

# ~ Second Chances ~

by Alex Tryst

Copyright © October 200

**Disclaimers:** These characters are of my own creation. This story does include sexual situations involving consenting adult women (and lots of them). If you are offended by this type of material or it is illegal where you live, it's best to turn back now. 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.....

## Part 1

Alex was sitting at the far end of the bar drinking her rum and coke alone. She had come into the lesbian club on her friend's advice when she had learned that Alex would be in New York on business for three weeks. Her friend was so enthusiastic about the place that Alex decided that she wanted to see it for herself. Taking the subway from her mid-town hotel down into Soho, Alex found the tiny hole in the wall dive. When she first arrived, she received a few glances, probably from her business attire she figured but was then left in peace on her barstool.

As she nursed her second drink, she scanned the bar again. Off in the corner there were two scantily clad women watching her. One was a tall brunette and the other blonde. The brunette caught her eyes, so Alex gave a smile and nod. The brunette returned it before turning to her friend. Alex watched as they had a brief conversation. It appeared as if the brunette wanted to come over, but the blonde was reluctant. Finally though the pair made their way over to Alex.

"Hey there. You're not from around here, are you?" the brunette asked.

"Actually, no. I'm not. You?"

"Born and raised. What brings you here?"

"I'm here on business, but my friend said I had to come visit this fine establishment."

"Well, are you looking for a good time with some of New York's finest?"

Alex looked at the two women now standing on either side of her. "Well, I'm always looking for a good time. What have I done to deserve such an offer? Are you two just hospitable Yankees, or is there something else to this deal?"

The brunette smiled running her fingers lightly along Alex's arm. "Well, one of us can show you the best of New York for a mere one hundred dollars an hour."

Alex laughed under her breath as she looked at them. The brunette was looking at her patiently awaiting an answer, but the blonde looked shy and almost terrified. Alex was intrigued by her behavior. She had never considered being with a prostitute before, but it had been awhile since she had been with a woman due to her schedule. She looked between the women again. Normally the brunette wouldn't have been Alex's type, but the blonde was definitely someone Alex would go after. Sensing that she probably wouldn't get a shot at the blonde without going through the brunette, she turned to the darker haired woman. "How do I know you aren't cops?"

"Do we look like cops? You want someone to vouch for us? We're regulars here. The bartender would tell you so."

"How about we make a deal? One hundred fifty for the both of you?" Alex suggested to see if they would take the offer.

"Fine." the brunette replied without even a look at the blonde.

Alex looked at the blonde herself who seemed frightened by the prospect but said nothing. "Fine. Let's go." stated Alex paying her tab.

Going out to the street Alex hailed a cab. Once they were all in the backseat and Alex had given the driver directions, she inquired, "So, do you ladies have names?"

"I'm Chloe, and this is my friend, Bren." the brunette stated.

"Chloe, Bren, I'm Alex."

"Where are we going, Alex?" Chloe inquired.

"Back to my hotel room. I have a place across from Madison Square Garden."

Once they got back to Alex's room, Alex asked, "Would either of you like a drink?"

"No but we do need the money up front before we start." Chloe said.

"Of course. Here's three hundred. I'll put it on the night stand, and you can pick it up before you leave." Alex put the money next to the phone before turning to the two women. "Bren, you haven't said a word this whole time. Are you all right with this?"

"She's fine." Chloe answered for her.

"Actually, I'd like to hear from her if you don't mind. Bren?"

“I’m... I’m... I’m all right.” she stuttered breaking the eye contact.

Alex easily saw through the obvious lie but let it rest. Turning to Chloe she asked, “So, exactly what do I get for my three hundred bucks?”

Chloe slid her arms around Alex’s neck. “Anything you want.”

“How do I know you’re clean?”

“I am. I get tested, and I use protection.”

“What about you, Bren?” Alex asked.

“I’m clean.” she mumbled her eyes more interested in the wall than Alex.

“So, what do you want, Alex?”

Alex thought for a moment before going to her closet. Pulling out her favorite toy, she held it up to Chloe. “Can you take this?”

“I can take anything, Alex.”

“Good. Get undressed and then get me undressed. Meanwhile I’m going to help our shy partner out of her clothes.” Alex instructed before coming to stand in front of Bren. Alex heard Chloe doing as she had asked, so Alex stared down at the blonde. Their eyes remain locked as Alex slowly began to work open the buttons on Bren’s shirt. Bren looked so scared that Alex briefly wondered if the girl had been coerced into this by the brunette. Chloe was now assisting Alex out of her clothes as Alex unzipped Bren’s tiny skirt. As it fell to the floor, Alex let her eyes roam over Bren’s body now clad in only in matching white lace undergarments. Alex embraced Bren, her hands sliding over Bren’s soft skin as she leaned into the blonde’s neck. Kissing her neck gently, Alex tried to get the woman to relax, but she was completely rigid under Alex’s touch. Alex felt Chloe attach the harness to her body and then kiss along her back. Alex pulled away slightly from Bren to look into her eyes again. They were watering. Alex stared a few moments longer before realizing that she couldn’t take the blonde. The woman was just too frightened that Alex knew she would feel horrible if she had sex with her. Alex withdrew her arms from Bren’s waist. “All right, Bren. I want you to sit here and watch us.” Alex stated pulling a chair out from her small writing table. Bren sat where Alex instructed and looked up to her for further direction. “Good. Now stay just like that until I tell you differently.” Turning to Chloe Alex took her by the hand. “You come with me.” Alex led Chloe over to the bed where she began to unceremoniously ravage her.

Every few minutes Alex would look up to meet eyes with Bren who stared on wide-eyed. Alex sensed that the blonde was horrified by the events she was witnessing as she shifted uncomfortably in the chair. Chloe however was practiced in her technique of escalating a person’s passion, spurring Alex on with her words and receptive body.

After a long time Alex turned her eyes to Bren again. “All right, Bren. It’s your turn. I want to watch you touch yourself while I’m fucking your friend here.” Alex watched Bren’s expression turn to mortification at the request, and for a few moments Alex was unsure whether she would do what had been asked of her. With tears freely flowing down her face, Bren slowly began to do as Alex said. Alex watched for a couple of minutes, but the tears inhibited her enjoyment, because she knew she was humiliating the younger woman. Alex dropped her head into Chloe’s shoulder, and after a few more minutes she withdrew from the brunette.

Without even a look in the blonde’s direction, Alex mumbled, “You can stop now, Bren. I’m actually getting tired, ladies. Perhaps we should just call it a night.” Alex went to retrieve her robe, slipping it over her shoulders and tying it in front. Looking back toward the bed Chloe was beginning to put her clothes on. Alex looked at Bren who was still sitting half dressed in the chair in shock.

“Would you mind if I used your bathroom?” Chloe asked, breaking the silence.

“No. Go ahead.” Alex replied. When Alex heard the door close, she moved to Bren. Picking up the woman’s clothes, she held them out to her. Bren took them without a word and began to dress. Her face was lowered the whole time that Alex stood in front of her. Alex couldn’t help herself. She felt terrible about making the blonde uncomfortable. Not knowing what else to say, Alex whispered, “I’m sorry, Bren.”

Bren looked up at her in confusion and spoke on her own accord for the first time. “Why?”

“Because I degraded you. I don’t know what your situation is, Bren, but you need to find another way. This isn’t for you. It’ll break your spirit.”

“You know nothing about me or my situation. There is no other way.”

“You can’t do this, Bren. Listen. There has to be another way. Why don’t you tell me about your situation? I’ll help you if I can.”

Bren gave her a wary gaze. “Why? You don’t know me. I don’t know you. Why should I tell you anything? Why should I trust you?”

“Bren, you’re walking out of here with a hundred fifty dollars of my money and all you did was cry. I think you can trust me.”

“So, you pity me? Is that it? I don’t need your pity!”

“What do you have to lose, Bren? Not all your customers would be this nice to you. I’m simply asking for a chance to talk to you. What if I can help?”

“You can’t help me.”

“How do you know? Isn’t worth the time to find out?” Alex asked as she gently began to button

Bren's top. "You can't do this. You don't have it in you to be a prostitute. I'll make you a deal, Bren. Meet me tomorrow at the lobby bar at 6:30. We'll have dinner and talk. We'll come back here, and I will pay you to stay the night. We won't have sex. You'll just stay here with me, and we'll talk it all out. How can you say no to that?"

Bren looked at Alex in uncertainty. Before she could answer Chloe emerged dressed and ready to leave. Alex went to the night stand and retrieved their money, handing half to each of them. Walking them to the door, Alex smiled. "Well, thank you for the lovely evening, ladies. You certainly are some of New York's finest."

"Our pleasure. You know where to find us if you need us again." Chloe said.

Alex nodded before looking to Bren. "Think about what I said, Bren. Will I see you tomorrow?"

Chloe looked at Bren in interest. Bren shot her a glance before turning back to Alex. "Yeah. Tomorrow, 6:30. I won't forget."

"Good. I look forward to it but just one thing. Wear something a little more conservative. I don't want them to throw you out of the bar if you get there before I do." Bren nodded in understanding. "Well, good night."

The following evening Alex arrived back at the hotel around 6:45. Knowing she didn't have time to change before meeting Bren, she simply walked into the bar with briefcase still in hand. Scanning the room she saw the young blonde sitting at the bar staring into her glass of water. She was dressed comfortably in khaki pants, white shirt, and sandals. Alex walked over to her. "Bren, good evening."

Bren turned at the sound of her name. Looking up she met Alex's gaze. "Hi, Alex."

"Sorry I made you wait. I was running behind. I haven't even had time to change clothes, but I didn't want you to think I had changed my mind." Bren just nodded. "Well, I'm going to go upstairs and change. I'll be back in a few minutes to pay your tab, and then we can go to dinner."

"Okay."

Alex rushed to change into more comfortable clothes, opting for a similar outfit to Bren's. Returning to the bar, she asked the bartender to bill Bren's drinks to her room. "Ready to go?" Alex asked.

Bren nodded. Walking out to the sidewalk, she asked, "Where are we going?"

"I don't know. I thought we would just walk up to Times Square and eat at whatever place strikes your fancy. How does that sound?"

"Okay."

The walk was relatively quiet between them until Bren finally pointed a place out that interested her. Once they were seated and had ordered however, Alex said, “So, tell me your story, Bren.”

“There’s not much to tell.”

“Oh, I think there is. Would it help if you heard mine first?”

“If you want to tell me.”

“All right. My name is Alex Schreiber. I’m thirty years old. I live in Washington, D.C. and am an attorney for a firm that specializes in work place discrimination. I’m also a lesbian if you haven’t figured that out. Now tell me a little about you.”

“Well, my name’s Bren Worthington. I’m seventeen, and my parents kicked me out a few weeks ago, so I live with Chloe.”

“Have you known her long?”

“I met her the first night I was on the street. When I got kicked out, I took what I could carry with me. I didn’t know where to go, and I didn’t have any friends, so I just started walking. I ended up in the subway, because it was raining, and I got mugged. They got away with most of my shit except for a small suitcase of clothes and a little money. Chloe actually came to my rescue. She was nice enough to let me crash at her place, and I’ve been there since.”

“Why did your parents kick you out? You seem like a well-mannered young woman. What did you do?”

“I didn’t do anything, and that’s why I got kicked out.”

“I don’t understand.”

“My step-father has been trying to make me do things I didn’t want to do for the last year. He and my mom just got married, and I’ve kept him at bay. I guess finally he realized he’d never get into my pants and told my mom a bunch of lies about me being on drugs and stuff. I told her what he had been trying to do, but she didn’t believe me. She threw me out instead.”

“What about your father?”

“He’s dead, has been for a long time.”

“Sorry. So, you hooked up with Chloe. She convinced you to become a prostitute.”

“Well, for the first few weeks, I just hung around and would watch her work. She made it seem so easy, and it was better than the prospect of working at a minimum wage job somewhere. I finally agreed to do it, because she was getting a little tired of me just hanging around her place not bringing in money. Last night was supposed to be my first night.”

“I see, and you came to the lesbian bar. Why?”

“Chloe thought it might be easier for me to start out with women to kind of get used to it. She had you picked out as my first trick from the moment you walked in the door. I had agreed to it, so she pulled me over to you to try to set it up.”

Alex nodded. “Well, I have to tell you. I have never had sex with a prostitute before. Last night I was just intrigued by you. That’s why I agreed. I didn’t know it was going to turn out the way it did.”

“Me neither. I really thought I was ready, but I just couldn’t do it.”

Alex took her hand and stroked it lightly. “I understand, and for my part I’m sorry, Bren. Did you have any other tricks after you left my place?”

“No. I wanted to go home. Chloe stayed out, but I just couldn’t.”

“So, what now? Are you going to try again?”

“I don’t want to, but I’m not sure what to do. Who’s going to hire a high school drop out?”

“You haven’t finished school?”

“How could I? I had nowhere to stay. I couldn’t support myself. I was so close. I just needed to finish this semester.”

“What would you do if you could finish school?”

“I had always wanted to go to college. I would be the first one in my family. Now I don’t even think about that. I need to figure out how to buy food and keep a roof over my head.”

“I’d like to help you, Bren. You’re too good for the street life. I can tell you have something special in you.”

“Thanks for the kind words but unless you can keep me from being kicked out of my apartment, I don’t see how you can help.”

Alex sat silently for a few minutes as she looked at her young companion in contemplation. She felt drawn to the young woman sitting across from her and wanted to help her. Sighing Alex asked, “Bren, if I offered you a solution, would you trust me enough to take me up on it?”

Bren shrugged. “Do you have something in mind?”

“Well, I’m leaving town in a few days, and I’m going home. What if you went with me? You could stay at my place, and you could finish school. I’ll keep a roof over your head and food in

your stomach.”

“Why would you do that for me?”

Alex shrugged. “Because I like you, and you deserve a chance. There would be some conditions, though.”

“Of course.” Bren mumbled rolling her eyes. “What do you want?”

“Well, you can’t do drugs of any kind and no sex either. I think you’re too young for that.”

“So, you want to be my mother now?”

“No, Bren, I don’t. I want to be your friend. As I was saying, no sex, no drugs. You’ll go to school and live with me. In exchange I want you to keep my house in order. I expect you to clean it top to bottom once a week. You do my laundry. You do my cooking. You do my errands. I’ll provide you with some transportation. After you graduate we’ll look at the local colleges and universities to see if we can get you set up for some classes. Maybe you can go out and find some part time work when you’re not in school to make some money.”

Bren sat silently in shock at Alex’s proposal. “Why would you do this? Are you some sort of psychopath? How can I trust you?”

Alex shrugged. “The same way I can trust you. I have faith that you won’t rob me the minute I leave you alone in my house with a car, and you have to have faith that I’ll keep my word. It’s a simple as that.”

“And you aren’t going to want to have sex with me or anything?” she questioned skeptically.

Alex looked at her food for a moment. “Listen, Bren. I’ll admit that I do find you attractive that way, but I don’t want to have sex with you in exchange for this. I want to do this, because it would be the right thing to do for a young woman. I would only want to have sex with you if you returned that interest. Whether we have sex is up to you. That’s not a part of this deal we’re making right now. I promise, and my feelings won’t change on the matter. You don’t have to be afraid that I’ll ask that of you in the future. I won’t. You have my word.”

“Please don’t take offense at this, but your word means nothing to me. However seeing as there is no other offer forthcoming, I should at least think about it.”

“Good. In the meantime I want you to stay at the hotel with me. We can begin to build our trust in each other over the next few days while you think about it, and I promise you that I don’t expect you to have sex with me at any point. We’ll just enjoy each other’s company, and I will pay you as if you are providing me a service. I’ll give you two hundred a night for the next three nights. You let me hold you while you sleep, and we have dinner together. If by the third night you don’t want to go home with me, I’ll let you go back to your old life. However if you do want to go with me, we’ll get your stuff, and I’ll take you home. Do we have a deal?”



Bren shrugged. "Sure. I guess. Why not?"

"Good. Now eat up before your food gets cold."

The rest of the evening while they were out passed quietly. Being that Alex was tired from a long day, they went back to the hotel. Alex went to the front desk to ask for a room key for Bren and a toothbrush before escorting the young woman upstairs. Alex showered and changed into her pajamas before offering Bren something to sleep in as well. While Bren was getting ready for bed, Alex prepared herself for the next day of work. Bren came out of the bathroom wearing the clothes Alex had given her to wear, a pair of boxers and an oversized t-shirt, and took a seat on the edge of the queen size bed. Alex took off her reading glasses and looked at her. "Bren, I'm almost finished with this, and then I really need to get some sleep. You can watch tv if you want but just keep it down."

"Okay." she said with a nod before proceeding to turn on the tv set.

Finally when Alex felt she needed to go to bed, she beckoned Bren over. "Time for bed, Bren. You can keep watching that from over here if you want, but I need to get some sleep." Bren moved cautiously to the bed and scooted under the covers next to Alex. Alex put an arm around her waist and her head on Bren's flat stomach as Bren reclined against the headboard. Alex felt Bren tense. "Bren, you have to trust that I'm not going to do anything to you the same way that I have to trust that when I open my eyes in the morning you and all my belongings will still be here. Okay? Now I just want to hold you until I fall asleep."

"All right. Sleep well, Alex. I will be here when you awake." she stated taking a calming breath. Alex felt Bren's body relax under hers, and she drifted to sleep.

The following morning when the alarm sounded Alex awoke to find the tv still on but Bren fast asleep. Alex softly got out of bed and turned off the tv before going about her morning routine as quietly as possible. Bren was still out cold when Alex was ready to leave. Coming to the bed, she sat down next to the blonde and shook her shoulder gently to wake her. "Bren, wake up for a minute."

Bren opened her eyes quickly and looked around in a panic as if she didn't know where she was at first. Finally she met Alex's eyes. "Oh, Alex. It's just you." she mumbled sleepily.

"Yeah. It's just me. I have to go now. You can stay here and sleep as long as you want. Your money and a key to my room are on the table. Meet me back here between 6:00 and 6:30 tonight. Okay?"

"Yeah. Okay." Bren answered already putting her head back down on the pillow. Alex smiled at her as she stood and gathered her things. As she walked toward the door, Bren called out to her. "Alex?"

"Yeah?"

“Have a good day.”

“You too, Bren. See you tonight.”

“Alex, can I bring some of my stuff over tonight?”

“I think that’s a great idea, Bren. I’ll see you later. Go back to sleep now.”

When Alex returned that evening, she heard the shower running in the bathroom. Dropping her briefcase on the table, she noticed several bags sitting in the corner of the room, one a suitcase, another a backpack, and then a trash bag. Alex opened the top of the trash bag to see random articles of clothing. Closing the bag, Alex began to undress. Just as she got out of her clothes, she heard the bathroom door open. Bren made her way into the room, her head down. She was wearing Alex’s robe. She looked like she was off in her own world, so Alex greeted her softly.

Nevertheless, she screamed when she heard Alex’s voice. “Alex, what are you doing here? You’re early. You’re naked.”

Alex nodded at the observation. “Yeah. I was just changing. Some days I can’t stand to wear these suits any longer than necessary. I got out of court a little early. What are you doing here? We weren’t supposed to meet until 6:00.”

“Oh, well, Chloe and I got into a fight. I didn’t have anywhere to get dressed for tonight, so I came back here. I hope that was okay. I wanted to be ready when you got here.”

“That’s perfectly fine. I’m glad you came here. Do you want to tell me what the fight was about?” Alex asked as she picked out casual clothes to wear.

“Chloe’s pissed off at me, because I told her about your proposal. I guess she’s jealous, but I feel bad. I mean if weren’t for her, no telling what would’ve happened to me. I feel like I owe her something.”

Alex nodded. “I guess I can understand that.”

“I guess I wish you would take her too.”

“I can’t save the world, Bren. Besides I couldn’t exactly trust her the way I think I can trust you.”

“What makes you think that?”

“Several things actually, none of which have anything to do with her being a hooker. I don’t judge women who sell their bodies for money. I give them the same respect I give others. However she didn’t care about the respect I showed her. When she went into my bathroom the night she was here, she stole something very valuable of mine and then proceeded to leave something in her rush.”

“What did she leave?”

“Cocaine. Now I don’t know if she does it herself or sells it, but I don’t like drug users, and I hate drug dealers even more.”

“I didn’t know about the drugs, Alex. I swear.”

“I believe you. I’m not accusing you.”

“What did she take?”

“A diamond ring. I had bought it a few months ago when I was here for my now ex-girlfriend, but when we broke up, she gave it back to me. I was going to return it, but I hadn’t been able to let it go. I don’t mind so much that it’s gone, but it was very expensive. There is no way she’ll get what that ring is worth on the street.”

“Oh, Alex. I didn’t know about the ring either.”

“I’m sure you didn’t. My point is that Chloe has gotten a ten thousand dollar ring out of me, so that should far pay whatever debt you feel that you owe her. Don’t feel bad for that woman. Be thankful that she helped you when you needed someone, but don’t feel you owe her more. She’s gotten enough already. Now may I assume by your belongings that you have come to a decision about my proposition?”

Bren nodded. “Chloe threw me out when I told her what you had said. I guess you really are stuck with me now if that’s okay.”

Alex smiled. “It’s more than okay, Bren. I was hoping that you would come with me. I think you’ll be happier. Is this all your stuff?”

“Yeah. As I said before, I had gotten mugged. I don’t have much.”

“That’s fine. Makes the train ride back easier. When we get home, I’ll see about getting you some more clothes for school. For now though, why don’t you go get dressed for dinner? I want to take you somewhere nice to celebrate your newfound freedom.”

“Okay. I’ll just be a few minutes. Could I use your hair dryer?” she asked with a smile.

“Of course. You can use anything you want.”

Alex took Bren out to a nice Italian dinner than evening before taking the long but peaceful stroll back to the hotel. As with the previous night, Alex worked on her case for a little while, and Bren watched tv. However when it was time to go to sleep, it was Bren who initiated contact between them, lightly rubbing Alex’s back and scalp until she fell asleep.

Friday afternoon came quickly for them, and they found themselves on the train back to Alex's. As they sat next to each other, Bren kept looking at Alex who was engrossed in her book. "Alex." she finally said.

"Yeah? What is it, Bren?" she asked sparing a glance over the top of her reading glasses at her friend.

"I just don't even know what to say to you. I can't believe this is actually happening. I am forever thankful for your generosity."

"Well, it's not completely a selfless act, Bren. I had some motivation behind this. I guess now would be a good a time as any to tell you. Right before I came to New York on business my girlfriend broke up with me. We had been together for three years. I thought I had given her everything she wanted, but come to find out, she felt lonely. We lived together, and I had given her all that my money could buy, but it wasn't enough. She felt I wasn't emotionally available to her. She played the part of the little housewife as long as she could. When she left me, she told me that what I really should have was not a girlfriend but a housekeeper. That's all I truly needed. Maybe she's right. Maybe that's the only kind of relationship I can handle in my life."

"But you didn't have to pick me to be that housekeeper. You don't even know if I can cook or clean."

"True. However I was drawn to you for some reason from the moment I saw you in the bar. I felt horrible about what had occurred in my room that night. I felt ashamed of making you do those things when all I could really see was how frightened you were. I wanted to make it up to you somehow. I thought this might be a way, and as a self-serving act, I wouldn't have to be alone, living with the knowledge that I am a failure at relationships." she said quietly, trying to hold her composure. Feeling it slip she stood abruptly. "I'm going to get some food. Would you like anything?"

"Sure. Whatever you're having I guess."

"Fine. I'll be back in a few minutes." When she came back, she was carrying a tray of snacks for them. "I still have things to learn about you. I wasn't sure what you would want to drink, so I brought water and a soda. You can pick what you want. I'll drink either. I got us a sandwich to split as well. If you want a whole one, I'll get it for you."

"No. This is fine. Thank you." Bren answered taking the water and half the sandwich. After taking a bite, she asked, "Alex, may I ask about your ex, or is that subject off limits?"

"You can ask. What do you want to know?"

"What's her name?"

"Megan O' Reilly."

“Will you tell me about her?”

“Well, she’s twenty-eight. We met at a softball game. Our firm is apart of a league with several other legal firms. She’s a paralegal for another firm. When we met there was instant chemistry. I remember it well. That little spitfire tried to run over me at home plate. I was playing catcher that game, and she knocked the fire out of me. I remember lying flat on my back with this spunky little redhead on top of me. Our eyes met, and I had never see such a pair of deep green before. The connection was instant. Well, my co-workers knew that I was a lesbian, so they spent the rest of the time teasing me about her, because I had dropped the ball when she hit me. After the game I went over and introduced myself. We talked for a few minutes before deciding to go for a drink, and then that was it. We were a couple. I guess we made a strange pair, a tall dark-haired, dark-eyed German Jew and a petite redheaded, green-eyed Irish Catholic. We had our problems, but I thought we could always work them out. We had even overcome our parents objections to the others religious background. I would’ve given anything to make her stay, Bren. I still love her with all that I am.”

“Do you think you might be able to work it out?”

Alex shrugged. “I just don’t know. I wish we could.”

“Maybe you will. You deserve to be happy, Alex.”

“So do you, Bren.”

Bren smiled squeezing Alex’s arm lightly. “Alex, I’m happier now than I have been in the last several years. You have no idea what this means to me.”

Alex flushed. “Eat your sandwich.” she said changing the subject.

Five hours later a cab pulled up to Alex’s house in Arlington, VA. He helped unload their things onto the front porch before Alex paid him. Once he was gone, Alex unlocked the front door for them. She went in first and turned on the lights. “Well, welcome to your new home, Bren.”

Bren looked around the first floor as Alex moved their luggage into the foyer before shutting the door. She then walked into the living room where Bren was looking at pictures on the piano.

“Megan?” Bren questioned pointing to a picture of a redhead and Alex.

Alex nodded. “I haven’t had a chance to take down some of the memorabilia yet. Why don’t I give you a tour of the place?” Alex showed her around the two story home before ending in the guestroom. “I was thinking you could stay in here. It’s the larger of the two spare rooms. That is unless you would prefer the other one.”

“No. This is great.”

“Good. Well, I’ll get your luggage for you, and you can start to settle in.”

“Okay.” Bren said a little unsure.

Alex took her by the arms gently. “Bren, this is your home now, and I want you to feel comfortable in it. If you need anything, let me know.”

“All right.”

“Good. Now I’m getting a little hungry, and I know there isn’t anything in the kitchen to eat. I was going to order a pizza or something. What kind do you like?”

“Pepperoni and mushroom.”

“What a coincidence. That’s my favorite too. I’ll go order it and then bring your things up to you.” It only took Bren half an hour to put all her things away, and by that time the pizza had arrived. As they sat around the kitchen table, they made a list of all the things they needed to do in order to get Bren ready to go back to school. “Well, this is quite a list. I think we better call it a night and start fresh in the morning.” suggested Alex giving a yawn.

“I agree.” Bren said beginning to pick up their dirty plates and leftover pizza.

“All right. Well, then I’m going to go to bed. If you need anything, you let me know. I think your bathroom is stocked with stuff, but if there is something missing just tell me, and we’ll get it tomorrow.” Bren nodded. Alex stood and stretched. She wanted to give the young woman a hug, but she opted not to saying, “Good night, Bren.”

“Good night.”

Alex double checked all the doors before slowly making her way up to her room. She hadn’t even bothered to unpack her things, so she left her hanging bag on the back of the closet door and fished out her toiletries. She did her nightly routine before sliding into bed with a book. Even as tired as she felt, she knew sleep wouldn’t come easily for her now that she was at home with time to think about Megan. Reaching over to what used to be Megan’s side of the bed, she pulled one of the pillows to her. It still smelled like Megan’s shampoo. Alex curled up around the pillow, finally allowing herself to feel the pain she had held at bay. She never even heard Bren come up the stairs she was so withdrawn into her own hurt. Alex didn’t even realize that Bren had come into her room as she cried into Megan’s pillow. However when she felt arms curve around her body, she only began to sob harder.

“It’s going to be okay, Alex.” Bren tried to soothe her.

“She’s gone, Bren. She left me.”

“I know, but it’s going to be all right. Just give it time. I know it hurts.”

“I don’t want to be alone. I can’t do it without her.”

Bren smoothed out Alex's hair gently. "I'm here for you, Alex. You're not alone."

"Please don't leave. Stay here with me tonight. I don't want to be alone." Alex pleaded in desperation.

"Okay. I'll stay." Bren whispered crawling under the covers and wrapping her arms more securely around Alex. Neither said anything else as Alex cried herself to sleep.

The following morning Alex awoke first, finding herself on Megan's side of the bed with Bren curled up against her. The younger woman was still asleep. Alex turned over to look at her for a few minutes. She looked so young and innocent in her Mickey Mouse t-shirt. Alex felt a mix of emotions as she regarded her companion. As much as she was attracted to the body she knew was underneath those clothes, she also felt protective of the teenager. Alex knew she wouldn't go back on her word regarding their situation as far as wanting more from the girl, but she let herself wonder what the future would hold for their relationship. Bren had never even disclosed a sexual orientation, saying that it was Chloe's idea that she be with a woman first. Figuring she had to at least be open to the idea, Alex wondered what Bren's orientation truly was.

Alex decided to let Bren sleep a little longer and went to dress for the day before heading off to the grocery store. Since she didn't exactly know what Bren liked to eat, she got her standard list as well as threw in some of the things she remembered enjoying at Bren's age. When she returned the house was still quiet, so Alex unloaded the food and began breakfast in order to rouse Bren from sleep. Just as Alex was setting the table with the breakfast food, she heard Bren coming down the staircase. Turning toward the noise, she saw her blonde friend yawning and stretching as she padded into the kitchen.

"Good morning, sleepyhead. I was wondering if you were going to ever get up." Alex teased coming to tussle Bren's golden hair.

Bren leaned into Alex's shoulder sleepily as she yawned, "Morning."

Alex chuckled. "I take it you aren't a morning person. Come on. Sit and have some breakfast. We need to get going to the mall to buy you some clothes. I have very little patience for clothes shopping, so it's best to do it now when I'm in a good mood."

Bren did as she was told, taking a seat in front of a plate of eggs, bacon, and toast. "Thanks for making breakfast." she said.

"No problem but don't get used to it. I'll probably be gone in the mornings before you even wake up, so you'll be on your own for the most part. By the way I have no idea what you like to eat, so maybe you could give me a list of some things you like for our next trip to the store. Today we'll get you some clothes and get to the bank to open up an account for you if you are ready in time. Then I'll start trying to find you some wheels. I still have to talk to Megan about that. She still has a car that we own jointly. I'm hoping to get it back or at least get my half of the investment back to get you something to drive. I'll drive you by the high school too. It's not that

far from here. If nothing else I guess you could walk for a few days. We'll see how it works out."

"Okay. I'm easy. Whatever works best for you."

"Good. As I said we need to get going, so as soon as you're finished here, you need to get dressed." Alex said taking a sip of her coffee and going back to the morning paper.

An hour later Bren reappeared clean and dressed for the day. Their first stop was to the bank, so that Bren could open an account with the money she had made over the past week. After that Alex took her to the mall. Alex hated shopping but for some reason it was bearable that afternoon being that it was for Bren. Several hours and a thousand dollars later, Alex called a halt to the activities, her patience for the crowded mall finally gone. By that time it was early afternoon, so Alex and Bren made their way home. Alex helped Bren take her new things to her room before saying, "I need to do some yard work before it gets dark. You just make yourself comfortable. I'll be outside if you need me."

"Okay. I guess I'll start on dinner."

"Good idea." Alex replied before turning to go to her own room. After changing clothes Alex made her way out to the garage to find her hedgers. Alex was off in her own thoughts trimming her hedges for a few hours before hearing a car come to a stop in front of her house. Turning she saw Megan getting out of the car. Silence prevailed as they just stared at each other before Megan slowly made her way up the walk toward Alex.

She stopped a few feet from Alex and just stood looking at her for a moment before softly saying, "Hello, Alex." Alex still said nothing as she looked down at her ex. "I wanted to talk to you about some things, and I knew you got back this weekend. Is this a good time?"

"A good a time as any I guess." she replied.

Megan looked around for a moment waiting for Alex to say more, but when she didn't Megan asked, "Could we go inside to talk?"

"Yeah. Sure." Alex led the way into the house. Gesturing toward the living room she said, "Let's sit in there."

The both took a seat, and then Alex just stared at Megan quietly. Megan took a moment to look around the room. Suddenly a crash was heard from the kitchen. "Is someone else here?" Megan inquired.

"My housekeeper."

"Your housekeeper? Well, that was fast. When did you hire someone?"

"Yesterday. She lives with me."



“Oh, I see.” Megan mumbled.

Just then Bren came walking into the room. Spotting Megan she thought about the previous night and Alex’s hurt state. Feeling anger toward the redhead, Bren put a consoling hand on Alex’s shoulder. “I thought I heard you come back in. You look hot.” she mentioned running her hand through Alex’s dark hair in an affectionate gesture. “Would you like something to drink?”

“That would be nice. And for you Megan?”

“Sure.” she answered with her eyes glued to Bren’s hand caressing her ex lover’s hair.

Alex took hold of Bren’s hand, squeezing it lightly. “Thanks, Bren.”

Bren returned a few minutes later with drinks for both of them. “Dinner will be ready shortly, Alex. Will our guest be joining us?”

Alex simply looked at Megan for an answer. “Oh, no. I don’t want to intrude.”

“All right. Well, you let me know when you want to eat, Alex.”

“Okay. Thank you, Bren.”

Once they were alone again, Megan stated, “That’s some housekeeper you have there. She’s awfully young, and she seems to have a crush on you.”

Alex shrugged. “She’s a good kid, has a good heart.”

“Where did you find her?”

“New York. Now enough about Bren. Tell me why you’re here.”

“Well, as you can probably tell, I haven’t moved out much of my stuff yet. I wanted to talk to you about some of our joint property before just moving things. I want this to be an amiable separation.”

“Are you sure you want to do this, Megan? You know I still love you. I want to work this out. Don’t you love me?”

“Alex, I do love you, but we’ve been growing apart for some time.”

“Why can’t we work on getting us back on track? I’m willing to do whatever it takes to keep you, Megan. Please. Let’s give this a chance.”

Megan sighed. “I just don’t know, Alex.”

“Then let me convince you.” Alex stated coming and kneeling next to her chair. Alex stroked her

cheek lightly before leaning in to give Megan a slow, sensuous kiss on the lips. Megan moaned as Alex probed deeper.

After a few minutes of lingering kisses, Megan pulled back to catch her breath. "I don't even know the last time you kissed me that way."

"Megan, we can be happy again. I'm willing to do whatever it takes. I don't want to throw away three years, and I won't do it without a fight for you. Let's work through it."

"What about Bren?"

"What about her?"

"Alex, I want to know the real story with her."

"She's my housekeeper, and in exchange for those services, she lives with me."

"Those are the only services she's providing? She seems awfully physical with you."

"Megan, we aren't sleeping together."

"How did you find her? How could you have had time to interview her if you've been in New York?"

"We met in New York. It was a stroke of luck that we met."

"Where did you meet? How did she know you were looking for a housekeeper?"

"She didn't. We met in a bar. I'll admit there was an attraction there until I found out how old she was. She's a kid, and she needed help. One of her friends was trying to get her to be a hooker when we met."

"You mean to tell me Bren is a whore?"

"No. She's never sold herself for money. Her friend Chloe was trying to get her to proposition me, but we never had sex. We never even messed around. She couldn't do it and neither could I, so we just talked. I learned about her situation, and I offered her a job."

"And she accepted. What a convenient way to get off the street."

"She didn't accept right away. She didn't accept until her friend threw her out, and she had nowhere else to go. Apparently Bren wasn't living up to the standard Chloe had envisioned."

"Sounds like you know this Chloe woman well. I take it she's a prostitute too. Did you have sex with her?"

Alex heard the slight hurt in Megan's voice but answered, "We were broken up, Megan. I just needed some company."

"I see. Well, we still are, Alex. You hadn't touched me in months, and then you go off to New York and have sex with a hooker. Now you're all over me like a bee to honey, and you want me to take you back. How am I supposed to respond to that? I don't even know if you're clean anymore. God knows what you could've picked up from that streetwalker." she huffed visibly shaken by the new information.

"Megan, it was a mistake. I shouldn't have done it. However at the time you had broken up with me. I wouldn't have done it if we were still together. I have never cheated on you, Megan, and I never would."

Megan shook her head. "I can't believe I'm actually discussing this. I just wanted to talk to you about our property. I really don't know if I can handle this right now."

"I'm sorry. We can stop talking about it. I just want you back so much, Megan. I love you, and you mean everything to me."

"I just don't know if I could do it, Alex."

"Just think about it. Just promise me that you will. I'm willing to do whatever it takes."

"Fine. I'll think about it, Alex, but in the mean time we need to talk about this other stuff. I want to split up our assets for now. Can we talk about that?"

Alex sighed as she moved back to her own chair. "Yeah, I guess we can. Why don't we start with the basics?"

"I took the initiative of giving the renter of the condo thirty days notice. I'll be moving back in there after they leave."

"I understand, but my money is wrapped up in that property as well."

"I know. I'm sure you noticed that I left my car in the garage. I thought it might be acceptable to you to get the car in exchange for the money you have in the condo."

Alex shrugged. "Well, it so happens that I promised Bren transportation. I wasn't planning on buying her a brand new Volvo wagon, but I guess she could drive that. I'd be willing to make that swap. What are you going to drive though?"

"I won't need a car. I got along fine without one before you, and the condo is near the subway. It won't be a problem. I'm going to need to take back my furniture."

"That's not a problem. Bren is sleeping in the other guestroom, so your furniture is free whenever you want it."

“I’d also like to take some of the kitchenware.”

“Of course. Just get me list of the things you want, so I know what I’ll have to replace for Bren. Better yet I could give you the money to buy it new, so that’s one less room you have to think about. What about the piano?”

“You know that’s the best gift I’ve ever gotten, Alex. I adore the piano, but I don’t think it can make it through the door or up the stairs to the condo. I’m going to have to see where I can put it. Will you keep it for me until then? I know it’s a lot to ask.”

“It’s not a problem. It’s yours whenever you’re ready to pick it up. I want you to have it, but I will hold on to it for the time being. Of course there are all these pictures and things of us. You can have any of those that you want. Just pack them up when you come to get the rest of your stuff.”

“Okay. I will.”

“When do you plan on getting everything?”

“When the tenant moves out of the condo. I need to have it cleaned and stuff, but I think I should be ready to get everything next weekend. Is that all right?”

“Of course. That’s fine. Where are you staying in the meantime?”

“With my parents.”

Alex nodded. “Is there anything else? Whose going to help you with your stuff?”

“Some people from work. I think that’s all for now. I know your dinner is waiting on you, so I should go. Will you be around next weekend?”

“I don’t know. Either Bren or I will be here when you come. Just let us know what day you’re coming over.”

“Okay.” she said standing. “Well, I should go.”

“I’ll walk you out.” Alex escorted Megan out to the car. Megan turned to her as they came to the driver’s side door. “Megan, please think about what I said. I’m serious about us. I want us to be together again. If it means starting at the very beginning, fresh and new, I’ll do it.”

Megan gave a tentative nod. “Good bye, Alex.”

Alex watched Megan’s car until it rounded the bend in the street and was gone before returning to the house. Coming into the kitchen, she said to Bren who was just sitting there reading a book, “Sorry that I kept you waiting.”

“It’s okay. Are you all right?”

Alex shrugged. “She just wanted to talk about how to divide our stuff. She’s coming to move her portion next weekend.”

“I’m sorry, Alex. I know you wanted things to turn out differently.”

“Well, I asked her to give me a second chance, and she promised to think about it. I just need to do something to help her come to the right decision. Until then I’m without a girlfriend.” Bren nodded. “She seems to think you are attracted to me by the way you were touching me earlier.” Alex mentioned.

“Oh, well, I couldn’t help myself. I thought about what had happened last night, how upset you were, and I got mad at her. I thought it would make her jealous.”

“Well, it was amusing. Anyway, I got a car for you out of the deal. I’m sorry that it probably isn’t what you would want, but it’s a car.”

“What kind of car is it?”

“I had gotten Megan a new Volvo station wagon two years ago when we moved in together. She gave it back, so I’m going to let you drive it. I know it’s not a sports car or anything, but it’ll get you from A to B and back again.”

“Do you mean that really nice car in the garage?” Bren asked. Alex nodded. Squealing in delight Bren came to Alex and embraced her in a tight hug.

“Thank you, Alex. Thank you so much. I wish there was a way I could repay you.”

Alex pulled Bren in closer, kissing the top of Bren’s head as she replied, “It is I who owe you, Bren, for my foul behavior in New York.”

Bren looked up at Alex and cupped her face with both hands gently. “Alex, you do not owe me for what happened that night. It was my choice to go with you to that hotel room. You didn’t force me into anything.”

“I still feel bad, Bren, because I made you cry. I degraded you.”

“It was my choice to go there with you. I knew what I thought would happen. Fortunately for me you turned out to be much more than a trick. For that I am forever grateful. Don’t you see, Alex? You’ve given me back my hope, my future. It’s the best gift I’ve ever been given.”

“Well, that’s what it was meant to be, a gift, nothing more. I don’t need repayment. Your friendship will be more than enough.”

“Still I wish I could do something to make you as happy as you have made me, but the only thing I have to give you have refused.”

“Oh, Bren, you have so much more than your body. That is sacred and should be revered by any person you allow so close to you. I do not deserve that. As I said for you to be my friend is enough.”

Bren nodded with tearful eyes as she backed away. “Well, why don’t you sit down? I have dinner warming in the oven. I’ll serve it for you.”

Alex got them both a drink and took a seat as Bren brought over the food. “This looks good, Bren. It’s been a long time since someone has made me dinner.”

“I hope you like it. I’m not sure if I’m even a good cook. I’ve never had to make a whole meal for someone. Maybe you should tell me some things that you like, so I can make sure to learn how to make them.”

“I will, but for now, let’s enjoy this fine looking meal.”

The rest of the weekend passed quickly and soon Monday morning came. Alex had decided to leave for work late just in case Bren needed anything for her first day of school. Fixing the young woman breakfast, Alex waited in the kitchen for her. When she heard Bren come down the stairs, she met the blonde in the hallway.

“Oh, I didn’t know you were still here.” Bren mentioned dropping her backpack at the bottom of the stairs.

“I was just wondering if you needed anything. Did you want me to go to school with you this morning to see that everything goes smoothly?”

“You don’t have to. I know you’re busy.”

“Well, I’d like to if you’ll let me. I just want to make sure you get where you are going all right.”

Bren smiled as she moved to hug Alex. “Alex, I’ll be fine. I’ve lived on the streets of New York. I think I can handle this, but thank you for your concern. You go on to work now and have a good day.”

“Okay. If you insist. I made you some breakfast. I don’t know when I’ll be home, so just leave the leftover dinner on a plate in the fridge for me if I’m not here. I hope you have a good first day.”

“Thank you, Alex, for everything.”

Alex smiled and then went to pick up her briefcase. Looking back at Bren, she said, “You look really nice today. I’ll see you when I get home.”

Alex spent most of her idle time that day thinking of the younger woman. As morning passed into afternoon, Alex became increasingly distracted by her thoughts, so she decided to give a quick call home.

She let the phone ring a couple of times but didn't want to leave a message on her own machine, so just as she was about to hang up, she heard the other end pick up and Bren breathlessly state, "Schreiber residence."

"Hey there, Bren. It's Alex."

"Oh, hi. How are you?"

"Good. I just wanted to see how your first day went."

"It was fine. I met some people, and my classes are okay. I think things are going to work out."

"Well, that's what I wanted to hear. You know, if you want to invite some friends over that's be fine with me. I know it being spring and all the pool probably would be appealing to high schoolers."

"Thanks, Alex. I might do that. When are you coming home?"

"Not until sometime after six. I've got a meeting at five, and that'll take at least an hour."

"All right. I'll see you then. I guess I should start on my homework, so I'll have time to make dinner later. See you tonight."

"I look forward to it, Bren. See you tonight." she answered just as her assistant walked in with some files. "I have to go now. Talk to you tonight."

When she hung up, her assistant, Kelly, looked at her with a questioning gaze. Alex said nothing, so Kelly asked, "You have yourself a new girl?"

Alex shook her head. "No. That was Bren Worthington, my new housekeeper. For future reference she should have access to me if she ever calls."

Kelly nodded. "So, what does Megan think of the new housekeeper?"

"Megan and I broke up a few weeks ago."

"Oh, I'm sorry to hear that. Well, if you need someone to talk to, I'm here for you."

Alex smiled demurely at her assistant. She knew the woman was attracted to her. "Thank you, Kelly, but don't worry. Megan will be mine again. It's only a matter of time. Now back to business."

That evening when Alex arrived back at the house she found Bren out by the pool. The teenager was lounging in a tiny bikini reading a classic novel. The bistro table was set for two with a candle giving it a soft glow. Bren was unaware of Alex's presence, so Alex had a moment to observe her. Alex felt her body responding to the stimulus of Bren's perfect form, but she pushed the thoughts from her mind as she stepped out the back door.

Bren looked up from her reading. "Hi there. Welcome home." she greeted with a bright smile.

"Hello. Doing a little light reading?" Alex asked gesturing to the book.

"Oh, it's for school. I'm behind, and the teacher is making me catch up. It's no problem. I like to read anyway. I'm sure it'll only take a night or two. Dinner is ready if you're hungry."

"Yeah. I'm starving actually. I worked through lunch, so I forgot to eat again. I'm really bad at that."

"Well, why don't you get more comfortable? I'll serve it up for us."

"You didn't have to wait on me to eat."

"I wanted to. Now go on in and change or whatever it is you do after work. Dinner will be ready in a few minutes." Bren said standing and moving toward her. Alex was just mesmerized by the way she moved and stood perfectly still until Bren reached her. Bren put her hands on Alex's stomach and applied light pressure. "Go on now."

Alex went up to her room to change clothes. Her mind kept replaying Bren standing and walking toward her, that perfect seventeen year old body, the hips swaying as she took her steps, and her breasts bouncing ever so slightly under the tiny top. Alex shook her head in effort to rid her mind of such lustful thoughts. Bren was in her care now and not to be taken advantage of.

Over dinner Bren told Alex what had happened at school that day and who she had met. Alex listened in interest for awhile but then her mind moved to Megan. Sensing the shift in Alex's attention, Bren asked, "Are you thinking about Megan?"

"Yeah. I'm sorry. I didn't mean to zone out on you. I was just thinking that in the two years we lived together we never ate dinner out here. We always ate in the kitchen on those rare times we had dinner together, and most of our time was spent talking about cases."

"You didn't talk about other interests? Didn't you guys like some of the same stuff?"

Alex thought for a moment. "No. Not really. We both liked softball and discussing legal issues. That's about all. She liked to go shopping with her friends, and I was just always so busy. I didn't want to deny her fun just because I wasn't available. We both like to travel too I guess but rarely did. We would always plan these great vacations and things, but I would always be called away, so she would go alone."



“Didn’t you want to go with her?”

“Of course but my career is very important to me. I’m a partner at a prestigious firm. I wouldn’t have gotten there without working like a dog.”

“But now you are a partner. Do you still have to work so hard?”

“I enjoy what I do, Bren. I help people. It is work, but I like doing it.”

“Isn’t this why Megan left? You liked work more than you liked her? Isn’t that basically what she told you?”

“I guess so.”

“You love her, Alex, but you’re going to have to make some serious changes to get her back. You realize that?”

“I know, Bren. I just love what I do. I can’t help that. She should be glad that I found something that makes me so happy.”

“But shouldn’t your girlfriend make you just as happy?” asked Bren.

Alex thought for a moment before answering, “When did you get to be so smart in the ways of love? I do want her back, Bren. I’m willing to make concessions this time around. I want it to work between us.”

“Then why are you sitting here with me? Have you even talked to her today?”

“No. I thought I should give her space to think.”

“You’ve given her more space than she wants, Alex. That’s the last thing she needs. She needs to see you to know that you’re serious.”

“You know, you’re right. Thanks for the advice, Bren.” Alex made quick work of the rest of her meal before standing. “Dinner was great, Bren. I appreciate it. I’m going to go over to see Megan. If you need anything you call me on my cell phone. Okay?”

Bren smiled. “All right. Don’t forget to buy her flowers before you go. It’ll be a nice touch.”

Alex nodded. “Good idea. Well, I’ll see you in a bit.”

“Okay. Give me the dirt when you get back.”

Alex followed Bren’s advice and picked up some flowers before heading to Megan’s parents’ house. When she arrived, she gave three strong knocks. When the door opened, Alex was greeted

by Megan's mother. "Well, hello, Alex. Didn't expect to see you here. How are you?"

"Hi, Mrs. O' Reilly. I'd be a lot better if Megan would come home. She told me she was staying here for a little while. Is she in?"

"Yes, she's here. Come on in." she stated stepping aside to let Alex in the house. "Perhaps you'd like to wait in the study."

Alex nodded and walked off in that direction. When she opened the door, the smell of pipe and smoke spilled out into the hallway. "Well, if it isn't Alex Schreiber." Megan's father stated. "Come in."

Alex entered and closed the door behind her. "Hello, Mr. O' Reilly."

"Have a seat. Can I get you a brandy or a cigar?" he asked. They had often shared after dinner drinks and cigars together in an effort to strengthen their relationship.

"Yes, that'd be nice. Thanks." Alex replied take a seat in her usual leather chair.

Mr. O' Reilly poured her a drink and extended her the humidor for her to select her cigar before taking a seat. "So, I take it you and my little Megan are having some difficulties." Alex nodded. "Anything I can help you with?"

"I don't think so. She's a strong minded woman, Mr. O' Reilly, and she'll do as she pleases. That's one of the things I love about her."

Mr. O' Reilly took a long drag of his smoke and held it before slowly exhaling. "Alex, I know that coming from a Jewish family you have strong female figures, but Megan, being Catholic, looks to the male figures for guidance. It's the nature of Christianity for the women to follow the men."

"That's an interesting point of view, but exactly what does that have to do with Megan and me?"

Pointing the cigar at Alex, he said, "You need to be more dominate than she is. She needs to know who's boss. You've let her run your house for too long, Alex. She's lost. It's up to you to give her direction."

"So, what are you suggesting I do? Demand that she come back to me? I don't think that's going to work. She's too stubborn."

Mr. O' Reilly smiled. "Just like her mother. In that case, you can't do a damn thing once that girl's made up her mind."

"That's what I'm afraid of. Mr. O' Reilly, I really want her to come back to me. I love her."

"Ah, you love her. Well, good luck to you then, Alex. You're going to need it."

They sat silently until the door creaked open, and Megan admitted herself. “Father, do you think Alex and I could have some privacy?”

“Oh, sure. No problem.” he said finishing off his drink. Laying his cigar in the ashtray to let it cool, he went to Alex. “Alex, nice to see you.” he said extending his hand.

Alex stood and shook it. “You too, Mr. O’ Reilly.” Once they were alone, Alex held the flowers out to Megan. “These are for you.”

“Thank you. I’ll just go put them in some water. I’ll be right back. Just a minute.” Alex took a seat again and waited for her to return. When she did she looked at Alex for a moment before saying, “I see my dad has gotten to you again. You know you shouldn’t smoke. Your asthma will act up.” Alex just nodded. “So, why are you here?”

“I just wanted to see how you were doing.”

“I’m fine. How are you?”

“All right.”

“How are things working out with Bren?”

“Okay. She’s actually a pretty good cook.”

“That’s good.”

“Listen, Megan. I was wondering if maybe we could go out tomorrow night for dinner?”

“You want to go out to dinner tomorrow night? Why?”

“Because, Megan, I’m serious about making things right with you. I’m willing to start all over again, and I am doing just that. Will you?”

Megan stared at Alex for a moment before saying, “All right, Alex. If you’re that serious, I’ll go to dinner with you. We’ll give this a second chance, but know that we’re going to move slowly. It’s going to take awhile for us to get to know each other again, if we ever did.”

“All right. Good. How about I pick you up here around seven? Does that sound okay?”

“Sure. I’ll be waiting.”

Just then there was a knock on the door before Megan’s mother opened it. She looked at the two of them before saying, “I was just about to serve dessert. Would you like to stay, Alex? We’re having your favorite.”

“Chocolate cake?” Alex clarified in interest. Mrs. O’ Reilly nodded in affirmation. Alex looked hopefully at Megan.

Megan rolled her eyes and chuckled. “Better make hers an extra large serving, Mom.”

Megan’s mother smiled. “I’ll do that. Come on into the kitchen.”

Alex smiled as Megan’s mother left them alone. “Thanks for letting me stay, Megan.”

“I couldn’t deprive you of one of your great joys. Put out that nasty cigar and then come into the kitchen.” she said heading toward the door.

Alex stayed for another hour after dessert before deciding to head home. As Megan walked her to the door, Alex said, “Think about somewhere you’d like to go for dinner tomorrow. I’ll take you anywhere. See you at seven.”

When Alex got home, she headed up to her bedroom bypassing Bren’s door, figuring the girl would be asleep. She prepared for bed and had just gotten into it when there was a knock on her bedroom door. Bren poked her head in. “I take it things went okay at Megan’s if you’re just now getting home.”

“Oh, yeah. I’m sorry if I woke you. I thought you were asleep.”

“No. I was just reading. What happened?”

“We talked, had some of her mother’s cake. I talked to her parents for awhile, and then I asked her to go to dinner with me tomorrow night. She said yes.”

“That’s great. Oh, I’m so happy that things are looking up for you.”

“Well, I have you to thank for that. It was your idea.”

“I’m just glad it worked.”

The next evening Alex arrived at Megan’s parents’ exactly at seven. She was still dressed in her suit from work, having come directly from there. In her hand she carried a single rose, a purchase that Bren had advised. Megan’s mother answered the door. “Hi, Alex. Come on in. Megan’s not ready yet. You can keep me company in the kitchen, though.”

Alex waited and talked with Megan’s mother for a long time before Megan finally appeared. Alex smiled and extended the rose to her. “Well, more flowers. This certainly is a trend I like.”

“You look nice tonight.” Alex complimented.

“Thank you. Are you ready to go?” Megan asked. Alex nodded. Megan gave the rose to her mother asking, “Would you put that in water for me?”

“Of course. You two have a good time.”

Dinner between them passed with the first part talking about work. However Alex tried to find other common ground as Bren had suggested with a little success. After their meal Alex suggested they walk a little and window shop, knowing that would be appealing to Megan. Alex finally dropped her off at home close to eleven. Walking her to the door, Alex watched as Megan unlocked it before turning to her. Alex gave her most charming smile.

“Well, would you like to come in for awhile? I think there is still some leftover cake.”

“That’d be great. Thanks.”

They both went into the kitchen where Megan cut a piece of cake for Alex. “Let’s sit in the den.” she suggested.

Alex followed her and took a seat on the couch while Megan closed the doors for privacy. She then took a seat next to Alex and watched as Alex devoured the dessert with great delight. “Your mom really does make the best desserts.” Alex mentioned as she scraped the extra icing off the plate with her fork. Megan nodded in agreement as she turned on the tv to the news. They sat quietly watching for a few minutes before Alex tried to put her arm around Megan’s shoulders. Megan cast a glance at Alex as she leaned into Alex’s shoulder. They smiled at each other. “Megan, I’d really like to kiss you right now.” Alex whispered.

“I was hoping you would.” replied Megan shyly. Alex slowly descended down to Megan’s mouth kissing her gently at first. Megan’s arms came around Alex’s shoulders as they both deepened their contact. Several minutes and increasingly passionate kisses later, Megan pulled back slightly. “Maybe we should go back to my room.” she suggested in her most provocative voice. Alex nodded in response. Megan turned off the tv and then took Alex’s hand to escort her to the bedroom.

Alex awoke on her own the next morning. Opening her eyes she saw dawn beginning to make its way through Megan’s window. Alex looked over to see Megan still blissfully asleep. Alex smiled at how beautiful she looked lying there. Trying not to wake her, Alex dressed in her previous night’s clothes before sitting next to the petite woman. Alex leaned in and brushed Megan’s face with kisses until she awoke. “I have to get going. I’ll call you later. Okay?”

“Okay.” Megan yawned leaning up for a kiss on the mouth.

Alex then left the room, closing the door as softly as possible behind her. Just as she got to the front door Megan’s father’s voice stated, “Good morning, Alex.”

Alex jumped startled at the sound. She turned to see Mr. O’ Reilly grinning at her in amusement. “Good morning, Mr. O’ Reilly. How are you?”

“Probably not as good as you are this fine morning. You and Megan work things out all right?”

Alex shrugged. "I think we're on our way to making it better."

"Well, by sound of it, she should be the happiest woman alive." Alex flushed at the thought of Megan's father hearing them in the throes of passion. "Nothing to be embarrassed about, Alex. It's a part of life. Get out of here now. I know you have to go save the world. Have a good day."

"You too, Mr. O' Reilly."

When Alex arrived back at her own house, Bren was in the kitchen. She gave Alex a smile and a curious look. "You just getting in from last night?" Alex nodded. "Well, must have been a great date then."

"It was. Thanks for all your help. You really gave me some good advice."

"I'm just glad it's working out. You deserve some happiness, Alex." Bren went to retrieve her backpack from the hallway. "I have to get going. Wouldn't want to be late. See you tonight."

"All right. Have a good day."

The week passed quickly, and before Alex even realized it, Saturday was upon them. Figuring that Bren would sleep in, Alex went to the office early to catch up on some work. When she returned she walked in to the radio up almost as loud as it could go. Alex frowned heading in the direction of the living room to turn it down when she spotted Bren in there. The younger woman was wearing tight black pants and a tank top. In her hands was a duster, and she was dancing suggestively to the music as she cleaned the room. Alex watched in interest for several minutes as Bren moved about the room touching the furniture in the most sensual ways. Finally deciding to announce her presence, Alex inquired, "Do you always clean house this way?"

Bren jumped at the sound of Alex's voice, but she turned and smiled.

"Depends on my mood." she answered still dancing to the beat.

"You missed your calling, Bren. You should've been a stripper." teased Alex.

Bren chuckled at the joke. "Maybe I will be in the future. You just never know." She moved closer to Alex, her hips still swaying to the rhythm. "You like to dance, Alex?" Alex nodded, so Bren put her hands on Alex's hips.

"Then show me what you got."

Alex was hesitant at first, but as Bren's body began to move against her, Alex felt her own come alive. They moved together in synchronicity for several songs before the doorbell broke the spell. Alex jumped away from the blonde as if she had been caught doing something wrong. Looking toward the open front door, she saw Megan and a few other people watching them through the glass storm door. Megan's expression was one of annoyance. Alex quickly moved to let them in,

saying, "I didn't expect you all until a little later."

"Sorry to ruin your plans, Alex." Megan quipped brushing by her.

Sensing what Megan thought, Alex rushed to say, "This isn't what you think it is, Megan."

"Oh, it isn't? I think I saw you dancing provocatively with the hooker that now lives with you."

"Bren's not a hooker, Megan. Don't call her that."

"Fine. Whatever. I just want to get my stuff."

Alex was stoic the rest of the time Megan was there. She watched on carefully as Megan's things were removed from the house. Once she was gone, Alex locked herself into her office where she remained the rest of the day. On Sunday Alex went over to Megan's condo. When Megan answered the door, she inquired, "What are you doing here?"

"I wanted to talk to you. May I come in?" Megan reluctantly nodded and allowed Alex into the house. Alex took a seat on one of the two makeshift chairs in the living area and looked at Megan seriously. "Megan, I just wanted to apologize for yesterday. Bren and I were just having a bit of fun. We were just dancing. It didn't mean anything."

"I don't know if I can believe that."

"Megan, please. I've made it clear that I want you back. I wouldn't jeopardize that by cheating on you."

Megan sighed. "Alex, I've been giving this some thought. Your actions toward Bren may be completely innocent, but I don't think hers are."

"That's not true. Bren's been helping me by trying to get me to understand where you stand. She's been nothing but supportive of my intentions of getting you back."

"Alex, I don't believe that she is innocent here. She wants something from you. I just know it. This is for your own good. If you want us to be a couple again, you have to get rid of Bren."

"Megan, you don't understand. I gave this woman my word that I would help her get off and stay off the street. She's only seventeen years old with nowhere to go. I can't just kick her out. The girl hasn't even finished high school."

"Alex, you have to ask her to leave. She's going to hurt you. How can you trust her?"

"The same way she trusts me. We have a simple arrangement. We're helping each other. I'm trying to do a good thing here, Megan. She just needs someone to take her in and believe in her."

"It doesn't have to be you, Alex."

“I gave her my word, Megan. Does that mean nothing to you?”

“Alex, you have a choice to make here. It’s very simple. You have to choose between us. It’s either Bren or me.”

Alex gave a long sigh as she looked around the condo. In her mind she replayed some of the memories of when she and Megan first began dating. “We had some fun times in this place.” she mentioned.

“Yes, we did, but things were different then.”

“Yeah, they were. Megan, I’m sorry to have bothered you. I know you have a lot of unpacking to do.” Alex stood and started for the door. Turning back briefly she looked at Megan. “Tell your parents I said good bye.”

Megan gave a curt nod. “I’ll do that.”

Alex paused for one more moment to look around. “Well, good bye, Megan.” With that she walked out the door not even waiting for a reply.

Alex thought about Megan all the way home. At first she was saddened that their reconciliation hadn’t worked, but the more she thought about things, the angrier she became. Totally disregarding Alex’s position, Megan had made demands of her, which she was not prepared to make. Alex thought Megan would have understood why Bren had to stay in the house with her. Her word was at stake, and Alex felt that was her most important asset.

When she returned home, Alex began to rid the house of Megan’s presence in a fury. She was throwing framed pictures and trinkets Megan had left behind in the garbage as she fumed about the turn of events. She was so off in her own world that she didn’t hear Bren come down and take a seat on the third to last stair. Finally turning to go into the kitchen, Alex caught sight of Bren sitting there with her face cradled in her hands, elbows propped up on her knees looking worried. She was gnawing at her fingernails on one hand and pulling at her lower lip in trepidation.

Alex’s anger receded for a moment as she asked, “Are you all right?”

Bren nodded slowly. “Are you okay?” she hesitantly inquired.

“I just got back from Megan’s. She said she was interested in getting back together with me but under some conditions.”

“What conditions are those?”

“Well, she told me that I had to kick you out of the house. She said she didn’t trust you. She wants you gone. It’s either her or you she said.”



Bren's head dropped forward. "Oh." Taking a deep breath she said, "I'm so sorry, Alex. I never meant to cause trouble with your girlfriend. If that's what you need to do, I understand. I'll go pack."

As she began to stand, Alex grabbed her by the hands. Alex squatted down, so they were on eye level and she held Bren's hands tightly in her own. "There's no need to do that, Bren. I chose you."

"Why?" she asked in complete surprise.

"Bren, I gave you my word that I would help you. I realized today that Megan doesn't understand that my word means everything to me. My word is my honor, Bren. Megan obviously doesn't know me, because if she did, she would understand that. I need a girlfriend that can support me. She's not the one. I love her, and it will take time to get over her, but she's not the one I'm meant to be with for the rest of my life if she can't understand something so fundamental about me."

"Oh, Alex. Thank you. Thank you so much. I'm not going to let you down."

"I know you won't. I believe in you whole-heartedly, Bren."

Bren smiled at her before leaning in to kiss her cheek. "You mean the world to me, Alex. Someday I hope to find someone like you to be with for the rest of my life."

Alex flushed at the comment. She had been curious to the girl's sexuality, and since the opening presented itself, Alex stated, "Speaking of that, I wanted to ask you something. Now it doesn't matter to me at all, but I've been wondering. You were in that lesbian bar with Chloe, but since you had considered being a prostitute, you had to consider that most of your clients would be male. Are you bi?"

Bren lowered her face slightly, so she wasn't looking into Alex's eyes. "I don't really know what I am. I don't have much experience."

"Well, what kind of past experience do you have?" she asked. Bren blushed but didn't answer at first. "Listen. You don't have to tell me if you don't want to. I was just curious more than anything."

Staring at the wooden stair between her legs, Bren mumbled, "I've never done it with anyone."

"Done what? Had sex?" Alex tried to clarify. Bren nodded in embarrassment. "Bren, that's nothing to be embarrassed about. I didn't have sex until I was twenty-one years old. You're only seventeen. There's no rush."

"You were a virgin until you were twenty-one? That's depressing. You're gorgeous. I'll never get laid."

Alex chuckled. “Oh, Bren. Looks have nothing to do with it. I’m sure there have been people that wanted to have sex with you. You probably just didn’t know the signs, or they didn’t know how to tell you. If I remember correctly, I gave you a clear indication.”

“Yeah but that was different. That was for money. If we had just met, would you have felt the same?”

“Well, if I didn’t know your age and thought you were receptive, I probably would have given it a shot. You are so beautiful, Bren. You really have no idea, but things are different between us now. Tell me about your dating experiences. Where they boys or girls?”

“Boys but none of them really did anything for me. You know, my mother’s new husband tried to molest me, so I think I’m just so weirded out by the event that I don’t really trust anyone.” she replied softly.

Sensing that Bren might want to talk about the incidents with him, Alex said, “You know, if you ever want to talk to me about him, I’m here to listen to you. I’m not going to judge you, Bren. What he did to you was wrong.”

“I know, but I just feel weird about it. My mother believed him and not me.”

“I know you said he tried to make you do things. Did he ever touch you inappropriately?”

Bren hesitated in answer but then slowly nodded her head. “Only once. That’s one of the reasons I ended up getting kicked out. I think he thought he’d rather have me out of the house if he couldn’t have his way.”

“Do you want to tell me what happened?”

Bren shrugged. “I was standing in the kitchen making some mac and cheese for dinner, because my mother was still at work, and I was hungry. I was standing near the stove reading this book that my friend said she had found. It was a smut book, but the particular passage I was reading was two women having sex. I guess I was just so engrossed that I didn’t hear my step-father come into the kitchen. Apparently he came up behind me and started reading over my shoulder. I had no idea he was even there until I felt him put his arms around my waist. He started talking to me, saying stuff like I shouldn’t be reading about that. You know women were only meant to be with men, and then he began saying dirty things about me and my body. I was wearing a pair of sweat pants and a midriff shirt, so he began to tell me how he thought it was terrible of me to tease him that way, that I just needed to be shown the way to treat men. Basically he was just verbally harassing me, but then he started talking about the book again, asking if I liked what I was reading. Then he put his hand on my breast. I started to freak out and struggle with him, but he’s such a large guy. He was still saying things as his other hand went down my pants. I had just taken a shower and wasn’t wearing anything under them, so he said something about me being ready for him. I still tried to free myself but was pretty much pinned against his body and the stove. No one had ever touched me there before, and I was scared. I guess my body had

responded to what I had been reading, so I was... you know... aroused, and he just taunted me, calling me a dyke. Then he proceeded to tell me that he was going to teach me a lesson, but before he could do anything else though, I managed to free myself by kicking him the knee repeatedly. He was so angry, and I just took off running. I didn't know where I was going, but I just ran out of the house. When I finally came home, it was late, way past my curfew. The next morning all hell broke loose, and I got kicked out of the house." By the end of her story Bren was sobbing, so Alex pulled her into her arms.

"It's going to be all right, Bren. You're a brave girl. He was wrong, and you did the right thing by telling your mother. You're better off away from him. You're safer here."

"I know, but she didn't believe me. That's what hurts, Alex. My own mother thought I made the whole thing up, and then believed him when he said he found drugs in my room and had seen me using them."

"I know it hurts, sweetie, but it's going to be okay." Alex whispered as she rocked Bren slightly for a few minutes.

When she had calmed, she said, "Back to your original question, Alex. I'm not sure about my sexuality. I guess I'm just scared of intimacy in general right now. I can't even think about being attracted to people. I think on the whole I could be attracted to women, but it's too soon to tell. I don't know if it's a reaction to what happened or the real thing. I need more time I think."

"I understand. As I said I don't care either way. I just want you to be happy, Bren. You deserve it as much as I do." A few silent moment passed before Alex mentioned, "We are quiet a pair, aren't we? We should do something to forget about everything for awhile. Let's go out. Want to see a movie?"

Bren smiled through her watery eyes. "Sure. That sounds like fun."

Continued Part 2:

### The Athenaeum's Scroll Archive

---

## ~ Second Chances ~

by Alex Tryst

Copyright © October 2000

**Disclaimers:** These characters are of my own creation. This story does include sexual situations involving consenting adult women (and lots of them). If you are offended by this type of material or it is illegal where you live, it's best to turn back now. 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.....

## Part 2

The next several months passed in a hurry. Bren had graduated from high school and been accepted to a local university on full scholarship. Alex was extremely proud of Bren's accomplishment, and bought her a new car for her graduation gift. As the summer wore on, Bren began to prepare for college. She was hesitant about leaving Alex's home to live in the dorms, but Alex assured her that she would always have a home with her, and if she didn't like dorm life, she could always come back.

During the fall they didn't see each other much due to Alex's schedule, but they would make time to talk over the phone several times a week. Bren was adjusting well to her new situation at school, and even though Alex was happy for her, she missed the young woman's company around the house.

As the holidays came around, Alex knew Bren would probably be missing her mother, so she invited the younger woman to spend Thanksgiving with her and invited her to her firm's holiday party. That evening Alex waited in her den as Bren dressed for the formal affair. As soon as she heard Bren making her way down the stairs, Alex came into the hallway. Bren was wearing a long black dress. Her hair was curled framing her face in ringlets.

Alex gasped. "Wow. You look beautiful, Bren. I've never seen you looking so elegant. I'm damn lucky to have you for a date tonight. You certainly don't look eighteen in that dress."

Bren smiled as her cheeks reddened with the compliments. "Thank you, Alex. You're wearing a tuxedo."

"Yeah. It's kind of an annual joke at the expense of the older partners. When I first became a partner, I was the only woman, so I wore a tux to tease the boys. They all got a good laugh out of it, even though they realized I was making a gender statement. They made another woman a partner within three months. Now it's just kind of expected."

"It looks very nice on you. You look really...dare I say sexy. The women at your office must love you." she mentioned fiddling with Alex's bowtie.

"Well, there is one woman at work that has taken particular interest in me, much to my concern. I don't think interoffice dating is a good idea, and especially if it's a subordinate."

"You're her boss?"

Alex nodded. “Her name is Kelly. You’ll meet her tonight. She’s my assistant actually. She’s a good looking woman, but I just don’t think it’s a good idea. Not to sound arrogant or anything, but she’s been sizing me up since the day we met.”

“Do you think she’s in love with you?”

“I don’t know. Maybe you can tell me when you meet her. I guarantee she’ll want to monopolize my dancing time tonight. Megan never liked her for that reason. Come on now. Let me escort you to the car.” Alex extended her arm for Bren to take.

Bren was an instant hit at the party, winning everyone’s favor in a few short minutes. Knowing that she was safe, Alex began to make her own social rounds, making it a point to talk to as many people as possible. As predicted though, Kelly kept dropping hints at Alex for a dance until Alex relented. As they moved across the floor around other people, Kelly smiled up at her boss.

“So, you seem to be having a good time tonight. I thought you might be a little down being that this is the first holiday season without Megan.”

Alex shrugged. “Well, I admit that it gets to me a little bit, but on the whole I’m doing much better. I realized that she wasn’t the one, and that makes it easier.”

“I’m glad you realized that. She seemed to have a way of bringing you down. Are you seeing someone? I haven’t heard you mention anyone but Bren in the last few months. I thought you were dating her, but after meeting her I now know differently.”

“What do you mean? Why wouldn’t I be dating Bren? She’s an extraordinary woman.”

“Oh, please, Alex. You don’t fool me. She’s almost half your age. I know you better than that. You need a woman who is attentive to you, a woman that caters to your needs.” she softly stated.

Alex knew Kelly was speaking of herself. She looked around to see if Bren was anywhere close by and saw her dancing with another partner a few feet away. Maneuvering over toward them, Alex replied, “You’re right, Kelly. I do need those things, and that’s why Bren and I are dating.” Then she quickly tapped the man dancing with Bren on the shoulder and asked to cut in. When she took Bren into her arms, she leaned in closely saying, “I told Kelly you were my girlfriend. She was really starting to piss me off. I hope that doesn’t make you uncomfortable.”

Bren smiled. “Oh, I can think of worse things than being mistaken for your girlfriend. After all everyone here thinks that anyway. You don’t know how many times I’ve been asked how long we’ve been together. I figured it would be in your best interest not to correct them.”

“Thank you. I owe you for this.”

York while you were there on business in March. I just gave the bare necessities, saying we met at a restaurant, got to know each other, etc. I was very discreet and conservative. They don’t

really need to know what happened.”

“No, they certainly don’t. Besides it doesn’t even matter now. I’ve got the best looking significant other in the whole place, and Kelly is off my back for now.”

Bren raised a brow as she looked around the room and spotted Kelly watching them. “She’s studying us right now. Think we ought to give her a show?” Alex shrugged, so Bren leaned up and caught Alex’s slightly open mouth in a kiss.

Alex moaned softly as she felt Bren’s tongue pass between her lips into her mouth. When they broke apart, Alex whispered, “Where did you learn to kiss like that?”

“Chloe taught me.”

Alex laughed lightly. “You mean she gave you kissing lessons?”

“Yeah. I told you I had no real experience. She taught me how to kiss men and women for the job.”

“Well, she certainly was a good teacher. You nearly had me convinced.” Alex glanced over toward Kelly, who was looking disappointed. “Kelly bought it. I guess that’s what matters. Short of someone finding us making out in the corner, I think we’ve done all the damage we can do. We should just leave now while we’re still on top. It’ll make it look like we’re really into each other.”

“Uh huh. It’ll look like we left to have sex, but I guess I can stroke your ego this once.” she teased.

“Thanks.” Alex smiled as she escorted Bren toward the coat check. Alex made a show of helping Bren with her coat and received a kiss for her effort. With one last quick gaze over the room, they both noted that Kelly had bought their story, and they both laughed about it all the way back to Alex’s house.

Over the course of Bren’s college career, Bren and Alex stayed in almost constant contact, and Bren even stayed with her during the school breaks. However as the spring semester of Bren’s senior year began, the younger woman seemed too busy for Alex. Even though Alex was busy enough with work, her thoughts still drifted to Bren almost on a daily basis. During the past four years, Alex watched as Bren developed into an amazingly beautiful and intelligent woman, and as time passed Alex found her image of the girl shift from the innocent child to the charming young woman. Alex knew in her heart that her feelings for Bren were growing stronger each day, so she was partly glad that they had little contact. Alex still felt as if she was under the oath she had given Bren years previous about not expecting a relationship to develop between them, but it was painfully obvious that Alex desperately wanted just that.

One evening Alex was sitting at work looking out her window deep in thought when Kelly knocked on the door. “Hey there. You look upset.” she mentioned.

Alex looked over at the woman, her former assistant and now junior partner of the firm. “I was just thinking about Bren. I’m just missing her I guess.”

Kelly gave a sympathetic smile. “Must be difficult dating such a younger woman. She’s at that age where change is constant.”

Alex nodded. “Actually, Bren and I aren’t dating, Kelly. We never were, but you’re right, she’s constantly changing. She’s a new person every time I see her.”

“You mean that time at the holiday party years ago when you two were kissing was fake?” Alex nodded. “It didn’t look fake to me, Alex.”

“Well, it was.”

“You did that because of me, didn’t you?” Alex gave a noncommittal shrug. Kelly chuckled.

“Well, I guess I deserved it. I did unashamedly try to put my hooks into you at every opportunity back then. Is it too late to apologize?”

“There’s no need for that. You were still young and ambitious. Your zeal for promotion outweighed your senses at times, but I can’t really blame you. There was a time I wanted it that badly myself. It was just that all my bosses were men, so that kind of ruled out sleeping my way to the top. Nevertheless you got what you deserved in the end.” Alex said with a smile.

“I guess I did. All I ever wanted was a partnership with the firm. You’re in love with Bren, aren’t you?” she asked touching Alex on the shoulder compassionately.

“Am I that transparent?”

“Why don’t you tell her?”

“I can’t.”

“Why not? You’re not scared, are you? Alex, you’re a powerful attorney who speaks her mind and doesn’t take crap from anyone. How can a petite little blonde throw you for a loop?”

Alex shrugged. “I don’t know, Kelly. When I met Bren, she was a little seventeen year old living on the streets of New York. She had nothing, and I took her in. I promised her that I wanted nothing in return. I took care of her financially and protected her. She doesn’t know it, but I’ve been paying for her schooling this whole time. I paid the school in full every year and had them tell her it was a scholarship, because I didn’t want her to know. I feel protective of her. Yet at the same time I find myself wanting her in ways that I haven’t wanted any woman since Megan. What am I to do? I feel like if I approach her I feel like I’m taking advantage of her. For things to work, she’ll have to come to me, and I’m not sure she’d be interested in women, much less me, that way.”

Kelly nodded. “I guess I can see how you’d feel that way. You’re a good woman, Alex Schreiber. Don’t let anyone tell you differently. Well, unless I can convince you to have dinner with me, so I don’t have to have dinner with my cat again, I’m going to go. You interested?”

Alex laughed. “Yeah. I’m interested. I could use some company tonight.”

“Then let’s go. I’ll even let you pick the place.”

“Well, there’s this great Irish pub close by that has live music. Megan introduced it to me ages ago. We can leave your car here, and I’ll drop you off.”

“Sounds good except I took the subway in today, so if you could just give me a ride home afterwards then it’s a date.”

“Great. Let’s go.”

Alex and Kelly spent a few hours at the pub listening to music, drinking, and eating dinner. The conversation was easy between them as they talked about current cases and other non-work related topics. Bren wasn’t mentioned the whole night by either of them. Alex then drove Kelly back home. As they came to a stop in the driveway of the little bungalow, Kelly turned to her asking, “You want to come in? We can watch a movie or talk.”

“I don’t want to intrude on your private time.”

“You aren’t. If you go, I’ll just end up reading myself to sleep, and that’s not much fun for a Thursday night.”

“Okay if you’re sure.” Alex answered turning her engine off. She followed Kelly to the side door and watched as Kelly unlocked it. Kelly showed Alex a seat in the den and then went to get them some drinks. Alex just sat staring at Kelly’s movie collection on the bookcase, taking in all the lesbian films the woman had. When Kelly came back, she was carrying beers for both of them. “You have quite the collection.” Alex mentioned.

“You want to watch one?”

“Sure. There are a few I haven’t seen.” Alex went over to the movies and picked out one that interested her. Turning to Kelly she asked, “This one any good?”

“Pretty good. It’s about two women who meet in Germany during World War II. It’s subtitled. Maybe you want to pick something else. It’s kind of graphic.”

“Explicit sex doesn’t bother me.”

“That’s not it. I mean the war crimes are pretty violent. I wouldn’t want you to be upset by it. One of the two women is Jewish.”



“Oh. Well, maybe you’re right. Let’s pick another. I’m not really up for that. I’ve heard enough first hand accounts of the Holocaust from my grandfather. That’s part of the reason I got involved in the law. What about this one?”

“That’s one of my favorites. Let’s watch that.”

Alex put in the movie and then took a seat next to Kelly on the small sofa. Silence prevailed as the movie began. Alex quickly realized that she had picked a film with many steamy love scenes. It had been years since she had felt the touch of another woman, Megan being the last. With her feelings toward Bren and her long dry spell, Alex could feel her body start to hum with sexual tension as the movie played. She felt Kelly shift her legs, curling one underneath her body, accidentally brushing into Alex’s trousered thigh. Alex flinched at the contact at first but then realized the simple act of rubbing against Kelly’s leg was stimulating her. Alex didn’t think about the repercussions of making a move on her co-worker with the way the light grazing was setting the skin of her thigh on fire. Subtly Alex moved her hand to Kelly’s leg, letting just one finger touch Kelly’s thigh. Kelly seemed unaware of the touch, so Alex scooted her hand over a little more. Kelly’s eyes still stayed on the screen, but her hand covered Alex’s. Alex froze until Kelly maneuvered her hand between her thighs under her skirt. Alex’s heart began to race as she lightly caressed Kelly’s bare inner thighs, mere inches from her destination. Alex could feel the heat radiating from Kelly’s body as the younger woman shifted her hips up slightly as her legs opened further. Still they didn’t dare look at each other. Alex boldly inched her fingers up until she could feel Kelly’s arousal. Kelly moaned softly. Alex teased her for a few moments before not being able to keep up the charade. She turned her body toward Kelly’s and cupped the woman’s cheek, pulling it around, so they could look at each other. Kelly’s eyes were hopeful yet questioning. Her breathing was heavy, but she said nothing as Alex stared at her.

In a husky voice Alex whispered, “Do you want me to keep going?”

“Please.” Kelly whimpered desperately. Upon that consent Alex leaned in to kiss Kelly fervently at the same time finding her way inside her with her questing fingers. Several minutes passed before Kelly managed to pull back from Alex’s probing tongue. “Let’s go into the bedroom. This couch is too small.” she panted. Alex didn’t reply but simply picked the woman up and walked her back to where she thought the bedrooms would be.

The following morning Alex awoke to the sound of an alarm. Opening her eyes she noted that the room was still dark, and furthermore she wasn’t sure where she was until she heard a discontented groan as the woman next to her slapped irritably at the offending noise. Alex reached toward the bedside to find a lamp and switched it on. Kelly’s head immediately shot up from under the covers and scowled at Alex.

Realizing that she was in bed with Kelly, Alex panicked. “Kelly, I have to get going.” she said already looking around for her clothes. Hastily she dressed. “Are you going to walk me out?”

“Sure.” Kelly yawned before slipping out of bed. She was completely naked but didn’t seem to mind.

Alex followed her wordlessly to the door. When Kelly turned to her, she said, “Well, I’ll see you later at the office.”

Kelly nodded her eyes barely open. “Yeah. See you in a bit.” she mumbled kissing Alex absentmindedly on the lips.

Alex made a quick exit to her car and started off down the street as the implications of what had transpired ran through her mind. Mentally she chastised herself for being intimate with a peer, but as she relived the night in her mind, her body once again started to come alive to latent desires. What they had shared was hot and lustful. Kelly had been an active lover, eager to experiment with anything Alex wanted to do. Briefly Alex wondered if they were to be together again Kelly would be as responsive. Not knowing how to feel about the events, Alex decided to see what Kelly’s reaction would be when they met at work.

At ten that morning all the partners had a meeting. Alex was the last to arrive due to a client meeting, and when she walked into the boardroom, she noted that the only empty seat around the table was next to Kelly’s. Alex met the brunette’s eyes momentarily but saw that Kelly was wearing an expressionless face. Matching her Alex quickly sat and opened her notebook for notes. Alex was deep into the conversation amongst the partners when she felt a light touch to her knee. She spared a glance at Kelly who looked back innocently. Ignoring her Alex tried to focus on the topic at hand. However as the minutes passed, the hand began to massage her thigh under the large oak table. Trying not to respond, Alex began to fidget with her pen, twirling it between her fingers. She made a concerted effort not to look at Kelly, but the hand was pressing harder now. As a last tactic, Alex pushed back from the table, leaving her legs completely exposed to the people on either side of her. Crossing her legs she brought her legal pad to her lap to continue her note-taking. When the meeting was adjourned, Alex walked directly to her office and shut the door. She sighed heavily at Kelly’s behavior. It was obvious to her that Kelly wanted more of what they had experienced the previous night.

Alex successfully managed to avoid the younger woman the rest of the business day until after six. Usually everyone was gone by five on Fridays, so Alex figured she was probably alone in the office. Going to her stereo, she put in her favorite R&B cd, and soon the sounds of Marvin Gaye filled her spacious office. Then going to her mini-refrigerator she retrieved some ice. In the bottom drawer of her filing cabinet she kept a bottle of scotch for those long days. Pouring herself a healthy glassful, Alex took a seat in her oversized leather chair and closed her eyes. Several songs played as her thoughts wandered between her growing feelings for Bren and the sexual excitement brought on by Kelly.

A soft rapping at her door brought her out of her reverie. Opening her eyes she saw Kelly standing there. “Is this a private party, or can anyone be invited?” she asked from the open doorway.

“No, it’s not private necessarily. Come on in. Want a drink?”

Kelly shut the door half of the way behind her and walked to Alex’s side of the desk. She took a seat on top of the files littering the dark wood directly in front of Alex. Taking the glass from

Alex's hand she took a sip. She sighed in satisfaction after she swallowed. Kelly then proceeded to prop her feet on the either arm of the chair effectively pinning Alex into it. Idly she ran the glass along the exposed skin of her chest between the two open buttons of her blouse as she inquired, "Hard day?"

Alex shrugged as she watched the path of her beverage dip between the valley of Kelly's inviting breasts. "I've had a lot on my mind."

"Anything I can help you with?"

"Maybe." Alex replied leaning forward and taking the drink away from her. Her fingers brushed Kelly's cleavage in the process. She took a long drink before saying, "I hate to state the obvious here, Kelly, but we bent a company policy last night."

"Maybe but we didn't break it. The partners frown upon dating within the office. It has nothing to do with two partners having wild sex one night for the hell of it."

Alex paused for a second before asking, "Was it just one night for the hell of it, Kelly?"

"What kind of question is that? What are you really asking me, Alex?" she inquired gently, her hands coming to rest behind her on the desk. Kelly stretched her back making her breasts arch higher into the air as her head dropped back slightly.

Alex took in the erotic pose, Kelly's open legs on either side of her exposing her legs up to mid-thigh, voluptuous breasts straining against her silk blouse, the skin of her neck that held a faint mark of their previous passion. Alex took a long sip of her drink as she studied the woman before her. Neither spoke for a moment. "Well, um... after the meeting today I thought maybe you wanted things to be more than a one night stand." Alex's hand went to Kelly's leg under her skirt where she rubbed the top of her thigh intently. "Did I misread you?"

Kelly looked down at Alex. "Am I misreading your intentions, Alex? After all your hand is under my skirt."

Alex withdrew it and looked around her office for a moment before meeting Kelly's gaze. "I'll admit it, Kelly. I've been thinking about you all day. You've given me something I haven't had in a long time. I'm feeling greedy for more, but I can't commit to more. I'm in love with someone else. I don't know where you stand, but I thought I should at least tell you that."

"I never asked you for a commitment, Alex. I'll be honest with you. It was never my intention last night to have sex with you. Like you I haven't felt what we shared in a long time, and it's all I've thought about today too. I can't help but want more. I know you love Bren, and she owns your heart, but until you two get involved, your body is still free game. I'd like to be the one to exercise it once in awhile if you'd like the same from me."

"Can you really have a sexual relationship without feelings, Kelly? I don't want to lead you on."

Kelly smiled but didn't answer. Slowly she began to undo the buttons of her blouse. Next she flicked open the front clasp to her bra exposing her chest to Alex. Alex licked her lips in anticipation. Kelly reached for the glass again dipping her fingertips into it. Bringing her hand back to her chest, Kelly began to rub the golden brown liquid over breasts all the while smiling sexily at Alex. After finishing the process, she reached for the back of Alex's head whispering, "Dinner's served."

Alex delightfully dove into the treat Kelly had presented. They kissed for a long time before Kelly slid off the desk into Alex's lap, so they were face to face. Alex's hand went up her skirt as Kelly began to unbutton Alex's shirt. Soon they were involved in each other, driving each other toward ecstasy. Alex could feel Kelly on the brink as the younger woman rocked faster onto her long searching digits. Alex bit harder into Kelly's shoulder as she whimpered spastically, Kelly's hand working wonders inside Alex's trousers. "Oh, God. Kelly." Alex groaned, pushing the brunette's body tighter against her.

Kelly was panting and moaning constantly with her head thrown back. "Don't stop, Alex. Oh, God. Don't stop. Harder. God. Fuck me harder." she screamed. Both women climaxed, yelling loudly as shudders overcame them.

Just as they settled into a blissful embrace, there was a knock on the door, startling both of them. Quickly they looked at each others state of undress before turning to the open door to see the founding partner of the firm standing there. The elderly man's face was white in shock, but he quickly averted his eyes. Both women quickly made themselves appropriate before Alex inquired, "What can we do for you, Arthur? We thought everyone was already gone for the day."

"Um... you're causing quite the commotion with the cleaning staff. I was wondering why they were all hovered around your doorway. Hope you're at least charging for your entertainment." he joked still trying to recover from what he had seen. "I think maybe you two should call it a night." he said before closing the office door without waiting for a response.

Kelly and Alex began to laugh uncontrollably once they were alone again. "Poor Ethel. She's going to have a surprise when Arthur gets home tonight. We probably gave him the biggest kick start to his hormones that he's had in ages." Kelly joked.

Alex laughed heartily. "Come on. He's right. We should get out of here. You want to come back to my place? We can order some takeout or something. We'll lay out by the pool and enjoy the spring evening. What do you say?"

"Sounds good. Let me get my things from my office, and then I'll follow you there in my car."

Later that evening Alex and Kelly were lounging together in a chaise drinking wine and stargazing as they cuddled in the cooling night air. They were just talking when Alex thought she heard her garage door opening. She cast a quizzical glance at Kelly. "That sounds like my garage door, doesn't it?" she asked. Kelly nodded. Deciding to investigate Alex went over to the gate leading from the pool area to her driveway. She saw Bren's car pulling into the garage. Alex stepped out onto the driveway and waited for Bren to exit her car before calling her name.

When Bren heard her name, she turned to Alex. “Oh, Alex. Thank goodness you’re here.” she sniffled coming to her. She threw herself into Alex’s arms.

“Sweetie, what’s wrong? Why are you crying?”

“One of my professors... he hit on me.” she sobbed.

“What? What do you mean he hit on you?”

“He made a pass at me and then grabbed my ass.”

“Uninvited?” Alex questioned. Bren nodded through her tears. “Okay. Let’s take this one step at a time. First of all you come inside with me. We’ll sit down, and you’ll tell me exactly what happened.” Alex escorted Bren through the gate into the backyard. Kelly was still lying in the chaise drinking her wine when she met their gaze.

Bren looked at Kelly and then Alex. Pulling away from Alex, she said, “I didn’t realize you had company. Maybe I should come by later.”

Alex sensed sadness in Bren’s voice as she made her suggestion. Knowing that the girl needed a friend at the moment, Alex answered, “No. You are welcome here anytime, Bren. I want to hear about what happened. Why don’t you go on inside and freshen up a bit? I’ll be there in a minute. Okay?” Bren looked over at Kelly again before nodding in consent. Once Bren had closed the door, Alex walked over to Kelly again. “I’m sorry, Kelly. She’s really upset and needs someone to talk to.”

“It’s all right. I understand. Wherever she goes your heart follows.” Kelly stated in jealousy. “We were having a perfect evening here, and you were going to get laid again later. Is that worth giving up, so Bren can cry on your shoulder tonight and leave you longing tomorrow?”

“Kelly, I thought we had an understanding here. I mean if you can’t handle it then we shouldn’t see each other anymore outside of work.”

“I’m just annoyed is all. I didn’t think we’d have this kind of interruption. I don’t have a problem with your feelings for Bren. I just thought we’d have some alone time.”

“Well, if it’s any consolation, even if I didn’t have feelings for her, I’d still let her cry on my shoulder. I am her friend. My friends come before my sex life if need be.”

Kelly took a deep breath. “I’m sorry. I didn’t mean to snap. I was just really looking forward to another night with you. I’m so hot for you right now.” she whispered leaning into Alex.

Alex groaned. “The feeling is mutual, Kelly, but I have to deal with this right now. Maybe I can call you later after she leaves.” she suggested.

Kelly glanced toward the house. “She’s not leaving tonight, Alex. She’s going to want you to stay with her. How about you call me tomorrow after she leaves?”

“All right. I’ll do that. Thanks for understanding. Let me walk you out.”

Alex walked Kelly through the house, so she could gather her purse and shoes. Then she followed the brunette out to her car. Kelly turned to Alex and smiled. “Sorry that the evening was cut short. While you’re alone in bed tonight, you can think about me screwing myself to sleep.” Alex moaned at the thought. “Good night, Alex. Have fun with your little friend.” Kelly whispered kissing Alex lightly on the mouth before getting into her car.

When Alex went back into the house, Bren said, “I didn’t know you were dating Kelly.”

“I’m not.”

“But I just saw you kissing.” Alex shrugged nonchalantly. Bren looked into her lap. “Well, I’m sorry I ruined your plans this evening.”

“You didn’t ruin anything, Bren. This is more important. Now why don’t you start from the beginning?” Alex suggested taking a seat next to Bren on the sofa and wrapping Bren in her arms.

“My friends and I were at this eighteen and over bar near school since I’m the only one not twenty-one. We were just hanging out, dancing, and stuff. We were sitting at the bar, and out of nowhere my European history professor appears. He’s obviously drunk, and he sits down next to me on the empty stool. He just started hitting on me, saying how pretty he always thought I was, how much he watched me in class. I tried to be nice but not let him think I was receptive. I even went so far as to say I was dating someone to try to get him to leave me alone, but he then said it was okay, because he was married. He mentioned that I could improve my grade in his class by sleeping with him. I just freaked out, Alex.”

“What did you say in response?”

“I said I was happy with my grade in his class already. I excused myself, and when I stood he grabbed my ass. I was appalled and shot him a nasty look, but then he said my grade could drop too, like it was some sort of threat. I just had to get out of there. I took off and came here. I don’t know what to do, Alex. I can’t fail his class. I won’t graduate on time. What should I do?”

“Well, you can report it to his superior. Who is the head of the department?”

“He is.”

“Oh. Well, how about the dean, the vice-president, or even the president? You can write a formal letter of complaint against him to those people, and you could even go to the board of trustees if you wanted.”

“I don’t know if I could do that, Alex.”

“I could help you. I’ll help you compose the letter if you want. If you really are too scared of him, though, I’ll talk to him.”

“Would you really?”

“Of course. However I think we should do this. Let’s write a formal letter to the dean, v.p., and president, and I will sign it, acting as your counsel on the matter. That way they know that you’re serious. We shouldn’t get your professor involved at this stage. Let his superiors handle him.”

“But I’m scared he’ll try something next time I’m in class.”

“Well, there is one other thing I can think of to do in addition. I can speak to him but not as your attorney. If he knows I’m your legal counsel, he could get suspicious of what we’re doing. You told him you were dating someone. I could pose as that person and have a little chat with him about his behavior. That would be the only way I could see getting involved without raising his suspicion, but obviously with me being a woman, you might become a target for derogatory remarks.”

“I don’t care about that, Alex. All I care about is my grade. There are only two months left of school, and I don’t want anything to screw this up. I’ve worked too hard not to finish on time.”

“I understand. If you want me to talk to him, I will but know that I’ll have to talk to him from that point of view.”

“That’s fine with me, Alex. I can think of worse things than you posing as my girlfriend.” she said with a smile.

“All right. Let me go into the office now and compose that letter quickly. You can give me the addresses later, but I want to do this now while it’s fresh in my mind.”

“Okay. Thank you, Alex. Can I fix you anything?”

“A cup of tea would be nice.” she responded already walking back to her office.

By the time Bren had come in with the tea, the letter was finished. They spent the rest of the evening watching movies, and then Bren went up to sleep in the guestroom.

On Monday morning Alex met Bren at her dorm to walk her to class just in case the professor had the nerve to approach her in route. When they arrived at the classroom, he was standing outside the door. Alex saw the smile he directed at Bren. Putting on her most intimidating face, Alex made a direct line for him as she launched into the dialogue that she and Bren had agreed upon. By the end of the two minutes diatribe the scrawny middle-aged man was literally shaking in fear as the six foot Alex towered over him yelling at the top of her lungs. Alex took a step back when she felt he had been properly chastised for his improper behavior. The man took one

glance at Bren and then back at Alex before retreating into the safety of the classroom.

Bren embraced Alex in a tight hug as the crowd of students began to disperse. “Oh, thank you, Alex. That was amazing. He was really scared.”

“Well, he deserved it. With the way I embarrassed him and the reprimand I’m sure he’ll receive from his boss when those letters arrive, that man will never even look at a student improperly again.”

“Thank you. I hope you’re right.” Bren said.

Alex checked her watch. “Well, I really need to go now, and you have class. Call me if you have any further problems with this guy, but I don’t think you will.”

“Okay. Thanks again, Alex. You’re a life saver.” Bren said with one extra squeeze to Alex’s frame and a peck on the cheek. Alex just watched her walk away with a dreamy look in her eyes. She had enjoyed reaming that professor a little too much, because she got to pretend if only for a few minutes that Bren was hers. Alex touched her cheek lightly where the feeling of Bren’s lips lingered on her skin. Alex sighed deeply before turning to go. She had to be in court in an hour, so she forced thought of the young woman from her mind.

A couple of weeks later was Bren’s twenty-first birthday. Bren had invited Alex to go out with her and several of her friends to celebrate the event, and even though Alex didn’t really want to go bar hopping with college seniors all night, she felt that she should be there for Bren. Unfortunately Alex was running late that evening, so when she arrived at the restaurant, Bren had already gotten tipsy. Having taken off her suit jacket and left it in the car, Alex rolled up the sleeves on her dress shirt as she made her way over to the table of rowdy girls. “Good evening, ladies.” she greeted everyone. “Happy birthday, Bren.”

Bren’s eyes lit up like Alex was her long lost best friend. “Alex!” she exclaimed. “You’re here!” She stood up from her seat in the middle of the booth and began to crawl over to her friends to get to where Alex was standing. She fell into Alex’s arms as she tripped over someone in her rush.

“Hey there, beautiful. You seem to already be having a great time. Sorry I’m late. Court let out later than expected.”

“That’s okay. You’re here now. The flowers I got today were so beautiful. They were the best I’ve ever gotten.”

“Well, glad you liked them.”

“Oh, you have to meet everyone.” she said before turning to the group. “Everyone,” she announced at the top of her voice, “This is Alex. Alex, everyone.” She pushed on the shoulder of her friend at the end of the booth. “Scoot down everyone. I want to sit on the end with Alex.”



They both took a seat, and then Bren continued to talk with her friends about subjects with which Alex was unfamiliar. Nevertheless she tried to act interested as she ate a few appetizers and waited on her dinner to arrive. Under the table though, Bren's hand was firmly attached to Alex's thigh, giving Alex enough attention to feel welcome in the group. After dinner for which Alex paid, the group decided to head to a dance club. Bren made it clear that she wanted to ride with Alex, so she and two more of her friends hopped into Alex's Mercedes as they followed the entourage to the bar. Once there Alex bought Bren her first drink and then sat on the stool sipping her own as Bren and her friends danced in a pack. Half an hour passed as Alex watched over the group, but then one of the girls approached the bar for another drink and took a seat next to Alex.

"So, you're Alex. It's finally good to put a face to the name. We weren't quite sure you were real."

"Oh? Why's that?"

"Bren talks about you all the time, how great you are, how in love she is with you, but none of us had ever seen or talked to you. It was kind of a running joke behind her back that you were a figment of her imagination. I'm glad to know that you truly exist. You make Bren so happy. It's amazing. It seems like whenever she's the happiest it's because she's just been with or talked to you."

"Oh, well, that's wonderful to hear. I care about Bren very much, and I just want her to be happy."

"Then you're succeeding, because she is happy, and I think a lot of it has to do with you."

"Listen. Bren and I have known each other a long time, and we were friends first. Do you remember when she finally started admitting that she was in love with me? I was just wondering if it coincided with when I began to feel that way toward her."

"Oh, I don't know for sure. As long as I remember I guess. I've known Bren since freshman year, and I remember her telling me about you then. Of course she didn't tell me she had feelings for women until second semester. At the time she seemed confused but said she thought she had fallen in love with you. I guess over time those feelings just grew stronger. Why? When did you fall in love with Bren?" she asked curiously.

Alex shrugged wondering if she should really admit anything to Bren's friend. "I've always held Bren close in my heart. I've always cared for her since the day I met her. I guess it's been so gradual over the last four years."

Before either of them could say anything else, Bren scampered over to the bar, and demanded another drink from the bartender. Looking at Alex and her friend, she inquired with slurred speech, "What are you talking about?"

Alex smiled at her as she took her hand. "Just talking. How are you? You having a good time?"

“Yeah but I’m super thirsty. I need a drink.” she said.

“Well, the bartender is getting you one. Hold your horses. Here take a sip of mine while you wait.” Alex said handing Bren the glass. When the bartender put Bren’s drink in front of her, Alex paid for it. Alex watched Bren guzzle the beverage before dropping the empty glass on the bar again. Alex had to set it upright after it had toppled over, spilling ice. The bartender scowled. “You’ll have to forgive her. It’s her twenty-first birthday.” Alex explained and then slipped him some extra money for the spill Bren had caused behind the bar.

Pulling on Alex’s arm, Bren demanded, “Come dance with me, Alex.”

Alex felt a little self-conscious surrounded by all the young women, but she quickly was lost in thoughts of Bren as the girl moved to the sensual beat. Alex let her emotions guide her as she moved in closer to Bren. Bren responded accordingly by stepping into to Alex, so their bodies lightly brushed as they danced. Bren reached out to Alex, wrapping one arm around Alex’s broad shoulder as their hips ground together. Alex could feel her heart start pounding wildly. Their eyes met with a burning intensity and held for several minutes before the laughing of Bren’s friends broke the moment. Bren broke away from Alex to investigate, leaving Alex wondering what was really happening. When Bren stepped back, Alex inquired, “You want to stop now?”

“Actually I have to go to the bathroom. Come with me?” she asked. Alex didn’t answer but let Bren lead her to the ladies’ room. When they got there, they found one of the stalls open.

Bren pulled Alex toward it, but Alex hesitated. “Why do you need me to go in there with you?”

“I need help.”

“Help? With what?”

“My jeans. They’re so tight to begin with that I had to lay down to get them on, and I don’t think I’ll be able to get them off alone.”

Realizing that she didn’t have a good excuse not to assist her, Alex begrudgingly went into the stall behind Bren and locked it. She decided to try to focus strictly on the task at hand and not think about the fact that her fingers were unzipping Bren’s jeans and pulling them off her slim hips. Once they were down to her knees, Alex averted her attention to the graffiti in the stall. She was surprised when Bren grabbed onto her belt on either side of her waist for balance as she squatted. Alex could feel Bren’s thumbs hooking inside her dress pants. Suddenly Alex began wishing that she hadn’t come out that evening, being that she was now having difficulty keeping her emotions in check. Now that she knew Bren had feelings for her, Alex wanted so badly to touch the blonde, but she knew she should refrain. Soon enough Bren was finished and then Alex had to get her back into her pants.

Heading back out onto the dance floor, Bren continued to dance into Alex at every opportunity, slowly driving the older woman delirious with desire. At one point Bren had backed into her and

was grinding her backside against Alex's overheated crotch. Alex's body began to overthrow her mind as she wrapped Bren in her arms, pushing back with equal fervor. As the night progressed, Bren kept drinking and targeting Alex as a dance partner. Their gaze was locked once again as they danced, and Alex could see for the first time in Bren's eyes what she was feeling. As the music slowed, they sought each other out in a tender embrace and swayed to the love song. Alex wanted so much to lean down and kiss the woman in her arms, but she chose not to do so. However just as the song came to an end and another fast one began, Bren stood up on her tiptoes and pulled Alex's head down for a long, deep kiss. Alex groaned as their tongues battled, and she held tighter to Bren as if she would disappear if she let go. When the need for air became paramount, they broke away slightly. Bren leaned to Alex's ear, growling, "Take me home, Alex."

Alex nodded quickly in agreement, understanding the look in Bren's eyes. Within seconds they had said good bye to Bren's friends and were on their way out to Alex's car. However once Alex had put Bren in the car and started around for her own door, her mind began to clear as the realization of what she was doing dawned on her. She was about to try to take advantage of her charge. Alex mentally cursed at herself for even thinking along such lines and regained her strength before getting into the driver's side.

"So, where to, birthday girl?" she asked.

"Your house." Bren purred, leaning over and running her hand along Alex's arm.

Alex tried not to react as she replied, "Okay. My place it is." The ride was a test of strength as Bren's hands roamed freely over Alex's body. When they finally arrived, Alex was on fire. "All right. Here we are. Let me help you out of the car."

Alex assisted Bren into the house before the younger woman nearly collapsed on the stairs. Figuring it would be easier, Alex simply picked Bren up in her arms and carried her the rest of the way into the guestroom. Putting her down on the bed, Alex began to step away but found herself trapped within Bren's arms, their faces mere inches from each other. Bren forced her mouth up into Alex's again, and Alex just didn't have the emotional strength to resist. Sliding onto the bed, Alex rolled over on top of Bren as they deepened the kiss. When it broke Alex moved to Bren's neck as she embraced Bren tighter.

Bren was moaning lightly as she called Alex's name, but then suddenly Alex's name went from cries of passion to moans of distress before Alex found the back of her shirt covered in regurgitated drinks and food. Bren began to cry as Alex slowly sat up. "Oh, Alex, I'm sorry. I'm so sorry. Please don't be angry." she sobbed.

Alex looked down at Bren. She had managed to throw up all over Alex, herself, and the bed linens. With sympathy in her eyes, Alex whispered, "I'm not mad, honey. We better get you into the bathroom. Come on. Let's get these dirty clothes off you." Alex took off her own soiled shirt before helping Bren with her clothes. Taking her into the bathroom, Alex sat her down and began to wipe off her face with a wet, warm washcloth. Once that was complete, she said, "You stay here. I'm going to get us some clothes to wear to bed, and put our dirty clothes and sheets in the

washer. I'll be right back. Okay?" Bren nodded silently. Alex returned several minutes later having put on clothes and put the items in the wash. When she came back into the bathroom, Bren was rocking herself slowly back and forth as she cried. Alex helped her into a loose t-shirt and boxer shorts before asking, "What's wrong, sweetie? You still feel sick?"

Bren shook her head. "I've ruined everything." she mumbled.

"You haven't ruined anything, Bren. It was just clothes and sheets. It'll all come out in the wash."

"No. I've ruined my chance. You don't want to sleep with me anymore." she sobbed hugging herself tighter.

Alex embraced her, brushing back Bren's blonde hair. "Oh, Bren. We can't sleep together tonight. You're sick, and you're probably going to get sick again."

"You probably think I'm still a child by throwing up." she pouted. "You don't want me now."

"Bren, I don't think of you as a child, and I never have. You had a lot to drink tonight, more than you should have, and you got sick. It happens. Now come on. You're sleeping with me in my bed tonight. I want to be near you in case you need anything."

Alex helped Bren into the master bedroom and eased her into bed. Bren didn't fight her and promptly passed out before Alex could even turn out the light. Alex stayed awake for several hours going over in her mind all that happened. There was no longer a doubt how Bren felt about her, but Alex wondered if Bren would admit to her feelings once she was sober again. Both of them had hidden them for so long, but Alex longed to hear Bren tell her how she felt. Alex drifted off pondering how to handle things in the morning.

Alex got up late that morning to find Bren still in deep sleep. Leaving her there, Alex went downstairs into the kitchen for some breakfast and to read the paper. She wasn't feeling all that great with the amount of alcohol she had consumed herself. She could feel it still sitting in her stomach, so to try and soak it up she made a hearty breakfast. Several hours later Bren finally made her way downstairs. As she entered the kitchen, Alex gave her a warm smile.

"Good afternoon." she teased. "How are you feeling?"

"Not good."

"Figures. Would you like something to eat? Maybe a little toast? That'll help your stomach."

"Okay. I'll try that." she mumbled dropping into a kitchen chair. She proceeded to drink Alex's cup of coffee as Alex made her toast. Alex just smiled at her, sensing that Bren remembered little or nothing of what had taken place the previous night. Alex made herself another cup of coffee and then brought Bren's toast to the table.

“So, that was quite a bash you had.” Alex mentioned conversationally.

“I’m never drinking that much again. I can’t even remember all that happened.”

“What’s the last thing you remember?”

“Dancing with you at the club.”

“Before or after the bathroom?”

“Before I guess. Why? Did something happen in the bathroom?”

“No. You just had a problem with your jeans, couldn’t get them back on without a little help. No big deal.”

“Oh, God.” she mumbled in embarrassment. “Speaking of jeans, where are my clothes?”

“In the laundry room. You threw up on us when we got home, so I washed them for you.”

“Alex, I’m sorry to have been such a problem. You could’ve just stuck with my friends. You didn’t have to bring me back here and care for me.”

“It wasn’t a problem. I didn’t mind doing it. You’re only twenty-one once. I’m glad you had a good time.”

“I wish I could remember what a good time I had.”

“I’m sure it’ll come back to you.”

“I guess, but do you know who gave me this?” she inquired, flipping her hair off her shoulder to expose a purpling bruise at the base of her neck.

Inwardly Alex groaned in displeasure, but she simply answered, “Yes. You were making out with someone last night.”

“What? You’re kidding me? Who? I’ve never done something like that. Was she at least cute?”

Alex shrugged. “She’s not my type, but I guess she was cute. You seemed to be enjoying yourself which is what matters I suppose.”

“But, you have to know, Alex, I don’t normally do things like that. Did I give her my number? Oh, God. I don’t want some strange girl I was making out with in a club calling me.”

“Well, I wouldn’t exactly call her a stranger.” Alex mumbled into her coffee, realizing this was beginning to scare Bren.

“No! You mean I was making out with one of my friends? Which one was it, because I’m going to kill her.”

“Well,” Alex fumbled. “If that’s the case, I would prefer a bullet to the back of the head.” she whispered, lowering her head shamefully.

Silence prevailed for several moments. “You mean to tell me you did this to my neck?” Bren finally asked quietly.

“I didn’t mean to leave a mark. I also had a little too much to drink, and I guess I was just overzealous.”

Again there was silence. “I woke up in your bed, Alex. Is there something else that happened that I should know about?”

“Yes. As a matter of fact there’s much more, but to ease your mind, we didn’t have sex if that’s what you were wondering. I wouldn’t do that to you or any other woman for that matter.”

“I know you wouldn’t, Alex. I’m just really shocked right now. Okay? I didn’t think you were interested in me that way. We made out last night?”

“You’re not the only one in shock, Bren. I didn’t think you were interested in me either, but your friends told me otherwise. We shared something last night, Bren, and whether or not you remember it, I think we should at least talk about what happened.”

“I agree. Exactly what did happen?”

“Well, last night after the incident in the bathroom you were all over me while we were dancing. We really were getting into each other, and then we danced to this slow song. I wanted to kiss you, Bren. I wanted to so much, but I thought it wouldn’t be right with the state you were in and our history. However right at that moment you kissed me. You kissed me with more passion than any other woman has shown me in my entire life, and I just melted. When we broke apart, you asked me to take you home. In the car you left no doubt about your intentions for when we got back here. You had me in a state of frenzy with the way you kept touching me. Once we got home, I carried you up to the guestroom with every intent on leaving you there to sleep it off, but we started kissing again, and I just lost all my self-control. I should’ve been stronger, but I couldn’t resist the way you kept kissing and touching me. That’s when I gave you that hickey accidentally. We were on our way to doing something we probably would’ve regretted, but then you threw up all over yourself, the bed, and me. You were upset about it, but I assured you it was okay. I changed you, and then we went to sleep in my room.”

Bren lowered her head into her hands mumbling in embarrassment, “Kill me now. Please just kill me now. I can’t believe I did that.”

Alex got up from her seat and got down on her knees in front of Bren’s chair. Taking Bren’s hands away from her face, Alex held them in her own. “Bren, there’s something I’ve been

wanting to tell you, but I haven't been able to. I have found myself falling in love with you. You're everything I ever wanted in a woman, but I was scared to tell you, because I didn't want you to think you owed me anything. You don't owe me anything, Bren, nothing at all. Everything I've done for you is because I wanted to do it not because I wanted something in return, but I can't help the way I feel. Last night was better than my wildest fantasies, Bren. I've always wanted to be that close to you, but I could never really imagine it until last night. Last night was perfection."

Bren took one of her hands from Alex's grasp to stroke Alex's dark hair affectionately. "Alex, I threw up on you."

Alex nodded. "And I still loved every moment. I'll understand if you don't share my feelings, and I don't want you to think that you have to say anything. I just couldn't keep it to myself after last night. It would've been impossible."

Bren pressed her fingers to Alex's lips. "Shh, Alex. That's enough. I've heard enough."

Alex moved back to her own chair and stared into her coffee. Bren was quiet, too quiet for her comfort, but Alex was determined not to force Bren into talking about her feelings. After an extended silence, Alex said, "So, maybe I should just go get dressed and take you back to school. You're clothes are in the laundry room." Alex stood and began to walk away.

"Alex." Bren softly called. "Wait. I have something to say." Alex turned to find Bren right behind her. "Come on. Let's sit down in the living room."

Bren escorted Alex to the couch and sat them down. Pointing to the far corner of the room, she asked, "Do you remember what was over there when I first moved in here?"

"A piano."

"With pictures of Megan and you sitting on top of it. What's there now?"

"A desk."

"The antique roll top desk you bought for me while I was in high school, so I would have a place to do my homework. What's on top?"

"Pictures of you and me."

"That's right. Pictures of us together. What does that say to you?" Alex shrugged. "Well, let me tell you what it says to me, Alex. It says that you love me. You've loved me for a long time, and I've known that, but I knew you were going to have a problem with us being together given our history. You've never been in my dorm room, but let me assure you. There are probably as many pictures of us there as there are here. I don't know which one of my loudmouth friends told you how I felt about you, but I'm actually glad somebody did. I knew it wouldn't come out right if I said anything. The truth is, Alex, I've loved you for a long time as well. I know it's hard not to

love you because of what you've done for me, but I've come to love you in spite of it. When you first propositioned me four years ago, I wasn't sure what I was in for. I thought I could trust you, but I wasn't completely sure. However I knew my position wasn't going to get any worse, and I decided to go for it. That day when we came back on the train, you got upset over losing Megan, and as much as you tried to hide it, I saw the tears in your eyes. It was at that moment that I knew I had made the right choice. I knew I could trust you, and I also knew that I actually liked you. Over the first few months I grew to really like you as a friend, but then I went to college. It was then I started to realize that I missed you like crazy during the week. I found myself driving by your house and even coming in when I knew you were at work just to feel close to you. I'd sit right where we're sitting now, and I'd watch the transition taking place across the room. One day I was just sitting here, and it dawned on me that I was in love with you. I had the strong feeling that you felt the same for me, but I knew that you would never say anything, and I felt it was best not to say anything either due to the risk of having you think that I was trying to return the favors you had given to me. Years passed, and I loved you from afar, never thinking that you might actually date again, and then I saw you with Kelly that night. I was so hurt, but at the same time I knew I couldn't expect you to wait forever. I wasn't planning on saying anything to you about this until after I graduated, but after last night I guess now was as good a time as any. I do love you, Alex. For as long as I've known you, you've only done one deceptive thing, and I understand why you did it, so I've forgiven you for it. Other than that you've been a perfect friend and companion, and I want the chance to take it further if you do."

"I do want that chance, Bren. What one deceptive thing are you talking about? I've haven't done anything wrong."

"I didn't say it was wrong, just deceptive. You've been paying for my tuition all along and making the financial aid office tell me I was on scholarship."

"How did you find that out?"

"I have a friend in the financial aid office. I asked to look at my file. It was right there in print with explicit instructions on how you wanted it presented."

"Bren, I just didn't want you to think I was doing it for any reason other than wanting to."

"I know that, but I knew at that moment that I had to say something. You've given me so much, Alex, and I'm not talking about all the money you've given to me and my education over the last four years. You've believed in me when no one else did. You gave me a chance and unconditional support. You loved me like I've never been loved in my entire life, and I love you for it and yet in spite of it. I want so much to be the woman you want to come home to at the end of a day. I want the opportunity to know love the way only you could show me."

"I want that too." Alex confessed. "I guess it's decided then. We're going to give this a shot, but if you ever change your mind, I want you to tell me."

"I will, but I don't think that's going to happen, Alex." she answered snuggling closer to her on the couch.



They sat for a long time in silence cuddled together before Alex asked. "Have you given any thought to your plans after school?"

"Actually, yes. I've been looking for a job, and a couple of friends and I have talked about getting a place together, but nothing is decided yet. Now that you know everything I don't know where we stand."

"What do you mean?"

"Well, I mean as far as us having a relationship. Do you want me to live with you or my friends?"

"I hadn't thought about it. I've always waited a little while before moving in with a woman, but this case is different. I wouldn't be opposed to you living with me, but there are some responsibilities that go along with that on both our parts. I guess it would be a matter of deciding if we could handle that. We don't have to decide now."

"I would like to live with you, Alex, if I had a choice."

"Let's think it over for a few days. I think I would like that too. For now though, we should focus on us. Have you thought about what you wanted for a graduation present?"

"Well, yeah. Last semester I wrote my mother a letter, and she wrote me back. We've been talking through letters and e-mail since, and I think I'd like to go see her."

"Well, that's a surprise. I didn't know you had done that."

"I wasn't sure what you'd think about it, but I really wanted to do it. I still love her, Alex, and I miss her."

"I understand. She's your mother. You should be able to reconcile if you want. I think that would be nice, but I am concerned about your physical and emotional safety. Last time you were there things were less than perfect. I would worry about you while you were gone, but I wouldn't try to stop you if it's what you really wanted."

"I was hoping you'd go with me, Alex. I'm still cautious, but I'd like to try. Would you go with me?"

"Of course. I'd be happy to."

"I was hoping that maybe we could go before graduation. Will you have any time?"

"I'll make time, Bren. Just tell me when you want to go."

"Why don't we go the first weekend of May? That's only two weeks from now."

“All right. It’s a date. Why don’t you let her know we’ll be coming?”

“Okay.” Bren replied finally pulling herself away from Alex’s arms. “As much as I’m enjoying this, I should probably get back to school.”

“Why’s that? You have big Saturday night plans?”

“No. Not yet but I don’t want to be in your way. I’m sure you’re busy.”

“Actually, I’m not. I was just going to hang around here. Maybe you’d like to go out tonight? I’ll take you anywhere you want to go.”

“You mean like on a real date?”

“Yeah, a real date. What do you say? Will you go out with me?”

Bren smiled. “I’d love to. I really should get going then. I have to get ready, figure out what to wear and where to go.”

Alex smiled. “All right. I’ll take you home.” she stated helping Bren off the sofa.

That evening Bren and Alex went to the traditional dinner and movie before strolling through Bren’s campus to enjoy the summer evening. When Alex escorted Bren back to her dorm room, she hovered around the door as Bren unlocked it. Bren smiled shyly as she asked, “Would you like to come in?”

“Sure.” Alex took Bren’s hand and let the younger woman lead her into the room, shutting the door behind them. Alex stood near the door waiting to see what Bren had in mind now that they were in the privacy of her room.

Bren gave another grin before inquiring, “Can I get you something to drink? You can sit if you’d like.”

Alex followed Bren’s gesture toward the single bed and took the offered seat. “A drink would be nice. Whatever you’re having.”

Bren nodded before opening her small fridge and retrieving two bottles of beer. She then handed them to Alex before lighting a few candles in her room and turning on soft music. Lastly she turned off the overhead light, leaving them in a soft glow. Taking a seat on the bed next to Alex, Bren began to sip her beverage and study Alex.

Alex looked around the room as she pretended not to notice Bren’s stare. She took in the pictures of the two of them all over the bookcase and the stacks of books piled on the desk in an obvious attempt to look neat. Alex drank her beer leisurely as she listened to the music Bren had chosen. She knew it well, one of her favorite artists singing the melodic songs of R&B.

Finally Bren quietly inquired, “What are you thinking about right now?”

Alex shrugged meeting Bren’s eyes. “I didn’t realize you liked R&B.”

“Well, I know you like it. I listen to it sometimes when I think of you. It can be very sensual but also relaxing.” Bren mentioned taking a slow sip from her bottle.

Alex watched in interest. “You know it’s funny. I don’t quite know what to do or say here. You would think I’ve never been on a date before.” She stated laughing nervously at the situation.

Bren just smiled. “Do whatever you want, Alex. I think I know you well enough to know what you’re thinking right now. It’ll be okay. I’ll let you.” she whispered leaning in closer to Alex. Alex’s pulse jumped realizing that Bren probably could read her thoughts. The ambiance was putting her in the mood to become more intimate with her date, but before she could even respond, Bren said, “Then again maybe I should just take the initiative.”

Alex reflexively closed her eyes as their lips met in a soft kiss. She let Bren have the lead, and soon they were engaged in deep exploration of each others mouths. Alex moaned in pleasure at the feel of Bren’s hands over her back, pulling her closer. She had often fantasized about the blonde, even as much as she felt guilty for it, so to feel her was better than any dream she had imagined. Bren pushed them further, putting their beers on the bedside table and pulling Alex down on top of her as they continued the game of acquainting themselves with each other. Even as much as Alex wanted to go farther, she kept her hands on the outside of Bren’s clothing at first and was surprised when Bren began to unbutton her shirt. Pulling back slightly Alex whispered, “Wait a minute, Bren. Are you sure we’re ready to go further?” She took Bren’s hands from the top button of her dress shirt.

“Don’t you want to?”

“Of course I do. However I’m not sure we should yet. I want it to be special for us.”

“It will be, because it’ll be with you.”

“I think we should wait a little longer. I don’t think this is the right place. I’m a little too old to be doing this in a dorm room and then having to sleep together afterwards in this tiny twin bed.”

Bren backed off a little. “Maybe you’re right. We should’ve gone back to your house. We still could.”

“Let’s just stay here for now. We’ll have plenty of time for all that. I promise.”

Bren smiled. “I’ve just waited so long. It seems like forever.”

Alex returned the smile as she caressed Bren’s cheek. “You are so beautiful, Bren. I know there are so many people out there who would love to have a chance at you. I’m honored that you’ve

chosen me.” Alex rolled off Bren and onto her side. Bren curled up into her, and they were quiet as they held each other. After a while Alex asked, “Bren, have you told your mother about me at all?”

“No. Not really. I mean I told her who you were and that you had helped me get back on my feet, but I didn’t tell her about my feelings for you. I’m not really sure how she’d react.”

“Does it matter to you what she thinks?”

Bren shrugged. “I know it shouldn’t, but she’s still my mother. I still want her to be proud of me for some reason.”

“I’m sure she is. You’re quite the resourceful woman, and you’ve persevered through such harsh trials. I’m proud of you. You’re stronger than I am.”

“I don’t think so. I just did what I thought I had to do. You were there to help.”

“I’m glad I was, because otherwise I’d be missing out on this right now. I am so content just holding you.”

“Do you want to watch tv or something?”

“Not necessarily. I’m okay where I am. Do you?”

“No. I just thought I’d offer.”

“I could hold you all night, Bren, and not tire of it. This is bliss to me.”

“I’d like that. Stay here with me tonight.”

“Here in this twin bed? I don’t think so.”

“Please.” Bren pouted, giving Alex a pitiful glance. “I’ll give you all the space that you want. I just don’t want this night to end.”

Alex demurely grinned. “Oh, this could be trouble. If I give in to your pouting now, then you’ll know you have a weapon to use against me.” she teased. Bren gave her best sad impression, making Alex laugh. “Okay, I’ll stay. My back is going to hate me in the morning though. Maybe we should think about getting ourselves ready for bed. What can I sleep in?”

“I have the perfect thing.” Bren said sliding off the bed and moving to the dresser. She opened the second drawer and pulled out a t-shirt and pajama pants that had once belonged to Alex.

“These things still probably fit you.”

“So, that’s where they went. Those are my favorite pair of pajamas pants. I guess that’s what I get for making you do my laundry.”

“Why don’t you go ahead and use the bathroom first? My stuff is in there, so use anything you want.” Bren said as Alex rose to gather her sleeping attire. Alex nodded before going into the bathroom that Bren shared with another person. When Alex returned Bren was in a midriff tank top and boxer shorts that she had rolled down at the top exposing all of her stomach. Passing by Alex, she brushed her fingers along Alex’s arm saying, “I’ll be right back.”

Alex could only nod as her eyes lingered over Bren’s backside as she went into the bathroom. Once she was alone, Alex let out a sigh. She knew Bren was intentionally dressing provocatively to drive her crazy. Not really knowing what the sleeping arrangements were going to be, she hovered around the desk looking at Bren’s books until Bren returned. “So, what side do you want?” Bren came to her, embracing her around the waist. She leaned up to kiss Alex softly. Alex moaned at the gentleness as her arms came around Bren’s bare back, her fingers slipping under the hem of the top. Bren deftly slid up Alex’s shirt enough so that their bare abdomens could touch. When Alex first felt Bren’s stomach grinding lightly into hers, she groaned. “You feel so good, Bren.” Alex whispered as she leaned into her neck.

“So do you, Alex. I want to feel your skin all over mine. Please.” she begged.

Alex knew she couldn’t deny Bren anything, so without further discussion, she pulled her own t-shirt off, leaving her naked from the waist up. Then her hands removed Bren’s top. Alex broke away slightly to look at the blonde’s body. Her hands instinctively went to the younger woman’s breasts and began to lightly stroke them. Alex watched as Bren’s eyes closed and her head dropped back slightly. “You are so beautiful, Bren. I’ve always wanted to touch you like this.” Bren whimpered, but her hands came up to Alex’s shoulders and then trailed down until they were touching Alex the same way. Alex gasped. She hadn’t let any woman touch her this way in years, but Bren’s hands felt so good over her skin.

A few minutes passed before Bren suggested breathlessly, “Let’s go to bed.”

Alex smiled at her. “I want you so much, Bren, but I really feel strongly about us not having sex tonight. I would love to just continue touching you and holding you like this. Okay?”

Bren nodded. “Okay. I’d like that too.”

With that agreement Alex pulled Bren over to the bed and lowered herself onto it, so Bren was lying on top of her as they continued to kiss and caress each other. That night they fell asleep curled around each other in the small bed, feeling more content than either of them ever had.

Continued Part 3:

# ~ Second Chances ~

by Alex Tryst

Copyright © October 200

**Disclaimers:** These characters are of my own creation. This story does include sexual situations involving consenting adult women (and lots of them). If you are offended by this type of material or it is illegal where you live, it's best to turn back now. 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.....

## Part 3

Two weeks later Bren and Alex made their way by train to New York. Since it was late Friday night when they arrived, they decided to check into their hotel and visit Bren's mother the following morning. Alex had arranged for them to stay in the same hotel where they first stayed, since it was a common place for her when she was on business, and after they dropped off their luggage, Bren convinced Alex to go back to the bar where they had first met.

As they stepped inside the tiny club, they were instantly overwhelmed with smoke and loud music. Bren led the way over to the bar where they ordered drinks and stood to observe the dance floor. "Well, this place hasn't changed a whole lot." Alex shouted to Bren over the music.

Bren shook her head in agreement. "You want to dance?" Alex nodded, so Bren led the way over to the floor where they began to slightly move to the music as they drank their beers. An hour passed until they decided to call it a break. Bren said she was going to the restroom, so Alex said she'd meet her at the bar afterwards. Making her way back to the bar, Alex took a seat on a stool in the corner. She ordered another beer for herself and then began to just watch the crowd as she waited. A few minutes passed before Alex caught the eyes of a woman that looked familiar. The woman was studying her intently from across the bar, and when their eyes met, she made a move toward Alex.

"Hi there." she greeted.

"Hello." Alex replied, wondering why the brunette looked familiar.

"You're not from around here, are you?"

"No. Why do you ask?"

“Well, I was thinking that maybe I could show you around, give you a good time. You are looking at New York’s finest.”

Alex gave a wide smile as the woman said that, figuring out exactly who she was. “Oh, Chloe, isn’t it?”

She nodded. “How do you know that? Have we met before?”

“Yeah. What is it about me that says I’d make a good trick?”

“You were a trick of mine? I don’t remember you.”

“Well, you should. About four years ago you and a co-worker tag teamed me at this very bar. You stole a diamond ring from me that night before you left my hotel room, and you left me with an underage high school drop out. Any of this ringing a bell for you?”

Chloe nodded. “A mid-town hotel across from the Garden. I do remember now. I didn’t dump that girl on you. She was my protégé, but you stole her from me if I remember correctly.”

“Well, think what you will. You say I stole. I say you stole. It’s in the past now, and I ended up with the better deal.” Alex noticed Bren making her way over to her, so she stated, “Maybe you’d like to see how your protege turned out.” Chloe turned as Alex held her hand out to Bren.

Bren smiled as she took it before glancing at Chloe. Knotting her forehead in confusion, Bren inquired, “Chloe?”

“Chloe, I’m sure you remember Bren.”

Chloe looked Bren up and down for a moment. “Well, well, you were a fast learner. Snagged yourself a benefactor your first time out. Just remember, little girl, you’d be nothing without me.”

Alex scowled at Chloe. “Chloe, just because you weren’t honest with me, don’t take it out on Bren. Had you not stolen that ring, this could’ve been you. Now I suggest you go back to the rock you crawled out from under and leave us alone.”

Chloe sneered at them. “Fuck you.” she snarled before turning to go.

Alex smiled at Bren. “Well, that was unexpected. Who would’ve ever thought we’d run into her?”

“I’m so glad that I left this city with you when I did. I could have turned out like that.”

“I don’t think you would have. You’ve got more going for you than she ever did. It’s getting late. Maybe we should go back to the hotel and try to rest. It’s going to be a long day tomorrow, and I

know you want to look your best.”

“You’re probably right.”

Once they were back at the hotel, they began to get ready for bed. Alex knew Bren was thinking about tomorrow and her mother, so she gave her quiet, introspective time until they climbed into bed together. Bringing Bren into her arms, Alex began to play with Bren’s blonde hair while her other hand caressed her back under her night shirt. “Are you ready for tomorrow?” she quietly asked.

“I don’t know. I’m scared. She hurt me so badly, Alex. I’m not sure why I’m doing this.”

“Because regardless of what’s happened, she’s your mother, and you still love her. It would be better if you two at least came to an understanding of what happened if nothing else. Don’t force anything. The right thing will happen. I feel sure of it.”

Bren squeezed Alex tightly. “Thanks for being here with me, Alex. I couldn’t do this without you.”

“I’ll always be here for you, Bren. After all I love you more than I’ve ever loved anyone else in this world.” Bren was silent for a few moments, but Alex could feel the front of her own shirt becoming wet. “Sweetie, what’s wrong?”

“Nothing is wrong. Everything is perfect. I’ve just waited forever to hear you say that. I’ve always wished for someone like you, and I’m glad you’re in my life. I love you too, Alex.”

Alex kissed the top of Bren’s head. “Sweet dreams, Bren.”

The following morning Alex took Bren to breakfast before she took a cab to Bren’s childhood home. As she stood on the street staring up at the old rowhouse, Bren stated, “I don’t know if I can do this, Alex. What if he’s there?”

“Your mother said he wouldn’t be.”

“But what if he is?”

“Then you let me handle him. We’re here to see your mother, and we’re going to do it if you’re ready. I’ll take care of the asshole should he be here. Are you ready?”

Bren paused for another moment before giving a hesitant nod. Together they walked up the stoop to the door. Bren rang the buzzer and then stepped back next to Alex. A few moments passed before a burly man came to the door. “Who the hell are you, and what do you want?” he growled.

Alex looked over at Bren who was frozen, so she took the initiative. “Yes, my name is Alex Schreiber, and I’m Ms. Worthington’s attorney. We’re here to see Ms. Garner.”



He sneered at Bren. “Well, well, look who the cat drug in? I hardly recognized you. Your mother isn’t here.”

“I beg to differ with you, sir. She is here, and she’s expecting us. Now if you would be so kind as to let us in.” Alex stated calmly.

“Fuck you. I’m not letting you in. You best go back to wherever you came from.” he said before starting to slam the door in their faces.

However Alex shot her arms out and caught it before it closed all the way. “You let us in now, or you let us in when I come back with the police. It’s your choice. We’re going to see Ms. Garner, and you can’t stop us. You might as well make it easy on yourself.”

He seemed to consider it for a moment as he let up on the pressure on the door. Finally he opened it again. “All right but make it quick. She’s in the back.” he said.

Alex entered first and kept her eyes on him as Bren walked in. She led the way toward the back of the house as Alex followed, warily casting glances over her shoulder to make sure he wasn’t going to try anything. When they came to a bedroom, Bren knocked first and announced her presence. As soon as she opened the door, a figure popped up from the bed, looking frail.

“Bren, is it really you?” the woman asked. She appeared to have been badly beaten and had a broken arm.

“Mom!” Bren exclaimed, forgetting all her nerves and rushing to the hurt woman.

Alex just looked back to see Bren’s step-father hovering close behind her. “I think they could use some alone time.” she mentioned.

“Sure you do, but they ain’t getting it!” he yelled trying to push by her.

Alex kept him at bay with a strong hand to his chest. “You don’t want to try to move me. That’s highly unwise.” she said standing her full six feet and glaring at him. He sized her up with his eyes, but before he could respond, Alex said, “You don’t actually think you could take me down, do you? Now leave them alone.”

He sneered at her again but turned to leave. Alex looked back at Bren and her mother. Bren met her eyes. “Alex, we need to take her to the hospital or call the police. We can’t just leave her here like this.”

Alex came to them and squatted down so that she was on their eye level. “Ms. Garner, my name is Alex Schreiber. I’m a friend of your daughter’s. Do you want us to take you to the hospital?”

“No. I’ll be okay.”

“Ma’am, with all due respect, I think it would be wise to seek medical attention.”

“No. I’ll be fine.”

Bren looked at her mother in concern. “Mom, please. At least let us call the police.”

“Why? All they’re going to do is arrest him, but he’ll be back here before the night is even through, and he’ll be madder than hell.”

Alex looked at Bren and saw the concern the blonde had in her eyes. “Bren, could I talk to for a moment in private? Excuse us one moment.” Bren followed Alex into the hall. “What do you want to do, Bren?” she asked.

“I can’t leave her here like this, Alex. Regardless of what happened between us, she doesn’t deserve to be beaten by that monster.”

“I happen to agree. How about this? We call the police, and once they come to get him, we take your mother back to the hotel. We’ll work on a plan from there. Maybe I can file a restraining order on her behalf.”

“Okay. That sounds good.”

Going back into the bedroom, Alex looked down at Bren’s mother. “All right, Ms. Garner. Bren and I would like to take you back to the hotel where we’re staying. I think it would easiest if you let us call the police on your husband, and once he’s gone, we can pack up some of your things. I’m not completely confident that I could take him if we got into a fight.”

Ms. Garner looked at Bren. “Why are you doing this?” she whispered.

“Because you don’t deserve this abuse. It doesn’t matter what you did to me right now. We’ll talk about that. For now just let us help you get out of this situation. Let Alex call the police.”

She contemplated it for a moment before whispering in tears, “Okay.”

The three of them stayed in the bedroom until the police knocked on the door. When the situation was explained to them, they promptly took a mad Mr. Garner off in handcuffs. Once he was gone, Alex stated, “Get some things together. You’re going to stay at the hotel the rest of the weekend with us.” The cab ride back to the hotel was silent, and when they arrived, Alex got a room for Bren’s mother. Escorting her to it, the three of them entered. Alex put her bags on top of the dresser and then turned to her. “I hope this is suitable to you.” she mentioned.

She nodded. “Yes, thank you.”

“Well, maybe I should leave you two alone, so you can talk.” she suggested, looking at Bren for confirmation.

Bren smiled at her. "That would be nice. Thank you, Alex."

Alex moved toward the door. "All right. Well, why don't we plan on going to dinner around six? I'll call you if I don't hear from you two by then."

Bren stepped over to her. "That would be great. Thanks for all your help." she said wrapping her arms around Alex's waist.

"My pleasure as usual, sweetheart. I'll check in with you in a few hours. Call if you need something." Alex replied kissing Bren on top of the head before leaving.

At dinner time Alex took them out to a restaurant in Times Square. She was quiet most of the meal, letting mother and daughter get reacquainted. However when Bren got up to go to the restroom at the end of the meal, the two older women were alone. "So, Alex, may I call you that?"

"Sure."

"Alex, Bren tells me that you were the one to take her in after I kicked her out."

"That's true."

"Well, I want to thank you for doing that. Not a day went by that I didn't think about her. I made a terrible mistake, and I felt so guilty, because there was nothing I could do to correct it once it had been made. I should've believed her when she told me about what my husband had done to her. I failed her as a mother, and I'll never be able to forgive myself. I'm just so glad that someone took her and gave her the things I couldn't. My greatest wish is that someday she could come to forgive me."

Alex shrugged. "Bren is a caring woman. She has a great capacity for love and forgiveness. It might take some time, but I think that may happen."

"I'm so glad Bren has a woman like you in her life. Tell me. You're more than just friends, aren't you? Have you two been dating this whole time?"

Alex looked at her quizzically. "Bren told you about us?"

"No. I just guessed. So, it's true?"

"Yes, it's true that we are dating now, but that hasn't always been the case. This is a recent development, just within the past few weeks. I didn't take your daughter in to turn her into a prostitute. I took her in to get her away from that life, but somewhere along the way I fell in love with her. I'm fortunate that she returns those feelings."

"She does love you. I can tell. The little looks and smiles. You're so affectionate with each other.

I knew there had to be something more.”

“That doesn’t bother you, does it?”

“Not at all. I’m just glad that she’s happy. I have no right to tell her how to live her life after what I did, but I do approve of this if it’s what makes her happy. She deserves it.”

“What about you? Don’t you think you deserve that too?”

She dropped her head. “I don’t think so. Not after what I did to my own daughter. I don’t deserve happiness. In fact I think I deserve to be mistreated for what I did to her.”

“I don’t think anyone should be beaten regardless. Why do you stay with him?”

“Because of Bren. I’ve thought of leaving before, but I didn’t want to move out of my house, because it was the last place Bren knew of. I had always hoped that one day she might find it in her heart to contact me. I’ve stayed so that she would know where to find me if she wanted to. I never expected her to, but I always hoped.”

“Well, she has. Do you think maybe you could move on now? She would want you to.”

“We’ll see.”

“Would you have a place to go?”

“The house is in my name, so I don’t want to just abandon it.”

“You could sell and buy another, but I think your bigger problem is your husband.”

“He wasn’t always this way. When we first met, he was kind to Bren and me, but somewhere along the way, he changed for the worse. I’ve thought about divorcing him, but as I said I didn’t want to lose the house in the divorce. All this time I’ve just been waiting for Bren.”

“Well, now I guess you have a lot to think about.”

“I guess I do.” she mumbled as Bren returned to the table.

They both smiled at her as she took her seat. “So, what have you two been talking about?” she inquired.

Alex looked at Bren’s mother and then back at Bren. “Just how much I love you and that you make my life complete.” Alex commented gazing at her girlfriend lovingly.

“Oh.” Bren blushed as she looked at her plate. “I hadn’t told my mom about us yet, Alex.”

“You didn’t have to, Bren. I see it on both your faces.” her mother said. Bren looked at her

mother uneasily, awaiting further comment. Her mother smiled, hesitantly reaching for her daughter's hand. With her other she reached for Alex's, and then brought all their hands together on top of the table. "Even if my opinion doesn't matter, I still want you to know that I'm happy for you, because you found that special person. You don't need to hide this from me. In fact I'd like to be able to witness your joy if you'll let me. Please. I know you've been wanting to do this all night." she mentioned putting her daughter's hand into Alex's and then pulling her own away.

Alex just smiled at Bren and decided to play along as long as Bren was comfortable. Bren's eyes began to water as she smiled back at Alex. Alex brought the back of Bren's hand to her lips, brushing it lightly with kisses before whispering, "I love you, Bren."

"I love you too, Alex." she replied trying to keep her composure.

"Well, I think that's my cue to leave." her mother mentioned standing. "We'll see each other in the morning?"

"Oh, no. I don't want you walking back to the hotel alone." Alex said.

She patted Alex on the shoulder. "You're needed elsewhere, Alex. I'll be fine. You two call me in my room in the morning. Okay?"

Alex gave her a grin, as she was beginning to actually like Bren's mother, something she thought would never occur after what she had done to Bren. "Okay. That sounds good. Around 9:00 all right?"

"Perfect. Good night you two."

Once Alex paid the bill, they walked out to the street. "So, what do you want to do now?" Alex inquired consulting her watch.

Bren leaned in close to her, encircling her waist. Leaning up to Alex's ear, she kissed it alluringly, seductively whispering, "Take me back to the hotel, Alex. There is something we need to do."

Alex moaned lightly as she felt her body temperature rise drastically with her girlfriend's coy behavior. Alex had no doubt what that something was. "Oh God, Bren." she groaned as Bren kissed the crook of her neck. Alex cast her eyes around them, noting that they were receiving a few curious glances from by passers, that Bren had seemed to totally forget. Alex maneuvered Bren's lips away from her neck and looked down at her. She opened her mouth to speak only to find her lips locked in a lustful kiss that she was helpless to resist.

When air became a necessity, they broke away. "We need to get out of here before we're arrested for indecent exposure." Alex joked.

"Then come on." Bren persisted taking Alex by the hand to pull her in the direction they needed to walk.

“Wait, honey. As much as I want to do this with you, I think we need to wait.”

“Wait? Wait for what? I know you want to.” Bren sexily whispered, rubbing her body into Alex’s temptingly. Alex would’ve sworn her girlfriend was drunk by the way she was acting except for the fact that she hadn’t had any alcohol at dinner.

“There’s something I need to do first.

“More important than making love to me?” Bren softly asked invitingly.

Alex knew Bren had taken out all the stops on a trying to seduce her, and Alex also knew she was falling for it. She felt sure that this would be the night that forever changed their relationship, but she held firm. “Yes, actually it is more important than that.” Bren frowned. “Play along with me. Okay? You won’t be disappointed, at least I hope not.” Alex assured her.

Bren smiled at her. “All right.”

“Good. Come on.” Alex said hailing a cab. When they got into it, Alex stated to the driver, “The Empire State Building.”

Bren gave her a quizzical look but didn’t ask as they made their way to the building. Once they arrived, Alex took Bren up to the observation deck. There were a few people about, but Alex escorted them over to a remote area. Together they looked out over New York City in silence. “It’s kind of chilly tonight.” Bren mentioned after a few minutes.

“Here.” Alex said taking off her suit jacket. “Put this on.” Several more minutes passed before Alex asked, “Have you ever seen the movie ‘An Affair to Remember?’ It’s an old black and white with Carey Grant and Deborah Kerr.” Bren shook her head. “Well, it’s a classic romance. The characters meet and fall in love, but she’s engaged to someone else. They agree to meet at the top of the Empire State Building in six months to be together, but ‘Sleepless in Seattle’ was a spin off of that.”

“Except they did actually meet at the top of the Empire State Building at the end.”

“Yeah, they did.” Alex paused. “You know, this has been a most enlightening day for me. I’ve always held a secret dislike for your mother for what she did to you. I didn’t want to tell you, because I didn’t want to influence how you might feel about her, but I hated her for what she did. However after meeting her and getting a chance to see you two together and talk to her, I think I might actually come to like her. I think underneath it all, she’s a good woman, Bren, a woman who made a horrible mistake, and she feels guilty about it. I think I’m a pretty good judge of character, and I can tell that she’s sincerely sorry for what she did to you. I’ve never been in your position, so I don’t truly know how you feel, but I don’t think she’s being fake with us. I think she honestly wants to make amends.”

“I think so too.” Bren answered looking out over the horizon like Alex.

“I also learned something new about you today, Bren.” Alex stated keeping her eyes off her girlfriend for a moment.

“What’s that?”

Alex turned to her and took hold of her hands. Looking deeply into Bren’s eyes, she answered, “That you’re the one.”

Bren gasped in surprise. “The one? As in…” she tried to ask but her voice failed her.

“Yes, as in the one I’ve been waiting for my entire life, Bren.”

“How did you come to that conclusion?” Bren croaked, still shocked by Alex’s revelation.

“I knew it the moment I saw you lay eyes on your mother for the first time. I knew it by the way you went to her bedside and knelt there next to her, eyes full of compassion and concern. The moment you saw her it wasn’t about what she had done to you. It was about helping her. You put her needs above your own. It takes a special woman to do that. You could’ve handled things so differently, but you were the perfect example of kindness, understanding, and mercy. I was honored to be witness to it. I knew at that very moment that you were the one I wanted to be with forever.”

“Oh, Alex. I don’t know what to say.” she confessed in awe.

“Don’t say anything yet. I have more to tell you. Do you know what I did this afternoon after I left you and your mother alone at the hotel? I went shopping.”

“Shopping? You hate shopping.”

“I know. That’s usually true, but today I was inspired. I bought you something.” Alex reached for the jacket Bren was wearing and opened it slightly to reach into the inside breast pocket. “Close your eyes. I want this to be a surprise.” she instructed. Bren did what she was told. “I hadn’t planned on doing this today, but I can’t wait any longer. I need you to know how I feel about us being together before our relationship goes any further.” Alex looked around to see that they were alone, so she knelt down on her knee in front of Bren and took the younger woman’s left hand. “Okay, Bren. You can open your eyes now.”

Bren’s eyes immediately locked onto Alex kneeling in front of her, their left hands interlocked, and in Alex’s right hand was an open ring box. The ring was glittering in the light. Meeting Alex’s dark eyes, Bren whispered, “Oh, Alex.”

“Bren, for the last four years you have held my heart. At first I wanted to deny it, but you have completely swept me away by your charms. I am so deeply in love with you, and I had always secretly hoped you would come to love me as well. I know we haven’t been dating long, but I know in my heart that you are the one I’m meant to be with for the rest of my life if you’ll have

me. I will do everything in my power to make you happy, Bren. It would be the greatest honor to have you as my friend, my lover, and my wife. Bren Worthington, will you marry me?"

Bren began to cry as she stared down at Alex. Cupping Alex's cheek, she whispered, "Alexandra Schreiber, you have no idea how many dreams I've had about this exact moment. I want to be your wife more than I want anything else in the world. I will marry you, and I'll make you proud of me."

Alex let a tear escape her own eyes as she slipped the ring onto Bren's finger before standing. "I already am, my darling. It is I who shall strive to make you proud of me." Leaning in Alex kissed Bren tenderly. "I love you so much, Bren."

"I love you too, Alex. This is what I've always wanted. Come on. Let's go back to the hotel and celebrate."

"May I make a request?" Alex inquired. Bren nodded.

"I know you're anxious to take this relationship to the most intimate level, and don't get me wrong, I am too, but I would like to wait. I don't want our first time to be in the same hotel that we tried this all those years ago. I'd like to do this for the first time in our home. I want it to be perfect, candles, music, champagne, flowers, everything. I want us to be able to take our time and really enjoy the moment of finally knowing each other that way."

Bren growled playfully. "You're going to be the death of me, Alex. There are times when I just get so turned on by you that I can't control myself."

Alex laughed softly. "Me neither. If you only knew how many times I had to relieve my own tension after being with you." she teased.

Bren blushed. "I know the feeling, but I can't wait until you touch me for the first time. I just know that it's going to be perfect." she said snuggling closer to Alex as she kissed her.

Alex groaned. "Oh, Bren, you are just such a temptress. I can hardly wait either, but we must, at least until we get back to our house."

"Our house. I like the sound of that."

"Me too. I was kind of hoping that you would want to move in after graduation, so that we could start planning our wedding. It doesn't seem practical to make you get an apartment when you'll just end up moving in with me within a few months anyway."

Bren nodded in agreement. "Oh, Alex. You've made me so happy. I can't even begin to describe it."

"I understand it, because I feel the same way. We should get back to the hotel unless you want to go out somewhere."



“The hotel sounds good. If nothing else we can at least cuddle in bed for awhile.”

“Nothing I like to do more than that. Let’s go.”

The next morning Bren and Alex met Bren’s mother down in the hotel restaurant for brunch. As soon as they had all gotten food off the buffet and sat down to eat, Bren’s mother remarked, “That’s a lovely ring you have on, Bren. Where did you get it?”

Bren grinned at Alex before turning to her mother. “Alex gave it to me last night. She proposed to me after you left. We went to the Empire State Building.”

“Like in ‘A Affair to Remember.’” she commented.

“See, your mother knows the movie.” Alex joked.

“How sweet and romantic. I’m glad I took off when I did then. Alex, I thought you said you two hadn’t been dating long.”

“We haven’t, but this is right. Bren’s had my heart from almost the beginning.”

“And I take it you agree, Bren?” Bren nodded vigorously. “Well, congratulations then. I hope that you have a wonderful marriage. Here’s to the two of you.” she said raising her glass in toast. Once that was complete, she turned to Alex. “Alex, after our conversation last night, I spent most of the rest of the evening thinking about what was said. I don’t suppose you know of any attorneys in this area that I could talk to.”

“On the contrary, I know lots of attorneys here. I will contact some to see if any of them know of a suitable one. What about your husband?”

“He’s going to be upset, and he’s probably going to try to get into the house, but I’ve made arrangements to have the locks changed on Monday after he goes to work.”

“As an attorney, I would advise that you put a restraining order out against him.”

“I will.”

“What are you two talking about?” Bren inquired.

Alex looked at Bren’s mother. “Bren, I’ve decided to divorce your step-father. I’ve been waiting in hopes that you would contact me again before I did so just in case I had to move. Now that we’ve established contact again, I feel comfortable proceeding. This has gone on long enough. First it was verbal assault, then sexual assault on you, then physical violence with me. I never should’ve married him in the first place, Bren. I should’ve seen it coming, but I was too blind. I want us to be a family again, Bren. I know that’s going to take awhile, but I hope that given some time, you could find it in your heart to think of me as your mother again in more than name

only.”

“I want that too, Mom.” Bren stated reaching her hand out to her.

Turning to Alex, her mother said, “Alex, I look forward to having you as a daughter-in-law. You make my little girl so happy.”

The weekend passed quickly as the three women got to know each other. When Alex and Bren left, they were sure that Bren and her mother were on their way to reconciliation. Once back at home though, Bren had to focus on school. She had a few weeks left before graduation, so she had to study for her finals. Meanwhile Alex headed back to her office to get back to her clients, but she also made some time to assist Bren’s mother in finding an attorney.

On the day of Bren’s graduation, Alex and Bren’s mother came to see her walk the stage. As they sat together in the audience, Bren’s mother said to Alex, “Thank you for making this all possible for Bren. She’s always been the smartest person in the family, and she deserved the chance that her father and I didn’t have.”

“It was my pleasure to do it. Bren’s brightened my life since the moment we met. I’d do this all again and give her even more. She really is the most important thing in my life, and when she’s happy so am I.”

“Do you think that maybe in time you and Bren might have children?”

“Children? Well, we haven’t ever talked about it. You know, I’m thirty-four, so I’m getting a little old to be having kids, but Bren is another story. I wouldn’t be opposed if Bren wanted to have a baby.”

“You’re thirty-four? I didn’t think you were over thirty.”

“That doesn’t change anything, does it?” Alex asked skeptically.

“No. Of course not. I’m just surprised, but it would explain a lot about your financial situation. Would you like for Bren to have kids?”

“I think kids would be fun. I like them a lot, but I’m going to leave it up to her. Do you think she wants children?”

“Probably at some point. It might be a few years though. It might take her awhile to really find herself. She’s still young, and with getting married so young, she might struggle with finding her own identity outside of the joint one you’ll share.”

“Well, she’ll have my support all the way with whatever she needs.”

“I know that. Short of Bren’s father you are probably the best influence she’s ever had in her life. I know I haven’t been a good influence on her. If anything I’ve shown her exactly what not to

do.”

“Well, it was a learning experience anyway. Tell me. How is your relationship with some other members of your family? I know that Bren would like to reunite with some other relatives if she could.”

“I think that would be good for her. I’ll see what I can do about that. She has several cousins that she used to be close to when they were younger. I was kind of disowned by Bren’s father’s family for what I did to Bren, but I’ll try to contact them.”

“What about your family?” She shrugged. “Don’t talk to them much either, but my relationship is better with them. I will definitely call them if that’s what Bren wants.”

“How’s the situation with your husband?”

“Well, as expected he’s tried to get back into the house, broke in once, but I had him thrown in jail again. He hasn’t been around in about a week though. Friends are staying with me for the time being just in case. I think that once I get a divorce I might sell the house. It’s time to move on, and it’ll be harder for him to find me.”

“Probably a wise move.”

After graduation and a reception for the graduates, Alex, Bren, and Bren’s mother began packing up Bren’s belongings to move them to Alex’s house. Between the three of them, they had all of Bren’s things moved by the end of the day and then headed out for a casual dinner before taking Bren’s mother back to her hotel. When they got back to the house, an exhausted Alex and Bren collapsed into bed and promptly fell asleep.

The next day the three women met for breakfast and discussed the upcoming wedding ideas over their meal before putting Bren’s mother back on the train for New York. Once back at home, Alex looked at her fiancée and smiled nervously. “Well, here we are, just the two of us.”

“Yeah. Here we are. Do you have any work to do today?”

“Actually yes. I have a case going to court tomorrow. I need to do some preparation.”

“Okay. I guess I’ll let you do that. I’m going to settle in.”

“Good idea. You just move any of my things around as you want them. I’m not partial to anything being in one place. I’ll let you have the run of it if that’s all right with you.”

A couple of weeks passed as Alex returned to her normal routine, and Bren began looking for work. The two of them only saw each other at night and a little on the weekends, much to both of their disappointment. Their were several nights that Bren went to bed before Alex would, because Alex would be working on a case.

One night Alex got home after midnight from the office. She had called Bren to let her know that she would be out late in preparation for a case that the firm was working on. Going into the kitchen, Alex found a note from Bren regarding the leftovers from dinner in the fridge. Alex heated them in the microwave and then sat down to a meal alone in the semi-darkness. Then she dragged herself upstairs to the master bedroom. Opening the door quietly, she saw Bren lying in bed asleep, the light on the bedside table still aglow. She was in unusual attire for her normal sleep wear, seeming to only be dressed in a black silk robe. Alex could see the edge of Bren's bare breast peeking out of the material. The blonde had obviously fallen asleep reading by the way a book rested face down on her stomach. Alex regarded her fondly as she began to undress herself. Discarding her clothes into a nearby chair, Alex walked into the bathroom to brush her teeth and wash her face. She opted not to wear anything to bed and slid in beside Bren. Bren stirred slightly with the movement of the bed, rearranging herself into a more comfortable position. Her robe fell open with her movement as her book slid off onto the mattress. Alex took the book and placed it on Bren's side table, but she didn't turn out the light as she studied Bren's naked body in the low light. Since they had moved in together as a couple, Bren had been shy about being completely naked in front of Alex, saying she wanted it to be a surprise when they finally made love for the first time, so Alex was seeing her for the first time. Immediately Alex's eyes were drawn to the one place she had never seen on Bren's body before, her illusive sexual treasure between her slightly staggered thighs. Alex's heart pounded wildly as she felt herself becoming aroused at the sight of the one thing she had never had the pleasure of exploring. Alex looked up to the face of her fiancée to see that she was still asleep before tentatively reaching for the blonde's thigh. Her hand just barely touched Bren's skin as she slid it between her legs. Alex could feel the heat radiating from Bren's core as her fingers skimmed across sticky residue on her inner thigh, signaling to Alex that her fiancée had recently been as aroused as she was now feeling. Alex leaned in closer with her whole body as if drawn by another power. Her breath was becoming labored as she neared her destination, but within a few feet of success she felt a hand to the back of her head, making her yelp in surprise as she pulled away quickly. Her eyes shot up to Bren's face to see the younger woman now awake.

"What are you doing?" Bren asked casting a firm glance at Alex.

"I... I was just...I was just looking." she stammered nervously. "I wouldn't have... done anything while you were asleep."

Bren stretched her back and proceeded to cover herself. "You weren't supposed to see me like this." she mentioned. "Are you just getting home?"

"Yeah. I'm going to get about four hours sleep before I have to be back at the office with Kelly."

"Kelly." Bren mumbled. "Were you with Kelly tonight too?"

"Yeah, I was with Kelly and several other associates. Why do you ask? This is a very important case."

"They always are." whispered Bren under her breath as she got up from the bed, but Alex heard her.

“What’s that supposed to mean?” Alex asked as Bren disappeared into the bathroom with pajamas.

When Bren returned a few moments later, she replied, “It’s just that every case is important to you, and it seems that work truly is the most important thing in your life.”

Alex rolled her eyes. “Oh, Bren. Of all people I thought you would understand. You’ve lived with me before, so you know what my schedule is like.”

Bren nodded. “You know, when I lived with you the first time, I kind of liked having you out of the house, because I had freedom to do whatever I wanted, but it’s different now. What I want most is to be with you, but that’s a rare event. I don’t know if it’s because I haven’t found a job, so I’m around the house a lot, but I’m lonely here without you, Alex. I wish we had more time together. I mean we have so much to discuss concerning the wedding, but you’re always off trying to save the world.”

“Bren, you know how much my work means to me.”

“I know, but I want to mean more. I want to feel like you care about the wedding. I honestly don’t know what to do here, Alex. I love you more than anything else in this world, and I want to be your wife, but I don’t know if I can take being second best to a job. I mean do you know why I haven’t even tried to get you to make love to me since we moved in together? It’s because you’re never here, and when you are, you’re too tired to do anything but sleep. There have been so many times that I’ve wanted you to touch me, but I knew you getting rest was more important for you, so I’ve just given up for the time being. I know you love what you do, Alex, and I’m grateful that you are happy in your career, because being happy means being successful. Yet at the same time I want to feel equally important.”

Alex took a moment to take in what Bren said. “Well, at the risk of starting a fight, could I ask that we talk about this at a more appropriate time?”

“When is it appropriate, Alex? Do I need to make an appointment to see you at the office?”

“Bren, please? I only have four hours to sleep. Can’t we discuss this tomorrow?”

Bren shook her head in defeat. “Fine. Tomorrow.” she stated turning over away from Alex and closing her eyes.

Alex turned opposite of her and tried to sleep, but her mind was too active to rest. Alex considered Bren’s words carefully, wondering how she could make her fiancée happy without compromising her career. Most of her four hours of sleep were spent in contemplation.

The next morning she was up and out of the house before Bren even stirred. When she arrived at the office, Kelly was already in the conference room giving instructions to other attorneys on the day’s projects. Alex went straight to the coffee to make herself a strong cup before joining the

group. Once assignments had been made, Kelly made her way over to her.

“Well now, Alex. It’s not like you to be late or look like death warmed over. You all right?”

“I’ll be fine. Bren and I just ended up talking when I got home last night.”

“Trouble in paradise?”

“More like paradise lost and Bren finally realizing exactly what she’s getting into. She’s just feeling neglected is all.”

“Well, why don’t you take some time off to be with her?”

“When? This is an important case.”

“If you think that about every case, you’ll never see her. Sometimes life is more important.”

“I know, and it’s just been worse I guess, because we supposed to be planning our wedding, and I just haven’t had any time.”

“You’re getting married?” Kelly loudly asked, gaining the attention of their associates.

“Yeah. We’re getting married.” Alex replied quietly.

“Why haven’t you said anything? When did you get engaged?”

“Mid-May.”

“And you waited six weeks to say something? What’s wrong with you, Alex? No wonder she doesn’t feel important.”

“Kelly, I don’t need this from you too.”

“I’m sorry. Look. I don’t mean to be meddling in your personal life, but you need to make some serious decisions. You have always thought it has to be your career or your relationship. Why can’t you do both?” Alex shrugged. “Alex, you know that I care about you as a friend. As a friend let me give you some advice. Don’t let anything stand in the way of the best woman that ever came into your life. You can still be an attorney and Bren’s wife at the same time if you truly want.”

“That is what I want, Kelly, but I don’t know how. I don’t know how to do anything other than be an attorney.”

“Then learn. She’s worth the effort. Learn when to stop, Alex. You can’t always be the life saver, and that’s okay. Sometimes it’s better to be Alex, the woman who is madly in love with Bren Worthington.”

Alex grinned at her co-worker. “Thanks for the tidbit of advice. Now we better both get down to business.”

“Try not to drool on the briefs when you fall asleep.” Kelly teased shoving a handful at Alex before turning to leave.

Alex tried to concentrate on work, but her thoughts were with her little blonde. She wondered what Bren was doing. Checking her watch she saw that it was nine, so she called the house. A sleepy Bren answered the phone. “Good morning, beautiful.” Alex greeted in her most suave voice.

“Um...” Bren moaned. “It is now.”

“Sleeping late?”

“I didn’t sleep well last night.”

“Me neither.” Alex mumbled.

“Did you need something?”

“Only you.” Alex stated. “Bren, I’m really sorry for the past few weeks. I want you to know that nothing means more to me than you. You are the woman that makes my life complete, and I was hoping that you’d accept my apology for being inattentive the past month and a half. I want to make it up to you. What are you doing for lunch today?”

“I’m free.”

“Well, would you like to meet me here at the office? I’d like to take you to lunch, so we can talk about the wedding. Does that sound good?”

“Yes, that sounds great. What time?”

“Around one. Is that okay?”

“Sounds good. I’ll be there.”

“Great. I look forward to it.” Alex said.

“Is there anything else?”

“I just wanted you to know that I love and miss you. I have to go now, but I’ll see you at one.”

“Okay. I love you too, Alex.”

Around eleven that day, Alex went to the her supervisor, Arthur's office for a requested meeting. When she arrived he looked up from his computer. "Alex, come on in. Sit down. You wanted to see me."

"Yeah. I wanted to talk to you about something important."

"Well, shoot. What's on your mind?"

Alex leaning back in the chair and regarded him for a moment. "Arthur, I've been with this firm since I graduated law school. I worked hard and became the first female partner. This position has been my life for the past eight years. However something else has come along that needs my priority now."

Arthur frowned at her as he quickly asked, "You're not leaving us, are you?"

"No. I'm not leaving. I'm talking about getting married."

"You're getting married?" he inquired in obvious relief. Alex nodded. "Well, that's wonderful. Congratulations. Who is the lucky lady?"

"Her name is Bren Worthington. Perhaps you remember her. She's been my date to the holiday party for the last four years."

"Oh, yes, of course. She's that lovely, young blonde. I do remember her. I'm so happy for you, Alex."

"Thank you. The reason I bring this up is that now that I've made a commitment to Bren, and I need to make sure that I keep it. She means the world to me, and I don't want anything to stand in the way of us being happy. Right now my excessive work load is hindering us from being together as much as she would like. In the past eight years I have never used all my vacation time. In fact I have almost three months of vacation time accrued. I was wondering if it would be possible to start using some of that or lightening my load a little. I really want to stay with this firm, Arthur. After all I am a partner, but I need a little time to devote to Bren and hopefully in the future my family."

Arthur smiled. "I understand completely, Alex. Maybe you haven't noticed, but of all the partners in the firm you are the most senior one that is unmarried. You have been working like a dog since you came here, even after you became a partner. The senior partners have been giving you so much work, because they know you can handle it. You're our most trusted junior partner. You have that edge, that instinct about you, Alex. It's funny that you are getting married, because it's been a topic of conversation amongst the senior partners for some time now. Some of them think you'll lose your edge by marrying, and some of us think you'll still be as sharp as ever. We've been discussing for awhile now when to make you a senior partner, and we've decided that there were a couple of factors involved. To be a senior partner is more of a PR position. We still work on cases but pick and choose them as we see fit. We oversee the office and each have attorneys to supervise. As a junior partner you've been in training for the position,



and the general opinion was that within a year or two you'd be ready to be promoted to senior partner. At that time you will have more free time on your hands. I kind of made the suggestion though that you be promoted earlier if you met some criteria."

"What criteria is that?"

"Oddly enough one of them was that you were to get married. You see those people who are married know that marriage and children, if you have any, take a great deal of time as well. You have been an exemplary employee, Alex, and I think you should be rewarded for that. I feel fortunate that you came to us, and I look forward to having you as an equal partner when the time comes. I understand your desire to spend time with your bride-to-be, and I encourage that. Life is too short not to enjoy. I would suggest to you that you take the time to be with her. You deserve that. Cut back on your hours. I know that you've been working at least sixty or seventy a week easily. Try working forty to fifty for a few months, or take some vacation time."

"But, Arthur, there's never a good time to take vacation."

"You have to make time, Alex. There's one critical skill you lack that you must learn before you can become a senior partner, and that one skill is delegation. Pass off some of your work to your junior associates. That's what they are there for, Alex, to help you prepare for cases. The attorneys under your supervision are working on average fifty hours a week to your sixty to seventy. It should be the other way around. You need to delegate your work more evenly. You learn that skill you'll be better off professionally and personally."

"Arthur, I understand what you're saying, but when I do it, I know it's done the way I want it done."

"Alex, you have to teach them to do it the way you want it done. Everyone on staff is a competent person, or they wouldn't be here. You tell them how you want them to do it, and they'll learn. When they become partners, that's when they'll be able to do it their own way. You can't always have your hands in everything. You have to pick and choose, and you're doing it right now by coming in here and saying you have to spend more time with Bren. That's a choice, and I feel it's the right one. Now you have to make some choices regarding your caseload. You personally do all the prep work and court time for almost all your cases. Let some of the others help you. If you don't, you will lose your edge, and more than that, you'll burn out. If that happens you're no good to anyone."

Alex sat in silent contemplation for a moment, taking in her supervisor's advice. She had often considered Arthur more than her boss but her friends as well. They had always had a special working relationship, and she knew he was a man she could trust. Nodding at him she said, "All right, I hear everything you're saying. It's just hard for me to give up the control."

"I know. You want to be the superhero, but it's time to pass the cape for now. You can always reclaim it later if you want, but give someone else a chance, and give yourself a break. You have someone under your supervision that can fill your shoes well enough until you're ready to step back into them, if you ever want to."

“Kelly.” Alex said definitively.

Arthur nodded. “She has been your project since she has arrived, and she is ready for the challenge. Give it to her. She wants it, and I want you to let her have it. Take the backseat on this case, Alex, and let her handle the majority of it. If you think she’s performing poorly take the reigns again, but I have faith that she’s ready.”

Alex nodded. “I’ll do that, Arthur. I think you’re right, and that will give me some much needed time with Bren. Thanks for the talk.”

“You’re welcome, and congratulations again. I’ll tell Ethel the good news, and maybe the four of us can get together for dinner sometime soon to celebrate.”

“Sounds good. I’ve got work to do now, so I better get out of here.” Alex mentioned standing and heading for the door.

At one o’clock Alex was busy at her desk going over some paperwork that Kelly had given her when her assistant knocked on the door. “Hey, Alex.” she began cracking the door slightly. “There’s a woman in the waiting area claiming that she’s your wife.”

Alex checked her watch. “Oh, my, it’s already one. Okay. You can bring her back.”

“All right.” her assistant replied but then paused. “Alex, is she your wife?”

“No, she’s not my wife, but she is my fiancée. Her name is Bren Worthington, and if you could please escort her back to my office, I’d appreciate it.”

“I didn’t know you were getting married. Congratulations. Why didn’t you say anything before?”

“Because I was busy with work, and that’s personal anyway. Now go on.”

A few moments passed before Bren entered the office. Alex stood and came to her, embracing her in a tight hug as she leaned down to kiss her passionately. “Oh, my.” Bren mumbled breathlessly when they broke apart.

“Bren, I’m so sorry about last night. I was so insensitive to you, and I want to apologize. You mean the world to me.”

“Apology accepted.” Bren answered still trying to recover from the smoldering kiss Alex had planted on her.

“Come on. We have lots to do over lunch. I hope you brought your notebook with you.”

“Of course I did.”

“Good. What are you in the mood to eat?”

“Whatever you are. I don’t have a preference.”

“Chinese?”

“Fine.”

“All right. Come on. I know just the place.” Taking Bren by the hand, Alex led her through the office. She knew that her co-workers were curiously watching them, but no one stopped them as they made their way to the elevators. Stopping briefly at the receptionist’s desk, Alex said, “I’m going out for an important lunch meeting. Should be gone two hours or so.” With that she smiled at Bren and pushed the button for the elevator.

Once they were alone in the compartment, Bren stated, “You’re in a chipper mood today.”

“Well, I’ve made some important decisions today that affect my career, and I feel pretty good about them. I’ll tell you all about it over lunch. First we order though, because I’m starving.”

Alex took Bren to a small Chinese place she often frequented when she remembered to eat lunch. Neither spoke about their business until they had ordered, but once they were alone, Bren inquired, “So, what’s this news that has you so happy?”

“Well, after last night’s discussion, I stayed awake contemplating the way my life was going. I felt really terrible for the way I brushed you off, and I realized that I’m not going to be able to do that if we’re going to have a successful marriage. Your thoughts and opinions matter to me, Bren, and I want to know everything that goes on in your head. This morning I had a talk with Arthur about the direction my career was taking, and he reaffirmed my thoughts that I would become a senior partner within the next couple of years. I explained to him that now that you were in my life, and we were planning to get married, I needed more personal time. I told him that I didn’t think it would be possible for me to work seventy hours a week and have a marriage. He agreed with me and suggested some ways to alter my current work habits without changing my goals for the future. I’ve decided to cut back on my hours and work something a lot more reasonable.”

“Really?” Bren asked in excitement. “You’re really going to do that for me?”

“Yeah. You mean so much to me, Bren, and I want to be with you more than anything else. Arthur and I agreed that for now I should try to work forty to fifty hours a week instead of sixty to seventy. As he said I should pass my superhero cape on to someone else for now. So, now you’re stuck me a lot more whether you like it or not.” Alex joked.

“Oh, Alex. Thank you so much. You have no idea what this means to me. I love you.” she exclaimed leaning over to kiss Alex with gusto.

Alex indulged in it for a few moments before whispering, “We’re going to get thrown out of here

if we're not careful." Bren giggled. "All right. Ease up. I can't think clearly when you do that. Let's talk wedding plans now. Where are we?"

"Well, we still haven't decided how many people we're going to invite. That kind of dictates everything else. I can only think of a handful of people I'd like to invite. I'm not sure if any of my family will want to come other than my mother."

"Supposing that they do want to come, what kind of number are we talking about, total between family and friends?"

"Forty to fifty, but if they don't want to come, it'll be more like twenty."

"Okay. Well, that gives me an idea of how many people I can invite. If I invited everyone at the office that I knew, it would be around hundred, and that doesn't count family and friends. My total would be probably around one hundred fifty. I guess that means I'll only invite family, friends, and my closest associates to bring it down to about sixty. That way we're looking at around one hundred to one ten. Then we have to pick a location. What is your favorite so far?"

"Well, I figured it would be local instead of in New York. I want it to be sort of lavish but on a small scale."

"Well, I have a suggestion. It might sound crazy at first but just listen. What about at the country club? We always have our company parties there, so they know me really well. Although money isn't an issue, they'll probably give us a reduced rate, but more importantly we have to make sure that we're in a place that will be accepting of the type of affair we're having. If we go there, it won't be an issue."

"I hadn't considered that. The country club is a very lovely facility, but that's the reception. What about the actual service?"

"Do you have an opposition to being married in my synagogue? I've been going there since I was in law school. I'm on their board. The rabbi knows me well, and you've been there on several occasions."

"I know, and I assumed that your rabbi would perform the service, but I kind of wanted to be married outside."

"In mid-September? Weather can be sketchy then, but if that's what you want, we could do it in the garden. I think it could accommodate that many people. Why don't I just call and ask?"

"Okay. That sounds good. Now assuming that we go with the garden wedding and reception at the country club, we have to talk about food and music, the cake, all that stuff."

"I know, but let's make sure these places are available before we continue. We've agreed on a number of people today and location choices. Let's make sure that all comes together first before moving on. Why don't we work on the guest list now? I'll call the locations when I get back to

work.”

When lunch came to a close, Alex walked Bren to her car in the parking garage. They lingered in an embrace as Bren inquired, “What time do you think you’ll be home tonight?”

“I’m going to try to get out of here around five or six. What do you want to do tonight? You want me to take you out to dinner, or do you want to stay in?”

“Let’s stay in and have dinner out by the pool. What do you think?”

“Sounds wonderful. I’ll call you as I’m leaving, but it should be no later than six.”

“I’ll be waiting with my bikini on.” Bren whispered giving Alex one last kiss.

“I look forward to it.” Alex grinned as she watched her fiancée get into her car. Alex stood there as the car pulled out of sight thinking about Bren. She wondered if she could get Bren to be interested in more than their usual cuddling that evening and began to formulate a plan in which to win her soon-to-be bride’s sexual favor.

Continued Part 4:

---

### The Athenaeum's Scroll Archive

---

## ~ Second Chances ~

by Alex Tryst

Copyright © October 200

**Disclaimers:** These characters are of my own creation. This story does include sexual situations involving consenting adult women (and lots of them). If you are offended by this type of material or it is illegal where you live, it’s best to turn back now. 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.....

### Part 4

Alex left work a little after five that afternoon with strict instructions for Kelly not to call her that

weekend about the case unless it was an emergency. Her first stop was to her favorite wine shop to pick out Bren's favorite champagne as well as some chocolates for her fiancée. Then she made a quick detour to the flower shop to pick up the roses she had ordered earlier that afternoon. When she arrived back at home, she found Bren out by the pool lounging in Alex's favorite bikini and sarong on her and reading. The table had already been set for them. As soon as Alex stepped out of the french doors to greet her, Bren gave a wide smile.

"Good evening, Miss Worthington." Alex said with a sexy grin.

"Hello. What do you have there?" Bren inquired coming to give Alex a kiss.

"A little something for you." Alex extended the flowers and chocolate to her fiancée.

"Well, thank you. Is this for dinner?" she asked pointing to the champagne.

"Maybe after. It needs to chill a little first."

"All right. Well, why don't you let me take all this off your hands? Dinner will be ready in a few moments."

"Great. Let me help you bring it to the table."

"Oh no. You sit right here. I'll be out in a few minutes. Why don't you pour the wine and light the candles for us?"

Alex did as was requested of her, pouring each of them a glass of wine as she waited on Bren's return. Bren came back with two plates already served with Alex's favorite meal, steak, salad, and baked potatoes. "Bren, this looks fabulous. Thank you."

"I hope you enjoy it. I have a surprise for dessert, so you better save some room." she mentioned with a smirk.

During dinner they discussed the wedding some more, having found out they the places they wanted were available. Even with their meal long over, they continued to enjoy their time together out by the pool until Alex mentioned, "Did you say something about dessert earlier?"

"Are you ready for it?" Bren inquired with a seductive grin.

Alex gave her own charming smile and answered in a matching sexy timbre, "If you are."

"Oh, I'm ready all right. You stay here until I come get you. Okay? I want this to be a surprise."

"Okay. I'll sit right here and dream of what wonders you could've possibly concocted."

Bren leaned over to Alex's ear as she brushed by her to go inside and licked along the curvature lightly as she whispered, "I think this one will be your new favorites."

Alex gave her a raised brow in response mumbling, “We’ll see, won’t we?” As Alex sat alone at the table, she wondered if this night would end the way she was hoping it would. Bren seemed rather playful and alluring that evening, making Alex wonder if her young fiancée had the same thoughts for the night as she did. Ten minutes passed before Bren returned empty-handed.

Extending her hand to Alex, she quietly inquired, “Are you ready?”

Alex smiled reassuringly, knowing that things were going in the direction she had hoped. “Are you, Bren?”

Bren blushed lightly. “Close your eyes, Alex.” she whispered.

Alex closed her eyes as she took Bren’s hand. Even though she couldn’t see, she sensed where they were headed in the house and even expected it when Bren told her that they were going up the stairs. Alex kept her eyes closed knowing that’s what Bren wanted, but she was anxious to see what Bren had done as she heard the familiar squeak of the master bedroom door. As Bren led her into the room, Alex noted the suggestive music of Al Green and that the room was considerably darker than normal but yet there was some soft light. Bren brought her to a stop a few feet into the room, and then she heard Bren shut the door. Alex remained still and waited for Bren’s next move. She felt her hands be guided to Bren’s hips where she felt the strings to the suit bottom under her fingers.

“All right, Alex. You can open your eyes now.” Bren said, her voice wavering a little with nervousness.

When Alex opened her eyes, she first saw Bren standing in front of her, looking more beautiful than she’d ever seen her. Her fiancée looked soft and slightly vulnerable but her eyes expressed the depth of love and trust she had. Alex didn’t say a word at first as her eyes shifted to the room. It had been elaborated decorated with candles, giving it an inviting feel. The music played quietly, setting a romantic ambiance and by the bedside were the roses Alex had brought home, the chocolate, and the chilled champagne with two glasses. Looking back at Bren she mumbled, “Wow. This is quite impressive. You did this all for me?” Bren nodded. “It’s wonderful. Thank you.” Bren stood unmoving and silent as if she was waiting for Alex to take the lead. Alex gave her a gentle smile. “So, where’s the dessert, beautiful?” she teased tenderly, already knowing but hoping Bren would put into words what she was feeling at the moment.

Bren took hold of Alex’s hands with her own and brought them to her shoulders. Then she guided them all over her upper torso, taking extra time with her breasts. When that was complete, she put the left one back on her hip but steered the right down the front of the outside of her suit and nestled it between her thighs. Alex took a ragged breath as she now touched the most intimate place on her lover’s body with only thin fabric separating her from the ultimate treasure. Bren pressed Alex’s hand harder, making them both shudder slightly. Meeting Alex’s gaze Bren whispered, “This is dessert.”

Alex could only moan in response as she stepped toward Bren to embrace her fully. Their

mouths met in a methodical kiss as Alex wasted no time in beginning to undo the four ties holding Bren's little clothing in place. The bikini pooled around her feet within moments as Alex let her hands roam along Bren's back. Bren's hands went to Alex's shirt but with Alex's lips distracting her, she had to push her away slightly and focus on the task at hand. Alex merely watched patiently as Bren's trembling fingers undid each button on her dress shirt. Bren proceeded to remove each article of clothing with great care until Alex was standing naked in front of her. Alex moved in again, bringing their bodies together as they began to kiss again with escalating fervor. After a few minutes Alex moved them to the bed, pushing Bren onto her back and then following her down. Propped on her arms in between Bren's thighs, Alex gave Bren a loving smile.

"You are so beautiful, Bren. I love you so much. I'll give you anything you want. Just tell me what I can do to bring you pleasure." she whispered nipping lightly at the blonde's ear.

Bren pulled Alex down on top of her, so they were touching completely. "I want you so much, Alex. Please. Make love to me. Touch me everywhere."

Alex took her time in touching Bren all over. She wanted to feel every part of Bren's body, to memorize every curve and leisurely outline it faintly with kisses and caresses. Then she began to concentrate on the areas that she knew would bring Bren the most satisfaction. Alex didn't even think about how much time was passing as she acquainted herself completely with her fiancée's body, but as Bren's need mounted, she knew that the moment they both had been longing for had arrived. Kissing her way down Bren's body, she settled her shoulders between Bren's accommodating legs. Casting a glance up to Bren's face, Alex saw the slight fear in her lover's eyes, but she also saw the passion burning with an intensity she's never seen in anyone.

"May I?" Alex asked letting Bren feel the power of being in control of their lovemaking.

"Please." Bren whimpered followed by a gasping cry as Alex let her tongue glide over Bren's heat.

"Um, you taste so good, baby, better than I ever imagined." Alex mumbled as she dove merrily into her task of directing Bren to peak. Alex could feel Bren's hands grasping at her head, trying to relieve the pressure building within her body, but Alex stayed at her torturously slow pace, slowly driving Bren crazy. Alex enjoyed the way Bren was responding with cries of mounting passion and erratic breathing. When Bren's hips began to move faster involuntarily, Alex knew that she was close. Alex began to work harder, but soon Bren was begging her to stop. Reluctantly Alex pulled away and looked at Bren in concern. "What is it, sweetheart? You were so close. Why did you want to stop?"

Bren smiled as she leaned up to give Alex a long kiss. "I just wanted to look into your eyes and hold you. I just want to feel you on top of me, all over me. I want you to be inside me the first time you make me yours." she sexily stated in uneven breaths.

"Oh, of course, sweetie. Anything you want." Alex replied leaning to kiss her with delight. Reaching down between them, Alex cupped Bren's wetness for a moment before tenderly sliding



into her. Bren gave a soft shriek as she reflexively tried to pull back. Alex remained still waiting for her to get used to her as she whispered comforting words of reassurance. "It's all right, honey. I've got you. I love you, Bren. You mean so much to me." When Bren's body relaxed, Alex pushed in a little further surprised when her fingers tore through a thin barrier. Bren yelped at that moment, once again involuntarily trying to expel Alex's fingers. "It's okay, Bren. I'll slow down. Just relax." Their eyes met.

Bren's were watery, but they held nothing but love in their gaze. "I love you, Alex."

"I love you too, Bren." Alex replied, her own eyes beginning to fill with tears at the realization that Bren had waited for her to be the first one to know her this way. Neither said anything for a moment before Alex asked, "Are you okay now?"

Bren nodded. "Better than okay, Alex. I'm perfect."

Alex smiled. "So am I. Are you ready to continue?"

"I've been ready for you for years, Alex."

Alex gave a nod before gently bringing Bren to an earth-shattering climax, the whole time with them staring deeply into each other's eyes. Alex stopped to let Bren revel in the glory of the moment as she held her with love. A dreamy smile transformed Bren's face.

"I've never seen you more beautiful than you are right now, Bren." Alex mentioned brushing back the wet strands of hair along Bren's forehead.

"Oh, Alex. This is the way I always dreamed it would be."

"I'm glad. Why don't we rest a moment? Would you like for me to pour you some champagne?"

"That would be nice."

Alex rolled off of Bren to reach for the bottle and glasses. Filling them both she handed one to Bren and then picked up the box of chocolates. "Hungry?" Alex inquired presenting them to her. Bren nodded in enthusiasm, so Alex picked on up and held it to Bren's lips. Bren moaned in satisfaction after swallowing the mixture of chocolate and champagne.

"This must be what heaven is like." Bren said making Alex chuckle.

"It would be nice if it was. I had no idea that you were still a virgin. I had always just assumed that you had been with people during college."

"I wanted it to be a surprise. It was something I always knew could only be for you."

Alex gave her a tearful smile. "Thank you for that gift. I'll cherish it."

They lay cuddled together for awhile listening to the music, drinking champagne, feeding each other chocolate, and just talking quietly, but as the night wore on, they succumbed several more times to the carnal pleasures they provided for each other.

When morning arrived Alex awoke first. Leaving Bren in bed, she made her way down to the kitchen to make them breakfast. Taking it up to the bedroom, she stirred Bren from sleep with gentle kisses along the limbs that the sheet wasn't covering. Bren moaned as her eyes fluttered open. "Morning, beautiful." Alex whispered seductively.

"It certainly is." Bren yawned leaning up to Alex's mouth for a slow kiss.

"I brought you some breakfast. Thought you could use it after the way we burned off the calories from dinner." Alex joked slipping the tray onto the bed and climbing on herself.

Leisurely they ate and snuggled under the covers for awhile. "I wish every Saturday could be like this." Bren mentioned as she repositioned herself against Alex.

Alex ran her fingers through Bren's blonde hair. "It's the best."

Bren looked up at Alex and grinned mischievously. "Better than last night?"

"Nothing could be better than last night, but this is wonderful too. I love just being with you."

"Good because you're stuck with me."

"You know, we should probably get up. This would probably be a good opportunity to look for outfits for the wedding, don't you think?"

Bren nodded. "Perhaps you're right. I'm so comfortable though." Bren snuggled in closer to Alex's chest.

"Well, I can think of ways to make you comfortable in the shower." Alex suggested.

Bren raised an interested eyebrow. "Really?"

Alex nodded. "What do you say? How would you like a little massage?"

Bren smiled. "I think I could get up for that." She made a move out of bed, but as soon as she took a step, she grimaced.

Alex noticed and asked, "You okay?"

"I feel like I've been riding a horse for the last ten hours, or maybe it's more like a horse had been riding me. You really are quite the stallion. My hips are sore." she joked.

"Sorry to hear that." Alex said coming to her. Her hands rubbed along Bren's hips. "Maybe I can

find a way to make you feel better.” she whispered leaning into Bren’s neck. Lightly dusting it with kisses, Alex’s mouth trailed along her shoulders before moving down to her breasts.

Bren sighed as she whispered, “All ready feeling better. Any other bright ideas?”

“Lots. Let’s get in the shower, so I can show you.” Alex led them into the bathroom and began the shower while she continued to run one hand along Bren’s body. When the temperature was just right, she moved Bren into the open shower and began to bathe her lover with gentle strokes of soap-filled hands as she kissed lightly over Bren’s face and neck.

“Oh, this was a good idea of yours.” Bren purred, allowing Alex full access to her body.

After a lengthy shower, they moved back into the bedroom to dress for the day. Alex was finished first and began to straighten up the space when she came to notice the stained bed sheets. Deciding to remove them before Bren saw them, she quickly tore them off the bed and rolled them into a ball, throwing them down the staircase as she moved out into the hall to retrieve fresh sheets from the linen closet. She was still putting them on when Bren came out of the bathroom.

“Why the new sheets? I just put those others on.”

“I figured after the romp we had last night, they needed to be washed.”

Bren nodded. “Well, in that case, while you’re doing that, I’ll just take these dishes downstairs. Meet me down there when you’re finished?”

Monday came too soon for Alex. After an incredible weekend of making love to Bren at almost every available opportunity, she was saddened to leave the sleeping blonde early Monday morning. As she tiptoed around the room to get dressed, she repeatedly stopped to gaze upon her fiancée, who was blissfully unaware of Alex’s eyes roaming over her. Even though Alex knew it was taking longer than normal to get ready for work, she still felt as if time passed too soon and regretted having to part ways with Bren even for only a business day.

Once at work however, Alex automatically went into her professional mode, having been away from the action all weekend and had to be caught up to speed by Kelly before heading to her office. A little while after arriving, Kelly dawned her doorway with another woman. “Alex, can you spare a minute? I want to introduce you to the new intern.”

“Yeah. Come on in.” Alex said standing. Extending her hand to the strawberry blonde, she stated, “Alex Schreiber.”

“Victoria Schumann. Nice to meet you, Ms. Schreiber.”

“Please, call me Alex. It’s a pleasure to make your acquaintance, Victoria. In case Kelly didn’t tell you, I’m one of the junior partners here.”

“She told me you were more than that actually. She said that you were next in line to become a senior partner.”

Alex nodded. “That is the general assumption here at the office, but nothing has been confirmed. Please, why don’t you have a seat, and we can talk for a few minutes. That is unless Kelly needs your services right away.” Alex looked at Kelly.

“No, no. You go ahead. I was hoping that you could possibly show her the ropes today if that fits into your schedule. There’s nothing better than learning from the best.”

Alex laughed. “Flattery will get you everywhere, Kelly.” she teased. “It just so happens that I was devoting most of my day to your current case, so I think that could work out well. How about it, Victoria? You want to hang out with me for a while? I’ll show you around, teach you the hot spots.”

Victoria gave a smile, making her green eyes sparkle merrily. “That sounds good to me. I was hoping to be able to spend more than just a moment with you.”

“Good. Have a seat.” Alex said again gesturing toward one of the chairs across from her desk.

“I have to get going, Alex.” Kelly stated. “By the way, it looks like a weekend off did you some good. You look like a new woman.”

Alex smiled broadly. “I feel like one.”

“Next time I see Bren I’ll have to thank her on behalf of the staff. You’ll be much easier to deal with now that you’ve released your tensions.” she teased. “She must be some miracle worker.”

“That’s enough, Kelly. Let’s not scared Ms. Schumann on the first day with your lewd innuendo. Now get out of here.” Alex joked shooing Kelly from the office. Taking her seat she inquired, “Would you like some of my special coffee? It’s much better than what’s in the break room.”

“I don’t drink coffee, but thank you anyway.”

“Don’t drink coffee? You’re in law school, and you don’t drink coffee? My, my. Wonders never cease. So, tell me what you meant when you said you hoped to spend more than just a moment with me.”

“Well, you have an excellent reputation. That’s why I first looked into an internship here. You are quite the inspiration to minority populations.”

“I see. My reputation precedes me. By looking at you, I can only see one minority group that you fit into, Victoria. That is unless I can infer from your last name that you are Jewish as well.”

“You are correct, counselor. I am Jewish too. Once again your reputation precedes you in that area as well.” Victoria joked.

Alex chuckled. "You know, Victoria, you might just have to tell me what you perceive my reputation to be, so we can dispel fact from fiction straight off the bat. What have you heard about me?"

"That you're a strong Jewish attorney, and you fight for the rights of all people. You are well-respected for your abilities as well as your humanitarian efforts."

"Anything else?"

"Yes but it isn't a work place kind of topic. Besides that rumor was just confirmed by Kelly anyway."

"Oh. You mean that my interests lie with the female persuasion?" Victoria nodded. "Well, do you believe everything you hear, Victoria?"

"Not always but that is a fact, is it not?" she defended.

Alex smiled. "I already like your style. Yes, that is a fact. I am Jewish, and I also am a lesbian. The fact that you know that would lead me to believe that you may also put your interests there?"

"It does appear that we have similar tastes, counselor. May I ask you something personal?"

"Sure. Why not?"

"Do you attend synagogue?"

"Yes. Why?"

"Well, while I'm here I would like to attend. I was just wondering if you knew of any."

"You should come to mine. You'd like it there. My fiancée and I would be more than happy to take you to a service sometime."

"Your fiancée? Would that be the Bren of which Kelly was speaking?"

"You do have an eye for details, Victoria. That's good. Yes, Bren is my fiancée. Now enough idle chatter. How about a tour of the office? Then we'll give Kelly and hand on her case."

"Wow. I can look at a case on my first day?" slightly sarcastically she said. "I thought I'd be stuck in the mail room for weeks."

"Yeah. We run things a little differently here. Although you will be stuck doing some of that junk work, like filing, sorting mail, answering phones and what not, we believe that hands on experience counts. You will get to be involved in cases under strict supervision of course, and it appears that Kelly is going to be the one to do that unless she passes you off to me to run through

the ringer.” Alex joked.

“You’ve been so tough to deal with so far. I don’t know if I can handle it.”

Alex showed Victoria around the office, introducing her to staff that they passed along the way before going into the conference room where Kelly had taken over for her case. They remained there assisting Kelly until Alex noticed Victoria’s attention wandering. Looking at her watched, she noted that it was after two o’clock. “Victoria, how about we take a break? Let’s get some lunch. My treat today.”

“That would be great.” she answered. “I’m so hungry that I can’t think any more.”

Kelly caught Alex’s eyes as they gathered their things. “Are you all right, Kelly? Would you like something?”

“No thanks. I’m fine. You okay?”

Alex shot her a confused look until it sunk in what Kelly was inferring. “Victoria, why don’t I meet you out in the waiting area?” Alex suggested.

“Sure. I need to run to the restroom anyway.”

As soon as she was gone, Alex stepped to Kelly. “Exactly what did you mean by that?” she gruffly asked.

Kelly pulled them over into a private corner, so no one could hear them. “Didn’t you get a good enough look at her tits the first time?” Kelly inquired.

Alex huffed. “What are you talking about?”

“Alex, don’t play dumb with me. I know you too well. I’ve seen you looking down her blouse on more than one occasion this morning. Don’t fuck this up. She’s not worth your career or your marriage. She’s just a little intern.”

“Kelly, she’s just a kid. I have no interest whatsoever.”

“She’s older than Bren, Alex. Not only that she’s given you the once over more than a few times when she thought no one was looking.”

“Thank you for your concern, Kelly, but this is business, and there is nothing that will get in the way of my job or marriage. Mark my words.”

“I hope so.”

Alex sighed loudly before turning to leave. She met Victoria out by the elevator, and together they made their way over to one of the local cafes for sandwiches. As they sat outside under one

of the umbrellas, Alex glanced over at Victoria. She admitted to herself that she did think the younger woman was attractive, like Bren in looks but also like Megan in many ways with her wit and strong knowledge in the law. She frowned unknowingly as she took another bite into her ham on rye.

“You seem upset.” Victoria mentioned.

“It’s nothing.”

“An ex-girlfriend quarrel?”

Alex couldn’t help but crack a smile. “You think you’re so perceptive, don’t you? For your information, Kelly is not an ex but a concerned friend.”

“Concerned over me.” Victoria stated plainly.

“How did you know?” Alex asked in bewilderment.

Victoria smiled. “I bet I know what she was talking to you about too.” Alex gave her a challenging look. “She was telling you to be more discreet when looking down my top.”

Alex began to choke on her sandwich as she gasped. Victoria leaned over to swat her on the back to help dislodge the food. “I... uh- damn you’re good. How in the hell did you know that? I only noticed once.”

“Oh, I believe my generous endowment pleased your eyes more than once today, Alex.” she stated seriously.

Alex started to defend herself but then stopped. “Shit. You have me dead to rights. I apologize. I was out of line, but you are difficult to miss in that blouse.”

Victoria slid her hand over Alex’s, patting it lightly. “It’s okay, Alex. I know when women find me attractive. Why do you think you were given an unobstructed view?”

“Uh, Victoria, I’m engaged.” Alex said quickly.

“I know, so we can keep this between us. I know you’re unobtainable, but I still don’t mind being your object of lust at work. I was hoping you would find me so. After all you are incredibly sexy yourself.”

Alex sat dumbfounded for a moment as Victoria went back to casually eating her salad. Finally gathering her senses, she stated, “Victoria, I appreciate the compliment, and I extend you the same. However, I need to make something crystal clear, and it’s best you learn this early on anyway. Women only get to the top of this industry two ways, being a tough as nails bitch or sleeping with their supervisors. I’ve made it a point to be known as the former in the courtroom, and I would hope you would be smarter than to choose the latter. I’ll be frank with you. There

are some partners at the firm that would help you out in exchange for a little extra attention. I even bet those same gentlemen think I treat women of the office with the same regard, but I don't. For me to give another female associate a leg up for sexual favors goes against my feminist thinking. If I did that, I'd be just as much of chauvinist as my counterparts. I want to see women make it based on their abilities, and I'll do what I can to help you, because I believe that if you do have the abilities, you should be given the chance regardless of how much time I've spent between your legs. Now we've gotten ourselves off on the wrong foot here. I haven't been exactly the perfect role model Kelly was hoping I would be, and you've picked up on that. I don't want you to think based on my unprofessional behavior today that I would be expecting to be treated with your sexual favor, because I do not want that at all, and furthermore, I won't tolerate sexual advances either. I'm set in my thinking on that. Now I do apologize for my behavior, but I would ask that you take ownership of your part of this little incident."

When Alex stopped talking, she just stared at Victoria waiting for a response, but Victoria was perfectly silent. Instead she signaled their waiter and asked for a to-go box for her salad. When it was packed away, Victoria finished her water and stood before sending Alex a scowl. "I can't sit here and listen to this. You are correct in the fact that your reputation of being a bitch is warranted. You act as if I just threw myself across the table and asked you for the fucking of a lifetime! You are mistaken, counselor, if you think you are God's gift to J.A.P.s like me! This was obviously a mistake on my part to accept this position, but since I can't quit, I will just stay out of your way! Take note though, counselor! You will never be getting between these thighs! I don't care if you're the last woman on earth! I don't care if you are the world's best cunt shagger! This is one you won't ever be getting your hands on, so you can just kiss my ass!"

Alex was shocked into immobility at first at Victoria's verbal assault, but quickly she recovered enough to shake her head patronizingly at the younger woman. "Temper, temper. You should try to watch your language." she said calmly knowing that the whole outdoor café was now intently listening to their argument.

"You know, Alex, while you have your head up your ass, eat shit and die, you fucking dyke! You think you're so cool, the big, bad Alex Schreiber, but you're nothing more than an arrogant asshole! You think you're all that, and women should bow at your feet, but you are mistaken! This is one woman who will eat you up and spit you out if you make me mad! You have no idea what kind of wrath I will bestow upon you! You haven't seen anything yet!"

"I've seen enough to know that if you learn to channel your passions you will be a brilliant attorney, but you have to curb your usage of foul language. If you want to eat me up and spit me out, you'll have to learn to do so without that latrine you have for a mouth." Alex simply stated.

Victoria huffed loudly. "Fuck you!" she yelled turning and walking away, leaving Alex laughing at her departure.

Only a moment went by before Alex heard her name be called. Turning she saw Arthur standing there with a to-go bag in his hand. "Alex, that was quite a show." he mentioned.

"Yes, it was. Have a seat if you'd like, Arthur."



“I wasn’t going to, but after what I just saw, I better. You should tell me what that was all about. It sounds like she was accusing you of sexually harassing her.”

“You know I would never do that, Arthur. I’m engaged to be married, and it could get me fired. We had a misunderstanding, and Ms. Schumann blew it way out of proportion.”

“Do I need to speak with her? I would hate to think I made a mistake by hiring her for the internship, but I thought she was the best candidate.”

“It was no mistake, Arthur. She’s going to be so great one day, but she has much to learn. She’s got the fire that it takes. Believe me. I just felt her heat, but she needs to learn how to direct it.”

“But she used severely derogatory and discriminatory language towards you. That can’t be tolerated. She can’t go around saying that kind of language.”

“Don’t worry about her calling me a dyke, Arthur. Takes one to know one after all. Besides I thought it was kind of amusing all the colorful ways she used her words. My personal favorite was her combination of two insults when she told me that my head was up my ass and to eat shit and die. That was a good one.”

“Exactly what did you say to bring on such behavior?”

“I just gave her a little speech about not sleeping with any of my subordinates.”

“Did she give you a reason to give her that lecture?”

“Yes. She was beginning to flirt with me and admitted to allowing my eyes easy access to her assets this morning. I wanted to make it clear that she was barking up the wrong tree if she wanted to sleep her way to the top.”

“Do you think that was her real intent, or do you think maybe she was genuinely interested in you?”

“It doesn’t matter nor do I care, but I truly don’t know. Why do you ask?”

“It just seems to me that she is just attracted to you, not your position. All that foul language and denial was just a way for her to cover how she really felt, especially when she knew it wouldn’t be reciprocated. I thought she might have that particular interest in you when I interviewed her, because she wanted to talk about you for quite awhile during the third round. It was my idea to stick her with Kelly and you, but if that’s going to be a problem, I’ll move her right away under someone else’s supervision. I don’t need another explosion like that to occur.”

“No. It’s all right, Arthur. I can handle her. She is a real spitfire, though. Someday with experience and discretion she will make a killer attorney. Did you see the way her face ignited with that passionate energy? It was amazing.”

“Alex, are you absolutely sure you don’t want me to move her? I don’t want this to become a problem between you and Bren either.”

“What does Bren have to do with this? Why would Victoria be an issue for us?”

“Because the fire that you ignite in Victoria is the same one I see burning in your eyes. This attraction is not one-sided, and I would hate to be responsible for your downfall.”

“Arthur, first of all if I did have a downfall, it wouldn’t be your fault. Secondly, I would never do anything to hurt Bren, and lastly, you heard the woman. She wouldn’t want me if I was the last woman on earth.” Alex joked.

They both laughed for a moment. “Alex, I know this seems funny now, but I really don’t want this to become a problem. At the first sign of trouble, I want you to tell me, so I can reassign her. Deal?”

“Deal. Well, I should get back. I know Kelly is dying to know why the new girl came back with her panties in a wad, especially when she’s Kelly’s responsibility.” she mention quickly downing the rest of her sandwich.

They walked back to the office together and simply were talking and teasing each other as Alex stopped back in to the conference room. Kelly looked up from her paperwork. “Oh, I didn’t realize you were having lunch with Arthur as well.” she said, casting a quick look at Victoria. Victoria didn’t even acknowledge Alex’s entrance.

“Oh, he just stopped by briefly after Victoria left to come back here. I know she was just so anxious to get back to the work that she could barely sit still.” Alex said also looking to Victoria. She did look up for a moment and met Alex’s eyes, but her expression was unreadable. “Look, Kelly. I’m just going to finish up my part of this stuff in my office, so buzz me if you need anything.”

“Okay. Sounds good. Your help is always appreciated. I might run some thoughts by you a little later.”

“Fine. You know where to find me.”

Around five that afternoon, Alex began to prepare to go home when Kelly knocked on her door. “Do you have a minute?”

“Yeah. What’s up, Kelly?”

“What in the world could you have said to Victoria? I ran into her in the restroom when she came back from lunch, and she was a wreck, tears and mascara running down her face. It was like she’d had her heart ripped from her chest.”

“I don’t really want to talk about it. It’s between Victoria and me.”

“That’s what she said when I asked her.”

“We just got into a fight. Let it lie for now, and we’ll see if it blows over. If it doesn’t I’ll talk to her. Just give her some time. If I wasn’t the Ice Queen, what she said might have hurt my feelings too.” teased Alex.

Kelly nodded. “You just hide your emotions better, but I know whatever was said hurt your feelings. That’s why you hid in your office all afternoon. Nevertheless I’ll leave it alone if that’s what you want.”

“I do. We’ll give it a few days, and if she doesn’t show improvement, I’ll speak to her.”

“All right. Well, I can tell you were about to leave, so I’ll just get out of your way. Have a nice evening.”

When Alex arrived at home, Bren was waiting on her with dinner already prepared. “You know, you’re turning out to be quite the culinary expert.” Alex said coming to embrace Bren in a hug.

“My God. You’re as stiff as a board. Are you okay?” Bren asked in concern gently kneading Alex’s back.

“I will be if you keep doing that. My whole back and neck are rigid. I just had a bad day, but it’s improving drastically now that I’m here with you, beautiful.” Alex leaned in to kiss Bren’s neck lightly.

Bren giggled. “I’ll tell you what. Let’s eat dinner, and then we’ll get you undressed. I’ll then give you the best back massage you ever had. How does that sound?”

“You truly are the best, Bren. I don’t know what I’d do without you.”

“Probably starve. Come on. Sit down and eat something.”

Alex got to work early the next morning. Heading directly into her office, she closed the door and got directly to work. She was interrupted several hours later by a knock on her door. She yelled for them to enter and then looked up to see Victoria standing there with papers in hand. “Kelly wanted me to bring these to you.”

“Oh, okay. Thanks. How did your first day of work end yesterday?”

“Awfully.”

“Sorry to hear that. What happened?”

“I made a complete ass out of myself, and then Arthur asked to speak with me. He asked if I was

happy with my decision to come work here.”

“I assure you I had nothing to do with that. I told him to stay out of it, but he’s the boss, so it’s his prerogative. He overheard our talk yesterday at the café.”

“I was afraid of that.” she mumbled.

“As far as I’m concerned, Victoria, it’s over, in the past, finished. You apologize for your unacceptable behavior, and we might be friends. Otherwise you’re just a pain in the backside intern with whom I will have very little to do. Your choice. Feel free to make it at any time.”

“You want me to apologize? You’re the one who should apologize for sexually harassing me! It was you who brought up having sex with me to improve my position here! I shouldn’t have to apologize for being offended by that crude behavior! I was simply defending myself!”

“Defending yourself? That’s a load of garbage, Victoria! You tried to verbally degrade me in front of all those people with that abusive language! If I wasn’t such a bitch, it might’ve hurt my feelings!” Alex yelled moving around her desk toward Victoria. “You are the one that needs to apologize, Victoria!” she screamed pointing a rigid finger at the petite woman as she closed the distance, so she stood almost in Victoria’s personal space.

Victoria stared at the finger close to her face before looking up into Alex’s dark eyes. Alex stared back at those green eyes, holding such fire aimed at her. Victoria boldly stepped forward, forcing Alex to withdraw her hand before it touched Victoria’s face. They were so close that Victoria was standing on one of Alex’s feet with her pointed heel and her breasts touched Alex’s midsection. Alex was immediately distracted by the faint touch, but she held firm. Victoria sneered at her and growled, “Never demand that I apologize for what I think about something. I will never apologize for the way I feel about you, Alex Schreiber.”

Alex was caught off guard by the statement, not realizing the full extent of Victoria’s words. “Well, at least when you’re blasting me out, you’re not using obscenities. That’s an improvement over yesterday. Maybe in a few days I might get an apology out of you, but until you can act civilized toward me, get off my foot with that heel and kindly leave my office. I don’t want to see you again until you get rid of that attitude.”

“You’re the one with the attitude, Alex, an arrogant bitch attitude. No one told me about this side of you. I wish I had been warned.”

“What can I say? Guess you just bring out the worst in me, Victoria. Now get out.”

Victoria shook her head and then turned to go. Alex watched her all the way out and then discreetly watched from her office door as the little woman made her way back to the conference area. Alex sighed deeply. Trying to make amends with the woman was going to prove harder than she expected, and she briefly considered having Arthur reassign her, but she knew she couldn’t do that to Kelly. Kelly needed the extra set of hands, but she resolved to talk to Kelly. A few minutes later she got her opportunity when Kelly came to her office.

“Did you have to put Victoria through the grand inquisition again? She’s a mess. All I ask for is a little cooperation between her and you. What went awry this time?”

“Kelly, don’t tell me what to do. She doesn’t want to cooperate with me, and that is fine. Keep her out of my sight. Don’t send her to my office ever again.”

Kelly shook her head disbelievingly. “Shit. She has you all bent out of shape. You’re even being weird with me.”

Alex sighed. “I’m sorry, Kelly. She just knows how to push my buttons. I don’t know how she does it, but one sentence and she’s just under my skin like a bad itch.” she growled irritably.

Kelly laughed. “Oh, boy. I guess you’ve finally met your match, Alex. I think she feels the same way about you. You’re like two magnets repelling each other, but just like with magnets the opportunity for attraction is just as equally great.”

“I am not attracted to that little imp. She’s got the most atrocious mouth on her, and I swear she’s got the temper of a redhead. She’s breathes fire, Kelly, and I’m tired of it being directed at me for no reason. She gets one more chance, and then Arthur is going to have to find another place for her. I can’t work with her. Now I hate to do that to you, because I know you could use the help, so do both of us a favor and keep her the hell away from me.”

“I’ll keep her away from you but not for you. I’m doing this for Bren. The look in your eyes tells me that you want to get between Victoria’s thighs as badly as you’re denying it. If you weren’t engaged, you’d already be all over her. You like her hard-headedness, and you would love to be the one to break her. You know what else? She wants you between those legs of hers, to make her scream so loud the whole world would hear it. She wants to be your personal Seven-Eleven, and she can’t stand that you won’t fall for her charms.”

Alex sighed. “What am I going to do, Kelly? If it’s that obvious to you, who else in this office has picked up on that? Arthur already has.”

Kelly shrugged. “Well, if you’re lucky, maybe she hasn’t figured it out yet, but my friend, I’m afraid she has your number. She’s smart enough I think to know that you’re attracted to her. You have to watch yourself. Don’t let that snake ruin what you have with Bren.”

“Don’t worry about that. Bren means the world to me. She’s an angel. Victoria is the spawn of Satan. There’s no contest. Now do I have your word that you will keep her out of my way?”

“Yeah. She’s out of your hair permanently. I’ll make sure of that.”

“Thank you. I appreciate that.”

“No problem.”

The next month passed with Kelly playing referee between Alex and Victoria. As Alex had requested, the intern had limited access to her, so there were few altercations. As was custom for the firm, they held a summer family picnic at the country club one Sunday afternoon near July fourth. Bren and Alex arrived a little earlier to talk with the coordinator again about their own event scheduled for September, so they were already there when everyone else began arriving. Due to the casual nature of the event, most of the people were dressed in shorts, khakis and patriotic attire, including the children. As in years passed, Bren was a favored spouse among the senior partners and graciously conversed with all of them as Alex talked with other families.

Alex and Bren were talking with some of the kids when Alex noticed Victoria arrive on the arm of an athletically-built, raven-haired, blue-eyed Amazon. Bren noticed as well and inquired, "Who's that?"

"Victoria Schumann. I'll introduce you." Alex said taking Bren's hand and leading the way over to Victoria and her date. However just before they got there, Kelly beat them to it. As Alex approached with Bren, Victoria spotted them.

"Well, if it isn't Alex, the arrogant ass." she stated coolly.

Bren cast a look at Alex, at the uncharacteristic description of her fiancée. "Great use of alliteration, Victoria. You're being more creative with your insults. That's good. I would like to introduce you to my fiancée, Bren Worthington. Bren, this is Victoria Schumann."

The two blondes shook hands. "It figures that only a beauty could tame the beast. Bren, you have my respect for being able to tame this bear." she said before introducing her own date.

Bren looked at Alex in disbelief that this woman didn't have a positive regard for her fiancée. Seeing the gaze Alex said, "Bren, Victoria is our new intern. She is one of the most talented law students to ever to grace our firm, but she doesn't like me, because I call her on her bull shit. Victoria has aspirations of one day winning a verbal debate with me, and with experience and time, she will be able to do so, but until then it's Kelly's and my job to run her through the rigorous paces of being the low person on the totem pole."

"Oh, I see. Well, Victoria, I would hate to have to put up with Alex in a professional capacity. She can be quite forceful. You have my sympathies, but you must realize that under that armor, she's really quite the pushover."

"Honey, don't tell her that. She's supposed to think I'm the Queen Bitch." Alex teased. "Right, Victoria?"

Alex looked at Victoria who was just standing there with an expression Alex hadn't seen since her first day, one of awe and fascination. "Right." she mumbled faintly just looking at Alex in confusion.

"Well, I hate to break up this little pow wow, but Bren, would you mind if I snagged Alex for a few minutes to dance? After all she is by far the best dancer at the firm, and I want to get my fair

share before the ladies begin taking numbers.” Kelly joked, breaking the sudden awkwardness.

“Oh, yeah. Sure. Go ahead.” Bren said leaning up to kiss Alex’s cheek. “Stay out of trouble now.” she teased winking at her fiancée.

Alex led Kelly to the dance floor. As they began to move, Kelly asked, “What was that all about? That’s the nicest you’ve been to Victoria since she started. And what was all that bull shit about her being so good?”

“That’s not bull shit, Kelly. As much as we don’t like each other, that’s all true. She is one of the best interns we’ve had in years. Bren doesn’t need to know about all the fights I’ve had with Victoria. It would serve no purpose. She wanted me to introduce them, so obviously she thinks Victoria is interesting. She’ll form her own opinion. I’m sure Victoria is a nice person. We just can’t get along.”

A little while later Alex was dancing with Bren and Victoria with her date when Victoria’s date asked to cut in with Bren. Alex freely allowed Bren to go with the dark-haired woman, leaving her and Victoria standing on the dance floor. “Well, we should either dance or get out of the way, don’t you think?” Alex asked extending her hand to Victoria. Victoria put her hand into it, and Alex began to led them through the steps on the floor. A moment passed as Alex watched Bren before turning her eyes to Victoria. “Victoria, do you really hate me?” she asked conversationally.

“No.” she answered softly. “Do you hate me?”

“No. I don’t hate you at all, Victoria. You just frustrate me sometimes.”

“You frustrate me too, Alex.” she stated. A second passed before she inquired, “Did you mean what you said about me to Bren?”

“Yes.”

“That’s the nicest compliment I’ve ever gotten professionally. Your opinion and approval mean a lot to me, Alex. I still think you’re brilliant.”

“And I still think you are the best intern we’ve had in years. I know that one day you will surpass me in legal abilities, but it will take time, experience, and discretion. I made it clear to Arthur that I think you’re an asset to us, and when I become a senior partner, I intend to see that you are challenged to the fullest extent, because I think you’ll be able to handle it. You have so much talent inside you, Victoria. It’s a matter of channeling your abilities. You’ll have to learn not to go off half-cocked and to control that temper. You can be impassioned, and you must be in this kind of work, but you can’t throw a temper tantrum in a courtroom. You have a lot to learn, but you already have so much to work with. I think you truly have a leg up on all your fellow students, because we only take the best. You are the best, Victoria.”

“You know, Alex, I have a confession to make. One of the reasons why I worked so hard for the

internship here was because of you. When I first learned of you, you inspired me to become an attorney. I kept up with all your cases, and I wanted to be just like you. We have so much in common, and it made me feel like if you could do it so could I.”

“Well, that’s a very nice thing to say. Thank you.” Alex replied gently.

A few minutes passed before Victoria looked up at Alex again. “Alex, I’m sorry for the way I’ve acted toward you for the past month. It’s not in my nature to be as rude and insulting as I have been toward you. You see I’ve always found it very easy to turn the heads of women, and I enjoy feeling their eyes on me. It makes me feel beautiful. When I noticed you, my idol, looking at me, I felt a tremendous amount of power as well. It made me feel brave and strong. That day at the café I was some other woman that I had never seen before. I have never flirted with a supervisor in my life, but the way your eyes kept seeking out my body, it made me feel more confident. However you squashed any notion of us ever having that type of relationship. I understand why you did it, and it was right, but the way you verbally berated and brutalized me hurt my feelings so deeply. It was like you had torn my heart from my chest and stomped on it, and I could only do one of two things. I could’ve shamelessly wept in front of you, which I would’ve regretted for the rest of my life, or I could’ve turned into a raving bitch. I chose the latter, only in an effort to disguise the fact that I was wounded by your words. A simple no would’ve have been sufficient, but instead you went off on a tangent about manipulating my way to the top. It never was about trying to advance my career, Alex. It was about hoping you liked me as much I as liked you.” she mumbled progressively dropping her head lower and lower until her eyes were downcast to the floor, and Alex could barely hear her.

Alex heard her snuffle, and she felt a sympathetic pull at her heart. “Oh, Victoria, I feel like the world’s biggest jackass. I’m so sorry that I caused you such pain. I misunderstood your intentions. I just assumed that was the only reason for a woman like you to be interested me. In truth I normally don’t act the way I have the past month either. I shouldn’t have egged you on every time I saw you. It was my way of dealing with the fact that I thought you only wanted to use me. I guess my ego was stung that I didn’t think you were interested in me, just my position.”

“Alex, how could you ever think that? You’re absolutely perfect in every way, including the fact that you’re Jewish. That’s all I ever wanted in life, a nice Jewish woman to take care of me financially and to be an attorney, because I feel I can help people. I came to this firm for you, Alex. I wanted to learn everything I could about you, your style, your methods, your process. All that I wanted out of this internship was to learn from you how to be the best. Would you give me another chance, Alex? Please? It would mean a great deal to me.” she humbly said, still not meeting Alex’s eyes.

“But you were getting so good at insulting me, Victoria. You’d give all that up?” Alex joked lightly. Victoria laughed and looked up at Alex again. “Victoria, you have bestowed some great compliments upon me, and I thank you. I would also like the chance to work together again. It would bring me great pleasure to know that I had a hand in creating the next superwoman attorney for our firm. I’ll talk to Kelly about it first thing tomorrow.”



Victoria gave a bright smile. "I would hug you if it wouldn't be misconstrued as sexual harassment." she teased.

On Monday morning Alex was greeted in her office by Victoria who handed her a cup of coffee. "Just a little peace offering." she said with a smile. "What's first on the agenda?"

"Same as usual but with Kelly's permission, you'll be spending more time under my tutelage."

"I can hardly wait. Thanks, Alex. This means a lot to me."

Over the next few weeks Alex had to stay late to assist Kelly with the case. Since she had been spending more time at home, Bren was understanding of the extended hours at work. During those times Victoria was a willing assistant as well, relishing all the extra time she got to spend learning from some of the industry's best. One night Alex and Victoria stayed later than everyone else due to the fact that Alex sent Kelly, who at that point was a walking zombie from overwork, home for a decent night's rest. The cleaning crew were the only people left in the office as the two of them poured over the work that they promised Kelly they would finish. Alex was lounging on her couch as she read over several briefs, but a headache was impeding her from fully grasping what she was trying to mentally process. Pulling her reading glasses up to the top of her head, she rubbed her eyes for a moment. She cast a glance over at Victoria, who had taken up residence at her desk. Her eyes roamed over the unaware blonde, who was diligently typing. Victoria had taken off her suit jacket, leaving her in a short-sleeved green silk blouse that matched her eyes perfectly and a linen skirt. Somewhere along the line she had grown tired of her hair being down and swept it up off her neck into a bun being held by a pencil. Her heels had been discarded haphazardly hours ago near Alex's black loafers by the front of the bookcase. Alex sighed at how sexy she thought Victoria looked at the moment, knowing that she was still a temptation. The sigh caught Victoria's attention, and she turned to look at Alex.

"You okay?" she asked softly.

"I have a terrible headache. Nothing has helped. I took aspirin, caffeine but nothing."

"What about water? Maybe you're dehydrated." Alex shrugged. "Here. I'll get you some." Victoria offered going to Alex's mini-fridge. She brought the older woman a small bottle of water and took a seat next to her. "Where does it hurt?" Alex rubbed her temples and forehead. "Why don't you close your eyes for a few minutes while you drink this water? Maybe that will help." Alex took the suggestion, leaning her head back against the couch and slumping down comfortably. She spread her legs out and put her heels against the floor to stretch her calves. After a moment she felt Victoria's fingertips against her temples. Alex began to protest, but Victoria whispered, "Just relax, Alex. Let me help you."

Alex could feel Victoria's body pressed against hers as Victoria leaned over her. Her fingers were working wonders though as the ache began to recede. Alex was beginning to relax further into the couch and hardly noticed as Victoria straddled her thigh, so they were facing each other completely in order to get a better angle for the massage. Alex could feel herself slipping from consciousness as the massage continued down her neck and shoulders. She didn't even realize it

had stopped as Victoria just stared at her in longing. Suddenly Alex was roused from sleep by a pair of lips against her forehead. Alex opened her eyes to the supple neck she had been admiring minutes before as Victoria's perfume assaulted her senses. Alex automatically wrapped her arms around Victoria's waist as the lips trailed over her temples. Even though she should have known, Alex was surprised when Victoria's mouth met with hers. Alex groaned as her desire flared, and she responded to Victoria's gentle probing. Bringing their bodies together, Alex dove passed Victoria's lips, making the younger woman moan in pleasure. A few minutes passed before Alex felt Victoria moving Alex's hands from around her back to her silk-covered breasts. Alex gasped and pulled back. Victoria was straddled across her lap, looking so soft and feminine.

Alex took a moment to control her breathing. "Oh, Victoria. You have no idea how many times I've thought of this since you came to work here. You look so sexy and irresistible right now, and if I wasn't engaged, I would already be well on my way to laying you out on this couch and showing you how you affect me, but I am engaged. I promised Bren that I would only be with her, and she trusts me. I can't break that trust. She takes my word as my honor, and my word is my most important asset with her. You truly are a goddess, a vision, and I am flattered beyond belief that you find me attractive. Please, Victoria, have mercy on this old woman. Please try to understand that I can only make love to you in my fantasies. I couldn't face Bren if I violated her faith in me."

Victoria dropped her face into her hands. "I'm so sorry, Alex. I don't know what got into me. I'm just drawn to you. I ache for your hands on my body, Alex. I fantasize about you making love to me every night, and I long to feel the reality. I need to feel you inside of me, Alex, taking me passed that edge over and over again." she whispered leaning in to Alex's mouth again.

Alex's pulse was racing at Victoria's word and lips. Her weakened defenses followed for a few more minutes before she forced herself away a second time. "So help me, Victoria, I'm only human. If I do this, it would destroy me emotionally. Physically I'd be sated, but I couldn't carry the emotional baggage of an adulterous fling. Please, Victoria. I beg you. Let me be. I couldn't face you or Bren if I did this."

Victoria slowly nodded and stood. "I've just made a fool out of myself with you again." she mumbled in embarrassment as she stood looking out the window.

"No, Victoria, you didn't. I'm telling you. The only reason I am not doing this is because I'm engaged. If I wasn't I would be honored to be with you." Alex said standing and moving to her. She put her hands on Victoria's shoulders and gently squeezed them. Victoria moaned in appreciation. Alex closed the gap between them as she pulled Victoria into her arms, so the blonde's back was in her chest and rested her head on top of Victoria's. She sighed deeply. "Victoria, this is extremely difficult for me. You are so beautiful and so smart. You're witty and charming. You really are a magnificent specimen of femininity, and I am completely attracted to you whenever you're near. I do want you desperately. I've thought it about what it would be like to be with you at the most inappropriate moments, and I've felt horribly guilty. Victoria, I pride myself on being an honorable person and knowing that my word is as binding as any legal document. I gave my word to Bren that I would forsake all others to be with her, and come September, those same words will become a vow of fidelity. I've known Bren for over four years

and most of that time I was in love with her. I am still in love with her, and I will continue to be in love with her for the rest of my life. Even if we were together for a night, I would still choose to be with Bren when it was said and done. You deserve better than to play second best, Victoria. You deserve a woman who loves you completely. I'm sorry that it can't be me."

A moment passed before Victoria gently pushed Alex away from her and said, "I need to leave if that's all right."

"Sure. It's getting late. We should both call it a night. I'll finish this stuff up at home. I'll walk you to your car."

"No. That's okay. I'll see myself out. You stay here and work. I know you still have a lot to do."

"Are you sure?"

"Yeah. I'm sure. I'll see you tomorrow."

As soon as Victoria left, Alex began to gather her things as well, knowing that she just didn't have the ability to work any longer that night. Heading out to the parking garage, she made her way to her car and got in. She was on her way down the winding garage when she noticed a little sports car with the driver's side door open, but there was no one in sight. Alex drove by it slowly as she overlooked the situation, but just as she passed the car, she noticed the lithe blonde lying face down against the pavement unmoving. Instantly Alex's heart froze as she quickly exited her own vehicle. "Victoria!" she screamed making a cautious approach.

Victoria just moaned incoherently. Alex looked around, not seeing anyone, so she knelt down next to her co-worker. "Victoria, can you move at all? What happened?"

"Alex." she mumbled.

"Yeah. I'm right here. Can you sit up?" she asked extended her hands to the woman. Victoria made her way into a sitting position against her car. When Alex saw her face, she gasped at the disfiguration. "What happened?"

"I was getting in my car, and next thing I know there was a person grabbing at my bag. We struggled. He was so much bigger than me. He knocked me down and took off with my purse." she sobbed.

Alex brought her into a hug. "It's going to be all right. This is my fault. I shouldn't have let you walk out here alone. I'm so sorry. I'm going to call the police and the night time guard. There are cameras in the garage, so maybe they caught it on tape. Don't worry. I'll take care of you. Just lean into me." she instructed as she dug out her cell phone from her pocket and called the appropriate authorities.

When they arrived Victoria was standing on her own, but she still held fastly to Alex for safety as they talked with the police. It was a couple hours before they could leave the scene, and when

they were allowed to go, Victoria was hesitant to leave Alex's side. Being sensitive to the woman's needs, Alex offered to drive her home. The ride was quiet except for Victoria's directions. After they got there, Alex escorted her up to her apartment.

"Thank you for the ride, Alex." she mumbled.

"You're welcome. Are you going to be okay?"

"I'm scared. That bastard knows where I live now, because he has my driver's license. I wish I didn't have to be here alone."

"I'll tell you what. Why don't I come in, and we'll check everything out together to make sure you're safe before I go. Okay?" Victoria nodded her consent. Together they entered the studio apartment. Alex looked around, but there was no real place for anyone to be hiding except in the bathroom, which was quickly investigated. When Alex returned Victoria was slumped down onto the couch shaking. Alex came to her. "It's going to be all right." she assured her, embracing Victoria tightly against her chest. "We're the only ones here. Everything is as it should be."

"I don't want to stay here alone, Alex. Please don't leave." she cried.

Alex sighed. "I can't stay, but you could come back to my place with me. Why don't you do that? We'll pack up some of your things that you'll need for work, and then you can spend the night with me."

"No." she cried. "Please, Alex. Just stay here with me."

Alex sighed, torn between staying with Victoria and returning home to Bren's arms. "All right, but I need to call to Bren. She is expecting me, so I need to tell her I won't be home." Alex withdrew from Victoria's embrace and moved into the kitchen area to make the phone call. The conversation with Bren wasn't really pleasant, but in the end Bren understood Alex's reasoning. She just made it clear that she didn't like having to be without her at night but allowed Alex to do what she thought was for the best. When Alex came back to the couch, Victoria had changed into her pajamas, light green silk pajama pants and short sleeved top. "Well, it's getting late. Why don't we just go ahead and try to get some sleep?" she suggested.

"I'll get you something to sleep in." Victoria offered moving to her dresser. She pulled out a t-shirt and a pair of boxer shorts. "These are the largest I have. I'm not used to having to dress giants." she joked.

Alex took them and moved into the bathroom to change. The shorts were slightly too small but bearable, so Alex tugged the t-shirt down over her backside before leaving the bathroom. Crossing her arms she said, "Do you have an extra blanket for the couch?"

"Yeah but I just thought you could sleep in the bed with me. There's enough room for both of us."

“Oh, no, Victoria. That’s suicidal on my part. There is no way I can sleep in the same bed with you. The couch is where I belong.”

“All right. It was just a suggestion.” she said digging linens out of her closet for Alex. Victoria quickly made a bed on the sofa before turning to Alex. “Would it be too much to ask you to hold me while I fall asleep?” she inquired softly.

Alex knew she couldn’t say no to the request, especially when Victoria looked so scared and vulnerable. “All right but just for a few minutes.”

Victoria led her over to the queen bed, and Victoria climbed under the covers. Alex made herself comfortable on the outside before turning out the lights and bringing Victoria into her arms. A few moments passed before Victoria whispered, “Thank you for staying, Alex. I always feel so much safer when you’re near.”

“You’re welcome. Go to sleep now. I’ll keep you safe.”

Alex awoke later that night to the feeling of Victoria snuggling up closer to her. Realizing that she had fallen asleep on top of Victoria’s bed, she began to try to extricate herself from Victoria’s embrace, but as she began to move, the blonde held tighter whimpering. After a moment the whimpers turned to cries of distress as Victoria began screaming for Alex in her sleep.

“Victoria, Victoria, it’s okay. I’m here. Wake up.” Alex whispered trying to shake Victoria out of her nightmare. It took a few moments of coaxing before Victoria awoke with a startled scream, sitting upright. “It’s all right, Victoria. It was just a bad dream.” Alex said softly, embracing her in consoling arms and kissing the top of her head.

“It was so real, Alex. He broke in to my apartment, and he... he...” she cried.

“Shh. It’s okay. As long as I’m here, he won’t hurt a hair on your pretty head. I won’t let him.”

Victoria wrapped her arms around Alex’s neck and buried her head in the crook as she trembled in fear from her nightmare. “I’m scared, Alex.”

“I know, but I’m here to protect you, sweetie. If he even comes near you, I’ll tear him apart. You have nothing to worry about. He can’t get through me.”

Victoria nodded. “Thank you for being here, Alex. You make me feel protected.” she said looking into Alex’s eyes through the darkness.

Alex smiled at her as she combed Victoria’s blonde hair back off her face. “It’s my pleasure, sweetie.” They continued to stare at each other as Alex kept stroking Victoria’s hair. Victoria leaned into the caress as Alex’s fingertips brushed along her swollen cheek before dropping to her cracked lower lip.

Victoria dropped her head forward away from Alex's gaze. "Don't look at me in pity, Alex. It makes me feel ugly."

"Oh, Victoria. I can't help it. He really hurt you, and he demolished your beautiful face. If I ever find out who did this to you, I'm going to give him a lesson on how to treat women. I'm going to give him a beating that he'll never forget."

"I wish you didn't have to see me like this. I've always tried to look perfect for you."

"You still are beautiful, Victoria. Nothing can change that." Alex whispered leaning to kiss Victoria's bruised cheek. Alex repeated it over the entire area, but then with a slight movement, Victoria and Alex's lips met in a tender kiss. Alex wasn't sure who moaned first, but all too soon they were engaged in fervent lip locks as they settled down in the bed. Repressed emotions overtook them both as they took in each others bodies with their hands and mouths. Alex showered Victoria's neck and chest with kisses as the little blonde clung to her, crying out in increasing ardor as Alex attended to the breasts she'd only seen in her dreams. As Victoria's hips rocked more erratically into her midsection, Alex became more impassioned. Her hand slipped down between Victoria's legs to the top of her thighs. Victoria gasped as Alex began to tease her in a circular pattern and met every thrust that Victoria's body made. Alex brought Victoria up to her peak until Victoria was begging to be pushed over the climatic edge. In desperation Victoria grabbed Alex by the wrist and shoved Alex's hand down the front of her pajama pants to get more intimate contact. Alex shuddered at the feeling of Victoria hot and wet for her. Alex thrust herself into Victoria with her whole body as she sunk into the depths of the younger woman. Victoria rode out the pinnacle of her pleasure impaled on Alex. As Victoria's body contracted and pulsated around her, Alex instantly knew she had made a the worst mistake of her life. Carefully she withdrew from Victoria's body as not to hurt her and rolled off the blonde onto her back. Immediately Victoria curled up next to her as her breathing began to even out. Neither said a word. Alex laid awake the rest of the night holding Victoria as she slept.

At six that morning Alex slipped out of Victoria's apartment, leaving her sound asleep. Going home Alex prepared to tell her fiancée of the indiscretion, but when she got up to the bedroom, Bren was still asleep. Alex laid down next to her and just watched her. Alex began to cry as she gazed at Bren lying peacefully, unaware of the torment that consumed Alex's soul. Curling up around her, Alex held Bren closely until Bren began to stir.

When Bren turned in her arms and opened her eyes, she whispered, "What's wrong, sweetie?"

Alex didn't say anything at first as she just pulled Bren closer. "I love you so much, Bren. I could never handle it if I lost you."

"You won't. I love you too, Alex. You'll never be without me. I'm here to stay. What has you so upset this morning?" Alex moved back a little to look into Bren's face, but before she could confess, Bren noticed the dried blood on her shirt. "Oh my God. You're bleeding."

Alex looked to where Bren's eyes were focused. "No. That's not my blood. It's Victoria's. That jerk really beat her up badly. It was so scary to see her like that. I wouldn't have been able to

handle it if it had happened to you.”

“Oh. So that’s what has you so emotional. All I can tell you, Alex, is that hopefully it never will. I’ve been mugged before, and it’s not a pleasant experience, but it’s not the end of the world either. I was able to move on, and Victoria will too. You’ll see. You’re such a tender-hearted woman, Alex. That’s one of the reasons why I love you so much.” Bren said leaning in for a kiss. Alex surrendered to the feeling that Bren stirred in her as they began to kiss more deeply. In her mind Alex decided right then that she couldn’t tell Bren in fear of all that she would lose. Pulling Bren into a tighter embrace, Alex lavished her most intimate attention on her fiancée. They made love for hours before tiring. Wrapped in each others arms, they were quiet for a moment. “You know, as much as I’m loving this, don’t you have to get to work?” Bren asked.

“Yeah.” regretfully Alex mumbled. “I don’t want to go, though. I just want to call in sick, so I can stay here with you.”

“Can you really do that?” Bren asked hopefully.

“I wish, but I swore to Kelly I would have this stuff done for her by today, and I couldn’t finish it last night like I had planned because of what happened. I really need to go in at some point. I should go ahead and get up.”

“Well, maybe I could help you in the shower? Would that make you feel better?”

“That sounds wonderful.”

As they moved to take their shower, Bren noticed the scratches on Alex’s back. “Baby, I’m so sorry. Why didn’t you tell me I was hurting your back?”

“What are you talking about?”

“I completely scratched it up. I don’t remember doing that this time, but I must have in my zeal to have you inside of me.” she said seductively as she kissed along Alex’s muscular back. “It’s just that you make love to me so well that I am always anxious for you.”

Alex moaned at Bren’s mouth on her skin, but in the back of her mind it registered that it was in fact Victoria who had clawed at her back during sex, not her beloved Bren. “You know, I didn’t even notice either. I just am always anxious to feel you that you could probably do anything to me, and I wouldn’t notice anything but you.” she joked as she turned around to face Bren. “I love you, Bren. You complete my life.”

When Alex arrived at work, Kelly immediately saw her. “Hey. Where have you been? Where’s that stuff I needed?”

“I haven’t finished it yet. I’ll have it to you by this afternoon. There was an incident last night in the garage with Victoria, so I spent a few hours with the police instead of working. She got mugged as she tried to leave. I was heading home myself to finish it up when I found her half-

unconscious.”

“So that’s why she isn’t here. Is she okay?”

“Not really. She was beaten up badly and she’s an emotional wreck right now. I ended up staying the night at her house, because she was too scared to be alone. I hardly got any sleep.”

“I bet Bren wasn’t too thrilled either.”

“No. I had to make up for it this morning. Anyway, I have to talk to Arthur about what happened, and then I’ll finish that stuff up. It’ll just take me a couple of hours. You’ll have it by 2:00. Okay?”

“Yeah. Okay. I’ve got more than enough to work on.”

Alex tried to go about work as normal, but her mind was on Victoria, so she finally called her that afternoon. “I woke up, and you were gone.” Victoria stated.

“I had to get home to dress for work. How are you?”

“Okay. Did you see Bren?”

“Yeah.”

“Did you tell her what happened?”

“No. I couldn’t hurt her that way, Victoria. I love her, and I wouldn’t bring her pain by telling her that. It would only devastate her, and I’m the one who should bare this pain alone. I deserve it.”

“So, what about what happened? Where does that leave us?”

“Victoria, I told you last night that regardless of what happened, I am still going to marry Bren. I love her, and I want to be with her for the rest of my life.”

“But that was before you had sex with me.”

“My feelings on the subject haven’t changed, Victoria.”

“Oh. I see. So, you just thought playing with my emotions was okay then?” she inquired rhetorically. “Alex, you had sex with me. This isn’t like we made out at the office or anything. We shared a bed. Did you think I would be fine with you fucking me and then running back to Bren?”

“Victoria, you can’t blame this all on me. You were there too. You wanted me to sleep with you. I didn’t have to convince you. It was you who was doing the seducing, too well I might add. You



set me up by pretending to be scared, so that I would stay the night.”

“I was scared, Alex. I wasn’t pretending, and I did feel safer with you here.”

“Victoria, I’m sorry if you thought something else would become of last night. I can’t give you what you want. I’m committed to Bren.”

“Yeah right. You’re not that committed if you slept with me.”

“I’m serious, Victoria. I cannot have a relationship with you, and I’m sorry if I led you to believe I could.”

“Fine. Apology noted but not accepted, Alex. You’ve hurt my feelings again. It’s going to take some time to get over that. I’m taking tomorrow off as well. Arthur and I already talked about it, so I’ll be back in first thing Monday. Please don’t check up on me again. I’d rather not talk to you right now.”

When Alex returned home that evening, Bren was awaiting with dinner as usual. As appreciative as Alex was, her mood was darkened by what had taken place. She kept thinking about Victoria and how awful she felt for betraying Bren’s trust, especially when her sweet fiancée was as cheerful and attentive as ever. Over dinner Bren asked several times if she was okay, but Alex couldn’t bring herself to admit her guilt. She knew Bren sensed the uneasiness surrounding her, but since Alex didn’t say anything, they spent most of their night in awkward silence.

The next morning Bren was up early with Alex making them breakfast. She kept trying to coax Alex into talking, but Alex refused, knowing that her admission would only hurt her beloved. At the end of breakfast that morning, Alex took Bren into her arms and held her in silence for several minutes before expressing her deepest love and devotion for her. Kissing Bren thoroughly Alex left for work with the weight of the world on her shoulders.

Arriving at work, she retreated directly into her office where she remained most of the day off in her own thoughts until a knock roused her from her self-pity. Kelly came in and studied her for a moment. “Are you having problems with Bren?” she asked in concern as she closed the door and moved to her friend.

“I don’t want to talk about it, Kelly.” Alex mumbled turning to look out the window.

“Alex, something is bothering you. You’re a wreck. I can see it in your eyes. I’m just trying to be a friend and give you a ear to listen to you.”

There was quiet for a moment before Alex asked, “Kelly, have you ever done something so completely horrible, and you knew right when it happened it was the worst mistake you had ever made in your entire life?”

“What did you do, Alex?” Kelly inquired softly moving to the same side of the desk.

Alex ignored the question at first. “Have you ever loved someone so much that you knew you couldn’t tell them, because you were afraid it would destroy them?”

Kelly put her hands on the arms of Alex’s chair and turned it around to try to see Alex’s face. “What did you do, Alex?”

Alex looked up at her with tears streaming down her face. “I ruined my life.” she sobbed.

“How? What happened?”

“Victoria.” Alex mumbled dropping her head.

“Oh no. You didn’t. Tell me you didn’t have sex with Victoria.”

Alex was quiet for a moment but then whispered, “That night she was mugged, I stayed with her at her apartment.”

“Does Bren know what happened?”

Alex shook her head. “You aren’t going to tell her, are you? Please don’t tell her.” she pleaded.

Kelly knelt down next to her friend. “I swear I won’t say a word to her. That’s what’s wrong though, isn’t it? You feel guilty, and it’s eating you up inside.”

Alex nodded. “I can’t tell her, Kelly. I love her, and I don’t want to hurt her. I deserve this suffering, not her.”

“But it’s not right to be deceitful with her either.”

“It would hurt her too much, Kelly. She would leave me. I couldn’t bear it if she left me. Every time I look at her I feel that much worse. I don’t know if I can go on this way.”

“I’m sorry, Alex. I don’t know what to tell you, but I won’t tell her. You have my word. She’ll never hear it from me. You just need to think about why you’re keeping it from her. Is it for her or yourself? I have to get back to work. Come find me if you want to talk some more. Okay?”

Alex nodded but kept her gaze out her window as her tears continued to fall. Due to her work schedule, Alex had to stay late that day and called Bren to let her know. Since Bren wasn’t at home, she simply left her a message and then tried to go about her work. Alex finally got home after ten that night. When she went into the house, it was dark and quiet. Being that Bren was almost always home when she got there, Alex was surprised. She began to call for Bren as she moved through the house, but there was no answer. Alex went up into the bedroom and immediately called Bren on her cell phone but as it rang, she heard Bren’s phone ringing from in the bathroom. In confusion, Alex went in there to see it sitting on the counter. Next to it was Bren’s house key and her engagement ring. Picking up the ring, panic struck Alex. She looked around the bathroom to see that Bren’s belongings had been removed. Alex hurried over to the

closet and threw open the doors. Bren's side was completely bare except for the exquisite wedding gown that Alex had purchased for Bren to wear on their special day. She moved back into the bedroom to the dresser and ripped the drawers open, but Bren's clothes were gone. Alex could feel her heart sinking as she hurried back down to the kitchen to where Bren normally kept her phone book, but it wasn't there. Since Alex didn't know any of Bren's friends phone numbers off the top of her head, she called Bren's mother.

"Have you seen or heard from Bren?" Alex asked hysterically.

"Alex, hello. Bren thought you might call here looking for her."

"Where is she? What did she say to you? Why did she move out of the house?" she asked in a rush.

"Alex, I can't answer that. I can't get involved. You need to speak to her about it."

"Where is she? I'd talk to her if I could find her."

"I can't tell you where she is, Alex. She asked me not to."

"Is she with one of her friends? Is she safe? Tell me what's going on!" Alex yelled in alarm.

"Alex, Bren is safe. She is with a friend. When I heard from her, she was upset and crying. She said she was leaving you, but when I asked her why, she wouldn't tell me. I don't know what's going on either, Alex. I do know that she's in a safe place with friends. I wish I could tell you more."

"Shit! Did she leave you with a phone number?"

"No. She said she wouldn't, because she knew you'd call here, and she didn't want me to have to lie to you and say I didn't have it when I did. What could've happened, Alex? I thought you two were so happy together."

"I have an idea, but I need to talk to her first. I need an answer! I deserve that much after all that I've done for her! Just because I royally fucked up doesn't give her the right just to abandon me without so much as a word! She owes me an explanation!"

"Alex, calm down. I don't know what happened, but I can imagine. Bren wouldn't leave you for something minor. I sense that there is another woman involved. I don't know which one of you strayed, and furthermore it's not my business, but it seems to me that would be the only reason she would just take off this way."

"Fuck! Dammit to hell! You have to tell me where she is!"

"I do not know, Alex. I swear it to you. She refused to tell me." Alex sighed deeply and took a moment to collect herself. "Alex, listen to me. Relationships are hard, and sometimes they don't

work, but you and Bren have something special. I can only imagine what you did, but I know that she loves you more than anyone else in this world. I've never heard such pain in her voice when I spoke to her. As a mother I felt helpless to hear her that way. Her heart has been broken, and she was desperate and hopeless. She's left everything behind, her home, her belongings, her heart and just walked away. The pain that emanated from her voice was too much for me to even bear. I want so badly to take that pain away from her, but you're the only one who can. You've torn her heart into a million pieces, but I know you're the only one that can mend it again. Without you she'll just go through the motions, but her spirit will not thrive. Do whatever you have to, Alex, to get her back. You're her lifeline and have been for years. She needs you."

"I need her." Alex mumbled. Alex talked with Bren's mother for several more minutes before finally hanging up the phone. Dialing Kelly's number, she waited for her friend to answer.

"Alex, what a surprise. What's up?" she asked conversationally.

"Kelly, did you tell Bren about Victoria?" she inquired in defeat.

"No. I promised you I wouldn't. Why? What's wrong?" Kelly asked in immediate concern.

"Bren's gone. She's left me. When I came home, she wasn't here, and all her things are gone. I found her ring in the bathroom. She's just gone, no note, no explanation, nothing."

"You mean she just left? You don't know where she is?"

"No. I called her mom, but she doesn't know either. I don't know the numbers of any of her friends or where they live. She took her phone book with her, so I can't call anyone. Her mother said she had talked to her and that she was safe, but Bren wouldn't tell her where she was. I don't understand it. I didn't tell her, and if you didn't tell her, how could she have found out?"

"Oh no." Kelly mumbled.

"What?" Alex asked curiously.

"Victoria. Yesterday she called me and asked for your home number. She said she wanted to call Bren to thank her for letting you stay the other night. She sounded okay over the phone. I didn't know what had happened at the time. I gave her the number. You don't think she would've called Bren and told her, do you?"

"Anything is possible. She was pretty upset with me yesterday when I talked to her on the phone. I told her that I couldn't have a relationship with her and that it had been a mistake. She didn't take that too well."

"Oh, Alex. I'm so sorry. I didn't know. I didn't mean to cause trouble for you and Bren."

"It's okay. It's not your fault, Kelly. You didn't know, and you shouldn't have to cover for me. Victoria had to have told her. She was the only other person who knew."

“That bitch. How could she do that? How could she call up Bren and tell her that she slept with you? Poor Bren. I can just imagine it. Victoria’s cold, callous voice, practically throwing it in Bren’s face. You know she was as malicious as she could possibly be.”

“She had to have called her sometime today. When I left this morning, Bren was being so attentive and caring. She got up early and made me breakfast. She held my hand through the entire meal, trying to get me to talk about what was wrong. It must have been a crushing blow to find out over the phone from Victoria. Dammit. Why did I do this? Why didn’t I admit it to her? It would’ve hurt her all the same, but at least she would know that I was still honorable. Now I’m just a cheating, lying asshole. I played her, and I bet she feels like a fool, because I got out of Victoria’s bed that morning and went straight home into her arms. She was totally open and responsive to my advances, and we made love for hours. She was so trusting of me and kept telling me how much she loved me, because I helped Victoria. I just cried the whole time as I loved her. My guilt was too much to bear. My emotions just overtook me, because I knew I had made a terrible mistake, and I couldn’t tell for fear of losing her love. I was such a fool. I don’t deserve a woman like Bren. She’s too good for the likes of a jerk like me. She deserves better, and I know I’ll envy the woman who sweeps her off her feet for good.” Alex mumbled.

“Alex, don’t give up. Maybe you can work through this.” Kelly said hopefully.

“No. She’s gone, and it’s better for her this way. I never deserved the chance to be with her. She’s too good for a slime like me. I just would’ve corrupted and hurt her the way I did Megan. She’s better off without me.”

“Alex, don’t talk like that. She’s nothing like Megan. Megan was a bitch, and she was corrupted long before she met you. You’ve never brought any harm to Bren, only helped her in every way you knew. You helped her through high school, college. You facilitated the reconciliation with her mother. You gave her a chance at life, Alex. Without you, she’d still be on the streets of New York without a future and without a family. She’s everything she is because of you. You made her this wonderful woman. She’s got to know that. She’s got to sense an obligation to you after all you’ve done.”

“I don’t want her to feel obligated to be with me for those things. I don’t want her to feel like she needs to be with me for any other reason than that she loves me. I love her, Kelly, and I want her to be happy. Maybe it’s for the best that it’s not with me.”

“Don’t give up on her, Alex. You can work this out.”

Alex gave a depressed sigh. “What am I going to do about Victoria? How am I going to work with her? Do I let her see what she did to me, or do I pretend everything is fine?”

“I don’t think there’s an option, Alex. You can’t pretend everything is normal. You’re good at hiding your feelings, but you aren’t that good. I think I should talk to Arthur about getting her removed.”

“Kelly, don’t do that. I appreciate your concern, but this is my own fault for being too weak. I deserve to suffer the consequences of my actions.”

“Fine but I’m pulling rank here. You’re going to needlessly torture yourself, and I won’t have it. I’m seeing that she gets removed from our supervision. I don’t want anything to do with her, because I might kill her on your behalf for doing this to you and Bren. I know what’s best for you, Alex.”

“Thanks for caring, Kelly. I’m glad I have you for a friend.”

“Anytime, Alex. Are you going to be okay alone? Do you want me to come over?”

“No. I’m afraid I won’t be much company right now. I think I just need to sit here and contemplate my life for awhile. I need to figure out how to move forward if I can.”

“All right but I’m just a phone call away if you need me. Don’t hesitate. If you need anything at all, give me a call. I don’t think you should go through this alone.”

“I’ll manage, Kelly. I brought this on myself, and now I must accept my fate.”

“Okay. I’ll call you tomorrow. All right?”

“Okay. Good night.”

Alex ended up drinking herself into a stupor after hanging up with Kelly until she passed out on the couch. Alex was in a daze for the rest of the weekend as she just sat in silence on her sofa. She didn’t eat, shower, change, or even sleep until alcohol forced her into slumber. Finally when Monday morning came, she decided to try to go to work.

Continued Part 5:

**The Athenaeum's Scroll Archive**

---

## ~ Second Chances ~

by Alex Tryst

Copyright © October 2000

**Disclaimers:** These characters are of my own creation. This story does include sexual situations involving consenting adult women (and lots of them). If you are offended by this type of material or it is illegal where you live, it’s best to turn back now. 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.....

## Part 5

She arrived for the partner meeting that day and stumbled in ten minutes late. All heads turned to her as she fell through the door still buzzed from all the alcohol she had consumed over the weekend. "Alex, glad you could join us." Arthur mentioned.

"Sorry I'm late." she mumbled dropping into a chair at the end of the table. Her co-workers were assaulted by the stench of dirty clothes and alcohol pouring off of her. Arthur furrowed his brow in displeasure and confusion at his prized attorney. "Okay. We'll go on now." he said going back to his original point. Alex fiddled around with her papers a moment before mumbling to herself as she searched her jacket pockets in irritation. The rustling broke Arthur's attention again. Turning a scowl on Alex, he asked, "What's the problem, Alex?"

"I can't find my damn glasses." she grumbled.

Kelly dropped her head into her hands at Alex's uncharacteristic behavior. "They're on top of your head, Alex." she answered for the group.

"How in the hell did they get there?" Alex asked no one in particular.

"Alex, maybe I should get you a cup of coffee?" Kelly suggested.

"That'd be nice."

"Hold the bourbon this time, Kelly. I don't think Alex needs to be drinking any more." Arthur stated coming within smelling distance of Alex.

"Fuck off, Arthur." Alex snapped glaring at him.

After a collective gasp from everyone, the room fell completely silent. Arthur slowly made his way over to where Alex was sitting. Putting his hands down on the table in front of her, he leaned over so they were nose to nose. "Counselor Schreiber, you are dismissed from this meeting. I don't want to see you again until you've sobered up. I am going to excuse this horrendous behavior on account of your wife leaving you, but if you ever cross me again, Alex, there will be serious consequences. Don't force me to make you take a leave of absence. It's not good for you or us, but if you keep this up, I'll have no choice."

Alex stood to her almost six feet and glared at the entire group. "Screw it. I don't need any of you, and I don't want to be here any more if you keep Victoria Schumann."

“Ms. Schumann?” questioned Arthur.

“Yeah, Victoria! Don’t pretend you don’t know what I’m talking about, Arthur! If you knew Bren left me, then you know why! I’m sure Kelly fucking told you the whole story!”

Arthur looked at Kelly and then back at Alex. “Alex, that part wasn’t any of my business, but she did tell me. You don’t know how sorry we all are that Bren left you, but I can’t let you be here like this.”

“The hell it isn’t your business! You knew this could happen! You even told me so! Why didn’t you stop me?”

“Stop you? Alex, who you sleep with is none of my business! I couldn’t have kept you from between Victoria’s thighs if I even tried! You wanted that ass since you saw it, and now you’re paying the consequences! It’s not my fault you can’t keep your trousers up! It’s also not my fault that Victoria keeps her legs open and skirt up around her waist! I warned you, because I didn’t want to see you get hurt, but you didn’t listen to me! You’re an adult, Alex! You did what you damn well pleased!”

Silence continued to plague the room of attorneys as they just stared at her in disappointment. Alex looked around the room at the shocked faces. Trying to stand tall, she picked up her belongings. Turning to address her audience, she mumbled dejectedly, “Well, now you all know. You’re golden girl is nothing but a failure. I fucked the intern, and my Bren left me because of it. Now if you’ll excuse me, I’ll be in my office trying not to screw up any other lives.”

Alex went into her office and slammed the door so loudly the windows shook. Pulling open her filing cabinet, she grabbed the whiskey she kept hidden in there and took a big swig directly from the bottle. Falling into her chair, she started to cry. Alex spent the rest of the day alone in her office. No one dared come in to speak to her, and she took no calls. As day turned to night, Alex decided to stay at work, because she couldn’t bear to go home to the emptiness. Pulling out the double bed from her foldout couch, Alex crashed there for the night as the booze once again lulled her into unconsciousness.

The next morning she awoke to a knocking on her door. “Go way.” she mumbled not looking up.

“Alex, I want to talk to you for a minute.” Arthur stated.

Alex turned over and propped herself up on her elbow as he entered and closed the door behind him. Coming over to her, he took a seat on the foldout. “You know, Alex, I’ve always thought of you as more of my child than employee. It’s true that I’ve made it known that you’re my go to girl. I’ve given you breaks that no one else has gotten, but they were well-deserved. It hurts me to see you like this.”

“Arthur, I’m sorry for the way I acted yesterday. I was totally out of line.”



“Yeah, you were, but even when you were cursing at me, I could see the pain in your eyes. I said some things I didn’t mean as well. Your love life really is none of my business, and it was wrong of me to chastize you about it, especially in front of the other partners. As I said I feel like your father at times, and my concerns are that of more than your boss. You mean so much to me, Alex, as an employee and as a friend. I’m sorry that things didn’t work out with Bren.”

“It’s my fault. You were right. I can’t keep my pants on. I let a woman like Victoria destroy everything I ever wanted in my entire life. I could blame her, but I know it’s my own doing. I am responsible for my own downfall. Kelly would like to try to pin this on Victoria, but I know it’s my own weakness. Victoria might be a temptress, but in the end, it was my decision to go down that road. I’ll admit I didn’t think it through. If I had Bren would still be here with me.”

“Well, you live and learn, Alex. I really don’t like seeing you this way. To be frank you look like shit, and you smell even worse. I think it might be a good idea for you to take some time off.”

“I don’t want to, Arthur. I can’t stand being in that house without her.”

“I know, but you have to understand that I can’t have you here at work drunk, unbathed, and in general disarray. I think you need time to pull yourself together.”

“Arthur, please don’t put me on leave. I need to work. It’s the only thing I have left.”

Arthur sat in thought for a moment. “I’ll make you a deal. Half days for awhile, and if you come in here drunk, know that I’m going to send you home.”

Alex nodded. “Okay. I understand.”

“Good. Now why don’t you sleep this latest hang over off, and then when you wake up, go home. I’ll have all your calls diverted for the rest of the day. We’ll see you tomorrow, and we’ll try again. This is going to take time, Alex. Let yourself work through the pain, and give yourself time to grieve. That’s the only way you’ll be able to move on.”

“Hey, Arthur. May I ask you something?”

“What?”

“What are you going to do about Victoria?”

“Well, I think I’m going to let her finish her internship, because she only has a few weeks left, but she’s been instructed not to come near you. When she leaves I’m going to write her a recommendation for her to go anywhere she wants, but she won’t be coming back here after graduation. We talked about it yesterday. She has great skill, but we’re more interested in keeping you on staff.”

Days drifted into weeks and then months without a word from Bren. Alex checked in often with Bren’s mother but eventually stopped asking where she could find the little blonde, knowing that

she was keeping Bren from being able to completely confide in her mother. Instead she would just ask if Bren was doing all right and make sure that she was safe. Alex had the painful process of having to cancel all the wedding plans, and then she threw herself head first into all the work she could possibly manage in an effort to alleviate her pain. She would often spend the night at the office and work nonstop during the day. Even as much as her fellow co-workers expressed their concern over her weight loss and general deterioration, she pressed on to become even more of a powerhouse for her firm. The woman with the no nonsense attitude became even more of a cutthroat, demolishing her competition whenever she was in court. Even as much as she was rewarded with accolades from her supervisors, she felt no real sense of satisfaction. She only wanted everyone else to feel as miserable as she did.

Alex tried not to think about Bren, but at night when everything was quiet, she couldn't help her mind from drifting to the times she and Bren had spent together. Alex replayed those four years of her life over and over in her mind as if to burn them into her core, so she would never forget the one woman who had captured her mind, heart, body, and soul. During those nights alone, little to any one's knowledge, she still found her strength at the end of a bottle, but she knew in order to keep her job, she had to hide it, so she found creative ways to sneak her alcohol into work.

The fall season passed with Alex hardly acknowledging it. It had always been Bren's favorite time of year. The younger woman used to love to drag Alex out on strolls and long drives through the country when she could, and even as much as Alex resisted at the time, she secretly cherished those moments of being with her beloved in the cool, crisp weather watching the wonder of the changing leaves.

As Thanksgiving approached Alex spent it with her family, but she wondered where Bren was, hoping that she was spending time with her mother working on their relationship. She had called up to New York once just to wish Bren's mother a good holiday, but she never asked if Bren was there, and the information was never volunteered. Soon after was the Winter holiday party for the company. Kelly convinced Alex to be her date, but when Kelly drove them up the long drive of the country club, Alex's thoughts were on what should've taken place there that previous September. Alex had purposely avoided the club even though she often golfed there with other partners. When the valet took Kelly's car, Alex dutifully extended her arm to her date and escorted her inside.

All the same old people were there, but instead of socializing as Alex usually was known for, she headed straight to the open bar where she remained for most of the evening. The women that usually sought her out for dances kept at bay much to her relief as she kept a firm grip on bourbon bottle she had convinced the bartender to surrender. Alex simply looked out over the dance floor not really seeing anyone as she thought of Bren. For the previous four years the blonde had been her date to the function, and she was feeling even more alone around her co-workers that evening, because Bren was not by her side.

An hour into the party, the band curiously stopped playing, making Alex look up from her glass. Seeing Arthur approaching the stage with champagne in hand, Alex assumed this would be his traditional speech of how much he appreciate everyone. Knowing she was expected to at least

pretend to be interested, Alex filled her glass with straight bourbon and moved in a little closer to hear his speech. As she made her way near the dance floor, Kelly took a place next to her. Alex wrapped her arm around Kelly's shoulders to support herself after more than half the bottle of whiskey. Kelly smiled up at Alex cheerily before turning her attention to Arthur as well.

“Well, thank you all for coming this evening. As usual this time of year is for families and friends to come together to celebrate their relationships. Tonight I just want all of you to know how much you mean to me. This organization wouldn't be what it was without caring individuals such as yourselves, and I'm proud to call each of you a friend. This year has been especially good for our firm, and for that reason I'm here to announce that this year you all will be receiving a large bonus for your extra efforts.” There was a chorus of cheering before Arthur settled the crowd. “Additionally, there is one person I'd like to recognize tonight. She has been with us for almost ten years and has been a junior partner for more than five. During her time at the firm, she has paved the way for many women in the industry and given us a name among the gay and lesbian community. She was the first woman to ever become a partner at the firm, and tonight I want Alex Schreiber to come up here to be recognized.” Alex looked at Arthur in confusion as she made her way through the clapping crowd. As she reached the stage, she hoisted herself up to stand next to Arthur. He smiled at her as he said, “Alex, the firm owes you a great deal. You've been a leader from day one, and you have the respect of your peers. You were the first woman to become a junior partner, and as of this moment you're our first female senior partner. Congratulations, Alex.” he said extending his hand to her.

Alex's eyes shot open in surprise. Taking his hand, she shook it before embracing him in a one-armed hug. Turning to the audience, she said, “This is certainly a surprise. I'm very honored. As many of you know, this year has been a roller coaster for me. However I must say that it's ending on a positive note. I promise you all that I will continue to strive for the better good of our clients and you, my fellow peers. This is a dream come true for me, and I owe most of this to a woman who really helped me become who I am today. Unfortunately she isn't here with us, but I must mention her anyway, Bren Worthington. Also I'd like to thank all of you for your support. It's always meant a great deal to me, and I hope in my new role I can return that favor many times over. Thank you very much. I'll make you all proud.”

Alex hardly had a moment to think about Bren the rest of the evening as she received congratulatory recognition from her fellow colleagues. However as Kelly took Alex home, Alex's mood became sullen again. “This has been quiet a night, huh?” Kelly inquired, trying to get Alex's mind off Bren.

“Yeah. I never expected this. It really was a surprise. I just wish Bren would've been here to share in it. I miss her, Kelly.”

“I know you do. You haven't spoken to her since she left, have you?”

“No. I keep in touch with her mother, and she updates me on what's going on in Bren's life, but I haven't spoken to her directly. I think that she was at her mom's for Thanksgiving, but when I called I didn't talk to her. I never thought my life would turn out this way, Kelly. I feel like I've wasted four years of my life.”

“It wasn’t a waste. You’ve grown as a person tremendously. You said so yourself tonight.”

“I just feel lost. The more time that goes by the less hope I have that I’ll ever see her again much less get a chance to beg for forgiveness. I just feel like the world has been pulled out from under me. This is the ultimate defeat, and I’m not sure I’ll ever come back as strong as I was when I was with her.”

“The other senior partners seem to think you have already.”

“Professionally maybe but personally I’m a disaster. I honestly don’t know what I’m going to do. It’s getting harder and harder to keep going. Without Bren I’m just a waste of space.”

“That’s not true, and you know it. The clients you help are grateful to you for your assistance. Many people are in your debt for all that you’ve done, Bren included, and if she doesn’t recognize that much, then she’s the fool.”

“I helped Bren, because I was in lust with her at first, but then I did it out of love. I wanted her to be happy, even if it meant without me. I still want that for her. She deserves the world, Kelly, but I failed to give it to her.”

“No, you didn’t. You did give her the world, Alex, by giving her a chance to dream, a chance to live. She’s a better woman for knowing you. There is no way she could deny that.”

The next Monday Alex made the move from her office upstairs to the senior partner floor. As she settled in to her new space, she thought about Bren. She wished that Bren was there to share in the accomplishment as she looked out over the city from her new window. Glancing around her office, she took in her amenities. Her office was twice as large as before with its own private bathroom and fully stocked wet bar. Going over to the bar, Alex began to fix herself a drink when there was a knock on her door.

Arthur poked his head in and stated, “No drinking during business hours, Alex. Put it down.” Alex slowly set the beverage aside. “Good. Now the senior partners have lunch waiting on you to officially recognize you in your new position. Come on down to the board room. We’ll be discussing your new role.”

Alex did as she was told. Going into the board room reserved only for the senior partners, she was awarded the seat at the end of the table opposite Arthur at the other side. Being that it was a working lunch, everyone put in their opinions about how Alex should approach her new position. Alex just took it in stride, knowing that she would do what she wanted as long as Arthur approved.

January was especially cold that year. Alex had settled into her new role, taking on only the cases she wanted and spending a lot of time with Kelly in and out of the office. One afternoon she and Kelly were sitting in Alex’s office discussing strategies for an upcoming case when Alex’s receptionist poked her head in. “Alex, were you expecting anyone this afternoon? I didn’t

have any appointments scheduled, but there is a woman here to see you.”

“No. I wasn’t expecting anyone either. What’s her name? Can she come back? We’re in the middle of something really important.”

“I’ll go check.” she said. Returning just a moment later, she stated, “The lobby attendant said her name was Ms. Bren Worthington. Should I send her away or have her sent up?”

Alex looked at Kelly as her heart hammered in her chest. It had been five months since she had seen Bren. “Did she say what she wanted?”

“Business of a personal nature was all I was told. Do you want her to come back later?”

Alex stared at Kelly. “Alex, be very careful. If you send her away, she might not come back, but if you’re not ready to see her, you should tell her.”

“I’m not ready, Kelly.”

“I’ll tell her to make an appointment.” Alex’s receptionist said beginning to turn away.

“Wait. I have to see her. Even if I’m not ready, it might be my only chance. I can’t risk her not returning after being gone so long. Send her up, and hold all my calls.”

Once they were alone, Kelly asked, “Do you want me to stay or leave?”

“Stay, at least at first.”

“Okay.”

“How do I look?” inquired Alex standing to get an appraisal. She brushed her hands over her shirt and slacks to rid them of wrinkles.

“You look fine. Just try to stay calm. Okay?”

The few minutes it took for Bren to arrive at Alex’s office seemed like an eternity to Alex. She kept pacing the floor until the door opened. “Ms. Worthington.” her secretary announced formally allowing Bren inside. Alex just stared at Bren for a few minutes in astonishment.

Bren was wearing a long grey overcoat, lined with black faux fur around the cuffs and neckline. Her hands were encased in black leather gloves, and she had a black purse slung over her shoulder. Her hair had been cut drastically shorter, coming to just lower than her chin, making her look more sophisticated. Dark sunglasses were sitting on top of her head holding back her blonde hair. Alex was temporarily struck mute at the sight before her, the woman she loved looking so much more mature and worldly than she had ever seen her.

Kelly broke the silence by standing. “Bren, it’s nice to see you again.” she stated making her way

over to shake Bren's hand.

Bren took it and locked eyes with Kelly momentarily. "Good to see you too, Kelly. I see you're still playing Alex's keeper."

Kelly laughed lightly at Bren's attempt at a joke. "Someone has to do it. She's lost otherwise. Well, I'll just let you two talk." Kelly looked at Alex, who still hadn't said a word and she just stared dumbfounded at the sight of Bren. "Alex, you just let me know when you're ready to continue with this. I'll be in my office."

Alex shook the fog from her muddled brain enough to look at her associate. "Yeah. Okay."

She watched Kelly gather her things and leave before turning her attention back to Bren. She still said nothing as she took in the vision before her. Bren stood quietly looking around the office for a moment before asking, "May I sit down?"

"Oh, yes. Of course. Here. Let me take your coat." Alex said reaching toward her. Bren let her slip it off. Alex's senses were assaulted by Bren's perfume as she hung the coat on the rack. "Can I get you something to drink?" she inquired looking at the blonde, who was now in a black pants suit.

"No. I'm fine. Thank you." Bren replied taking a seat on the client side of Alex's desk. Alex momentarily debated where to sit, opting for her desk chair. They simply gazed at each other thoughtfully a moment before Alex whispered, "You look amazing."

Bren blushed slightly, turning her head downward to avoid Alex's eyes. "Thank you." She looked back after a second. "You certainly look... different." she mentioned.

"Oh. Well, it's the hair." Alex said running her hand through graying locks. They had begun to turn due to the stress she had experienced over the last six months, but Alex saw no reason to color it, leaving her with pronounced gray patches above her ears and framing her face.

"To say the least. It looks like you've lost about forty pounds, and I don't remember you having any you needed to lose in the first place."

Alex shrugged. "Yeah. I guess I have lost a little weight. Not eating enough I guess." she mumbled.

"Forgive me for saying this, Alex, but you don't look good. You're not taking care of yourself. You look ten years older than the last time I saw you."

"I feel even older than that. Are you sure I can't get you a drink?" Bren shook her head. "Mind of I have one then?"

"No. Go ahead." Alex waded over to her bar and fixed a glass of whiskey. "A little early, isn't it?" Bren asked.

“It’s never too early.” Alex mumbled bringing the bottle with her back to the desk.

Bren watched as Alex threw back three shots. “You’re drinking more than you used to.”

Alex gave another shrug. “I don’t really know any more, but it seems to have the numbing effect on my heart that I’ve been looking for the last half year.” she explained studying the contents of her glass carefully.

After another awkward pause, Bren asked, “Do you want to know why I’m here?”

“I’m not sure.” Alex answered truthfully. “If it’s to show me how well off you are now that you’ve broken my spirit, then no. I’d just like to sit here and look at you for awhile and memorize your beauty before you go dashing out of my life permanently.”

Being thrown off by Alex’s comment, Bren flushed again at the compliment. “Alex, I wanted to talk to you about what happened. After everything we’ve been through, I know you deserve that much. I just haven’t been able to face you until now, and right now I’m beginning to think it was still too soon.” Alex just sat waiting for her to continue. “Alex, may I ask you something that’s been on my mind for the last five months?” When Alex shrugged, Bren inquired, “Why did you do it? Didn’t I make you happy?”

“Bren, you made me happier than I have ever been in my entire life. I did it out of my own stupidity. It was the most God awful mistake I have ever made, and I regret it daily.”

“May I ask how it happened?”

“If I can ask you how you found out.”

“Victoria told me over the phone. I didn’t want to believe it at first, but then she told me about the scratches on your back. That’s when I knew she was telling me the truth. It wasn’t me that did it. It was her. I was so hurt by that.”

“I knew it. Kelly and I pieced it together that way. I guess to really understand what happened I should explain the nature of the relationship Victoria and I had. The first day she started here she was flirting with me. I’ll admit that I was attracted to her from the beginning, but I put a stop to it, knowing that to let her continue would be harmful to both of us. She was really upset with the way I handled things, and we fought every time we saw each other until the company picnic. You see Victoria and I were very much like magnets. When you place two of them together, they repel each other harshly, but if you flip them over, they are attracted so strongly. Once we had called a truce and changed our ways, the attraction was back as strong as ever. We were spending a lot of time together, sometimes after hours alone. The undercurrent of attraction was always there, but we never talked about it.” Alex paused and broke her gaze with Bren. She concentrated on pouring herself another drink for a moment. Raising the glass she looked at the brown liquid as she continued. “The night Victoria got mugged our relationship had reached a crossroads. We had been working here late and alone. I felt miserable, because I had a headache

that wouldn't go away. I was sitting on the couch trying to relax when I felt her begin to massage my temples. I should have pulled away, but I didn't. It just felt so good. Next thing I knew we were kissing. I don't know how long we kissed. It felt like forever but probably was only a minute before I pulled back. I apologized, saying that I couldn't do that to you even as much as my body wanted to. I think we were both embarrassed by our actions, because she wanted to leave. I asked her to wait and let me walk her to the garage, but she wanted to get out of there right away. Well, I found her in the garage a little bit later. That part you know. I invited her to stay at our house, because she was scared, but she said no. I think it was because you were there. Anyway, we went to her place where I stayed the night. I fully intended to sleep on the couch, but she begged me to hold her until she fell asleep. That's how I ended up in her bed. Sometime later I awoke, realizing I had fallen asleep next to her. I tried to move, but she was in the middle of a nightmare and clutching to me. She awoke screaming, so I calmed her down. At that point things just began to happen. I don't know who kissed who first, and it doesn't really matter. We were in bed dressed in only skimpy pajamas with emotions on overload. We were like two wild animals. It was fast and furious but without a real connection. It couldn't have lasted more than fifteen minutes. Guess I fucked her like the bitch she really was." snidely Alex remarked chugging back her bourbon. Bren just sat silently watching, but Alex's eyes focused on the far wall of her office. "When it was over, I knew for certain that life as I knew it was forever changed. I ruined it! Everything I ever wanted slipped from my hands when I got out of Victoria's bed that morning! I fucked up my life!" she spat angrily throwing her glass against the wall as hard as she could. It hit with a thud before falling to the floor and shattering. Bren yelped in surprise. Alex leaned forward in her chair, hands covering her face as she began to cry. "Not a day goes by that I didn't wish I was dead."

A moment of silence passed before Bren mentioned, "So that's what this is about? This not eating and excessive drinking? You're torturing yourself until you die?"

Alex shrugged. "Why not? I deserve it. I lost the one thing that means more to me than anything else in this entire world, Bren. Without you there is no reason to live. I have nothing without you."

"You have your new job as senior partner."

"That only serves as a reminder of what a screw up I really am. They promoted me out of pity, Bren. They wanted me to take time off, and they knew I wouldn't do it as a junior partner. They've been pressuring me to take a leave of absence, but I refuse. They want me to get out of the office for awhile, but I have no where I want to go. Our home sits empty. I only go there once a week to pack up new clothes. I live here at the office now. It's the only place in which I find any kind of peace but even then it's only temporary."

"Alex, as much as you hurt me, you don't deserve to drink yourself to death. I'm sorry that you're hurting now, but I'm hurting too. You don't see me taking it out on myself."

"You're not the one who did anything wrong, Bren. You were nothing but the perfect bride-to-be. I found no greater joy than being with you. There's nothing in this world that compares to being in your arms, listening to those little mewling sounds of yours when you stretched in the



morning or your cries of passion when we made love. Nothing compares to watching you sleep or reading a book, or the late night conversations after one of your fabulous dinners. I'd never find that again with anyone else, and I don't want to. I want you or nothing, but nothing is a lonely way to live. I would do anything in this world to win you back, Bren, but I know I don't deserve another chance." Alex said meeting the blonde's eyes again.

Bren was quiet for a moment. "You know, Alex, when this first happened, I loved you and hated you with equal intensity. I've never been hurt so badly than when I found out what you did, including when my mother threw me out onto the street. For the past five months I've tried to work through all this in my mind and heart, and finally the hate has receded. The pain is still there but so is the love. You've done more for me in kindness than anyone else in this world, and I can never forget that. Regardless of what happened between us as a couple, you did open your home and heart to me for four years. During that time you shelled out hundreds of thousands of dollars to pay for anything and everything I ever wanted or needed. For that reason alone, I could never go on hating you. You were my friend then, and I'd still like to think of you as my friend now."

"Friend, huh? Well, I guess I could try that, but you know that's not what I want."

"I know, but I don't think I have it in me to go back to the way we were before. There's just too much pain and loss of trust, but I'd like to try to regain some of that. After all this time, I would hate to lose you from my life permanently. I want to see if we can be friends again."

Alex nodded as she contemplated it for a moment. Bren was offering her a chance for them to possibly see each other more often. Alex knew she would love to see Bren but wondered if she could emotionally handle not being able to have more with the younger woman. "I'm willing to try, Bren, but I can't guarantee that my emotions won't get in the way. I still love you, and I still wish we could be together. I don't know if I can move beyond that or if I want to."

"I understand. If your feelings get in the way too much, I'll tell you. I don't want this to be painful for either of us. If it gets to be more than either of us can bear, we'll stop. I just thought it was worth a try."

Alex hesitantly nodded. "So, when do we try it?" she asked curiously.

"What about right now? I know you haven't eaten lunch. Why don't we have lunch before I have to go back to work?"

Alex thought a moment before replying, "Okay. Lunch it is." Alex went over to the coat rack to retrieve their coats. Holding Bren's out for her, she helped Bren slip it on before leading the way out of the office. Stopping by her receptionist's desk, Alex stated, "I'm going out for awhile. Tell Kelly that Bren and I went to lunch if she calls looking for me."

With that Alex stoically made her way down the hall. She knew she was receiving curious glances from peers at Bren's presence, especially since their breakup had been made public knowledge by Alex's frequent outbursts at work when Bren first left. Once they were in the

elevator, Alex asked where Bren wanted to eat. Bren suggested the Chinese place that Alex loved so much, so they quietly walked the few blocks to the small restaurant. After placing their orders, Alex regarded the woman across from her. Bren looked totally radiant, except for the small hint of sadness that Alex could see her trying desperately to hide.

“So, why don’t you tell me about your job?” Alex suggested, trying to figure out what to say.

“Well, I work for a local non-profit that organizes after school programs for kids to help them stay off the street. It’s fun. I get to spend some time with the kids.”

“They certainly have an asset in you.” Alex mentioned. “That’s good that you’re enjoying it. Where are you living now?”

“Actually I still live in Arlington. Some friends of mine own a house there and are letting me rent out their basement apartment. I like it. It’s kind of nice having my own space after sharing with friends the last four months.”

“Gives you a quiet place to read anyway.” Alex said.

Bren nodded. “What about you? What have you been up to?”

“Absolutely nothing other than work. Popular opinion is that I work too hard and too long, but that’s the only thing there is for me to do in my life. I don’t socialize with anyone in particular except for Kelly. Every once in awhile she forces me out into the real world, but I prefer just to stay and wade around in my legal books all night. You can never be too prepared in my business.” After a pause Alex decided to be brave and ask the question plaguing her mind. “Are you... seeing anyone these days?” The hesitation in Bren’s response gave her the answer that she had hoped against.

“Well, I have started dating again a little. There is someone that I’ve seen several times now, but I’d hardly consider it serious.”

Alex sat straighter in her seat. Pulling her professional impartial mask over her features, she said. “I see. Well, what’s her name? What’s she like?”

Bren shifted uncomfortably for a moment. “Well, her name is Cassidy, and she’s twenty-seven. She’s a pilot for a small private airliner.”

“How did you meet?”

“At a New Year’s party. She’s a friend of a friend.” Bren mumbled.

“Are you interested?”

Bren looked at Alex for a moment before changing the subject. “So, what about you and Kelly? Are you two...”

“No.” firmly Alex replied. “Kelly and I are just friends. You just get to a certain point in a relationship where it has to take a definite direction. That’s the way Kelly’s and my relationship has gone. We’re friends, and that is all we’ll ever be. Although sometimes she seems like a girlfriend with the way she nags at me.”

“She’s just concerned about you is all.”

Alex shrugged in response. The rest of lunch was filled with awkward small talk, but Alex did enjoy looking at Bren during their visit. It had been so long since she had seen the little blonde, and she had missed her face and voice. At the end of the meal, Alex paid for the both of them even though Bren objected. Once the meal was over, Alex walked Bren back to her car. “Well, thank you for the visit today, Bren. I had missed you.”

“Listen. My friends that live above me and I are having a Super Bowl party on Sunday. Would you like to come?”

“Oh, I don’t know. I don’t want to be in the way.”

“You won’t be. It’s my party, and I’m inviting you. You can bring Kelly if you want. Come on. It’ll be fun.”

“Are you sure you want me to come?” Alex asked looking for reassurance that the invitation was genuine.

“Yes, I want you to come, and I want you to bring Kelly with you. Will you?”

“Okay if you want me to.”

“Great. I’ll call you later this week to give you directions. Don’t think about backing out either. I’ll talk to you later. Thanks for lunch.”

Alex watched as Bren unlocked her car door and then held it open for the younger woman. She stood in the flurrying snow as Bren pulled away in her car before heading back up to her office. As soon as she got in, she called Kelly, who came rushing upstairs to see how things went. “Bren wants us to go to a Super Bowl party at her place this Sunday. I can’t go without you, Kelly. Please tell me your free.”

Kelly shook her head. “I’ll go but only because you are desperate.”

“Thank you.”

“Now tell me how things went.”

“Awkwardly.”

“Well, was there screaming, crying, laughter, what? Give me more than that.”

“Yes, there was some screaming by me but at myself. There wasn’t any crying or laughter. We simply made small talk at lunch. I did tell her that I was sorry, that I loved her and wanted her back, though.”

“What did she say?”

“Nothing except she didn’t think she could go back to the way it was, but she wanted to try to be friends again. I let her know that I wasn’t sure I could do that, but I would try.”

“Did you talk about Victoria?”

“Yes. She wanted to know how and why it happened, and I told her. I don’t really know what I was expecting to happen. Part of me hoped that she would forgive me and come running back, but the other part of me knew that was too much to hope for. I guess I got lucky in the fact that she wants to be friends with me after what happened.”

“Well, maybe you can be friends for awhile, and then it may lead you back to being a couple again. I guess only time will tell.”

“I don’t know about the couple part. She’s got a new girlfriend. I asked. I just wanted to know where I stood, and she told me, friends or nothing. I said I’d try friends even though I know that’s not going to work in the long run.”

“You can’t give up, Alex. Just take it a step at a time. Obviously she still cares about you or else she wouldn’t have come here today. Use that to your advantage. We’ll get a better idea about where you stand at this party.”

Alex and Kelly and got the Bren’s place around four that afternoon. When Bren answered the door, she smiled at them both allowing them to come inside. Alex held firmly to Kelly’s hand like a lifeline. Bren made introductions to the people already there and then offered them drinks. Alex followed Bren into the kitchen for beverages.

“I’m so glad you and Kelly came today, but with the way you’re hanging on her, it sure does seem like you’re a couple.” Bren mentioned.

“We’re not. I’m just not quite comfortable with this yet. I need at least one ally in the room.”

Bren gave a tentative smile. “I don’t consider you my enemy, Alex. If I did you wouldn’t be here. By the way in hopes that you would come, I bought you your favorite whiskey. Everyone else drinks beer, but I thought it might entice you to stay longer.”

“That’s nice of you. Thanks.”

Bren prepared the two drinks before handing them to Alex to take to the living room. Handing

Kelly hers, Alex took a seat next to her and linked hands with her co-worker again. Kelly did most of the talking with people with Alex being an attentive listener, but her thoughts were mainly with Bren. She kept on the opposite side of the room talking with other friends. However once the game began, everyone seemed more interested in that than talking, giving Alex a chance to feel more relaxed. Even though Alex was involved in the game, her eyes kept straying to Bren every few moments. Bren was curled up in an oversized chair next to a woman Alex recognized as a friend of hers from college, but it seemed as if every time Alex looked over at her, Bren was looking back.

More than half way through the game there was a knock on the door. Bren jumped up to get it and within a moment admitted a woman almost as tall as Alex with black hair and dark eyes. It was obvious that the woman was in incredible shape even under her bulky winter wear, and she was smiling brightly at Bren.

“Cass, hey! What are you doing here?” Bren asked excitedly throwing herself into Cass’ open arms for a hug.

“My flight was canceled due to the weather, so I figured I couldn’t leave my favorite girl without a date to her own party.” Cassidy answered leaning down for a kiss.

Alex noticed that the kiss was met with rigidity by Bren but seemed to go unnoticed by everyone else as Cassidy quickly pulled away and greeted everyone. “Um, I guess you know everyone but Alex and Kelly.” Bren said pointing over to where they were sitting on the couch.

Cassidy gave a friendly wave before heading to the coat closet. She then took a seat on the floor at Bren’s feet once Bren had settled in her chair again. Alex couldn’t watch the game after that. Her eyes kept drifting to Bren. Bren was looking back with equal intensity. Alex could see her nervousness whenever Alex looked toward Cassidy.

After awhile Alex went into the kitchen for another drink. She was only in there a moment before she heard someone else enter. Turning she saw her competition. “So, you must be the Alex?” she asked conversationally.

“You mean Bren’s ex? Yeah. That’s me.”

Cassidy grinned. “Well, I have to thank you for letting her go. She really is something else and pretty as hell. That woman fills my fantasies.” Alex just rolled her eyes and sighed as she poured her drink. “Hey, where did you find that whiskey?” Cassidy inquired.

“Oh, Bren bought it for me, knowing it was my favorite. You want some?” Alex lightly taunted.

Before Cassidy could reply, Kelly came waltzing in the kitchen. “Honey, come back to the game. You’re missing good stuff.” she said wrapping her arms around Alex’s waist.

Alex immediately fell into role, knowing what Kelly was doing. “In a minute sweetheart. Do you want something else to drink?”

“No. I’ll be fine as long as you come back and cuddle with me on the couch. Hurry back.” she stated kissing Alex’s cheek.

Cassidy smiled at Kelly’s retreating form. “You have quite a woman there.” she mentioned.

“She is a good woman.” Alex agreed, deciding not to correct Cassidy’s misconception. “Well, I must get back. Have a shot of that whiskey. It’s good stuff.”

Alex returned to the game and continued to snuggle with Kelly. She noticed that Cassidy returned a few moments later with a glass of whiskey instead of beer. The rest of the evening passed with very little talk between Bren and Alex. Instead Alex focused on Cassidy, trying to learn about the woman that threatened her plan of winning Bren back. Cassidy was friendly and open to Alex, oblivious to the true nature of Alex’s intentions. The more Alex conversed with her, the more she realized why Bren liked her and found herself begrudgingly liking the pilot.

When Kelly and Alex left that night, Bren walked them out to their car. Kelly thanked Bren for the invitation before getting into the car, leaving Bren and Alex standing alone for a moment. “Well, thanks for letting us come over. It was fun.” Alex said shifting on her feet nervously.

“I’m glad you came.” After a pause she asked, “Are you sure you and Kelly are just friends?”

“Yeah, I promise. Kelly was just doing that to make me feel better about being here. It felt awkward for me for everyone to know I was the ex.”

“I guess I understand that. I guess it’s going to take some time to get used to this.”

“Yeah but I’d like to keep trying.”

“Me too.” Bren answered confidently.

“Great. Well, we should go. May I call you later this week? We could go out and do something.”

“Sounds good. I look forward to it.”

Over the next few months Alex and Bren formed a tentative friendship. They got together every couple of weeks either alone or in the company of Kelly and Cassidy. As much as Alex wanted Bren back, she found herself really coming to like Cassidy as a person, making it more difficult for her to try to undermine the woman’s feelings toward Bren.

Late that spring the four of them decided to take a trip to Rehobeth Beach in Delaware for a extended weekend. Alex had given Bren full reign in making the arrangements, and when Alex’s fellow senior partners found out she was planning time away from the office, they were thrilled and encouraged her to take even more vacation. However the Thursday afternoon that Kelly and Alex were supposed to leave, Kelly had to stay late in court. Since they had planned to leave straight from there, Alex was present when the judge convened for the day to pick it up on

Friday. As everyone filed out of the courtroom, Kelly frowned at Alex.

“I’m sorry, Alex. I really thought this case would be over today. I wish I could go with you.”

“It’s all right. I know how it is. Work comes first.”

“Are you going to be okay with seeing Bren and Cassidy as a couple without me?”

“Whether I am or not, it looks like I have to do this one on my own. Don’t worry about it. You just concentrate on this case.”

“I’ll give you a call tomorrow to give you an update. Hopefully I can make it up for the weekend.”

“I hope so too. Talk to you then.”

All the way up to the beach Alex tried to prepare herself for seeing Bren and Cassidy. However when she arrived, she was surprised to see Bren there by herself sitting on the front porch of the beach house they had rented for the long weekend. Coming to a stop next to Bren’s car, Alex got out with a questioning brow. “Hey there.” she greeted.

“Hi. Where’s Kelly?” Bren inquired.

“She had to stay behind. She thought her case would be over today, but it wasn’t. She hopes she can be here by tomorrow. Where’s Cass?”

“She had to work too at the last minute. I don’t think she’s going to come at all now.”

“Oh, too bad. She’s going to miss a great weekend. The weather is supposed to be perfect.”

“I know. I look forward to a little beach time. I was just waiting on you to get here. I hadn’t run to the store or anything. I wasn’t sure what to get.”

“Well, let me just unload my bags, and I’ll accompany you. I don’t think we’ll need much for three people.” Alex grabbed her bag out of the trunk before asking, “Did you pick the room you wanted yet?”

“No. I figured we would talk about it when you got here. With you and Kelly being the wealthy ones, I figured you’d take the master bedroom, and I’d take the other one.”

“If that’s what you want, but I don’t care either way. If you want the master, you can have it.”

“I don’t think so. There’s a king bed in there, and if Cassidy does come, I’m not sure I want to have to share it with her.”

“Oh. Okay. I just assumed that wouldn’t be a problem. I’ll take it then to make you more

comfortable.” Alex stated making her way up to the bedroom, sporting a huge grin when she had turned from Bren’s gaze. She was elated to no end to know that Bren and Cassidy’s relationship hadn’t progressed that far. Going up to the master, she dropped her bags on the bed before going out to the deck. “Wow. Have you seen this view?” she called out to Bren.

“It’s pretty amazing, isn’t it? Well, maybe we should get to the store before it closes. We only have about half an hour or so.”

“Yeah. Okay.”

Alex drove them down to the local grocery store to pick up their weekend supplies before heading back to the house. After unloading everything, Alex opened the bottle of bourbon she had brought with her and offered Bren some. Bren declined but watched as Alex nursed a couple of drinks while they sat on the deck overlooking the water. Being that they both had arrived fairly late that night, they only stayed up for a few hours, heading to their separate rooms a little after one in the morning with promises to head to the beach together after breakfast.

Alex left her deck doors open that night to listen to the waves as she settled to sleep. Even as relaxing as the lulling sounds were, Alex was wide awake, knowing that Bren was just next door. She could imagine Bren in one of the double beds in light sleeping attire. Alex let her mind wander, envisioning Bren in the little white tank top and red and white stripe shorts she had bought her for Valentine’s Day her senior year of college. She remembered the first time she saw them on the little blonde that following summer. The shorts were cut high enough to accentuate the curvature of her posterior, and the tank top exposed some of her abdomen and had a large red heart that sat perfectly centered between her breasts, further emphasizing her cleavage. Alex grinned to herself as she recalled the frisky night Bren had worn the outfit to bed. Vivid images took hold in Alex’s mind of the many times she made love to Bren until she eventually drifted to sleep.

Alex awoke the following morning to the smell of food. Rising from bed, she padded into her bathroom to brush her teeth and freshen up before going downstairs. As she turned the corner, she saw Bren standing over the stove in a pair of navy and green boxer shorts and navy tank top. Alex stared at her a moment, knowing Bren was unaware of her presence, as she thought of the times she had awakened to Bren making her breakfast. Finally Alex whispered, “Good morning. Something smells good.”

Bren jumped slightly at the voice but turned and gave a demure smile. “I thought the smell of your favorite chocolate pancakes might get you up.”

Alex moved in closer to her, wanting desperately to wrap her arms around Bren’s waist and nuzzle into the younger woman’s hair but settled for leaning into Bren’s back until they were barely touching. “You make the best pancakes. I can’t wait.”

Bren looked up over her shoulder giving Alex another smile and longer gaze. “Why don’t you set the table for us and get the juice?” she suggested.



Alex gave a mock salute and smile. "Private Schreiber reporting for kitchen duty, ma'am. I am at your service."

Bren gave a sultry smile as she turned toward Alex. "Well, you better getting going, Private, unless you are partial to punishment for disobeying orders."

"Maybe I am." Alex teased. As she turned to go to the refrigerator, she felt the smack of the plastic spatula lightly against her backside. "Oh." Alex moaned rubbing the spot as if had hurt her, but then she broke out into a grin. "Thank you, Rear Admiral Worthington." she joked.

Bren laughed. "You are so bad sometimes."

Breakfast was full of easy banter. Once it was over they both cleaned the kitchen and then headed to their rooms to get ready for the beach. Alex was finished first and waited on the back porch for Bren. When Bren stepped out of the house, Alex felt her breath catch. It had seemed like forever since she had seen Bren in a bikini. The blonde was wearing blue gingham two-piece that left little to the imagination. Alex was glad that she was wearing her sun glasses, so she could peruse Bren's body undetected. Even as beautiful as Alex thought her ex had been when they were together, she thought her even more beautiful now. It was obvious that Bren had started working out regularly, the soft contours of her body having given way to lean, toned muscle. Alex's eyes scanned down Bren's form, taking in the still large but firmer breasts and barely noticeable six pack of her stomach.

"You ready?" Bren inquired breaking Alex's eyes from her inspection.

"Yeah." she mumbled standing and following Bren toward the sand. Alex let her eyes look down at Bren's posterior, mesmerized by the way the muscles flexed as Bren walked. Inwardly Alex groaned as the sexy vision before her. Her Bren had come to look more like a woman and less like a girl over the months they had been apart, and Alex could feel her resolve slipping. She thought she had begun to get a handle on their friendship, at least outwardly, but seeing Bren this way, made Alex's knees weak in wanton desire. Knowing she couldn't say anything, Alex simply placed her towel down next to Bren's and laid down.

Being on a semi-private area of the beach just north of the strip allowed them some more quiet and privacy that they both enjoyed. As they settled down, Alex removed her own t-shirt, revealing her two-piece suit, more conservatively cut to suit her style. The top was like a sports bra with the bottoms more like athletic shorts than a more traditional bikini. Bren looked over at her as she folded her shirt.

"Looks like you are starting to gain that much needed weight back." she mentioned beginning to lather lotion over her arms.

"Yeah, I guess. It helps to have a good cook like you feeding me every once in awhile. Those chocolate chip pancakes definitely put on a few pounds. I could eat those every morning."

They both began the process of putting on suntan lotion, but then Bren asked for help reaching

her back. As Alex moved in behind her to assist her, Bren handed her the bottle. Alex rubbed the lotion in her hands for a moment to warm it as she gazed over Bren's back. In their new relationship, Alex and Bren's physical contact had been minimal, Alex never getting a chance to touch her for more than a fleeting moment. However she now delighted in the opportunity to feel Bren's smooth, soft skin under her hands. Alex took her time in thoroughly rubbing the lotion into Bren's back. Even after it had disappeared into the young woman's skin, Alex kept up the light caressing, taking in the wondrous feeling of Bren's body.

Alex was only brought out of her trance when Bren asked, "Do you want me to get your back now?"

"Yeah. Sure." she whispered, not trusting her voice to remain neutral. Alex took a seat on her towel. She closed her eyes as she concentrated on Bren's hands making long strokes along her back. Her heart was hammering in excitement as her ex rubbed the lotion into her skin. However it also twinged in sadness that she couldn't feel those same hands touching her intimately again. When she couldn't take it any more, she gently nudged Bren away mumbling, "Thanks." Bren nodded, but Alex thought she saw the tiniest hint of disappointment in the blonde's features.

The morning passed in silence for the most part, each of them absorbed in their books and thoughts. When it was lunch time, they decided to walk down to the boardwalk for food. Alex noticed the looks women were giving Bren, who seemed oblivious, as they strolled down to the end of the strip examining their options before deciding on Mexican food.

The afternoon passed slowly as the two of them absorbed the sun in quietness. Every once in awhile Alex would sneak a peek at Bren, who was so completely engrossed in her book that she never noticed the prolonged stares. When Alex had finally had enough, she inquired, "What are we going to do tonight for dinner? I'm starting to get hungry."

Bren shrugged. "We didn't really buy dinner food. We could go out or go back to the store. Have anything special in mind?"

"Let's go out. Did you bring any nice clothes or just casual stuff?"

"I brought one nice outfit. Why?"

"There's a restaurant I want to take you to if I can get a reservation for us. I should go in and call them. Sound good to you?"

"Yeah. I'll be right in. I just want to finish this chapter."

Alex went off to make her phone call, leaving Bren on the beach. The restaurant she wanted to take Bren to didn't have any open reservations for that night, so she booked one for Saturday night instead before heading up to the shower. She had just finished when she heard the knock on her bedroom door. She threw on a tight tank top since her towel was already secured around her waist and opened the door. She saw Bren's eyes sweep her body in surprise, settling on her loose breasts longer than necessary before meeting her gaze.

“Um, so, what’s the word?” she recovered.

“Oh. They’re booked tonight, so I got us a reservation for tomorrow if that’s okay with you.”

“Sure. I was just wondering, so I knew what to wear. I’m going to go ahead and shower now. I’ll be ready in about half an hour. Oh, and by the way, I talked to Cassidy while you were in the shower. She’s not coming up at all.”

“Oh. Okay.” Alex answered watching Bren walk away, admiring her as she heading toward her own room. As soon as Alex closed her own door, she rushed over to her cell phone to call Kelly.

“Hey, Alex. What’s up?”

“Are you on your way up here yet?”

“No. I actually was about to call you.”

“Listen. Bren and I are here alone. Cassidy canceled on us. She won’t be coming up here at all. I know this was meant to be a long weekend for you too, but I was wondering...”

“You want to be alone with her.” Kelly stated.

“Sort of. Yeah. I don’t want to uninvite you, Kelly. It’s just that things are going so well right now.”

“Yeah? Meaning like you think you might have a chance to reconcile? That kind of going well?”

“It’s too soon to say but maybe I have shot. I now know that she and Cassidy haven’t had sex together. That has to be a good sign. She’s not ready to make that commitment yet.”

“So, you think you still have a chance then?”

“I have to find out, Kelly. We’ve had a great day together. She was so playful this morning, and I saw her looking at me a couple of times in a more than friendly manner.”

“Oh, Alex. You know I love you when I let you talk me out of much needed beach time. Well, I’ll make you a deal. I’ll stay home, but you have to make it up to me.”

“Anything you want. Just name it, Kelly.” Alex said hopefully.

“Win that woman back, Alex. That’s enough for me as well as let me go use your pool.”

“Yeah. Have at the pool if you want. I have a spare key for the house in my desk. Feel free to hang out. Thanks, Kelly. This means a lot to me.”

“Alex, be careful. If you think you have a chance, don’t ruin it by being too aggressive. You two have a lot to work on, but it doesn’t hurt to let her know where you stand.”

Over dinner that night, Alex informed Bren that Kelly wouldn’t be able to make it up to the beach that weekend either. Bren took it in stride, just giving a smile and saying it was too bad she couldn’t come. After their meal Bren wanted to go to a club, so Alex relented even though she felt too old for such events. She remembered the time on Bren’s birthday that she got a chance to be with her at a club and figured it might not be all bad.

The club was packed with locals and tourists. Even though the crowd was mostly gay men, there were a fair amount of women of different styles hanging around. Alex was extremely aware of the women eying Bren as they waded over to the bar for drinks. It was only a few minutes before the first woman approached the blonde, asking her to dance. Bren looked to Alex for a second before agreeing to dance with the stranger, leaving Alex alone by the bar. Alex watched Bren move in time with the woman, their bodies at a respectable distance for Alex’s comfort. Several songs passed with Alex being the observer before a touch to her arm brought her out of her musings. Turning she saw a perky petite red-head smiling up at her. Alex gave her own smile.

“Hi there.” the woman offered shyly.

“Hello.”

“Would you like to dance?”

Alex sensed that the young woman was nervous about asking her, but seeing as she didn’t have a reason to refuse, she gave a sexy grin. “Sure.” she replied extending her hand. Taking the smaller woman to the floor, Alex began to dance with her. “So, what’s your name?” she asked politely.

“Noel. What’s yours?”

“Alex. Nice to meet you, Noel. You a local?”

“Only during the summer. During the year I go attend NYU.”

“New York, huh? I love New York.”

They danced silently for a little bit, but Alex kept her eyes on Bren for the most part. Finally Noel inquired, “She is your girlfriend?”

“No, my ex actually. She’s from New York too.”

“I take it by the way you’re ogling her that it wasn’t a mutual break up.”

“No. She left me, because I was an asshole. Good for her. Bad for me.” Alex stated with a partially joking grin.

“You jest, but you still want her anyway.”

Alex gave a hesitant nod. “No offense to you of course.” she said.

“None taken. If you feel that strongly, you should let her know.”

“I’m working on it, but she’s not shown me that she’s receptive to another shot with me. She deserves the best.”

“She’s lucky to have such an admirer.”

“Enough about her for now. Let’s dance.”

Bren and Alex spent several hours at the bar that night. Alex danced with a few different women, but to her it seemed as if Bren was the most popular woman there with the constant flow of women trying to dance with or talk to her. Alex tried her best not to feel jealous of all the attention being paid to Bren, but she couldn’t help wondering if any of these women could offer the blonde something better than she, making her slightly uneasy. Leaning into the bar sipping a drink and overlooking the situation, Alex felt a hand on her back again. When she turned she saw Noel standing behind her again.

“Hello again. May I buy you a drink?”

“Sure. Whatever is fine. Thanks.”

Alex nodded before signaling the bartender. “So, to what do I owe the pleasure of a second visit this evening?”

“You just looked like you could use some company. I can tell this is really bothering you.”

“It’s something I have to learn to live with.”

After a moment Noel asked, “Can I tell you something?”

Alex shrugged. “Sure. What?”

Noel flushed slightly as she admitted, “I’m totally attracted to you. You’re so sexy, so I don’t know why I want to play matchmaker between you and your ex, but I have to tell you, Alex, that I think you should go after that woman with all you have. It’s so obvious you love her. Love like that is hard to find. You can’t let it go without a fight.”

“Thanks, Noel, for the compliments and encouragement. I want her back so badly.”

“Then why don’t you start by dancing with her? You haven’t asked her to dance once.”

“You’re right. Maybe I should.” With confidence Alex made her way through the sea of grinding

bodies over to where Bren was dancing with someone. Smiling politely she asked to cut in. She was met with reluctance from Bren's dance partner, but Bren nodded enthusiastically, moving in closer to Alex.

As Bren danced in front of her, Alex zoned out everything and everyone around them. The blonde had always been able to acquire Alex's full attention when she danced. The way she moved sensually to the beat made Alex's excitement grow as she dared to step in closer, so they were slightly brushing into each other's bodies. Bren responded accordingly and soon they had their arms around each other. Bren didn't look up into Alex's eyes now that they were so close, but the feeling of Bren's breasts and hips grinding with her own was slowly driving Alex over the edge. Several songs passed before the music slowed into a lover's dance. Even though Alex wanted to keep moving with Bren, she thought it best to try to pull back. However Bren didn't let go of her, forcing them to gently sway with the music. Bren placed her head against Alex's shoulder as they moved together in time with the seductive beat. Alex knew Bren could feel her heart thumping erratically in her chest at being so close, and she felt Bren's uneven breathing as Bren snuggled in further.

All too soon the beat picked up again, and Alex reluctantly pulled away. Their eyes finally met, but neither of them said anything at first. Finally Alex found her voice, inquiring, "Would you like another drink?" Bren nodded but didn't give a verbal reply. Placing a hand on Bren's lower back, Alex escorted Bren back to the bar. They both ordered another drink and consumed it quietly as they watched others dance.

Alex was not sure what to say to Bren, so she kept to herself. Bren didn't say anything either for several minutes. Once Bren had finished her drink, she turned to Alex. "Are you ready to go? I'm getting kind of tired."

"Yeah. Sure. We can go." Alex replied.

Alex and Bren made their way back to their beach house in silence. When they arrived, Bren immediately excused herself to bed, leaving Alex to wonder about what had transpired between them at the club. As Alex sat on the balcony overlooking the dark water, she analyzed every aspect of the night, hoping to find some clue into Bren's motivations and actions. Everything seemed to lead Alex to the belief that Bren still felt something for her. As much as Alex wished for that, she still wasn't completely sure.

The next day when Alex awoke Bren was already on the beach reading. Sensing that the young woman wanted time to herself, Alex made her own breakfast and then took a walk along the beach. Even though Alex knew the time away from the office was supposed to be relaxing, Alex felt tense about being alone with Bren after the events of the previous night. Alex hoped with all she had that she had come to the correct assumption about Bren's feelings, but she wasn't sure how to broach the subject, given their past. Deciding to play it by ear, Alex joined Bren on the beach after lunch.

The blonde didn't say much just stayed buried in her reading, but after awhile, Alex questioned, "That book must be something else to ignore your company, huh?"

Bren looked up. Alex saw the uneasiness in her eyes. “It is pretty good. Why don’t you just try to relax? Is it too hard for you to just sit still without anything to do?”

“Well, you know me, always on the go. I feel like I’m being useless, especially since I have nothing pressing to do. I just thought we could have some fun. Is there anything you want to do today?”

“I had thought about shopping but discarded the idea, knowing how much you hated that pastime.”

Alex laughed. “True but it could prove to be a good thing today. Why don’t we go?”

“Are you serious?”

“Yeah. Why not? We’ll hit some shops, and maybe I can find something to wear to our dinner tonight.”

“Oh yeah. I had forgotten about that. It’s supposed to be more formal, right?” Alex nodded. “Well, maybe I could do with a little shopping. A new outfit would be nice.”

“Great. Let’s get going. Our reservations are at 8:00, so we have about five hours before having to get serious about getting ready.”

Even though Alex loathed shopping normally, she made it a point to look like she was enjoying herself, especially since Bren was having a good time. Alex savored watching Bren leisurely try on at least one outfit at every store however, because Bren always asked her opinion. By the time they needed to go back to get ready for dinner, Bren had purchased two new outfits, one of which she had decided to wear to dinner.

Alex waited for Bren to finish getting ready that evening on the back deck. Watching nighttime rise over the water, Alex pondered if she should try to make a move on Bren that evening. She felt fairly sure that the younger woman might be receptive, but at the same time, she was concerned about ruining the friendship they had developed over the past four months. Her thoughts were interrupted by Bren’s voice.

When Alex turned toward her, her mouth dropped slightly. Bren was dressed in a sleeveless, cotton, black dress, black sandals, and holding a black cardigan sweater. “Wow. You look incredible, Bren.”

Bren blushed lightly. “Thank you. You look nice too.” she mentioned as Alex stood.

Alex tugged at the cuffs of her dark grey suit jacket. “Thanks. Are you ready to go?” Bren nodded. Trying to feel out the situation, Alex extended her arm, asking, “Shall we go to dinner?”

Bren smiled taking the offered arm. “Lead on, Counselor Schreiber.”

The atmosphere at the restaurant was intimate when they arrived. Alex had intentionally not told Bren where they were going in hopes that she could get away with bringing Bren to such a romantic place. Bren said nothing about their surroundings but just smiled at Alex as they were seated at their table. Once they had been left to look over the menu, Bren inquired, "Have you ever been here before?"

"No. I read about it though. It's a highly rated place for the beach that is. See anything that interests you on the menu?"

"Well, I think I might splurge and get the lobster."

"I was thinking about that too. Do you want any wine with dinner?"

"Sure. Sounds good. You choose it." Once they had placed their order and been served their salads and wine, Bren mentioned, "I guess it's a good thing Cassidy isn't here. She'd hate this place."

"Why's that?"

"Let's just say she's more of a sports bar kind of woman. She's not one for really civilized meals. I swear that woman lives on beer and buffalo wings."

"That must be difficult for you at times. You aren't the sports bar type."

"I've tried to be for her, but it's just not working. She's too immature for me I guess. It's like dating a frat boy, the parties, the drinking, the late hours. I think she enjoys being single too much. She says she cares about me, and I believe that she does, but she's not ready for a commitment."

"And you are?" Alex asked, suddenly wondering where this conversation was heading.

"Yeah."

"Have you told her how you felt?" inquired Alex as she tried to remain calm even though her heart was sinking.

"Well, that's just it. I've come to realize that even though I do want a serious relationship, I don't want it with her. She's a great woman, and I do enjoy her company but as long as it is on my terms. That's not the makings of a relationship. I guess I'm kind of glad that she didn't come on this trip. She probably would've thought it a perfect opportunity to try to score, as her cronies so eloquently put it to me."

"I take it you don't think so highly of her friends by calling them cronies."

Bren shrugged. "They're all the same, rowdy pilots. The things they tell me behind her back



have been less than flattering. I have been privy to comments she's made about me."

"What kind of comments?"

"Sexually suggestive comments. I think she just says them to sound cool with her friends, because she doesn't say them to me. Nevertheless it's made me feel more like a prize than a person."

Alex nodded. "I know what you mean by immaturity. I've seen that too and heard some comments, but I just thought you were all right with it."

Bren nodded. "She is a nice person, but I just don't think it's meant to go anywhere. I was thinking about giving it a little more time, but at the same time, I already know the outcome, so why prolong the inevitable?"

Alex gave a shrug. "That's a decision only you can make, Bren. How's the salad?" she asked trying to change the subject.

Dinner lasted more than two hours due to the full course meal. Being that it was after 10:00 when they left, they opted to just go back to the house. Sitting on the deck, they shared another two bottles of wine as they chatted about nothing important. Several hours passed before Bren stated that she was getting tired. Both of them stood to begin collecting their litter, and before either of them could stop the other, they simultaneously reached down to pick up the empty bottles, whacking their foreheads in a loud smack.

Alex groaned at the pain as she rubbed the spot. Bren giggled quietly as she asked, "Are you all right? I'm so sorry."

"Yeah. I'll be fine. What about you? Let me look." Alex reached under Bren's chin to lift her head. There was a light bruise beginning on her fair skin. "Oh, poor baby. I really got you good." Alex said brushing her thumb across the spot. Instinctively she leaned in and grazed her lips over the bump. She heard Bren exhale quickly. "Anything else I need to kiss and make better?" Alex whispered seductively before she could catch herself. Bren only nodded. "Show me where it hurts, and I'll make it all better. Does it hurt here?" Alex questioned tracing along Bren's cheek. Bren gave a nod, urging Alex to kiss her there lightly. "What about here?" She pressed her finger against the tip of Bren's round nose. With another affirmative nod, Alex kissed down the bridge. "And here?" she queried touching the blonde's chin. Bren whimpered as Alex placed a kiss there. Pressing two fingers against Bren's quivering lips, Alex murmured, "Does it hurt here, baby?"

"Yes." Bren whispered.

Alex captured Bren's lips even before Bren could complete her answer. Twin moans erupted as they gently probed each others' mouths and gripped tighter to one another. Softly they exchanged intimate kisses for several moments before Bren finally pulled away. Alex looked down at her, dazed and breathless.

Bren just stared at her for a moment before saying, "I'm going to go to bed now. I'll see you in the morning. Okay?" Without even waiting for an answer, she turned and walked into the house, leaving a confused Alex in her wake.

Alex sunk back into her chair as she realized what she had done. She had pushed Bren too far too fast, and she now felt terrible for making the blonde uncomfortable. Cursing at herself under her breath, Alex gathered all their belongs, taking them into the kitchen before heading up to bed herself.

The following morning Alex got up later than normal due to the wine from the previous night. She showered and dressed before making her way downstairs but found the house quiet. Calling for Bren she walked outside and looked up and down the beach, but the young woman was nowhere to be seen. Thinking that maybe she was still in bed, Alex went back upstairs and knocked on Bren's closed door. When there was no answer, Alex opened it. Bren's bed had been made, and there was no luggage. On top of the pillow there was a folded piece of paper. Alex went over to pick it up, but she knew even before she read it what it said. Bren was once again gone.

Continued Part 6:

---

### The Athenaeum's Scroll Archive

---

## ~ Second Chances ~

by Alex Tryst

Copyright © October 200

**Disclaimers:** These characters are of my own creation. This story does include sexual situations involving consenting adult women (and lots of them). If you are offended by this type of material or it is illegal where you live, it's best to turn back now. 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.....

### Part 6

Since there was nothing keeping her there, Alex packed her things as well and headed back to

her house. When she arrived Kelly was lounging out by the pool.

“Hey. You’re back early. I didn’t expect you until much later. Did you have a good trip?”

Alex sighed. “It was good until last night.”

“What happened?”

“I ruined my chance to get Bren back for good.”

“What? How?”

“Last night we had a wonderful dinner at this romantic restaurant and then went back to the house. We sat up talking, and as she excused herself to go to bed, we ended up kissing. It was better than I even remember it, Kelly, the feeling of her body pressed into mine, her sweet mouth. We kissed for a couple of minutes before she pulled away and excused herself. This morning I woke up, and she was gone. There’s nothing I can do to take back what happened, and I don’t want to. I want her as my lover and my wife. I can’t do this friendship only thing any more, but I ruined it.”

“Maybe not. Don’t be too hard on yourself. You won’t know why she left until you talk to her. She does have a girlfriend right now you know. Maybe she left because she wanted more but didn’t want to do anything while she was with Cassidy.

“I don’t know. My cards are on the table now. There’s no taking them back. She knows exactly how I feel. It bothers me that I don’t know if she feels the same. I mean I think she does, but I don’t know for sure, because she hasn’t said anything.”

“Well, maybe she needs time to think, Alex. The fact that she kissed you has to be a good indicator of how she feels. Maybe she just needs time to search her soul to see if a relationship with you is something she can do again. Don’t give up yet. Never give up on her. She is the woman of your dreams, and you need her. Give her a day or two to process the turn of events.”

“Maybe you’re right. I sure hope so, Kelly. I can’t be without her.”

A week passed without a word from Bren, making Alex fear for the worst. She dove back into her work in an effort to alleviate the discomfort of not knowing where she stood. However late on Friday afternoon, Bren showed up at her office. Alex’s assistant admitted Bren, and once again they stood face to face in awkward silence, but this time Alex allowed her emotions to show on her face.

“Have a seat.” Alex said pointing to a chair.

Bren took it before Alex took the one directly next to her. They stared at each other a moment without a word. “I broke up with Cassidy.” Bren finally said.

“Is that so?”

Bren nodded. “I need to ask you something, Alex. Do you still love me?”

“With all that I am, Bren. That’s never going to change.” Alex admitted shyly.

“I guess that means you still want me back?”

“Yes, I do.”

“I thought so. You know when we were at the beach, I saw the parts of you that made me fall for you to begin with. You have to understand that this is really difficult for me, Alex. I still love you as much as the day I discovered that I was in love with you in the first place. That night at the beach when we kissed I realized that something similar probably happened with Victoria. You were attracted to each other but fought it for as long as you could. Then all of a sudden one innocent touch turned into burning passion.”

“Yes but that’s still no excuse for what I did. I don’t deserve you, Bren, but that doesn’t stop me from wanting you.”

“It doesn’t stop me from wanting you either, Alex. I’ve missed you so much. So many nights I’ve lied awake dreaming about what should’ve been. I would fantasize about what our marriage would be like, if we’d have children, the places we’d go, our families being together at holidays.”

“I dream of the same things, Bren, but I want more than just to dream. I want that to be reality.”

Bren nodded. “Most of me wants that too.”

“But? What about that small part?”

“The small part thinks I should ignore my protesting heart and move on. I’ve listened to my head for the last six months and haven’t gotten anywhere. This is hard for me to decide. You hurt me so deeply.”

“I know. Even when I was at my angriest, I knew that much. You’re a kind woman, Alex. You have a good heart.”

“If I could erase the past, I would, but I can’t, Bren. However I would like to try to move forward.”

“Me too. I’ve done a lot of thinking over the past week, and I’ve come to realize that we only have two options here. One, we can walk away and never see each other again, or two, we can work at rebuilding our relationship in hopes that someday we can have the marriage that we both wanted. Friendship alone just isn’t going to work at this point. It’s too late for that.”

“Well, Bren, I think you know how I feel, but the ball really is in your court. The decision is up to you. What do you want?” Alex asked.

There were several minutes of silence as Alex just watched Bren for a reaction. Tears came to Bren’s eyes as she instinctively leaned towards Alex. Alex took the cue and embraced her. Bren swept in Alex’s arms for a long time. When she was finished, she accepted the tissue Alex extended to her. “I want to be Mrs. Schreiber.” she replied softly.

“I want you to be Mrs. Schreiber too, Bren.”

“But I just don’t know how, Alex. We need to work on building our trust. I can’t marry you and be your wife if I don’t trust you completely.”

“How do I regain that? Tell me what I need to do, Bren.”

“For the most part I do trust you, Alex. I know that you would provide for me, but there is that sliver of my heart that fears you hurting me again this way.”

“I wish I could do something about that.”

“I don’t think there is anything to do, Alex. You apologized, and I’ve accepted that apology. I honestly think by how you’ve been acting since I left the first time that you would do anything for me and that you wouldn’t cheat on me ever again. My mind knows that, but my heart hasn’t caught up yet. I guess I just have to have faith.”

“What if we get help like couples therapy or something? Would that be beneficial to you? I’m more than willing to accommodate you in whatever way necessary to get us back on track.”

“I think I would like that. Will you find someone for us?”

“Of course. I’ll gather some names right away.”

“Okay. Well, I guess I should go. I bet you’re busy.”

“I’m never too busy for you, Bren. May I take you out to dinner tonight if you’re free?”

“Yeah, I’m free. Pick me at 7:00?”

“Sure. Let me walk you out.” Alex stood and tentatively extended her hand to Bren. Bren gave her a bashful grin taking the outstretched hand. Together they walked through Alex’s office that way, gaining the attention of many co-workers. When they arrived at Bren’s car, Alex opened the door for her.

“Well, I’ll see you in a few hours then?”

“I’ll be there with bells on.” Alex teased with a smile.

Bren nodded before leaning to give Alex a quick kiss on the cheek. “See you then.”

Once Bren’s car was gone, Alex practically skipped back into the office with a grin plastered on her face. Going directly to Kelly’s office, she admitted herself. “Well, Alex, what on earth happened to you? You haven’t looked this happy since you and Bren got engaged.”

Going over to Kelly, who was sitting in her chair, she grabbed the younger woman and twirled her around excitedly. “Bren just came by. We’ve decided to try to reconcile.”

“Oh, Alex! That’s great news! Congratulations!” exclaimed Kelly, hugging her friend tightly.

“There is one condition, though. We’re going to attend couples therapy for awhile just to make sure we talk about everything. We think it would be good to have a moderator. You wouldn’t happen to know of any therapists, would you?”

“Not off hand but I think if you ask HR they’ll have a list that accepts our insurance. I’m really happy for you, Alex. I’m so glad that you and Bren will be together again. All of us here know that she’s become your rock over the last couple of years. It’s good to have her part of your life again.”

“It certainly is. We have a ways to go, but one thing is clear. We both want the same thing. We both want to be married to each other. That’s a start. I’ll bide my time now that I know she feels the same.”

Over the next few weeks Alex and Bren attended couples counseling twice a week in addition to seeing each other almost every evening at Bren’s apartment for dinner. During one of the first sessions, Bren admitted that she was hesitant to go back to Alex’s house given their history and that she would eventually like to begin with a new place that they picked together when the time came, so Alex always came to Bren’s. She didn’t want the blonde to feel uncomfortable, so she never suggested that they go back to her house, even though the accommodations were much grander.

However Alex began to visit her own home more often once she had Bren had begun to reconcile after a long absence. Having spent most of her free time at the office over the past six months, it was refreshing for her to go back and reflect on the progress she and Bren were making. Knowing that she would eventually have to sell her first home, Alex began methodically cleaning out the place from top to bottom, throwing the past away and planning for the future.

When the annual company picnic arrived that early July, Alex went to pick Bren up at her apartment. There had been much discussion about whether Bren would attend due to the fact that it was at the country club where they were supposed to have their wedding reception and the fact that she would be facing all of Alex’s staff again for the first time. Other than Kelly Alex hadn’t told anyone about Bren, so her girlfriend wouldn’t feel the pressure to come if she didn’t want to. When Bren opened the door to allow Alex in, she gave a uncertain demure smile.

Alex smiled back, knowing that Bren was nervous about the event. “Are you ready to go?” she inquired calmly.

“Ready as I’ll ever be I suppose. How do I look?” She stepped back to model her outfit, a red and white gingham blouse with a khaki skirt and red and navy sandals.

“You look like the angel you are.” responded Alex reaching down for Bren’s hand. “Absolutely stunning.”

Bren blushed. “Such the charmer. You look good too.”

“Are you ready for this? I don’t want to push you into something you’re not ready to do.”

“No, I need to do this, for me and for us. It’s time to take this step.”

“All right. Well, if you want to leave at any point, you just let me know.”

They made small talk as they drove over to the picnic, but as they began to drive through the gate, Bren became still. Knowing what Bren was probably thinking given that she had done the same thing the first time she came back, Alex just let Bren have her quiet time. Pulling into a parking space, Alex turned to her beloved. “Are you ready to go inside?” Bren nodded, so Alex came around to her door and helped her out of the car.

They walked soundlessly up to the building before Alex reached for Bren’s hand. When Bren allowed her to take it, Alex opened the door for them and smiled at Bren reassuringly. “We can do this.” Escorting Bren inside Alex took them into the main ballroom where she knew most of her colleagues would be. As they entered they were immediately spotted by Arthur, who practically ran over to them.

Grinning widely he said, “Alex, how are you? Bren, it’s so good to see you again.”

“It’s nice to see you too, Arthur. How are you and Ethel?”

“We’re fabulous. How are you?”

Bren smiled at Alex before answering, “We’re getting better, Arthur.”

“I’m certainly glad to hear that. This is one woman who is lost without you. I’m glad that the two of you are friendly terms again, and I’m happy you’ve decided to grace us with your presence today. You always have been a favored guest.”

“Thank you, Arthur. That’s sweet of you to say.”

The afternoon passed without problems for them as Bren enjoyed visiting with all the people she had known over the passed four and a half years. When the evening was over, Alex drove Bren home, where she was invited in for a late movie. Going into the kitchen together, they made

popcorn and grabbed some sodas out of the fridge. Then they moved into the living room and curled up closely together on the couch.

Silence prevailed for most of the movie as they shared a bowl of popcorn and watched one of Bren's favorite foreign films. As the end of the movie neared, Alex could feel Bren shifting against her in uneasiness. Alex eyes flittered over the blonde before settling on the screen again. During the time her thoughts had wandered from the movie, the lesbian love scene within the film had begun to unfold on the screen. Alex became aware of the heat suddenly emanating from Bren's close body. Of all the times they had seen the film together, neither of them had reacted strongly to the sex scene now on display, but as it ran, Alex felt herself responding to the combined stimulus of the screen and the petite blonde continuously brushing into her side.

Since they had decided to try to repair their relationship, they had not moved beyond the occasional chaste kiss, but Alex had always wanted more. Now as she focused on Bren, she realized the younger woman was wanting the same. Alex waited out the movie before deciding to initiate any intimate contact between them. Sliding her arms around Bren's waist, she nuzzled into Bren's hair as she asked, "So, you want to watch another movie or do something else?"

Bren instinctively leaned her head away from Alex, allowing more of her neck to be exposed to Alex's grazing lips. She moaned lightly as Alex kissed just under her jaw. "It's starting to get late. I don't think we have enough time to watch another before bedtime." she mentioned turning toward Alex's mouth, meeting it with her own in a modest kiss at first, but when Alex pressed harder, Bren responded with equal intensity.

Within moments their explorations became fervent as Alex maneuvered Bren onto her back against the couch. Pulling away from Bren's lips, Alex turned her attentions to her girlfriend's neck. "God, Bren, I love you. I want you so badly." Alex confessed as one of her hands slid up Bren's top as their mouths met again.

Bren cried out softly until Alex's hand landed on top of her breast. Gasping in surprise she pushed against Alex's chest. "Wait. Alex, please, no."

Alex looked down into Bren's brown eyes in confusion, but she removed her hand, placing it against the pillow Bren's head was resting upon. "What's wrong, honey? Don't you want this too?"

"Yes but not right now. I'm not ready for something like this, Alex. I do love you, and I want you as much as I ever did, but I'm not ready. Tonight was a big step for us, and I'm not at a point in which I can go further."

Alex nodded. "All right. I'm sorry. I guess I just misread you. I don't mean to push." she apologized sitting up again.

"Alex, you didn't misread me, but I'm not comfortable with that part of it again yet. I do want to be with you, but I can't right now. There are still things that we need to do before we can go back to that."



“Such as?” Alex inquired, wondering what Bren could possibly want from her since they hadn’t discussed this aspect in their counseling.

”Well, we may be going against doctor’s orders by talking about this right now.”

“I don’t care. I want to know. There will come a time when we’ll have to talk seriously without a moderator, so why not try to start now? Tell me your concerns.”

“Well, given what you’ve been through within the last year, I would feel more comfortable if you got an HIV test. I know you got one before we became intimate the first time, but since things have changed, I’d like you to get another just to be sure, especially since you and Victoria didn’t use protection. I’m going to get one myself because of what happened. Maybe we can go together.”

“Why do you need one? Have you been with anyone else?”

“No but you were with Victoria unprotected first and then me unprotected. I just think for both of us we should do it.”

“All right. I’ll get an HIV test. Is there anything else you want to talk to me about while we’re on this particular subject?”

Bren shrugged. “Well, I have been thinking about waiting until we venture back into this.”

“Waiting for what? A certain time?”

“Yeah.” “When did you have in mind? I just want to know where we stand here.”

“When we were married.” she stated hesitantly.

“I see. Where you going to mention this to me at some point or just keep me at bay? Why haven’t you said anything about this before now?”

Bren shrugged. “I don’t know. I guess I feel a little weird about it. I thought maybe you’d give me a hard time or disagree.”

Alex gave a nod. “Well, I guess we haven’t gotten as far in therapy as I thought we had if you’re still afraid to bring things to my attention for discussion. It is my right to disagree with you if I want, Bren. I wish you didn’t feel that way, but this is one of those situations in which I am willing to do what you want for the sake of the relationship. I won’t force you to do something you don’t want to do, because that would undermine the trust we’re trying to rebuild. However it’s only fair to me to be completely honest with me about it. When we do get married, are you going to be comfortable with sex again? It’s not everything in a marriage, but it is important to me. I don’t want to get married until you are ready for a sexual relationship again. It can’t be half a marriage. It has to be all or nothing. Is that something you’re going to be able to do?”

“Alex, I’m not going to marry you until I feel that comfortable, because I also think it should be all or nothing. Can we agree on this now, so there is no pressure later on?”

Alex nodded. “Yeah. You have my word.”

Bren threw her arms around Alex’s neck, squeezing her tightly. “Thank you, Alex. This means a lot to me. I know you’re trying so hard.”

“I would do anything for you, Bren.” Alex confessed. “I better go. It’s late.”

During the following therapy session, Bren brought up the discussion that she and Alex had. The therapist was so impressed with their progress that she decided that one session a week was appropriate and sent them on their way to repair their relationship at their pace. As usual Alex took Bren to dinner afterwards where they discussed the most recent turn of events.

“You know, I was wondering. Being that we both are sure we want to be married to each other, how do we want approach it? Do want to set a date now and work through therapy until then, or do you want to wait until our relationship is perfect to set a date?”

“Actually, Alex, I haven’t given that much thought. My goal is to get us back on track as fast as possible, because I do want to spend my time with you. I do want to be your wife as soon as possible, but these things take time.”

“So does planning a wedding. Do you think we can making wedding plans and attend therapy at the same time, or would you rather wait until we’ve worked everything out to start on plans?”

“What would you like to do, Alex?” Bren asked.

“Whatever makes you most comfortable, Bren.”

“I know you want me to believe that, but I know you have an opinion otherwise you wouldn’t have asked. Tell me what you want.”

“I want to set a date. I like having goals. It would just make me feel the permanence of our situation even though I already know that it’s never really permanent.”

Bren nodded. “I guess I can understand why you feel that way. Every time things have gotten tough I’ve run away from it. I guess I understand your fear. Let’s set a date then. When do you think is appropriate?”

“This is where I’d like to defer to you. When do you think it is appropriate? Planning takes time but so will counseling. We need time to do both, because they are equally important.”

“I’m not sure yet. Could we put that issue aside for a moment and talk about the wedding itself?”

“Sure.”

“Well, I guess it’s my desire to begin fresh, but I really don’t want to do this the way we were planning to last time. After all our trials, this has become a very private thing to me. I was wondering if you would agree to forgo the large ceremony.”

“Of course. I feel the same way. I was kind of hoping for small too. How small did you want it?”

“Well, maybe just our families. I still want to get married at the synagogue, because I know that’s important to you. However instead of having the reception at the country club, we could have it in our new home with just our families and closest friends. I really don’t want the fanfare like we had last time with the engagement or anything. I want everything to be simple.”

“I understand, and I agree. Well, now that we’ve agreed upon that, can we talk about a date?”

Bren thought for a moment. “Give me another three months, Alex. We have so much to do before then, buy a house, make preparations, continue with counseling.”

“The house will pose the most serious obstacle I think. We should begin looking right away as soon as we pick an exact date.”

Bren smiled. “You and this date thing. All right. As soon as dinner is over, we’ll go back to my place and look at the calendar.”

That weekend Bren and Alex made plans to start house hunting. As Alex sat in her kitchen drinking her morning coffee on Saturday, she was interrupted by the doorbell. Curiously she checked her watch. Seeing the early hour, she wondered who it might be. Going to the door, she pulled it open to see Bren standing on the front porch. “Bren, good morning. What are you doing here? I was supposed to come get you.”

“I know, but I just wanted to come over. You don’t mind, do you?”

“No. Of course not. Come on in. Want some coffee or breakfast?” she inquired letting Bren inside before closing the door behind her.

“No thanks. I’m fine.” she answered looking around the place.

Alex knew that Bren was thinking about times gone by and allowed the blonde to have her moment of quiet. Alex turned and went back to the kitchen. Bren followed slowly behind. “Are you sure I can’t get you something? Juice maybe?”

“Well, juice would be nice.” Bren conceded. Alex fixed her a glass before they both sat down at the table. Alex went back to her paper while Bren just looked around from her chair. Finally Bren broke the silence. “You know, this reminds me of so many Saturday mornings we used to spend here. You would read the paper, and I would read my book, and we would just enjoy each other’s company in silence. I miss that.”

“Me too. I look forward to those moments to come. We’ll have more, Bren.”

Bren was quiet for a few more moments. “Would you mind if I looked around?” she inquired.

Alex was curious at the request but didn’t want to deny Bren anything, so she said, “Sure. Be my guest.”

Alex stayed behind in the kitchen but her mind was with Bren, wondering why her girlfriend wanted the tour the house they once shared. Half an hour later she went in search of the petite woman finding her upstairs in one of the spare bedrooms, sitting on the bed. When Alex leaned against the doorframe, Bren looked up wearing a tearful smile.

“You know, I had forgotten about all the wonderful memories I had of this house. The first night you brought me home I sat on this very bed and contemplated the change in my life. I wasn’t sure where I was headed, and I certainly never expected to end up falling in love with my redeemer. I remember thinking that you had given me a second chance at the life I always wanted, and I knew no matter what I would be forever thankful for your generosity. Every night that I was here under this roof before I went to college I prayed that God would keep you safe and thank him for sending you to me at the time I needed help the most. Regardless of what has happened between us, I could never stay mad at you, because you gave me everything I ever wanted and needed., not just financially either. It made it so much easier to forgive you for your transgression once the pain receded to a bearable level.”

“Well, you never deserved to be hurt that way. It was a mistake.”

“I know, but I’ve come to forgive you, Alex. Have you forgiven yourself for what happened? I mean really forgiven yourself and accepted the fact that it’s okay to be human instead of this superhero image people have of you.”

“I hope in time that I will, Bren, but it makes it a little easier knowing that you have the grace to forgive. Are you ready for that house hunt now?”

“Alex, what you say if I told you I already know of the perfect house for us and it’s the one we’re in right now?”

“That would make me extremely happy, Bren. I love this house, but I would’ve given it up for you.”

“I love this house too, Alex, because it represents us, the good and the bad. Why don’t we just stay here but remodel instead? We’ll really make it ours by redoing the inside.”

Alex smiled. “All right. We’ll give the whole house a make over. Why don’t we spend our time shopping today to get a feel of how we want our home to look?”

“Sounds good.”

“Great. Let me just stop into the bedroom for a second, and then I’ll be ready.” Alex went into the master bedroom and over to her dresser to her top drawer. Pulling something out, Alex met up with Bren downstairs. “Here. I believe this belongs to you.” Taking Bren’s left hand, Alex slipped her engagement ring back on her finger.

Bren looked at it and then up at Alex. “You kept it?” she questioned.

“Of course. I always hoped it would once again find it’s way back to its rightful owner.”

Bren smiled, embracing Alex and pulling her head down into a kiss. “Thank you, Alex, for always hoping. I love you so much.”

Three months passed quickly for them. With Alex being a senior partner, she had much more time to dedicate to making the wedding of Bren’s dreams a reality. The morning of the big day Alex awoke late to the sound of movement in her house. She heard her parents in the kitchen, so she sauntered downstairs to see them talking with the caterer. After greeting them and grabbing a quick breakfast, she went up to her room to get ready for the special event.

Alex spent several minutes staring at herself in the mirror after her shower as she thought about all that had happened over the passed four and a half years. Even though Bren claimed that she had saved her from a terrible fate, Alex knew it was really Bren who saved her by bringing true happiness into her house. The younger woman always had a smile on her face and an enduring spirit that Alex had come to admire. She knew that Bren made her life possible by providing her with the perfect home even before they became lovers. It had always been a pleasure to come home to those beautiful light brown eyes and expressive grin. Alex had treasured seeing Bren transform from a young girl, scared but determined into a stunning woman, confident and caring of all people.

When it was finally time to go to the synagogue, Alex went back downstairs to collect her parents. Kelly had arrived by that time and was supervising the catering crew in their preparations for the reception. Kelly smiled when she saw Alex. “Alex, you look so happy right now. Congratulations.” she said coming to hug her.

“Thanks, Kelly, for everything. You’re the best friend I could ever have.”

“I’m just glad to be able to do this for you.” she said pulling on Alex’s jacket and brushing off imaginary lint. “Now go get your lady. I’ll hold down the fort until people get here, and when you get back, we’re going to have a much deserved celebration.”

Alex laughed. “The Mrs. and I will be back as soon as we can.” Alex replied.

Once at the synagogue, Alex and her parents took their place waiting in a room for their cue to line up for the procession. There was very little talking as Alex wondered where Bren was and what she was doing at the moment. Soon it was time for Alex to line up with her parents. Being that the service was going to be intimate, Bren and Alex had decided just to be escorted by their

parents. As the doors opened to admit them into the sanctuary, the eyes of all of their families turned. Alex couldn't help but smile at how many members of Bren's extended family were there, knowing that would please her soon-to-be wife. Alex smiled wider as her parents guided her down the aisle to where her rabbi awaited her. Once she was there, her parents moved to stand at her side. Instinctively Alex turned to wait for Bren and her mother to come down the aisle, but as soon as the doors were opened, she felt her legs start to waver as her heart hammered against her chest. She didn't even realize she gasped until she felt her father's hand on her back.

Bren was dressed in the gown that she had picked out for their first wedding, an elegant, simple, white dress and holding a bouquet of fall colored flowers. Bren's smile was wide, but Alex saw the unshed tears in the blonde's eyes, and she knew her own were quickly becoming that way as well. Bren's eyes never strayed from Alex during her procession. When she finally reached the front, both Bren and Alex exchanged hugs with all their parents before they stood alone with each other and the rabbi.

After some opening words by their rabbi, he turned to Alex saying that each of them had written something for the other. Alex looked down at Bren and smiled nervously. Forgetting what she had intended to say, Alex just began talking. "Bren, you look so undescribly beautiful today. You completely blow me away. I know God is fully responsible for bringing you into my life. You are the best thing that has ever happened to me, Bren. When I met you four and half years ago, I didn't know I was meeting my soulmate, but it didn't take me long to realize that you were a true blessing from God. When I met you, I was a tired, sad, broken spirit, but with your love you have made me whole again. You have breathed life into a soul that was lost, and I am forever grateful. From the moment I met you, I knew that you were a special woman, and I knew that whoever you chose for a mate would be one of the luckiest people on this earth. I am so honored and humbled that you have chosen me. Thank you for giving me the chance of a lifetime. From this moment forward, Bren, I will do everything in my power to make you happy. I love you with all that I am and all I ever hope to be." softly Alex said as the tears streamed down her face.

Bren smiled at her dark-haired hero as tears also adorned her cheeks. "Alex, from almost the moment I met you, I've known that you were a special person. Your capacity for caring and loving was so great, and I feel fortunate that you turned those feelings toward me. You made me feel safe and secure in this sometimes scary world. You gave me love, hope, and encouragement like no one else in this world, and I am forever thankful that I found you. It didn't take me long to realize that you deserved the best in a wife and that I wanted to strive to be her. You are my heart, Alex. You complete my soul. Finally my prayers for the perfect match have been answered, and I have you. Through the good and bad, Alex, I will be by your side, supporting you and loving you the way no one else could. I love you more than I could ever express to you, but I will spend the rest of my life trying."

The rabbi guided them through their vows and ring exchange before the ceremony was officially over. By the time Alex and Bren arrived back at their house, a party was already in full swing. All their family and friends cheered loudly as they entered. After greeting everyone they slipped away into the kitchen for a moment alone. Once they were in relative privacy except for the

catering crew, Bren pulled Alex into a hug.

“We did it, Alex. I can’t believe it.”

“I know. I can’t believe it either. This is all I ever wanted, Bren. Everything else in life is just icing on the cake. Thank you for believing in us.”

“Thank you for making it possible.” Bren whispered kissing Alex with all the emotion she felt in her heart.

“Come on. As much as I would love just making out with you in the kitchen right now, we do have guests to tend to.” Alex growled with playful frustration.

“Just you wait until tonight, Alex.” Bren teased rubbing herself up onto her wife suggestively before walking away. Even as turned on as Alex was, she was enjoying the way Bren was playing with her.

Bren and Alex stayed with their guests until after nine that evening before leaving for their honeymoon suite downtown. When they arrived they were quickly processed with their check-in and went upstairs to their room. After a quick inspection of their room, Bren and Alex poured the champagne that was awaiting them.

“So, now that we’re here, will you tell me where we’re flying in the morning?” Bren inquired.

“Depends on what?” gamely Bren asked.

“How nice you’re going to be to me the rest of the night.” Alex joked.

Bren smiled. “To be honest, Alex, I haven’t decided how nice to be to you tonight. I know you’ve been trying so hard to be good, but underneath it all, I know you’re still a bad girl. I mean all day long you’ve been flirting with this blonde woman.”

Alex smiled knowing that Bren was speaking of herself. “I can’t help it. She is just so beautiful and intelligent. She has the best sense of humor and such a sweet smile. I can’t help but be completely captivated by her. I’m hopelessly in love with her.” she whispered moving in to embrace Bren around the waist.

“You say such wonderful things. Never stop.”

“I’ll never stop loving you, Bren, and I’ll never stop telling you how wonderful you are in every way. If I do you have my permission to punish me.”

“Punish you, huh? I think you like it a little too much when I punish you.” Bren mentioned slapping Alex’s backside with her hand playfully.

“I like anything you do to me, Mrs. Worthington-Schreiber.”

Bren grinned. “Thanks for agreeing with me about keeping my name. I know it makes my name really long, but I like that we’ll be passing both our names to our children. It would make my father happy if he were alive.”

“As long as you’re happy with it then so am I.” Alex stated leaning down for a kiss.

Bren wrapped her arms around Alex’s neck as the kiss deepened. For several minutes they stood exchanging increasingly fervent kisses before Bren quietly questioned, “Are you ready for bed yet, Alex?”

“If you are. Is my precious wife ready?”

Bren gave a sexy smile. “I’ve been ready for a long time.” Bren took Alex by the hands and walked backwards into the bedroom with her. Depositing her wife at the foot of the bed, she instructed Alex to stay put while she went to retrieve the champagne. When Bren returned she put their beverages next to the bed before going to stand in front of Alex again.

“Well, here we are.” Alex stated, waiting for Bren to take the lead.

“Yeah. Here we are.” Bren mumbled, suddenly seeming a little nervous.

“Are you all right?” Alex asked seeing the hesitation in her wife’s eyes.

Bren gave a little laugh. “It’s funny. I feel more nervous now than the first time we did this.”

“Oh. Well, listen. If you’re not ready, we don’t have to. Um, we can find something else to do tonight.” Alex tried to reassure her gently.

Bren chuckled again. “Alex, just because I’m nervous doesn’t mean I don’t want to do this. It’s just that this time will be different.”

“It doesn’t have to be unless you want it that way, Bren. I just want to do everything in my power to make you happy tonight. Tell me how I can do that.”

“I want it to feel like the first time.” Bren murmured pulling Alex’s head down for a soft kiss.

Without further discussion Bren and Alex expressed the emotions that they had been holding back over the past year as they celebrated their bright future. “I love you so much, Bren. Thank you for saving me.” Alex whispered as she gazed at her wife with awe and wonder in her teary eyes.

Bren giggled as she stroked Alex’s face and stared up at her. “You’re very welcome, Alex Schreiber. Thank you for never giving up on us. You really are the other half of my soul. I love you more everyday, and I look forward to forever with you.”



The End

**The Athenaeum's Scroll Archive**

---