she had the driver take her to Lola and Natalie’s apartment. Lola answered the door wearing a long, black dress. “You look beautiful.” Drew stated smiling appreciatively at her.

“You look nice too.”

“Are you ready to go?” Drew asked taking the overnight bag from Lola’s hand. She extended her other arm to Lola.

Lola let Drew lead her out to the limo where the driver was standing by the back door. He open it for them and then took the bag Drew was carrying. Drew intentionally hadn’t told Lola of their plans, so she was surprised when they arrived at the river. Silently Drew escorted her to a small yacht where they were greeted by a woman. “Good evening, Sheriff Bailey, Miss Emerson. I’m Captain Smith. Welcome aboard. If you would go into the lounge, one of the staff will get you cocktails. We should be underway shortly.”

Drew and Lola stepped aboard and headed into the cabin. A man in a white tuxedo was standing behind the bar and politely asked what they wanted to drink. “Champagne?” Drew asked Lola, who nodded in approval as her eyes scanned the room. There didn’t seem to be anyone else on board except for them and the crew.

“Are we alone?” Lola inquired when Drew handed her the champagne.

“Except for the staff, yes. Come over to the window. We’ll get to see a lot of the monuments.” she said taking Lola’s hand. They sat drinking their beverages and watched the scenery in comfortable silence until dinner was announced. They were then led into an adjoining room where a romantic candle light dinner was waiting. Drew held out Lola’s chair.

“What is going on with you? You are too much tonight.” Lola mentioned as Drew sat.

“I just wanted you to have a pleasant night out.”

Over their meal they mainly talked about Lola’s last semester of school. Dinner was leisurely as they shared laughter and food. Once it was finished, they moved back into the parlor for more champagne. As they sat cuddled on the couch, Drew said, “Lola, if you haven’t figured it out yet, I kind of wanted this to be a special night for us.”

“It’s been wonderful, Drew.”

Drew smiled at her. “Well, there’s something I wanted to say to you tonight.” she began as she untangled herself from Lola’s embrace. Lola smiled reassuringly as Drew knelt at her feet. Drew took her hands and squeezed them gently. “Lola, my entire life I’ve longed for that perfect companion. It’s taken me twenty-two years to realize the perfect woman was already a part of my life. I’ve never loved anyone the way I love you, and everyday that love grows stronger. You are the one I’ve been wanting and needing my whole life. It would be the greatest honor to have you as my friend, my lover, and my wife if you’ll have me. Please, Lola. Make me the happiest, luckiest woman in the world. Will you marry me?” she softly inquired pulling the ring from its box and slipping it onto Lola’s finger. Lola stared down at she diamond ring now adorning her hand. The diamonds were sparkling in the low light.

“Oh, Drew. It’s even more beautiful than I remember it. I love you so much.” she confessed bringing Drew’s head up to meet her lips in a tender kiss. They kissed slowly for a few moments before breaking for air.

“Was that a yes?” Drew teased when she realized she hadn’t gotten an answer to her question.

“Yes, oh yes.” Lola whispered breathlessly as she pulled Drew up onto the couch to feast indulgently on her fiancée’s mouth. The rest of their cruise passed without notice as they methodically explored each other. Finally the stopping of the yacht brought them out of their haze. Reluctantly they withdrew from each other’s embrace to make themselves presentable again. The captain came to retrieve them after a few minutes.

Walking them to the end of the dock, she smiled at them. “Well, good night, Sheriff and Mrs. Bailey.”

Lola beamed. “Good night, Captain Smith.” she replied for them.

The driver then took them to the hotel. Lola cast a questioning look at Drew when they were on the elevator but said nothing. When they entered their room, a dozen red roses were awaiting

Lola along with more champagne. Smiling at Drew, Lola inquired, "Would you mind if I changed into something more comfortable while you pour the champagne?"

"Not at all. Please do."

Lola leaned up and kissed Drew's lips lightly. "I'll be back in a minute."

Drew moved to the window after pouring two glasses and leaving them on the table. She was just looking out over the city when she heard the bathroom door open. She turned and felt her breath leave her for a moment. Lola was standing there in the red, silk chemise and robe she'd given her the first Christmas they had been together. Slowly but directly Lola moved toward her, her perfume proceeding her, assaulting Drew's senses. Lola took hold of the lapels of Drew's jacket and leaned up to kiss her gently. Drew moaned. Pulling back ever so slightly, Lola allowed her breath to brush over Drew's lips as she whispered, "Would you forgive me if I was too weak to resist you this once before the wedding? I really need you to make love to me to make this night complete."

Drew leaned in to capture Lola's lips, softly mumbling through the kiss, "It would be my pleasure, Mrs. Bailey."

Neither rushed the moment surrounding them as they reacquainted themselves with each other intimately. Everything seemed like the first time, including the tears they shared, as Drew brought their bodies together as one physically and emotionally. The early morning hours found Drew awake, lying on her back with one hand behind her head as the other softly caressed Lola's downy, golden tresses as her young fiancée used her as a full body pillow. Drew could feel the warmth of Lola's body radiating through her as she thought about her future with the now sleeping beauty. Drew softly chuckled to herself as she thought of the look on her mother's face when she told her of the official engagement. She knew her mother would make sure Drew knew that she had been right all along.

Lola stirred and looked up at her with sleepy eyes. "What's so funny?" she inquired with a yawn.

"Oh, sorry I woke you. I was just thinking about my mother. When we tell her we're getting married, she's going to tell me she knew all along." Lola moaned as she kissed along Drew's chest, clearly ignoring Drew's answer. "What are you doing?" Drew playfully asked.

"Trying to give you something else to think about other than your mother. Surely we can find more constructive things to do with our time." Lola replied rubbing the palm of her hand along the curvature of Drew's breast.

"Oh, no you don't. We had a deal. Remember? No more sex until the wedding."

Lola moaned in frustration. "Well, we better be doing it soon, because I'm not sure if I can wait any longer."

"We can get married any time you want. My only restriction is that it has to be after you

graduate. I think that's important, but other than that, I'll go along with anything you have in mind."

"Soon. Let's make it the end of May. The sooner the better for me."

"That's fine with me. I'm sure our moms will be willing to help us out since we're both under tight schedules."

"Um hum." Lola mumbled, already focusing on Drew's naked frame again. Drew moaned as Lola attacked her neck with kisses, but she was aware enough to catch Lola by the wrist when her hand trailed between Drew's thighs.

"No, no, no." Drew teased. "We only agreed to one night of sin before the big day."

Lola looked at her with a pout, trying to reason. "Well, the night's technically not over until we get out of bed."

Drew laughed at her lover's antics. "Oh, all right." she conceded rolling Lola onto her back as she kissed the younger woman deeply. Pulling back momentarily Drew whispered, "I love you."

"I love you too, Drew."

"Good. Then you'll forgive me for this." Drew stated quickly pulling away and getting out of bed. "Night's over. I'm out of bed." she said with a smile.

Lola moaned in frustration. "You sneak!"

"Seriously, honey. We do need to get up. We're supposed to be at our house for a special engagement brunch. The family is waiting to see us. I didn't realize we'd be getting so little sleep, but you threw a wrench into the plans. Come on now."

Lola smiled. "Our house. I like the sound of that. Okay. I didn't know the family was in town."

"Good. I'll go ahead and shower first." Drew let the warm water run over her for a moment. She hadn't gotten a moment of sleep, but she felt completely rested. She began her bath ritual as she thought of all the things she and Lola needed to discuss as she lathered herself with soap. However just as she was rinsing herself off, she felt a pair of hands on her wet, muscular back. "You really are insatiable." Drew groaned as Lola hands trailed down taking hold of her backside. Squeezing gently Lola gently kissed Drew between the shoulder blades. "Is this what I have to look forward to? A permanent shower mate?" Drew joked turning around.

Lola smiled. "Not if you keep getting up so early." she teased.

When Lola and Drew returned to the farm, everyone in both families was awaiting them. Everybody was smiling as Drew led Lola through the kitchen into the den stating that they had an important announcement to make. Standing in front of their families, Drew cast a smile as

Lola, who blushed and returned the grin whole-heartedly.

“Well, it’s official.” Drew began. “I finally have found the one woman who can tame my wild heart, and fortunately for me, Lola has graciously agreed to watch out over me for the rest of our lives and become my wife.”

Even though it was expected, everyone stilled screamed in excitement at the official word as they hovered around the couple. Drew stepped toward her father and Lola’s grandfathers as the women looked at Lola’s ring.

“Congratulations, Drew. I’m so happy for you, tiger.” her father said giving her a tight hug.

“Thanks, Dad.”

“You know, you may be the strong arm of the law around these parts, but you’re still my baby girl, and I’m so glad you found the right person. You and Lola will be so happy together.” he mentioned.

Her mother grabbed her into a strong embrace. “You see, I told you this would be the right thing.”

Drew laughed at the statement as she squeezed her mother tighter. “Thanks for believing, Mom.”

After several minutes Kate announced, “Well, we have a great brunch that was put together by the grandmothers. Why don’t we go enjoy it?”

As they settled down to their meal, they were bombarded with questions about the wedding. “Where do you think you’ll want to have it?” Drew’s mother asked.

Lola looked at Drew. “Well, we hadn’t discussed it, but I’ve always thought it would be wonderful to have it here. Maybe with the service in the front and the reception out back. As a little girl, I always thought it would be so romantic.”

“We can do it here if you’d like. That could be fun.” Drew agreed.

“And I want it to be kind of small, just family and close friends.” Lola continued.

“I would want that too.” Drew said.

Lola paused a moment before saying, “I think the bigger issue is what to wear. We don’t have a lot of time until the end of May.”

“And we have to figure out what to put Drew in. We know she’ll never wear a dress.” Drew’s mother said with a teasing smile in her daughter’s direction.

“That’s okay. I don’t want her to wear a dress anyway.”

“What do you think I should wear exactly?” Drew inquired curiously.

Lola shrugged. “I’m not sure. You’d look silly in a dress.”

“What about my uniform?” she asked helpfully.

Lola made a face. “No. I hate that thing. You should wear a suit, because I know you’ll be most comfortable in that, but I don’t think it should be a tux. After all it’s black so it’ll be hot, and I do want to know that you are the woman I love when I’m walking down the aisle.”

“What if you both wear white? It is Drew’s first wedding too.” Kate mentioned.

“That could be cute. Would you feel comfortable in a white suit, honey?”

“Sure. I’ll wear anything you want me to, Lola. This is your big day, and I only want to compliment what you’re going to wear, not overshadow it.”

“You’re so sweet, but it’s our day. I think having both of us in white would be fun.”

A few weeks passed as Drew and Lola began trying to figure out what they wanted for their day, but with all the extra ideas from their mothers and grandmothers, they were no further along. One night over dinner with Kate, Drew announced that she and Lola had decided it would be better to hire a professional wedding coordinator to take care of things.

“But, Drew, that’s going to be expensive. If you’re that bogged down, give each of us something to do. We’re just trying to help.”

“Look, Kate. Lola and I appreciate all the things that you all are doing. As the mother of the bride, you’re going to have plenty to do. We just think it would be less stressful for Lola and myself. They already have all the contacts. Lola and I just think it’s for the best, but since we want you and my mom to be involved, we’ve decided to let you find the wedding planner. You call around and find us the right one. If you have rapport with them, and they can do it in the time frame we want, schedule a time for all of us to meet at the house.”

Kate gave a nod. “Okay. I can do that. Do I still get to help with your clothes?”

“Of course. We’re counting on you.”

The following Friday Drew and Kate were standing on the front porch waiting on the prospective wedding planner. As the unfamiliar car pulled into the driveway, Drew checked her watch.

“She’s early. That’s a good sign.”

The car came to a stop behind Kate’s before the driver emerged. Drew eyes opened a little wider at the tall, slender, well-dressed auburn haired woman. She was wearing sunglasses, so Drew couldn’t get a look at her eyes. She grabbed a clipboard and then slipped on a jacket before

walking toward them. When she was close enough, she smiled and slid her sunglasses up to her forehead to hold back her shoulder length hair, reveal sparkling green eyes. Drew felt the woman's eyes run over her from head to toe before she turned to Kate. "Kate or Lola?" she asked cheerfully.

"I'm Kate Emerson. Unfortunately Lola's running late."

"Nice to meet you, Kate. I'm Megan O' Malley." she said shaking hands with her. Turning to Drew she stated, "And you must be Drew."

"Yes, Drew Bailey. Pleasure to meet you, Megan."

"Well, why we wait on the other bride, why don't you tell me how far you've gotten?" she asked in interest.

"Actually, Megan, before we start I want to make one thing absolutely clear. There is only one real bride here, and it's Lola. I expect her to be treated like the queen of the world, and I'll expect nothing less." Drew said gruffly crossing her arms over her chest.

Megan shifted nervously. "Yes, of course, Drew. I understand. I'll be honest with you. I've never done this kind of wedding, so I'm not sure what to call you. I didn't mean to offend you. I didn't want to assume I should call you the groom. I'll call you whatever you would like me to." Megan apologized.

"Drew is good enough. Now why don't we go inside where it's a little warmer? I want to wait on Lola before we begin."

For the next several hours Lola and Drew shared ideas with Megan on what they wanted. During that time Megan vigorously took notes on everything, and at the end of the conversation, she folded a piece of paper in half asking, "Which of you would like the estimate?" She looked to Drew and Kate expectantly.

Drew held out her hand. "I'll take it." She flipped it open and looked at the final price. Emotionlessly she folded it again and stuck it in her pocket. She then looked at Megan in silence.

"Well, I guess you want time to think about it." Megan stated somewhat nervously, looking to Kate for assistance.

"Thank you, Megan. I'll get your coat and walk you out." Drew said seriously.

"Is there anything I can do to help you with your decision? You don't really have time to waste if you want this done in May."

"I know that, but Lola and I have some things to discuss first. We'll let you know in a few days."

"Did you have any questions about the estimate?"

“No. It seems pretty self-explanatory. We just need to talk about some details first. Thanks for coming out here. We’ll call you soon.” Drew stated politely but firmly.

Megan took her coat from Drew and put it on. Drew then led her out to her vehicle. “Before I go, Drew, I would like to remind you that the price takes into account the short time frame. Given more time, the price would be a little lower.”

Drew nodded. “Okay. Thanks for letting me know. You’ll hear from us soon.”

When Drew returned to the house, she sat in the chair Megan had been in and turned to Lola. “So, what did you think?”

“I liked her a lot. What about you? It seemed like you didn’t like her.”

“I liked her just fine. Do you want her to be our coordinator?”

“Yes but only if you do as well.”

Drew pulled the estimate out of her pocket and studied it a moment. “Is it the price, Drew?” Kate asked.

“No. I’m prepared to pay the price listed. However she just told me that it’s more than she normally charges due to the time frame. Are you set on the end of May? We could wait until the fall.”

“Drew, if the money is an issue, we can wait, but I really did want to do it at the end of May.”

Drew nodded. “All right then. The end of May it is. Megan can be our planner. We’ll have to call her on Monday.”

A little later that afternoon Lola was in the office working on a paper while Kate and Drew started on dinner. “Drew, I was wondering if I could see the estimate for the wedding.”

“Why?”

“Well, Paul and I set up wedding accounts for both the girls, and as the bride’s mother, I’m supposed to be paying for it.”

“I’m not going to let you pay, Katherine. My parents wanted to pay too, but I said no. We’ve agreed to split it in half.”

“Then let’s do it into thirds. Paul would want that and so do I.” Drew sighed and handed the estimate over to Kate. “Split three ways this is almost reasonable. Please let me help.”

“All right. If you insist you can pay a third, but I don’t want Lola to know how much this is

costing. Money is no object to me for this day if it makes her happy.”

Kate nodded in agreement. “Shall I call Megan for you on Monday?”

“That would be great. Thanks, Kate.”

“No problem. Did you really like her? You seemed irritated by her more than anything.”

“I was just trying to intimidate her to see if she’d come down on her price at all. It’s still a considerable amount of money, but she wouldn’t budge.”

The following Friday was a snowy February day. Kate had gone into town to stay with weekend with Lola and Natalie to help them find their outfits for the wedding. When Drew returned from work, she changed out of her uniform and immediately began on her dinner after starting a fire in the fireplace. She was in the middle of dinner preparations when there was a knock at the door. Confused at who could be visiting her on such a potentially hazardous evening weather wise, she rushed to the door. Opening it she saw Megan standing there.

“Megan, hi. What are you doing here?” she asked allowing the woman to enter.

“Actually, I called Kate this morning, because I couldn’t get in touch with you or Lola. I told her I wanted to come out here this evening to look at the location again. She said no one would be home, but I was more than welcome to drive out here. I just saw your lights on, so I thought I’d knock first.”

“Oh, well, of course you’re welcome out here anytime. It’s just not a very good day for driving. Come on in. Can I get you something to drink? Tea, coffee, anything?”

“Actually, I’d really like to go ahead and look around outside before taking you up on that offer if that’s okay. I want to try to figure out what kind of set up would work best with your terrain. It won’t take too long hopefully.”

“Okay. Well, why don’t I join you?” Drew mentioned grabbing her coat from the closet.

Together they walked the property as Drew relayed Lola’s thoughts to Megan on where they thought the ceremony and reception should be held. After half an hour they retreated back into the house. Drew hung up both their coats before leading the way into the kitchen.

Seeing the food sitting on the counter, Megan said, “I didn’t realize I had interrupted your dinner, Drew. I’m terribly sorry.”

“Don’t worry about it. I’m alone tonight, so it doesn’t matter when I eat. How about that hot drink now? Looks like you could use it.”

“That would be great.”

They both sipped their drinks as they began to thaw from the bitter cold weather. As Drew began to work on her meal again, she casually inquired, "Have you eaten? I've got lots of food here and no one to share it with. How about it? I'm a pretty good cook, so I promise not to kill your taste buds."

Megan smiled but declined. "I shouldn't."

"Why not? I'm alone, and I've come to hate being by myself. You can even charge me by the hour. I don't care."

Megan blushed slightly as she mumbled, "If I charge you by the hour, you would deserve more than just my idle chat."

Drew chuckled at Megan's slightly flirtatious response. "Well, we could always barter for the services you'd be willing to provide in exchange for billing by the hour." she mentioned.

Megan face turned a deeper shade of red. "I think there's some sort of policy against having candle light dinners with the groom." she bantered.

Drew laughed loudly. "Lucky for you I was going to skip the candles." she joked. "Seriously, I have food here, and we can talk about some of the wedding ideas. This might be one of your few chances to get me to sit down with you for any length of time."

"That much is true. It's definitely been difficult to contact you and Lola during the day. All right. If you're sure that I won't be in the way." Drew served up two plates and brought them to the table before pouring two glasses of white wine for them. Megan raised her glass saying, "Here's to you and Lola." Once the meal began, Megan said, "So, tell me your story, Drew. How long have you and Lola known each other? Where did you meet?"

"That's kind of a funny thing actually. I've known her mother, Kate, and Kate's family for many, many years. Kate and I were best friends in high school, although at the time I wanted much more than that."

"Really?" Megan inquired in interest. "Did she know that?"

"I never told her, but she says she knew anyway. At that time I think Kate was just scared. Had she not meet Lola's father, I feel fairly sure that she and I would've eventually found each other, but that was not in our cards. Kate met and married Paul Emerson, and they had two little girls, Natalie and Lola. I've been a part of their whole lives. I'll admit that I first resented Paul, but over the years, he and I became good friends. Natalie is my goddaughter, so there is a long history with Lola's family."

"How did you and Lola become a couple then? Wasn't it weird?"

"To say the least but Lola is a persistent young woman, just like her mother. She said she wanted a relationship with me. She wouldn't take no for an answer, and believe me when I tell you that I

told that girl no several times, but she continued to proposition me. The day of her eighteenth birthday she finally broke through that barrier. Then all hell broke loose. Kate found out about it and forbid me from ever seeing Lola again and told me that she did not want us to be friends either. I really was heartbroken about losing Kate's friendship, but then the tables turned again when I got shot by one of my former farm hands. That's how it all started really. He had tried to sexually assault Lola, but I had been able to stop him, and that's how I found out that Lola had been having feelings for me. Lola didn't even know I was a lesbian until her senior year of high school, so it was of great surprise to me when she finally told me she had been having thoughts about me since she was young. After I was shot, Kate apologized and begged me to be her friend again, because she had already lost Paul that year, and of course I said I would. She told me that she would allow Lola and me to date at that point. We dated her senior year of high school, but then she went to college, and we broke up. The summer before her senior year of college we began dating again, and now here we are."

"What do you mean when you said Kate lost Paul that year?" Megan inquired.

"Oh, Paul was killed in a car accident right before Lola started her senior year of high school."

"I see. I was wondering why there had been no mention of the father of the bride. I thought there might be an issue there that I was unaware of."

"Well, that would be it. Enough about me for now. Tell me about yourself. How did you become a wedding planner?" Drew asked refilling both their wine glasses.

"Actually, I began working at a catering company while I was in college, and we often did wedding events. I met different wedding planners that way, and I got interested in that side of the business. Half way into my senior year one of the wedding planners I had met told me about an opening at their company, knowing that I might be interested. I got the job and have been with them ever since. I started coordinating events on my own last year, but for the past four years I've been gaining valuable experience as a junior associate, and now it's finally paid off. When I got the call about your event, I was anxious to take it to my boss, because we'd never done one like this before, but she gave me the green light. I think it might become an advertising piece in the future and a real notch in my belt. I hope this brings in new clientele."

"I'm sure you'll do a wonderful job, and it will improve your business. If you started out of school, I take it your about twenty-seven or so?"

"Yeah."

"You have a boyfriend?"

"No but I'd like one. Know of anyone to set me up with?" she joked.

"Well, outside of the strapping young deputies under my supervision, no. Besides they might be a little too back woods for you. You seem be the type of woman who needs a sophisticated man."

“Actually, I really have a thing for older men. Somehow men in their late thirties or early forties are just the ones I’m attracted to.” Drew nodded. “May I ask how old you are, Drew?”

“I’m forty-one.”

Megan shook her head. “See, if you were a man, I’d be totally attracted to you in every way. You would be like the ideal for me. You’re nice, smart, funny, well-off, and you’ve got that ruggedness that I’ve always found sexy.”

Drew smiled behind her glass. “Isn’t there some sort of rule about flirting with the groom?” she teased. “Lucky for you and Lola that I am a woman then, huh?”

Megan flushed. “I didn’t mean to infer…” she stuttered.

“What? That I’m sexy?” she asked giving a dashing smile.

Megan shook her head. “I can see why Lola finds you attractive, Drew. You are quite the charmer. I guess I am lucky that you are indeed a woman, or else I’d be in trouble.”

“Well, to be completely honest, if you weren’t straight, I’d think you were pretty attractive yourself.” Drew mentioned, a feral grin transforming her face.

They sat a moment staring at each other. Drew was enjoying making the young woman shift in her seat. She sensed that Megan was not as straight as she portrayed, so she was giving her something to think about in the future. Finally Megan broke the gaze. “Well, I should probably get going. It’s getting late, and I’m sure the weather is only going to get worse.” she mentioned.

Drew nodded, knowing that she had succeeded in making Megan consider other options by the way she fidgeted. “All right. I think that’s a good idea. Wouldn’t want you to get stuck out here, having to spend the night.” Drew said, again trying to get one last rise out of her dinner companion.

Megan jumped from her seat. “I hadn’t that about that, but you’re right. I wouldn’t want to impose that way. I already stayed too long.”

Drew escorted Megan to the door and helped her into her coat. “Well,” Drew said opening the door and propping up against the frame. She looked intently at Megan to see what Megan would say.

“Thank you for dinner, Drew. That was an unexpected treat.”

“You’re very welcome. Be careful getting out of here.”

“I will.” she said, looking up at Drew for a moment. Drew just stared back, knowing that the woman in front of her was thinking thoughts about her that she didn’t need to know. She just smiled cordially. “Well, good night, Drew.” Megan brought herself to say.

“Good night, Miss O’ Malley. Thank you for the lovely dinner company.”

Once Megan was gone, Drew laughed to herself in amusement at the turn of events as she cleaned up the kitchen.

The following week Drew and Kate met Lola one day in the city, so they could look for Drew’s outfit options and attend a meeting with Megan. When they arrived at Megan’s office, they had to wait for a few minutes before Megan appeared. She was busy talking to someone else as she came into the waiting area.

Looking up her eyes immediately connected with Drew’s. “Drew!” she exclaimed with a smile as a light blush rose in her face.

“Megan.” Drew said.

Megan just stared at her a second before Lola stood up next to Drew. “Lola, hi.” Megan recovered stepping closer to take Lola’s hand. “Hello, Kate.” Curving her arm around Lola’s shoulder, Megan began to move them toward her office as she inquired, “So, Lola, tell me what kind of dress you decided on.”

Drew and Kate were a few paces behind them as they all walked to the office. Seeing Megan take a quick glance at Drew over her shoulder, Kate turned a questioning gaze to Drew. “What’s up with her?” she inquired.

Drew grinned. “I’ll tell you later when we’re at home. Not now.”

As they went into Megan’s office, she stated, “I didn’t expect to see you, Drew, so I’ll have to get another chair. I’ll be right back. Just a moment. Can I get any of you something to drink?”

When she left the three of them in her office, Lola looked at Drew. “Is there any woman safe from your charms?” she teased.

Drew laughed. “It’s nothing, honey. She just has a little crush. Don’t worry about it.”

“Oh, I’m not worried about it. I know I’m the only woman that could ever put up with you, so I know my claim on you is safe.”

“Very true, my dear.”

“When did this happen?” Kate inquired.

“The day you sent her out to the house. I was actually home when she arrived.”

“I should’ve known.” Kate mumbled.

“Don’t worry about it. Megan is a typical two beer lesbian, nothing more.”

“Two beer lesbian?” Kate questioned.

“Yeah. Give her two beers over her limit, and you can get her in bed.” Lola explained. “So, Drew, what is her limit?” Lola joked, making Drew laugh.

Before Drew could say anything, Megan returned, so they were all business the rest of the time they were there.

Time passed quickly and before they knew it, Lola’s Spring Break was upon them. Since they were busy with wedding plans, she didn’t go anywhere, but Drew came to the city almost everyday. One day when they had returned to Lola and Natalie’s apartment after a meeting with infatuated Megan, they decided to eat in instead of going to dinner. Drew excused herself to the bathroom while Lola began to prepare food for them. When Drew went into the bathroom, she saw something on the counter that she didn’t recognize. She picked it up and took a closer look. It was an electronic device that Drew had never seen before, so after she finished what she needed to do, she brought it out to Lola.

“Honey, what is this?”

Lola face colored. “Oh, I didn’t know I left that out.”

“What is it?”

“It’s a machine that tracks my cycle.”

Drew furrowed her brow in confusion. “Why do you have it?”

“Well, it lets me know what time I’m most likely to get pregnant.”

“That still doesn’t tell me why you have it. I don’t think I’ve grown any extra anatomy that will make it necessary to know your cycle to the days.”

“Drew, sit down. I wanted to talk to you about this, but I didn’t know when would be a good time.” Drew took a seat at the small kitchen table, and Lola came to sit across from her. Taking Drew’s hand, Lola smiled at her. “Drew, I want to have a baby.”

“I know. I want us too as well.”

“Well, I was thinking about this. With you being the age you are, I thought it might be best to start right away.”

“Are you saying I’m getting old?”

“Drew, you’re forty-one. If we had a child today, you’d be sixty-three when they graduated college. What about when they get married and have kids? I want you to be around to share in all of that. I know it’s hard for me to think about life without you, but I certainly don’t want our children to know what it’s like to lose you at an early age. Please just try to understand that I’m just thinking about what would be best for them.”

“I guess I never thought about it that way. I’ve only been thinking about us. I wanted to wait until you were ready.”

“I am ready. I was thinking we could pick a donor. I’ve already done a great deal of research on this, finding the right place and potential donors. Do you want to see?”

“Yeah. Sure. Why not?” They went back into Lola’s bedroom and turned on her computer. Lola guided her through several websites that included lists of possible donors that matched Drew’s characteristics. “Wow. You really have done research on this.” Drew mentioned when Lola was finished with her presentation. “I think it’s sweet that you want the donors to look like me.”

“Then you approve?”

“Yeah. I approve of your choices and method. It’ll definitely give us something to work with when we decide to start.”

“I was thinking that maybe we could try it ourselves just once to see what it’s like before going to a doctor. I think it would be really special if we could conceive without medical assistance.”

“Okay. That could be fun. I suppose you have a date in mind of when you want to try this.”

“Actually, if this machine is accurate, my most fertile time should fall either on the wedding day or the day after. Of course that’s if my body decides to stay on track. Stress could throw it off.”

“Well, if you really want to do this, I say we try it. The worst that can happen is it doesn’t work. We’ll call the institute and start narrowing down the choices.”

“Great. Thank you, Drew. I knew you’d understand. I want this to stay between us, though. Don’t tell Mom. Okay?”

“Okay. I can’t believe we only have seven weeks before the big day. I never thought I’d do this, especially with you. You’ve made me so happy, Lola.”

“You’re making all my dreams come true, Drew. I love you so much.”

The day of Lola’s graduation marked two weeks before the wedding. However as Lola made her way across the stage in cap and gown, Drew kept thinking about how lucky she truly was but wondered what Lola’s intentions would be career-wise once they were married. They had never talked about what Lola wanted to do as a career having been far too busy with the wedding and

secret baby plans. Drew decided she needed to bring it up with her fiancée the following day since it was supposed to be a celebration.

When that time came the next morning, Drew took Lola into her arms as they sat on the back porch. “Honey, I wanted to ask you about something serious. You hadn’t made mention to me about what you would like to do now.”

“I don’t know, Drew. I’m confused about it. I have these grand plans of becoming your wife in two weeks and hopefully have children soon after that. I don’t know if I have it in me to be a mother and have a career. Besides that I’m not sure what I want to do.”

“Why not do what you love? Why not work with horses?”

“I have no experience, Drew.”

“No experience? Lola you’ve been riding since you were six. You have sixteen years of experience. We own a stable. My father and I have always wanted to expand the program and get into breeding and training. With you here it would work out well, but it’s only if you want to.”

“Drew, you own the stable. You need someone with real experience to handle that.”

“I’m convinced you can do it if you wanted, Lola. I’ll even sell you half, so we can officially be partners.”

“Like I could afford to buy half.”

“Do you have any money in your pocket?” Drew asked. Lola pulled out a quarter. Drew took it from her. “There. You just bought half the ranch.”

“Drew.”

“Seriously, Lola. I’m having papers drawn up as we speak by my attorney. When we get married, you’ll own half of my life, and I’ll own half of yours.”

“But I have nothing to give you.”

“On the contrary. You’re giving me the most valuable possession you have, your love and devotion. That’s worth much more than all the money in the world.”

Lola leaned to kiss her softly. “I love you, Drew. You are so good to me.”

“I love you too, Lola.

Finally the day of the wedding arrived. Since Drew and Lola had agreed that they wouldn’t see

each other before the ceremony, Drew was forced to wait in the office while the other women got ready upstairs. She was off in her own thoughts when Megan entered. She came to where Drew was standing and smiled at her.

“You look nice, Drew.” she mentioned, dusting the top of Drew’s shoulders at imaginary lent.

“Thank you.”

“You know, Drew, often as a wedding coordinator, I have to deal with the groom being attracted to me. I think it’s because they sense they’re going to be locked up in chains when they go down the aisle.” she teased. Drew chuckled. “I have to admit this it the first time I’ve been slightly attracted to the groom myself.”

Drew smiled at her. “Well, then, Megan. That slight attraction would be mutual.”

Megan nodded. “That’s what I thought, but I have to say you’ve handled yourself perfectly. I hope someday I will find someone who treats me like a queen the way you treat Lola. She truly is a lucky woman. The love you show for her is so amazing, and it’s obvious she returns those feelings completely. You really are a perfect match in every way.”

“Thank you for thinking so, Megan. Coming from you that means a lot. After all you see people get married everyday.”

She nodded. “Yes, some of which don’t have the spark you and Lola do. I can tell when it’s real an when it’ll last. You and Lola have what it takes to make it. Your love will last beyond the time you take your last breath. You two are the perfect example of what love should be.” Megan looked at her watch. “It’s time. Let’s get you lined up with your parents.”

Drew was standing at the end of the aisle anxiously awaiting Lola. As soon as she saw her being escorted by her mother, Drew could feel her eyes swell up. Kate looked beautiful, and Lola was a vision in white. Drew hadn’t been allowed to see the dress or hear about how Lola was going to do her hair, so Drew was completely surprised and overwhelmed by her bride’s appearance. Drew was openly crying by the time Kate and Lola reached where she was standing, but she wore a huge smile. Kate moved to embrace Drew in a tight hug before kissing her cheek affectionately.

“I love you, Drew. You make my little girl so happy.”

“I love you too, Katherine.” Without further words Kate put Lola’s hand in Drew’s. Drew smiled at the young blonde. “I love you, Lola.” she whispered.

“I love you too, Drew.”

The ceremony and reception passed smoothly, and before they even realized it, they were headed off to the city where they would be spending the night before embarking on their honeymoon. Once they were alone in the room, Drew smiled at Lola as she pulled her into an embrace. “Well,

Mrs. Emerson-Bailey, I can't believe it."

"Me neither. This whole day has been a dream come true for me, Drew. You are all I ever wanted."

"And I am all yours, Lola, heart, mind, body, and soul."

Lola gave a sexy smile. "It's the body I'm most interested in right now. It's been a long four months."

"Yes, it certainly has, and we have a lot of time to make up."

Chapter Twelve

Two months later it was in the middle of a sweltering summer. Drew had been devoting a lot of time between her job and the new construction down at the barn. That particular day she had been assisting the contractors with the extension for breeding and training until she saw Lola up the hill standing on the back porch. As she began the long walk up the hill, she saw Lola drinking a tall glass of lemonade and fanning herself with a magazine. Drew's smile widened as she came up the stairs.

"Hi." she greeted Lola.

"Hi yourself." she answered as Drew took a sip of her drink.

"It's so hot out today." Drew mentioned running the cold beverage along her forehead. Lola nodded, still smiling brightly at Drew. "What's with you today? You look like a cat who ate a canary."

Lola laughed as she brought Drew into a hug. Her hands slipped under Drew's sweat-drenched t-shirt to her bare stomach. She smiled up at the older woman. "Drew." she stated dreamily.

"Yes?" curiously Drew inquired, looking at her wife in amusement.

"Guess where I was today?"

"On a hot rendezvous with your mistress?" Drew joked.

Lola slapped her lightly in the stomach with the back of her hand. "No. Guess again."

"On a mad shopping spree with your sister?"

"I wish." Lola teased. "No. I was at the doctor's office."

"Oh really? And what did the doctor have to say to you?"

Lola blushed as she brought their bodies closer, so they were touching everywhere as her hands roamed over Drew's wet back under her shirt. "I'm pregnant, Drew." she whispered gently.

"What? Are you sure?" Drew inquired with obvious surprise and excitement. Lola nodded. "I can't believe it. We only did it twice by ourselves. You mean to tell me that really worked?"

Lola gave a giddy laugh as she nodded. She stroked Drew's chest as she playfully said, "You got me pregnant, Drew."

Drew laughed lightly. "Oh my God. I really did it?"

"Yes, you did, tiger." Lola growled seductively. "You knocked me right up, my stud of a wife."

"Oh, Lola!" Drew exclaimed whirling the younger woman around in her arms gently, as reality settled in her mind. "You've made me so happy. I love you more than I could ever express."

"I love you too, Drew. Thank you for making my life complete."

Leaning in to each other, they shared a kiss of love and hope for the long future of their marriage and family.

The End