

~ Time: Clock of the Heart ~

by Alex Tryst

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Disclaimers: This is a sequel to Persistence and would be difficult and confusing to read if you haven't read Persistence first. Some of you may recognize the title of this book as a song title from my favorite 80s band, Culture Club, but I assure you that no infringement was intended. I simply felt that George O'Dowd's (Boy George) song of loving, losing, and learning to love again perfectly expressed the sentiments of this piece. I also must state that there are several songs in this book that have been modified from their original content, and even though I attribute them as original works by one of my characters, they really were written by Babyface and on his "For the Cool in You" CD (which I only bought because the sales girl was flirting with me and I wanted a date, but that's a story for another time). Due to the unfamiliarity of these songs, most people won't know the melody, but they read more like poetry, so this shouldn't hinder your enjoyment. As for sex, violence, language and so on, this is a rather tame story. Of course there is sex between two consenting adult women, and if this is illegal where you live or offensive to you, you must do a 180 degree turn immediately. There isn't any violence that I can think of, and I could count the uses of foul language on one hand, well maybe two.

Dedication: To my wife, you are my fondest wish. To my fans of Drew and Lola, this one is just for you. You asked for it, and you got it. Enjoy!

Now on with the show.....

Chapter 1

Drew pulled up to her house at half past eleven that night. She had expected to be home much earlier but an emergency at work kept her from her precious family that evening. Knowing that everyone should be asleep, Drew quietly crept inside before securing the door behind her. The kitchen light was still on, drawing her into the room where a note had been left on the counter by her beloved Lola stating that she had put a plate of food in the refrigerator for her if she was hungry and to hurry to bed.

Even though Drew was hungry, she opted to skip the meal and head straight upstairs. When she got up to the second floor, she bypassed the master bedroom, softly opening the first of three doors on the right side of the hallway. Noting that their baby girl was not in the nursery, Drew moved on to the second room. Sprawled out in the middle of the bed, covers on the floor, and pajamas misbuttoned and mismatched was her five year old son Jack. Drew stifled a laugh at his attempt to dress himself for bed as she went to retrieve his blanket. Maneuvering him back into the correct position, she covered him as she lightly stroked his dark hair. Placing a kiss on his forehead, she left the room for the one next door.

As she walked in, she noticed that her three year old Libby looked more and more like her wife everyday. Drew thought back to a time when she babysat Lola at Libby's age and how similar they really were in all facets. Taking a moment to brush Libby's golden hair, Drew bestowed a kiss upon her as well before heading to she and Lola's room.

Opening the door as quietly as possible, Drew stepped in to find Lola lying naked on her side of the bed, a book laying face down on her stomach as she reclined against the headboard sound asleep. Next to her where Drew normally slept was their youngest child, four month old Emma also sleeping. Coming over to where Lola was, Drew leaned down to kiss her lips softly.

Lola moaned before her eyes fluttered open. "Hey. Where have you been?" she asked with a sigh. "I called the station looking for you, and they said you had an emergency, but they wouldn't tell me where you were."

Drew took a seat on the edge of the bed and caressed Lola's bare thigh lightly. "One of my deputies got shot this evening in the line of duty. I've been at the hospital with his family. Sorry I didn't have time to call."

"I was concerned about you. Are you all right? Will he be all right?"

Drew shrugged. "I'll be okay. It's just hard at times like these. I care about my guys so much, and I hate it when something like this happens. It's hard to tell someone's wife that her husband has been seriously injured and that you have no idea if he's going to make. It's hard to watch her crying over her husband's unresponsive body, knowing that I can't do a damn thing to make either of them feel better." she mumbled slouching forward a little.

Lola moved to embrace her. "Drew, you're such a kind, giving spirit. I'm sure it helped that you were there with her. Why don't you get ready for bed? I'll go put Emma down."

Drew simply nodded before heading into the bathroom. By the time she returned Lola was back in bed awaiting her with open arms. Climbing into bed Drew laid her head against Lola's breasts and promptly fell asleep from the emotional stress of the day. A few hours later Drew was roused from sleep by a constant nudging and her wife's voice. "What is it?" she grumbled not even attempting to move from her place on top of Lola's frame.

"Emma's crying. I need to get up, Drew." Lola stated much more patiently than she felt due to the fact that Emma had been crying for several moments and threatened to wake the other kids if left unattended too long. Drew groaned but complied with Lola's unspoken request that she move. Rolling onto her back, she went back to sleep as Lola left the room.

A couple of minutes later, Lola returned with Emma in her arms. Taking a seat on the bed and reclining back against the headboard, she let Emma settle against her breast as the infant began to feed. Lola regarded her wife intently as their youngest took nourishment from her body. Drew was seemingly passed out from exhaustion not even having bothered with pajamas that night. With the sheet barely covering her lover, Lola got a chance to examine Drew's naked body as the older woman slept. Even at forty-eight Drew was in incredible shape, her body lean and tone

through years of working out at the station gym and around their horse farm. Lola's eyes trailed over Drew's broad, strong shoulders passed her firm breasts to her favorite part of Drew's body, the taut, rippling muscles of her abdomen. Reaching over Lola let her hand slide along Drew's six pack as she reminisced about the feeling of those muscles. Whether astride her partner or with Drew lying in the cradle of her thighs, Lola always loved the exquisite feeling of those muscles slithering along her overheated, sensitive, wet flesh whenever they made love. She couldn't even remember the last time she and Drew had been intimate, knowing that it was sometime while she had still been pregnant with Emma.

Suddenly her musings were interrupted by Drew's husky voice asking, "What are you doing?"

Lola blushed. "Oh, just thinking. Would you flex you abs for me, honey?" she asked sweetly.

Drew gave her a quizzical look but replied, "Sure."

Lola moaned as her hand skimmed over the surface. "Oh, I just love that feeling." she mentioned.

Drew rolled over onto her side, so she could get a better view of her daughter. "Man, that's one lucky girl right there." Drew stated propping up on her elbow.

"Why do you say that?"

"Every time she cries she get a face full of your luscious breasts. Had I known that was the key, I would've tried that technique a long time ago." she teased. "I hope she realizes those are only on temporary loan, because they are all mine."

Lola laughed. "You aren't jealous now, are you Drew?"

"Only as long as I know you get no sexual enjoyment out of that." Drew said with a joking smile.

Lola laughed. "Hardly, Drew. She lacks your skills, but I do enjoy this. That doesn't bother you, does it?" she asked seriously.

Drew gave her a gentle smile as she sat up next to her. "Not at all. I enjoy watching the two of you together like this. It's the second most beautiful thing I've ever seen." she said as she cupped the back of Emma's blonde head.

"The second most beautiful? What's the first?" Lola inquired.

Drew placed her hand against Lola's cheek, turning it toward her, so they were face to face. "The sight of you when we make love. There is nothing more beautiful than the sight and sound of you as you reach your fulfillment. It's just been a long time since I've seen it."

Lola blushed at her lover's words. "It's been too long, Drew, in my opinion." Lola admitted as

she leaned in for a kiss.

A few kisses later Drew pulled back slightly and looked down at their daughter. "Maybe if piglet there is finished, we can talk about this more in depth." she suggested giving Lola a sexy grin. Several minutes later Emma had completed her meal, and Drew took her back into the nursery to burp her before putting her down. By the time she returned to the master bedroom for the much anticipated loving from her wife, Lola was already sleeping soundly. Drew chuckled at the situation, more amused than frustrated that another opportunity to make love to the most beautiful woman in the world had passed. Sliding in next to her wife, Drew clicked off the light and put her arms around Lola as sleep claimed them both.

Drew was awake first the following morning, knowing that Lola had gotten up at some point during the night with Emma again. Even though she knew her two older children were probably about to wake, Drew couldn't bring herself to get out of bed. She laid there watching Lola while the twenty-eight year old was lost in sleep as she thought about their six year marriage. It was eleven years ago that Lola first approached Drew about a relationship, but Drew had adamantly refused, because Lola was the daughter of her best friend. However after five years she crumbled hopelessly to the wiles of the young woman, and Drew felt blessed that Lola had chosen her ever since. Curving an arm around her wife's waist, Drew settled her head against Lola's shoulder and drifted for a few more minutes until she heard the door creak open.

Raising her head she saw their middle child lingering in the doorway. "Good morning." Drew whispered.

"Morning, Mommy. I'm hungry." she said softly as she moved toward the bed on Drew's side.

"All right. I'll fix you something to eat. Is your brother up yet?" Libby nodded affirmatively. "He's hungry too."

"Okay. Just give me a minute. I'll be right there. You wait in the kitchen with Jack."

"Okay. Is Mama going to get up too?" she asked looking at Lola.

"No. Let's let her sleep. Emma kept her up late last night. Go on now. I'll be right there." Once Libby was gone, Drew slipped out of bed and went to the dresser for her pajamas. Quickly throwing them on, Drew made her way downstairs into the kitchen where Jack and Libby were already sitting at their places at the table. "Morning, tiger." Drew greeted Jack giving him a hug before giving Libby one as well. "What do you two want for breakfast?"

"Cereal." they said in unison.

"Well, that's easy enough." Drew mumbled to no one in particular. Going into the pantry, she dug out the cereal specially designated for Saturdays given its sugar content. As she poured two bowls for her kids, she wondered if Lola only allowed the children to eat it when Drew was around, because Drew would handle them when they got on their sugar high. Setting the cereal in front of her children to eat, she started on a pot of coffee for herself. "So, what are we doing

today?" she asked them casually.

"Mama said we were going to Grandma and Grandpa's house to go swimming." Jack said with a mouthful.

"Oh really? I didn't know that. That sounds like fun."

"Aunt Nat is coming. Are you?" Jack asked referring to Lola's older sister Natalie.

"Well, tiger, I think I will if you want me to." Drew stated with a smile.

"Yeah. Mommy's coming." Libby squealed in delight.

"Jack, did Mama say what time we were supposed to be there?" He shook his head. Drew checked her watch for the time before deciding that she could call Lola's mother, Katherine, to find out, so after pouring herself a cup of coffee, she went to the phone. Kate's husband Jim answered the phone on the third ring. "Hey, Jim. Good morning." she said.

"Hi, Drew. How are you? How are the kids?"

"They're good. Actually they just told me that we're supposed to be coming to your house to go swimming today, and I knew nothing about it."

"I didn't know either actually. I better let you talk to Kate about that, but I know we're going to be here and would love to see them. Let me get her for you. Hold on."

"Hey, Grandma." Drew joked when her best friend of over thirty years came to the phone.

"Good morning, Drew. How are my favorite grandchildren?"

"Good. They are anxious to come see you today and go swimming. Lola didn't mention it to me, so I was wondering if we were supposed to come over at a certain time or anything."

"No, no specific time. As soon as you can get the troops together is fine with us. We'll be here. I figured we do lunch and dinner here depending on how long you all are going to stay. Just come on over."

"All right. I'll talk to Lola when she wakes up."

"Lola is still asleep? It's after eight. The kids weren't banging down your door this morning?"

"They were, but Lola is pretty tired. I got up with the kids to try to give her a little extra time to sleep. We're both really exhausted, though."

"Well, why don't you let Jim and me keep Jack and Libby for a few days? You two deserve a break. You've been going nonstop for a long time. Let them stay the next few days with us, so

you two can get some rest.”

“Kate, we wouldn’t want to put you and Jim out like that.”

“Don’t be silly. These are my grandchildren we’re talking about here. I love having them around.”

“Will they be in Jim’s way? I don’t want him to be bothered.”

“No. He’s taking the weekend off, doesn’t have to be back at work until Monday. Let them stay the weekend. I know you and Lola could use a little private time.”

“Yeah, we could. I’ll talk to her about it. Thanks, Kate.”

“Anything for my little girl and my best friend. You know that. See you a little later.”

About an hour later Drew was sitting on the couch reading the paper as her two older children flanked her engrossed in cartoons when she heard movement on the stairs. Looking up over her shoulder she saw Lola coming down the stairs carrying Emma. “Good morning, Mama.” Drew greeted with a smile.

“Good morning, Mommy, kids.” she said moving to give all of them hugs and kisses.

“Here. Let me take the little rascal.” Drew suggested reaching out for Emma.

“Thanks.” Lola moved into the kitchen to get herself something to eat, deciding on a bagel and cream cheese with orange juice. Going back into the family room, she sat in one of the side chairs to eat while she watched tv as well.

“I talked to your mom while you were asleep. She said we could come over whenever we’re ready for swimming.”

“Okay. After breakfast we’ll get everyone ready to go.”

“She also suggested that we have a weekend to ourselves by letting number one and two stay for the weekend.” she said making sure her kids were not involved in their conversation.

“Oh, I don’t know. I don’t want to put Mom and Jim though that really. That’s a lot of work.”

“I said the same thing, but she assured me that it wasn’t a problem. Honey, you’re exhausted, and we haven’t had any time alone in forever. We’ll keep piglet here with us obviously, but we could use a little break. If I can handle this crew, you’re Mom and Jim can. It’ll just be a couple of days. What do you think?”

“It would be nice. I think I feel asleep in the middle of our conversation last night, and I’d like to finish it at some point.” Lola said with a smile. Turning to her two older children, she inquired,

“How would the two of you like to spend the whole weekend with just Grandma and Grandpa?”

Both children nodded their heads in excitement, so Drew said, “I guess that settles that. Let’s get going. Come on kids. Let’s get our clothes on.”

Kate and Jim’s house was about forty minutes from theirs, so they arrived shortly after ten that morning with overnight bags in hand. After hugs for the kids, Kate moved to her daughter and friend. “Thanks for taking them, Mom. It’s just going to be for a couple of days, right?”

“Of course. You just let me know when you want them back. Jim and I are glad to have something to entertain us. How many days did you pack for?”

“Just until Monday. Drew has to go back to work then.”

“Great but if you still need more time, don’t worry about it. I can always buy them some more clothes.”

“Don’t you dare, Katherine. These kids are spoiled enough. They don’t need gifts every time we come over here.” Drew warned.

“Lighten up, Mommy. That’s the advantage of being the grandmother. I get to spoil them rotten and then send them home to you. Pay backs, Drew, for when you did it to Natalie and Lola.” Kate teased with a laugh. “All right, kids. Who’s ready for the pool?”

That afternoon Drew and Jim grilled hamburgers for everyone as they all hung out by the pool. Natalie spent most of her time in the pool with the kids and her mother while Lola sat in the shade with Emma. As Drew and Jim stood next to the grill, they shared a few beers as they talked mostly about their respective jobs.

“Jim, I just wanted you to know that Lola and I both appreciate the fact that you and Kate are taking the children for a few days. We’ve been dead on our feet for weeks.”

“Oh, it’s a pleasure. It’s been too long since Kate and I have had kids in the house. It’ll be fun.”

“Yeah but I hate that we’re taking up your private time. You are still technically newlyweds.” she teased throwing a playful elbow into his arm. “I know what that’s all about.”

Jim chuckled. “Not for much longer. It’s been a quick two years.”

“Has it been all you expected?”

“More.” Jim stated with a smile. “She really is an extraordinary woman, Drew. I’m so glad I found her. When I divorced my first wife, I wasn’t sure I’d ever find another woman that could capture my heart so fully, but Katherine did from the moment I met her.”

“You know when Paul died, I was worried about her. I had hoped she would find happiness

again. You just better be glad it wasn't with me." Drew joked.

"I thank Lola for that. I know that's the only reason I had half a chance. Life really has a strange way of working out, doesn't it?"

"Sure does." Drew agreed looking over at her wife and newest baby.

Drew and Lola left right after dinner that evening. As they took the drive back to their farm, Emma fell asleep in her car seat, leaving the two of them in quiet. Reaching over to Lola, Drew took her hand. "Why didn't we do this sooner?" Lola inquired with a smile. "This is nice to only have to worry about one little infant instead of the three of them. With any luck we'll be able to have that talk from last night." she mentioned with a seductive smile.

"I hope we can do more than talk, Mrs. Emerson-Bailey."

"Well, what did you have in mind, Sheriff Bailey? Maybe if you tell me what you want we could work something out."

Drew gave a demure grin. "Well, as soon as Emma settles down, I was thinking that you and I could take a much deserved soak in a luxurious bubble bath. Then maybe I could give you a little massage, and if I play my cards right I might be able to slip you some of my special love potion."

Lola moaned lightly at the thought. "I have to admit. If you give me that massage first, you might put me to sleep, and I know that's not what you had in mind."

Drew smiled as her hand slipped between Lola's thighs and rubbed the apex of her khaki shorts lightly. "Don't you worry your pretty head about that. I only intend to massage the spots that need me the most." she said suggestively.

"I think you need to step on the gas, Drew." Lola stated placing her hand on top of Drew's and increasing the pressure..

Chapter 2

By the time they reached home, Drew's hand had managed to work itself into Lola's shorts. Bringing the jeep to a quick halt, she turned off the engine just as Lola came across the seat at her. Lola assaulted her with a barrage of sensual kisses, but Drew didn't try to escalate their intimacy, knowing that they had to get Emma inside into bed before continuing. "All right, Lola. Just slow down there, woman. We've got all night. I promise." Drew assured her. "Let's get Emma put down first, and then we can wear each other out."

Lola regretfully pulled away and nodded. "Okay. Hopefully she'll stay asleep for a few hours before making herself known again."

Drew retrieved their youngest from her car seat and took her up to the nursery while Lola

disappeared into the master bedroom. By the time Drew entered the bedroom, Lola had turned it into a den of love with candles illuminating the room in a soft glow. Drew heard the water running in the bathroom, so she made a move toward it, fully expecting to see her lover in the tub, but as she cleared the doorway, she saw an empty tub as someone grabbed her around the waist from behind. "Lola?" Drew questioned needlessly as her assailant began ripping at her clothes.

"You're way overdressed, Drew." Lola mentioned pulling Drew's shirt down her shoulders after unbuttoning it. Quickly unclasping Drew's bra, Lola kissed over her back as her hands took in Drew's abdomen before setting to work on the belt of Drew's shorts.

Drew dropped her head back as Lola's hands roamed over her bare torso and Lola's breasts rubbed invitingly into her back.. "I love it when you sneak up on me like this. It makes me so hot for you." she whispered as Lola shoved Drew's shorts to the floor, leaving the both naked. "I'm so ready for you, Drew. Please take me." begged Lola turning her wife around.

Drew growled as she leaned in to capture Lola's lips in a fervent lock. "Come here." she demanded pulling them over to the tub. Settling them both into the water, Lola's body on top of hers, Drew moved to kiss her frantically again. Drew slid her hand down between their bodies finding Lola completely ready for her. Slipping into her Drew groaned in satisfaction as Lola immediately moaned and began a grinding pace to bring herself to peak swiftly.

Once she had climaxed, Lola gave a sigh of content as she dropped her head onto Drew's shoulder, leaving them interlocked. "Oh, did I ever need that. I love you, Drew." she mumbled, kissing Drew's neck lightly.

"I love you too, Lola. Glad to be at your service." Drew replied.

Several minutes passed in silence before Lola finally released Drew's hand from its confinement. Turning over so her back was against Drew's chest, Lola mentioned, "It's so nice just to be alone with you like this."

"It is nice. It seems like forever since we've had time to ourselves that we weren't passed out in exhaustion. As much as I love sleeping next to you, I married you for those awake activities." Drew joked.

Leisurely they lounged in the tub long after the bubbles has disappeared, just feeling close to each other until they heard Emma's cry on the monitor. "Well, I guess our quiet time is over for now." Lola mentioned with regret as she moved to get out of the tub.

Drew did the same, reaching for her robe as she said, "I'll go see what the problem is. You stay here."

"She's most likely hungry. It's about that time." Lola let the water out of the bath before draping her robe over her shoulders and going into the bedroom. As she thought Emma was hungry, so she took the infant from Drew and settled down into the bedside chair to feed her.

“While you’re tending to that, do you want anything from downstairs? A drink or anything?”

“A drink would be nice. Maybe a glass of water. Thanks, honey.”

“Sure. Be right back.” Drew went downstairs to retrieve water for her wife and a glass of milk for herself. Figuring she could get away with stealing some of her children’s cookies without their notice, she put a few on a plate and returned to the bedroom.

Lola grinned when her wife returned with a snack. “You know you’re just lucky the kids aren’t here to see you with those. They’d be begging for some right about now.”

“Well, I think Emma can keep my secret. She won’t tell.” Drew replied dunking her cookie in her milk to make it the proper soggiess before eating. Once Emma had finished and fallen back to sleep, Drew put her back in the nursery before joining Lola in bed. “Well, this certainly is pleasant. I’m looking forward to tomorrow when it’s going to be quiet around here.”

“Did you have plans for tomorrow, Drew?”

“Not really, jut enjoying the silence. Why? Is there something you wanted to do?”

“Well, I was kind of hoping to convince you to watch Emma while I went for a ride. I don’t even know the last time I got a chance to ride, and I miss it.”

“Why don’t you go more often?” Drew asked curiously.

Lola looked at her wife like she was crazy. “And exactly when do I have time? Drew, I’m looking after three children all day long. I never have a moment alone much less a few hours. As much as I love being down with the horses, I just don’t have time for that anymore. Besides the crew is self-sufficient down there without me. It was one thing when I could take Jack down there when he was a baby, but I can’t take the three of them down there at the same time. It would be too stressful, so we just don’t go anywhere near the stables. They know they are off limits.”

“Well, if you want to ride tomorrow, I’ll be happy to stay here with Emma. I would hate to deprive you of your chance to do that.”

“Really? You wouldn’t mind? I know we were supposed to have some time together, but this really is my only chance.”

“I don’t mind, sweetheart. I know how much you love riding, and I want you to go tomorrow if you want to. Emma and I will be fine here by ourselves for a few hours. How hard can it be to watch over a child that sleeps most of the time?”

Lola looked at her wife skeptically. “That’s what I thought at first, but when you have three of them, it makes it a little harder. I’d love to be a fly on the wall while you were in charge of the

three of them for the day. I just know it would be a disaster.”

“Hey. Are you saying I can’t care for our kids as well as you?” Drew inquired with slight hurt in her voice.

“No, honey. I don’t mean it that way. I know with you their well-taken care of, but I’m saying our house might not survive that test is all. You have to admit that when you are in charge things tend to get a little messy around here. They know who the gullible parent is.” she teased.

Drew had to conceded to Lola’s point. “I guess that’s true. It does seem like a tornado has hit whenever I’m in charge. I don’t know how you do it as well as you do. You’re something else, love.” Drew commented leaning to kiss Lola on top of the head.

Lola leaned up to catch Drew’s mouth in a soft kiss that lasted several moments. “I love so much, Drew. You are the best provider for us that I could ever ask for. Thank you for taking such good care of all of us.”

“Thank you for letting me, Lola, and thank you for choosing me as your mate. Not a day goes by that I don’t count that as my greatest blessing.” Drew whispered bestowing gentle kisses on her wife.

Several minutes passed as they exchanged delicate kisses before Lola pulled Drew’s body on top of her. Opening her thighs for her lover, Lola rocked her hips lightly taking in the feel of Drew’s body against her own. “I love the way your body feels against mine.” she murmured as her hands took in the landscape of Drew’s back and gray hair.

“I love it too, baby.” Drew answered leaning down to kiss along Lola’s neck and breasts as their love making continued into the night at a tender pace.

The next few weeks of the summer passed much in the same fashion, making weekly trips to Kate and Jim’s or having the grandparents visit out at the farm. One particular Saturday Drew had spent the morning down at the stables while Kate was with Lola and the kids. When she came back up to the house for lunch, Lola stopped her at the door looking like she was about to explode.

Wrapping Lola in her arms, Drew looked down at her in concern. “What’s wrong, honey? You look about ready to kill someone.”

“Your son is being a holy terror this morning. I really need a break, Drew. Do you think you could take him for a little one on one attention? I think he could use a little Mommy time.”

Seeing that Lola’s patience was gone, she nodded. “Sure. I’ve got to do some more stuff down at the barn, but I’ll take him with me. Maybe it’ll be just the distraction he needs. Where is he?”

“He’s in timeout.”

“That bad?” Drew asked. Lola nodded. “What did he do?”

“He hit Libby, because she wanted to play with one of his cars, and he didn’t want her to.”

“Okay. I’ll handle it. How much more time does he have in timeout?”

“About another minute.”

“All right. Could I trouble you for a sandwich? I’m so hungry right now, and I’m needed back down there as soon as possible.”

“Sure. I’ll make you something. You deal with our little nightmare.”

Drew walked to the designated timeout spot and found their son pouting on the bottom stair. Crossing her arms across her chest, she put on her serious face. “Mama tells me she sent you to timeout for hitting your sister.” she stated. “Is that true?”

“She started it, Mommy. She took one of my toys.”

Drew squatted down, so they were closer in height. “You know the rules about sharing. Hitting someone because you don’t get your way is wrong, Paul Jackson. You don’t hit people, especially your sisters. Do you understand me?”

He nodded. “Yes, Mommy.”

“Good. Now come here.” she said reaching for him. He went into her arms for a hug. “You’re going to spend some time with me for awhile.”

“Really?” he asked excitedly.

“Yeah. I’m going to take you down to the barn. How would you like that?”

“Mama says we can’t go down there.” Jack mentioned seriously.

“Well, that’s true, Jack. You can’t go down there by yourself, but I’m going to take you. Do you want to go?”

“Just the two of us? No Libby?” he inquired climbing onto her back for a piggy back ride as they made their way into the kitchen.

“No Libby.” Drew clarified much to his excitement.

By the time they got to the kitchen, Lola was putting a sandwich in a little plastic for Drew. “Sorry it’s probably not what you wanted but these were left over from the kids’ lunch. I promise you a better dinner.”

Drew looked at the peanut butter and jelly sandwich that had been mangled by little hands but decided not to push the issue, knowing that Lola was at her wits end. Drew leaned over to kiss Lola's forehead in sympathy. "Thanks, honey. We'll be back later. Let's go, cowboy." Once they got to the barn, Drew let Jack off her back but held his hand as he entered. "All right, Jack. This is not a playground in here. You need to be on your best behavior. There are a lot of things in here that can be dangerous, so stay close to me." With that warning Drew dropped his hand as they made their way back to the office. Drew went about her business with the stable hands, knowing that Jack was near by with they way he clung to her leg as she spoke to her employees. However once they moved out of the office for a small walking tour of the facility, she temporarily lost track of her son being so involved with work. It wasn't until she heard the sound of one of the tractors being turned on that caught her attention. Looking toward the noise, she saw her son playing with the controls. "Jack, that is not a toy!" she scolded, immediately retrieving him and yanking the key out. Turning back to her employees with the keys in her hand, she said, "This is an example of what I was talking about earlier. I don't want any more keys left in equipment. We have a lot of kids that come through here, and it's a lawsuit waiting to happen, not to mention the keys could get lost. From now on every key gets labeled and put on a board in the office." She tossed the keys to the office manager before looking down at Jack.. "Son, what did I tell you about being on your best behavior? These are not toys in here."

"Mommy, I wanna look at the horses." she stated.

"In minute, Jack. I have to finish this first." she said going back to work. Moving the group outside, Drew continued with her meeting. Ten minutes later Drew dismissed her workers and looked around for Jack, but he was nowhere to be seen. "Jack?" she called out. "Jack, where are you?" When there wasn't an answer, she went back into the barn, thinking that he had gone to look at the horses against her warning, but he was not inside. "Jack? Where are you, son?" she called with greater concern as she went back outside.

All of a sudden one of the farmhands said, "Drew, you better come quick. It's Jack. He's gotten into ring with some of the newer horses."

"What?" she screamed out anxiously running to the outside ring. There she saw the five year old standing in the ring oblivious to the agitation he was causing some of the untrained horses. "Jack!" she yelled. "Stay right there, son! Don't move!" Drew ran as fast as she could, scaling the fence and hopping into the ring. As she ran toward him, he began to back away from her, thinking that he was in trouble for running off again. Drew saw her son bump into a black stallion behind him causing him to yelp in surprise and spooking the horse who reared up on his hind legs. "Jack!" Drew screamed at the top of her lungs as she sprinted for him and pushing him out of the way before everything went dark.

Continued: Chapter 3

~ Time: Clock of the Heart ~

by Alex Tryst

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Disclaimers: This is a sequel to Persistence and would be difficult and confusing to read if you haven't read Persistence first. Some of you may recognize the title of this book as a song title from my favorite 80s band, Culture Club, but I assure you that no infringement was intended. I simply felt that George O'Dowd's (Boy George) song of loving, losing, and learning to love again perfectly expressed the sentiments of this piece. I also must state that there are several songs in this book that have been modified from their original content, and even though I attribute them as original works by one of my characters, they really were written by Babyface and on his "For the Cool in You" CD (which I only bought because the sales girl was flirting with me and I wanted a date, but that's a story for another time). Due to the unfamiliarity of these songs, most people won't know the melody, but they read more like poetry, so this shouldn't hinder your enjoyment. As for sex, violence, language and so on, this is a rather tame story. Of course there is sex between two consenting adult women, and if this is illegal where you live or offensive to you, you must do a 180 degree turn immediately. There isn't any violence that I can think of, and I could count the uses of foul language on one hand, well maybe two.

Dedication: To my wife, you are my fondest wish. To my fans of Drew and Lola, this one is just for you. You asked for it, and you got it. Enjoy!

Now on with the show.....

Chapter 3

Lola was sitting with her mother and girls in the family when she heard Drew scream Jack's name. However as soon as she heard her son wailing, she knew something was horribly wrong. Jumping from the couch she rushed outside onto the deck. Seeing one of the older horse trainers holding a hysterical Jack in his arms as a small group huddled in the outdoor ring, she took off down the hill toward the commotion. Vaulting over the fence, Lola screamed, "What happened?"

"Mama! Mama!" Jack cried, lunging for her.

Lola took him into her arms as she parted the workers to see who was hurt. As soon as she laid eyes on her wife face down in the dirt her world began to spin out of control. Dropping to her knees, Lola reached for the back of Drew's head with a shaky hand to stop the flow of blood. "Someone get me a towel!" she yelled, her voice wavering with emotion. "Drew, baby, can you hear me?" she whispered to her lover who lay motionless.

Moments later an old towel was placed in her hand by one of their workers. "I already called an ambulance, Lola. They're on their way." he mentioned.

“Does anyone know what happened?” she asked looking around at all their employees.

he young man that had found Jack originally stepped forward and dropped to a knee next to her. “I saw Jack had wandered into the ring with some of the horses we were training today. Drew and I came to get him when one of the horses got spooked. Jack was about to get trampled when Drew pushed him out of the way, and the horse landed on her instead. I’m sorry, Lola.” he said quietly.

“Oh, God.” Lola whispered clutching her weeping son closer to her body with one arm as she kept the pressure against Drew’s head injury. Lola began to cry as the minutes passed seeing her wife’s precious blood soaking the ground around her.

“Mommy! Mommy, please wake up! I’m sorry! Please wake up, Mommy! I’ll never do it again!” Jack swore as he tried to reach for her, but Lola kept him back.

“It’s okay, baby. Everything is going to be all right.” Lola consoled him, rocking him slightly, trying to keep him calm.

“Make her wake up, Mama. Please.” he begged.

Knowing she couldn’t fulfill that request, she simply held Jack closer. “Mommy will be okay, Jack. She just has to be.” Turning to address the group, she said, “Someone go up to the house and tell my mother what’s going on. Tell her to get the girls ready to follow the ambulance to the hospital.”

Hours later found Lola, the children, Kate, and Jim hovering around in Drew’s room in the hospital. Even though Lola was a complete emotional wreck, she tried to remain strong for her kids. Jack had worn himself out crying and was now asleep next to Drew in the bed after he had been examined by the doctor for injuries as well. The room was quiet, everyone lost in their own thoughts as Lola rocked a sleeping Emma, and Kate softly hummed to a tired Libby.

“Lola, why don’t I take the kids home and get them ready for bed?” Jim suggested. “It might be awhile before we know anything.”

Knowing her children didn’t need to be around the hospital any longer, she gave a nod. “All right. I’ll keep Emma with me, though. Thanks, Jim.”

Once mother and daughter were alone, Kate slipped her arms around Lola who began to cry. “I know this is hard for you, baby, but Drew’s a fighter.”

“I can’t lose her, Mom. She means everything to me. I can’t live without her beside me.” the young blonde sobbed clinging to her mother for comfort.

Kate stared at Drew lying almost lifelessly in the bed. Her head had been bandaged to stop the bleeding, and she lay unconscious to the movement around her. Kate’s own heart began to break

seeing the woman who had been her best friend for thirty two years clinging to life by a thread as her daughter, her best friend's wife, wept uncontrollably in her arms. "No matter what happens, Lola, you have to know that Drew loves you and the children with all that she is. She put her life on the line today for your son. She saved his life."

"I know. I know. I just feel like this is all my fault. I'm the one that suggested she take him down to the barn. If he hadn't have gone with her, this wouldn't have happened, Mom. She wouldn't be fighting for her life right now. I blame myself. If Drew dies I couldn't face my children knowing this is all my fault."

"Oh, honey, this is not your fault. This is no one's fault. Things like this just happen sometimes. Lola, you have to be there for your kids. They need you now more than ever. They need their Mama right now, holding them and assuring them that they are loved, especially Jack. You can see it in his eyes. Even if he can't express it, you can tell he feels responsible."

"Oh, Mom. He was hysterical when I got to the scene. He kept screaming for Drew, saying he was sorry, that he wouldn't ever do that again. She must have told him not to go near the horses. He kept wanting me to wake her up, but I knew I couldn't. I couldn't do anything but sit there and watch her life fade from her body." she sobbed shaking in her mother's embrace.

The two women cried together quietly until the door opened. "Good evening. My name is Dr. Melissa Johnston. I was in the ER when Sheriff Bailey was admitted."

"Hi, Dr. Johnston. I'm Lola Emerson-Bailey, Drew's wife, and this is my mother, Kate." Lola said standing to shake the doctor's hand.

"Please call me Melissa. May I come in and talk to you about Drew for awhile?" Lola nodded, so Melissa pulled a chair up near the ones they were seated in and sat slumped slightly forward. "Would it be all right if I called you Lola?" she asked politely.

"Of course, Melissa."

"Great. Now can you tell me anything about how Drew got her injuries?"

"I've been told by some of our farmhands that Drew got trampled by a horse trying to save our son's life. Apparently he spooked one of the horses, but Drew managed to push him out of the way before the horse came down on him."

"I see. And your son is all right?"

"Yes. He was examined here at the ER as well, but they said he was fine. Now please, Melissa, tell me about Drew."

"Well, as you probably already know, Drew sustained a major head trauma as well as several broken ribs. This is a very serious matter, Lola. Drew lost a lot of blood, and she's been unconscious since the accident."

“Will she be okay? That’s what I need to know right now.” Lola said. “She just has to make it. We have three children that need her, not to mention me.”

“Lola, I really wish I could give you a definite answer to that. I wish I could tell you that she will wake up, but in all honesty, I don’t know that for sure. She’s holding on right now, but she’s in critical condition. I have to make you aware of the seriousness of this situation. It’s not easy to sit here and tell you that there is a chance that she will not make it, but there is a real possibility that she might succumb to her injury over the next few days. Only time will tell. If Drew makes it through the night, there is a better chance of survival, but these next twelve hours are crucial for her.” Lola began to cry again as she clung to her mother for support. “Now, Lola, I don’t say this to upset you. I just want you to be realistic about what’s happening here. I think we should focus on the next few days. She needs you and the rest of her family right now. I’m a firm believer that even though people are unconscious they can hear us. She needs to be surrounded by people that care about her, letting her know that she has so much to come back to, you, her children, the rest of her family.”

Lola nodded. “Okay. What happens after she’s stabilized?”

Melissa gave a small smile. “That’s the attitude we need. I’ll be frank with you, Lola. Assuming that she does stabilize, there is a gamete of what we can expect. There is a possibility that she may never wake, or there is a chance that she awake with few side effects, and then there is everything in between. First we stabilize her. Then we work on trying to bring her around. We won’t know what brain damage has really occurred until she’sconscious.”

“Are you saying that she has a chance of complete recovery?” Lola inquired hopefully.

“That is possible, Lola, but we don’t know at this point. Please have faith in that but realistic with what is happening in the present.”

“I’ll try, Melissa.”

“That’s all I ask. I’m going to go for now, and they are going to take Drew to her new room in a few minutes. I just want you to know that she’s being moved to the wing with all the other brain and spinal cord injuries. I’m a specialist in that wing and was just filling in tonight, so I’ll see you and Drew in the morning. Okay?”

“All right. Thank you for coming to talk to us, Melissa.”

Melissa nodded. Going over to Drew, she took Drew’s hand in her own. “Drew, I’m Dr. Johnston, and I’m here to tell you that you’ve got one hell of a wife here, so please come back to us. She and your kids need you. I’ll see you in the morning.” Turning to leave Melissa stated, “I’ll call upstairs and make sure they put a cot in Drew’s room for you and see if there’s something we can do for the little one as well.”

“Thank you, Melissa.”

Kate stayed until Drew was settled in a private room before calling Jim. “I’ll tell you what, Lola. Jim has to go back to the city, but I’ll stay with the kids. I’ll give you a call in the morning to see if you want them to come visit.”

“Thanks, Mom. I don’t know what I would do without you. Drew’s parents should be arriving sometime late tonight. They have a key, so just leave them a note as to where to sleep. I don’t care what you decide on.”

“All right. We’ll call you in the morning. Try to get some sleep if you can. You’ll be no good to your children if you don’t get rest.” Kate softly stated coming to give Lola a hug. “I love you, Lola. We’ll get through this. I promise.”

“I love you too, Mom. Kiss the kids for me.”

Kate nodded before going to Drew. Leaning down Kate kissed her cheek. “Drew, please come back to us. Lola and the kids need you. I need you. I love you.” she whispered so her daughter would not hear her desperation.

Once Lola was left with just she and Emma, she took a seat at Drew’s bedside as she cradled their daughter. “Well, Drew, if you wanted a break, you could’ve just said so. You didn’t have to go to such great lengths to get some alone time.” she joked through her tears. “It didn’t work, though. You’re still going to have to put up with the kids and me. We’re going to be here. You’ll be so tired of us hanging around your room that you’ll just wake up and tell us all to be quiet.” She was silent for a moment before saying, “Please wake up, Drew. The kids need you. They are too young to be without you, and I need you. I need you at home with us. I need you in our bed loving and protecting me. I’m not ready to let you go, so you better just make up your mind to come back to me. I’ve got lots of loving to give to you before it’s all over. This is not your time, Drew. You just tell God that you’re not ready, that you still have a lot left to do.”

Lola sat up for several hours before deciding to move to the cot that had been rolled in for her. Placing Emma in the crib that had been brought in as well, Lola closed her eyes, knowing that she would not sleep but trying to rest for her children’s sake. Between the nurses coming to check on Drew every hour and Emma’s schedule, Lola didn’t sleep at all, but she felt better being able to lie down for awhile.

Melissa arrived early that morning as promised, gracing Lola with a subdued smile. “Well, good morning. How is our patient this morning?” she asked of Lola.

“No change from last night that I can see.” Lola said as she moved to stand next to the bed.

Melissa moved to the other side. “And how are you, Lola? How are you feeling?”

“I’ve been better. I didn’t sleep at all last night, so I’m not in the best of moods.”

“That’s understandable. I’ll tell you what. After I look at Drew, I’ll see if I can round up some

breakfast for you. I know you probably haven't eaten in at least fifteen hours, have you?"

"No. I guess I haven't."

"I hope that you will be going home at some point today to get some rest. You'll be no good to Drew and your kids if you don't stay healthy yourself."

"I know. Drew's parents and my mother should be coming over soon with the kids."

"That's good to hear. I suggest that you work out a schedule. All of you need rest and quality time with the kids right now. I know you're first inclination is to stay here with Drew until she awakes, but this could take awhile, so please do you family a favor and stay rested. Now the good news this morning is that Drew has made it through the night. That's a positive sign. She still has a long way to go, but she's made it over the first hurdle. These next few days will give us a better inclination of what might happen. She's become more stable throughout the night, so that's definitely what we want to see, but she still has a fight ahead." Turning her attentions to Drew, Melissa said, "I guess you know that you have all this family to come back to, don't you, Drew? You've got one pretty little wife just waiting on you, so help us out here. Open those big brown eyes for us. I promise Lola will be making pathetic love sick eyes at you if you just open yours."

Lola looked down at her wife wishing that Melissa's words would stir her lover into consciousness, but Drew didn't respond. "Please, baby. Open your eyes. I want to see them." Lola stated touching Drew on the shoulder.

When nothing happened for a moment, Melissa put a hand on Lola's arm. "Don't give up. She's in there somewhere. I have rounds to make, but I'll see to your breakfast."

"Thanks, Melissa."

When Drew's parents arrived at the hospital later that morning, they spent a few minutes with Lola learning the details of what had happened before sending their daughter-in-law home for some much needed rest. Going back to the house, Lola was greeted by her mother and children. "All right, Lola. Let me take Emma off your hands. I think you should go upstairs and try to sleep for awhile." Kate suggested. In no shape to argue, Lola simply nodded at her mother and passed off her baby. "Okay, kids. We're going to have quiet play time this morning, so Mama can get some sleep." Kate said to the group.

Lola made her way upstairs to the master bedroom. Heading into the bathroom she began the water in the shower before peeling off her clothes from the previous day. Seeing Drew's blood staining her top, Lola began to cry again as she tossed the clothes in the hamper. Even though Melissa wanted her to remain positive, Lola could feel doubt entering her mind as she stood under the spray of warm water, wondering what she would do to support her family if Drew died or didn't recover fully. Their financial security had rested with Drew for all the years of their marriage, so Lola had no idea how she would care for herself and three children if Drew didn't make it. "Oh, dear God. Please bring her back to me." she prayed.

Having finished her shower, she threw on one of Drew's t-shirts and crawled into bed, emotionally drained. Closing her eyes she began to drift when she heard the bedroom door creak open and then felt someone crawl onto Drew's side of the bed. Figuring it was one of the kids, Lola just laid quietly trying to control her tears before opening her eyes, but she could feel them flooding over her face. It was only when she felt a tiny fingers tracing over her cheek that she opened her eyes to see her son kneeling next to her on the bed. Jack's eyes were watery and his lips quivering as he looked at her. Lola reached her arms out to him, and he immediately fell into her embrace, laying his dark head on her breast.

"I'm sorry I was bad, Mama," he whispered. "Does Mommy still love me?"

"Of course she does, Jack. She loves you so much," she croaked caressing his brown hair.

"Do you still love me, Mama?" tentatively he inquired looking up at her.

Lola gave him the best smile she could muster as she cupped his face in her hands. "I could never stop loving you, son. I will always love you, Jack, no matter what," she reassured him. Seeing the affirmation settle him, Lola guided him back down onto her chest.

"Is Mommy going to wake up soon? I want her to come home," he said after a moment.

Knowing that she couldn't give him the answer he wanted, Lola whispered, "I hope so, Jack. I want her to come home too."

Chapter 4

Three weeks passed with Drew remaining stable but still unconscious. Even with all the family that visited on a daily basis, she was unresponsive. Lola's only consolation was Melissa's constant attention to her and Drew's needs, making Lola hope that Melissa saw something in Drew that she didn't.

One evening as Drew's mother sat with Lola in Drew's room, Melissa stopped in at the end of her shift. Going over to the bed, Melissa leaned down towards Drew's ear whispering so neither of the other women could hear, "Hey, Drew, you need to wake up now. If you don't wake up, who is going to stop me from making a play for your lady? She's too sweet to have to go through this, Drew. She needs a woman to take care of her, and your children need two mothers. You don't want me to replace you now, do you? Come on, Drew. Wake up and tell me to go to hell. Don't be a quitter," she challenged hoping to draw any kind of reaction from the older woman, but there was only silence. Sighing softly she stood and turned to Lola. "How is everyone holding up today?"

"Fine," Lola mumbled.

"Well, you nearly had me convinced with that overwhelming response, Lola. Listen, I know it's

been a long day for you. You could use a little break. Could I convince you to have dinner with me tonight?"

"Dinner?" Lola questioned skeptically, looking at Drew before facing Melissa again.

"Yeah, dinner. You know the last meal of the day? I know you've been overwhelmed with Drew and the kids, so I just thought having a little dinner out would be a nice break for you. Please, Lola. It would bring me great pleasure to ease your burdens for awhile." Melissa mentioned, eying Drew as she spoke to the blonde.

Lola caught where Melissa's gaze was, and inquired, "What are you doing?"

"I'll tell you about it at dinner, if you grace me with the pleasure of your company, my dear beautiful woman." she said extending her hand to Lola. Under her breath she whispered, "I swear I'm not really hitting on you. Just play along. I'll explain later."

Lola looked at Drew again before hesitantly placing her hand in the doctor's. "All right. I really could use some time away, Melissa. Thank you."

"Wonderful. It's such a rare opportunity that I get to spend the evening with such an incredible lady." As soon as Melissa escorted her from the room, she dropped Lola's hand. "Listen, there's a great little Italian place a few miles down the road from here. Let's eat there, and then I'll drop you off here again."

As they walked down the corridor to exit the building, Lola inquired, "Is your shift over for the day?"

"Yeah. These twelve hour days can be a bear. I'm about ready to just go home and crash."

"Well, if that's the case, we can do dinner some other time. I don't want to intrude on your private time, Melissa."

"Don't worry about that, Lola. I meant what I said back there. It's a rare opportunity to go out with an amazing woman, even if she is already married." she mentioned.

Lola blushed at the unexpected compliment. "Okay. If you're sure, we'll get something to eat, but I don't want to stay gone too long."

"I understand."

Once they were seated in the restaurant and had ordered, Lola asked, "Would you like to explain what you were doing back in Drew's room now?"

"Yeah. I'm testing a theory, but I'll need your help. Drew's been surrounded with people that love her for the last few weeks, and even though she's stable, she's not making the progress I think she should be. I feel confident that we can bring her around, but it's a matter of reaching

her. Usually in cases like these, loved ones have the best chance of reaching the patient, because the patient knows their voices, but with Drew I think it's going to take a little more. Based on what I know about her personality from what you've told me, she's a fighter, and I've seen that, because she's made it this far, but she's struggling to get back to us completely. Sometimes with people like Drew, I've taken a different course of action with permission from their spouses of course, and that's where you come in."

"Okay. What do I have to do?"

"Well, first of all, I want you to know that I have no intention of undermining your marriage to Drew, and I don't want you to do something that makes you uncomfortable. However if you're okay with this, I'm going to start treating you differently in front of Drew to see if we can get a reaction out of her."

"You mean you're going to start flirting with me in front of her like you were earlier?" pointedly Lola inquired.

"Essentially, yes. Let me explain what I'm trying to accomplish here. I don't need for you to be overtly positive toward my so called advances, just friendly and neutral. I don't want Drew to think that she's lost you, because I think that would have disastrous consequences if she believed that you had abandoned her. You still concentrate fully on giving her all your love. I simply want to create a competitive atmosphere in that room. I believe that competition for the woman she loves might bring her around much faster. She seems like the type of woman who would fight for your love, Lola, and I'm trying to play into that. Once she's conscious I won't continue that game, because having her see that would be counter productive, but as long as she's out, I think it could work. Of course if we see that it's being counter productive, we'll stop immediately. Would you be all right with trying this?"

Lola shrugged. "I guess. Have you ever tried this with anyone else before?"

"Yeah, a few times."

"Has it worked?"

"I would like to believe that it has. There's no real scientific proof if that's what you want to know. The people on whom I've done this have all come out of their comas, but whether that's due to this or luck, who really knows. I think it's worth a try if you're willing to let me do it."

Lola shrugged her shoulders. "Sure. If you think it will help, I'm all for that."

"Great. Now let's talk about something else other than Drew for awhile. Tell me more about you. We've been together all this time, and I know nothing except that you're a doting wife with three beautiful children."

"There's not much to tell about me that's not about Drew too."

“Oh, come on. Don’t be so modest. Surely you have a self-definition that doesn’t include your handsome knight in shining armor. What are your hobbies? What do you do for fun?”

“Well, I like to ride horses, but after this incident, I think I’ll be a little hesitant to get into the saddle again. Of course due to the kids, I don’t have a lot of time to spend down at our stable.”

“I take it you stay home with the kids while Drew works?”

“Yeah. I got pregnant with Jack shortly after we got married, and I was basically in charge of the stables until Jack got to the age that he was walking. Drew and I decided that I should take a leave of absence from my position to focus on our family, and then once I was pregnant with Libby, it was just impossible to do any sort of work outside the home. I do look forward to when the kids are all in school, and I’ll get to go back to working with the horses, at least part time. I’ve got a few years before then, though. Right now the kids are my life.”

“Is that the way you wanted it?” Melissa inquired seriously.

“Yeah. I’m the one who convinced Drew to have kids so early, because I thought she should be able to be active in their lives. There is a considerable age difference between us that concerns me at times, because I fear losing her early in our marriage. I lost my father when I was in high school, and I devastated for a long time. I don’t want that for our kids. I want our children to know Drew’s love, so I persuaded her to let me get pregnant early on.”

“That makes sense. May I ask how long you and Drew have known each other?”

“My whole life. She and my mother have been best friends since they were in high school. Drew’s my sister’s godmother.”

“Oh? That sounds like a real drama.”

“It was at the time I guess, but I wasn’t going to take no for an answer from Drew, at least not for long. I was determined to make myself Mrs. Bailey, much against the wishes of my mother and Drew. Neither of them so keen on the idea at first.”

“How did you manage to change their minds?” curiously Melissa asked as she dug into the meal that had just been delivered to them.

“Well, with my mom I just talked it out. Eventually she came to understand.”

“And Drew?”

“Drew was not so easy. I wove an intricate web to snare her, but you better believe once I had her interest, I wasn’t letting go. An occasion flash of T and A didn’t hurt either.” Lola joked with a laugh.

Melissa smiled back at her. “It’s good to see you laugh, Lola. You have a beautiful smile and

laugh. Do you let Drew hear it when you two are alone in her room?"

"I guess not as much as I should. It's so hard to see her like this sometimes."

"I know. I can see that on your face. You should let her hear that laugh. Do you touch her a lot when you're alone together?"

"Yeah. I hold her hand and stuff and kiss her. Is that what you mean?"

"If I may ask, how do you kiss her? Compassionately, sexually, sympathetically?"

Lola shrugged. "I guess compassionately and lovingly."

"Never sexually?"

"No. Do you think I should?"

Melissa shrugged. "If you're comfortable with that. It wouldn't hurt. It would be interesting to see if she would respond to that kind of touch. I'd be thrilled if she would respond to anything. Now I'm not saying you should have sex with her while she's in a coma, but there's nothing wrong with a little tactile exploration to let her know you're there. What about putting her hands on your body, so she can really feel you?"

"You have some extremely unorthodox methods, Dr. Johnston, but I'd be willing to try anything."

"I'm willing to guess that you feel as much comfort as you do arousal at Drew's touch, so why not give yourself that? It'll make you feel better. I have no problem with you climbing into that bed with her as long as you are mindful of those broken ribs. You can't touch that side of her, but lay next her and put her arm around you. Notwithstanding what it might due to Drew, I know it would be positive for you, and I certainly don't think it would harm Drew to feel the woman she loves next to her."

"As I said, Melissa, I'm willing to try anything. I'll do it tonight. I'll admit that I've missed feeling her arms around me."

Once their meal was over, Melissa took Lola back to the hospital and walked her back to Drew's room. Looking to Drew and then back at Lola, Melissa winked before saying, "Well, thank you so much for the wonderful dinner, Lola. It was a real pleasure. I hope we get to do it again sometime soon. You have made my night."

"I had a nice time too, Melissa. Thank you for the dinner."

"I'll see you, my lovely lady, in the morning." Melissa announced before softly adding, "I'm going to stop by the nurses station and let them know you have my permission to do as we discussed over dinner. The last thing I need is for them to harass you for doing what I told you."

Lola nodded before bidding her good night. Taking a seat next to her mother-in-law, she sighed as she looked at her wife. "Dear, I don't mean to intrude on your privacy, but was that doctor flirting with you?" Rose inquired as she bounced Emma on her knee to keep her occupied.

Lola smiled at her. "Don't worry about that, Rose. You know I'm committed to Drew. I love her with all I am." she stated before leaning in to share the secret plan Dr. Johnston had suggested.

"Well, I should get going. I know Jackson is probably about out of his mind with the kids by now. He never was very good at child rearing Drew, so I'm afraid to leave him too long without supervision with the grandkids. They've probably destroyed the house by now."

"The kids love him. I'm sure it's fine."

"Yeah but I'm the one that's going to have to clean up after them once they are asleep. I'll see you when you come home in the morning. I think Jackson is planning on coming over here first thing to relieve you of your duties."

"All right. I'll see you then. Good night."

As soon as she and Emma were alone, Lola moved to Drew's bed, raising it into a semi-sitting position. "Hope you don't mind the change of position, Drew, but I'm not quite ready to lie down yet. Emma and I want to sit next to you and watch a little tv. I think your favorite show is on tonight. I'll even consent to let you watch it since the kids aren't here." she mentioned, turning on the set and flipping the channels until she got to Drew's favorite cop show. Snuggling up to her wife, Lola put Emma down between them until the infant was fast asleep. Once the tv show was over, Lola moved Emma to the crib before settling down against Drew again.

"Oh, Drew. I've missed this feeling of being close to you." Lola whispered as she rubbed Drew's arm with sexual intention. Even though she felt strange about trying something with Drew being unconscious, Lola heeded Melissa's instructions as she moved her mouth over Drew's neck, showering it with long, lingering kisses. "I wish you were awake right now, Drew. I could use your strong hands making love to me." Lola allowed her hands to gently wander over Drew's body like Melissa had suggested, and she found her hand petting the tops of Drew's thighs and over her abdomen, trying to produce a response from her partner. Even though Drew remained perfectly still, Lola could feel heat beginning to radiate from Drew's core, giving Lola small assurance that Drew's body recognized her touch.

Lola spent the remainder of the night lying next to Drew, finding comfort in being close to the woman she loved eternally until the voice of her father-in-law softly awoke her the next day. Lola spent most of the rest of the day after leaving the hospital sleeping and playing with her children. When she returned to take her night shift, Melissa was talking with Drew's father in the room.

"Well, there's the lady whom I've been waiting to see all day. You certainly know how to bring a smile to my face, Lola." Melissa stated with a grin.

“Hello, Melissa. How are you?”

“I’m great now that I’ve seen you. Could I interest you in dinner tonight?” she asked.

“Thank you for the invitation but no. I should stay here.”

“Maybe next time then. Could we talk outside for a moment?” Melissa inquired. Lola followed her out into the hallway. “So, how are you feeling today? Did you take my advice last night?”

“Actually, I did, and you were right. I felt much better.”

“You look like you’re feeling better. Being close to her helped then?”

“Tremendously. I tried that touching advice, you know the sexual touching. It was awkward at first, but after I got used to it, it was comforting.”

“Good. Any reactions from Drew?”

“She didn’t move or anything, but she did respond in other ways.” Lola admitted with a slight flush.

“How so?” Melissa inquired in clinical interest. When she saw the blush of Lola’s face, she said, “Lola, I’m a doctor. I told you to touch her that way. Don’t be embarrassed by what happened.”

“Well, let’s just say that her body got aroused by it.”

“How do you know?” Melissa asked trying to clarify.

“I had my hand between her legs at one point.” Lola admitted, blushing profusely.

Deciding to let the blonde off the hook, Melissa gave her a reassuring smile. “I see. Well, I guess there’s a woman who really knows the touch of her lover then. Just remember what I said. No having sex with her while she’s in a coma. We wouldn’t want to risk her waking up in the middle of that. Speaking of waking up, we should talk a little bit more about what to expect when she does come around.”

“Do you definitely think she will?” Lola asked hopefully.

“Lola, you know I can’t give you a definite answer to that, but I’m strongly leaning toward that expectation. She has every reason to come back. I think it’s only a matter of time. I should warn you about what to possibly expect, though.” Lola looked at her with trepidation. Putting her hand on Lola’s arm, Melissa stated, “There is a small chance that she could wake up perfectly normal, like nothing ever happened with the exception of the broken ribs of course, but that’s not highly likely. Usually people who have suffered injuries like this have problems mentally and physically. These can be temporary or permanent, Lola, but we won’t know until she’s conscious

the extent of the damage. She may have memory loss and paralysis.” Lola looked at her in confusion, so Melissa tried again. “The short of it, Lola, is that she may not know who you or anyone else in the family is, and furthermore she might be disabled and unable to control her facilities. I just want you to be prepared for that. This can be a temporary or permanent debility, but we won’t know anything for sure until she wakes up. My guess is that she’s going to be angry at her inability to do what she normally could, so your patience, love, and support will be needed more than ever.”

“Okay.” Lola said with a determined nod. “I can do this. We’ll get through it together. I promised her that, and I’m not about to back out now. I’ve come this far. I’m here to see it through.”

“Good. I’m glad to hear that, and I know she’ll feel that way too even if she’ll be unable to express it. Just focus on the love you two have had for each other all this time, and it’ll help you get through this trying time.”

“Thank you, Melissa.” Lola whispered reaching out to hug the doctor. “Thank you for everything.”

Melissa returned the embrace for several moments before lifting Lola’s chin to look in her eyes. “Drew is so lucky to have you, Lola. Never doubt that or vice versa.”

When Lola went back into Drew’s room, she gave Jackson a hug. “How has Drew been today?”

“All right. I read her some of her magazines, and we watched one of our favorite movies today on tv. All in all it’s been a pretty good day. She’s much easier to deal with than my grandchildren. They wear me out.” he joked.

“Thank you for being here, Jackson. I don’t know what I would do without you, Rose, Mom, and Jim. You’ve all been such a great help to me.”

“We love you, Lola. We would do anything for you and Drew.” he assured her bringing her in for a hug.

“I’m so happy Drew has you. Even as much as I’ve come to love Jim over the last several years, he could never replace my own father, so I’m glad Drew still has you. She’s going to need you.”

“I’m here for both of you. Never forget that.”

Once Lola was alone with Drew and had put Emma in her crib, she decided to try Melissa’s advice again by sliding onto the bed next to her beloved. “Well, here we are again, baby, all alone, just the two of us. I’ve been thinking of you all day, Drew. You don’t even know how badly I miss the feeling of you touching me. I need you to touch me, Drew. Since you can’t touch me on your own right now, I’m going help you touch me if you don’t mind. I just need to feel your hands along my body for awhile.” Kneeling on the bed and facing Drew, Lola began to unbutton her blouse as she stared at Drew’s closed eyes. “Too bad you’re missing the show,

Drew. I know you would love to see me undressing myself right now. Open your eyes, baby. Watch me. I know you love it when I unhook my bra and let my breasts tumble free just like right now. Come on, Drew. I know you want to look at them.” she stated baring herself from the waist up. “I’m half naked, Drew. Don’t you want to see me naked? Just open your eyes.” she whispered. Suddenly Lola saw Drew’s brow twitch. “That’s it, Drew. You can do it. Open those pretty brown eyes.” she encouraged, but Drew’s eyelids only quivered for a moment before there was nothing. “How about this, baby?” she question raising Drew’s hand to her chest. Lola held Drew’s hand against her breasts. “Do you feel my heart, Drew? It beats for you, honey. You make my life worth living, and I need you to come back to me. I just want you to open your eyes. Please do it for me, angel.” Not getting any reaction, Lola moved Drew’s hand a little lower, so the older woman could cup her breast. “How’s that, Drew? It’s that a nice feeling? You always like to hold my breasts like this. They love your touch. Touch them, Drew.” Lola whispered just waiting for any kind of response from her partner. She stared intently at Drew’s hand on her breast trying to will it to move but to no avail. Lola sighed in disappointment, but abruptly squealed in surprise when Drew’s hand squeezed the sensitive mound. “Drew!” she exclaimed anxiously looking to Drew’s face, but her wife lay motionless. “Drew, I felt that. I know you’re in there. Please open your eyes for me.” Drew didn’t give any response to her words, so Lola just sat still until she felt Drew’s hand relax against her breast. “All right. I won’t push you before you’re ready but know this. There are so many people that love you that want you to come back to us. Please wake up for us, baby. I love you.” she said leaning down to kiss Drew’s lips, feeling the muscles tremble as she touched them with her own.

When it appeared that Drew wasn’t going to do anything else, Lola put her top back on and went to alert the nurses of Drew’s condition. They confirmed for her that it appeared Drew was improving and then left the young blonde to her thoughts. Elated that Drew seemed to finally be coming around, she settled her head in the crook of Drew’s neck. As much as Lola wanted to stay awake in case Drew awoke, she began to drift off, not even realizing that she was being lulled into unconsciousness by a strong hand stroking her back.

Continued: Chapter 5

The Athenaeum's Scroll Archive

~ Time: Clock of the Heart ~

by Alex Tryst

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Disclaimers: This is a sequel to Persistence and would be difficult and confusing to read if you haven’t read Persistence first. Some of you may recognize the title of this book as a song title from my favorite 80s band, Culture Club, but I assure you that no infringement was intended. I simply felt that George O’Dowd’s (Boy George) song of loving, losing, and learning to love

again perfectly expressed the sentiments of this piece. I also must state that there are several songs in this book that have been modified from their original content, and even though I attribute them as original works by one of my characters, they really were written by Babyface and on his "For the Cool in You" CD (which I only bought because the sales girl was flirting with me and I wanted a date, but that's a story for another time). Due to the unfamiliarity of these songs, most people won't know the melody, but they read more like poetry, so this shouldn't hinder your enjoyment. As for sex, violence, language and so on, this is a rather tame story. Of course there is sex between two consenting adult women, and if this is illegal where you live or offensive to you, you must do a 180 degree turn immediately. There isn't any violence that I can think of, and I could count the uses of foul language on one hand, well maybe two.

Dedication: To my wife, you are my fondest wish. To my fans of Drew and Lola, this one is just for you. You asked for it, and you got it. Enjoy!

Now on with the show.....

Chapter 5

Drew's eyes popped open early with the first rays of the sun. Confused as to where she was, she lifted her head just enough to look around the room. It looked like a hospital, but she had no idea why she was there. On her right side she noticed a little blonde curled up against her that looked like Katherine and a crib holding a baby that looked like Lola, but she had no idea where she was. Feeling her bedmate snuggle in closer, Drew grinned to herself. Regardless of why she was confined to the hospital bed, she instantly felt better when she realized she was holding Kate as she slept. Briefly wondering where Paul and Natalie were, Drew simply stroked the blonde's head, taking guilty pleasure in being so intimate with her best friend even though Kate was married to someone else.

Just then the door opened admitting a tall, dark haired woman wearing a large white overcoat. "Well, look who's awake? Good morning, Drew." Melissa greeted pleased to see Drew's dark eyes open.

"Good morning, doctor." Drew replied.

Lola was becoming aware of the sensation of someone touching her, but as soon as she felt Drew's chest rumble and her voice, she shot up quickly. "Drew! You're awake! Oh, thank God! I've missed you so much!" Lola cried instantly pummeling Drew's face and mouth with fervent kisses. "I love you so much, baby."

Drew groaned at the feel of blonde's lips against her own. She had always secretly dreamed of being able to have more than a friendship with her best friend, but now she was in bliss at the shower of affection Kate was showing her. "I love you too, Kate." she replied.

Lola froze when her mother's name slipped from Drew's mouth. Pulling back and looking at Drew in confusion, she asked, "What did you just say?"

Bewildered at the question, Drew repeated, "I love you too, Kate. What's wrong? What happened to me, Katie? Why are you and Lola here in the hospital with me?"

Perplexed Lola followed Drew's line of sight to the crib. Immediately realizing what Drew thought, Lola began to cry as she mumbled, "Oh, God."

"Katie, don't cry. I'll be fine. You'll see." Drew vowed trying unsuccessfully to put an arm around her, but Lola evaded the touch rising from the bed.

Lola looked at Melissa in tears as she sunk into a chair near the bed. Drew looked at her before looking toward the doctor who had approached her. "Well, it certainly seems you haven't lost your speech. That's a good sign, Drew. My name is Melissa Johnston. May I ask you some questions?" Drew nodded. "Do you know who you are?"

"Drew Bailey."

"How about where you are?"

Drew shrugged. "At a hospital."

"All right. Do you know who this woman is?" she asked pointing to Lola.

"My best friend, Kate Emerson."

"Okay. Could I ask you hold old you are, Drew, and what you do for a living?"

"I'm twenty-one, and I'm a senior at UVA." she replied perplexed by the question of her occupation. Looking back at Lola, she asked, "Kate, what's wrong? Are you okay?"

Lola just looked at Melissa helplessly. Even though Melissa had told her of the possible effects of Drew's injury, Lola never really considered that Drew wouldn't recognize her or mistake her for someone else, especially her own mother. Melissa exchanged looks with the young blonde, extending her sympathies through a soft gaze before looking back at Drew.

"Drew, you're in the hospital due to a head injury you sustained when you were trampled by a horse. Do you have any recollection of that?" Drew shook her head. Melissa nodded. "All right, Drew, what I'm about to tell you will probably come as a shock, and you might have difficult accepting what I'm about to say, but I want you to know that I'm about to give you some facts about your life." she began taking a seat in the bedside chair next to Lola's. "First of all, you are forty-eight years old, not twenty-one, and you are currently the sheriff of this county."

"What?" Drew inquired disconcertion, knitting her brow. "How can that be? I just got home from school for summer vacation. My dad is the sheriff, Dr. Johnston, not me." she defended beginning to become agitated before looking at Lola and saying, "Kate, tell her she's mistaken."

“Drew, I know this is difficult for you, but this is not Kate.” Melissa stated, putting a hand on Lola’s arm. “This is Lola Emerson-Bailey, your wife.”

Drew scowled. “My wife? There’s no way! I would never marry Lola! I wouldn’t even touch Lola! I could never betray Kate that way! I love her even though she is married to that loser, Paul! Lola is a baby, an infant! That would be practically incest! You are not Lola, and you are not my wife! That is Lola!” she yelled, looking to the crib.

“Actually, Drew, that is your youngest child, Emma. I know this is hard for you to understand, but this is Lola. You two are married, and you have three children together.” Melissa tried again.

“Now I know you’re lying, Doc, because I hate all kids except for Natalie and Lola! I’m never having kids! All I need in my life is Kate!”

“Lola, do you have pictures on you?”

Wiping tears from her face, Lola whispered, “Yeah. I think I might have some in my purse.” Leaning down to grab her bag from the floor, Lola pulled out her wallet and opened it. With an encouraging nod from Melissa, Lola addressed Drew directly. “Drew, I would never hurt you. I love you with all that I am. It might be hard to understand, but we are married, have been for six years. Here is a picture of us on our wedding day and some of our kids.” she stated tentatively placing the wallet on the bed. Even though she was desperately trying to hold her composure, Lola felt shattered inside at Drew’s adamant declaration of love for Kate. It brought back painful memories when she was in college, and Drew had been having a secret affair with Kate little to anyone’s knowledge.

Drew looked at the pictures and tried to reach for them. However she found it extremely difficult to get her muscles to move the way she wanted. Sensing the problem after a moment, Melissa inquired, “Would you like for me to hold them up for you, Drew?”

“No!” she barked focusing harder on getting her arm to reach out to the pictures. Struggling for another moment she growled in frustration as she screamed, “Dammit! What the hell is wrong with me?”

“Drew, you’ve been in a coma for some time, almost a month. Your muscles are weak. I’d like to perform some tests on you to see what kind of condition they are in. Why don’t we do that now, and then get back to the pictures in a bit. They’ll keep for a few minutes. All right? I want to look over your physical condition.”

“Fine, but can I talk to you alone, Doc?” Drew requested.

“Of course.” she answered before looking to Lola. Knowing that the last thing Lola wanted was to leave the room but figuring she might have better luck with Drew alone, she said, “Lola, why don’t you take Emma outside the room and make some phone calls? I’m sure your family will want to know Drew’s condition.”

Lola looked at Drew for a moment before giving a resigned nod. “All right but I’ll be just outside if you need anything.”

Once Melissa and Drew were alone, Melissa stood. “Okay, Drew. I’m just going to run through these as quickly as possible, and then we can talk. I sense you have something you want to say without Lola in the room.” After running through several tests, Melissa determined that even though Drew was extremely weak, she had not been paralyzed from the injury, knowing that would be a relief to Lola. Taking up the pictures off the bed, Melissa looked at them briefly before noticing the make-up mirror hidden inside one of the inner pockets. “Drew, I know this is a big shock for you, and it can be painful and scary to realize you don’t remember, but I want you to look in the mirror for me. I want you to see yourself as I see you. Will you do that for me?”

Reluctantly Drew gave a slight nod. As Melissa held up the mirror and Drew caught a glimpse of herself, she gasped at what she saw staring back at her. Her normally tanned skin was ashen and her eyes tired. The wrinkles along her brow portrayed her real age. “Oh, God.” she mumbled in dismay. Looking up at Melissa, she inquired in a voice revealing her terror, “Why can’t I remember?”

“Amnesia is somewhat of an enigma, Drew. Sometimes it’s temporary, other times permanent. Your body is weak but will recover, of that I’m sure. It might take some time, but you will be back to your normal self eventually physically. Remember that you’ve had a serious brain trauma. It will take time to heal. Things won’t come back to you right away.”

“But they will eventually right?”

“It’s my greatest hope, Drew, but I can’t guarantee that. However Lola is going to be by your side every step of the way as well as many other people that love you. Your loved ones are going to be your greatest asset in helping you remember things, so even though it might be hard to feel strongly toward them given your confusion and anxiety, know that they love you and have your best interest at heart.”

“I just don’t understand. I have no recollection of Lola beyond her being a baby, and now you two tell me we’re married with children. It’s hard for me to grasp.”

“I know, Drew. I could hardly believe it the first time I saw her with you myself. There is quite an age difference.”

“It’s not just that, Doc. I’ve been in love with her mother since the moment I laid eyes on her. How could I marry her daughter?”

“How long have you known Kate?” Melissa asked curiously. “We met in high school. I was fifteen. She was eighteen. I’ve known her for- how old did you say I was again?”

“Forty-eight.”

“Wow. It’s been thirty-three years. It’s so strange. The last memory I have of her was coming home from school for summer vacation, and I went over to see her and the girls. Paul wasn’t home, so it was just Kate, Natalie, Lola, and me. I was sitting there in the chair holding Lola in my arms as she slept while Katherine rocked Natalie and hummed to her, because she had fallen and bumped her head, and she was crying. I remember just intently watching, thinking how I much I loved that woman. She truly was the most beautiful woman I had ever seen, and I was hopelessly in love with her. I stared at her in silent awe, wishing and hoping that she return that love and leave Paul for me. I wanted to marry her and raise Natalie and Lola as our own. I just can’t fathom how I went from that to marrying that baby I had cradled in my arms.”

“Drew, I really don’t know that, but fortunately there are people who help you fill in those pieces. I’ve met Kate myself, and I think she’s an extraordinary woman. She’ll be a real asset in helping your recall those memories, and Lola can help you remember your marriage and kids.”

“But how can I even look at Lola? She’s a child herself, and I married her? I let her have children. I’m in love with Katherine.”

“Drew, I didn’t know you prior to your accident, so I can’t say for sure how you felt for Lola, but I think you’ll come to find that you are not in love with Kate. You think you are, because of the place where you are in your mind, but as your memories come back to you, you’ll realize why you married Lola.”

“But what if I never remember her as anything other than a baby? I don’t even know my own children.” she stated with obvious dread.

“I know you’re scared, Drew. It’s perfectly natural, but give it time. That’s all you can do. Only cross the bridges when you come to them. Don’t fret over what ifs. Focus on getting your memories back. That’s all you can do.”

“All right, Doc.”

“Good. Now I’m going to go talk to Lola for a few minutes, and then I’m going to send her back in here to show you these pictures if you’re comfortable with that. Does that sounds okay to you?”

“Yeah.” Drew replied.

Lola was just finishing the conversation with her mother when Melissa appeared. “Well, what happened after I left?” she asked anxiously.

Gesturing down the hall toward the sitting area, Melissa said, “Let’s go sit down for a minute. I have some things to explain to you.” They moved the chairs before Melissa began, “First off, it appears as if Drew has not be paralyzed from the accident. She is very weak, but with some physical therapy, I expect her to recover. Her mind however is another issue. She has lost more than half of her life’s memories. I can tell she’s terrified, but I calmed her down enough to make her understand who you are even though she doesn’t remember you as anything more than an

infant. She knows you're Lola, her wife and Kate's daughter. I should warn you though, Lola, that Drew is in a place in her mind where she is in love with your mother. I don't know if that was some skeleton in the closet or not, but she's obstinate in her feelings for Kate. I know that has to hurt you, but please don't take it out on Drew. She doesn't remember you as her wife nor does she remember the love you share. You're going to have to help her recall that. She's having difficulty understanding how she went from loving your mother to loving you, but I couldn't help her with that one. That's a job for you. Now that she knows who you are, I believe that she will take what you say at face value. I explained to her that you are vital in helping her recover her memories, so I think she will be receptive to you. However I should caution you that she still thinks she's in love with your mother, and in her mind you're a baby, so sexual contact probably won't go over well. I do think she'd be okay with physical contact, but I would be careful not to get too intimate. Having said all that, I think Drew's outlook is good. We'll get her scheduled for some PT, and she'll have to continue her stay here a little longer, but she will be able to go home at some point in the near future with minimal physical side effects. I think she'll be ready to leave us before she's recovered all her memories though, which could cause some complications at home, but we don't have to go into those right now. She could surprise us and start remembering things quickly, but in my experience these things take time. Now I told her I was going to talk to you and then send you back in there. Are you ready to go back? I said you would show her the pictures from your wallet."

"All right. I can do this." Lola said with resolution.

"Oh, I also think it would be a good idea to get your mother out here. I hope you aren't threatened by Drew's current mentality toward your mother, but it would be good for Drew to be able to see and talk to her. Just remember Drew's mind set is that of a twenty-one year old in love with Kate Emerson. Please don't take it to heart that she doesn't remember your love yet. Give it time, and if you have to, make her fall in love with you again. Also, Drew mentioned Kate's husband, Paul, who I am assuming is your father. I didn't know anything him to give to Drew, but since she mentioned him I think you should talk to her about him. Her feelings for him weren't that positive in her twenty-one year old mind, but you could at least tell her where he is and what he's doing now to help her."

"Oh, well, my father has been dead for ten years. Drew was there when he died. They were good friends."

"Then you might want to say something to lessen the blow if she recalls that particular memory. I also think it might help the both of you to have couples counseling to try to piece your relationship back together. I'll leave that decision up to you for now, so think it over. I really have to go make some rounds now, but I'm so happy that I saw Drew's eyes open this morning. She's come a long way."

Both women stood and hugged for a long time. "Thank you so much for everything, Melissa. I don't know what I would've done without you."

Melissa smiled pleasantly at her. "This might be one of the rare occasions that I've actually been envious of my patient. Drew truly is blessed to have you, Lola. You are quite the remarkable

woman.”

The long gaze that passed between them expressed the deeper emotions for the Lola that the doctor didn't say. Realizing the moment for what it was, Lola gave a charming smile as a slight blush rose in her cheeks. “You are pretty exceptional yourself, Doctor Johnston. Now if you'll excuse me, my wife needs me.”

“Then by all means, go to her.” Melissa replied, a hint of sadness lining her voice even though she gave a professional, becoming smile..

Chapter 6

Lola made her way back to Drew's room, pausing to take a deep breath before making her entrance. Drew was looking out the window when she came in but gazed over at the door to see Lola standing there with Emma in her arms. “Well, Lola Emerson, or is it Lola Bailey now?” Drew asked hesitantly.

“Actually it's Lola Emerson-Bailey. I hyphenated it because of my dad.”

“Paul? What about him?”

Taking the seat she had abandoned several minutes prior, Lola replied, “I didn't really want to start with my dad, but I might as well get it out of the way. The summer before my senior year of high school, my father was killed by a drunk driver. You were at the scene of the accident, and he actually died in your arms, Drew. The two of you were really good friends.”

“Oh, poor Katherine. How has she managed all this time?”

Lola shrugged. “I would have to say she managed largely due to you and then Jim.”

“Who's Jim?” Drew asked curiously.

“Mom got remarried a couple of years ago. Jim is her new husband.” Lola answered wondering if they were ever going to move beyond questions about her mother.

“I see, and how long have we been married?”

“Six years. Six wonderful years.” she said with her first smile. “And we have three children. Let me show you the pictures.” Holding up the first one, she said, “This is us on our wedding day.”

Drew looked closely at the picture Lola was holding up her for inspection. “This is at my parents' ranch. This is my favorite tree.” Drew mentioned happy to recognize something.

“Yes. Actually it's our ranch now, but you're right. That is your favorite tree.”

“Why do we live here? What happened to my parents?” she questioned timidly.

“Your parents are fine, Drew. They are healthy and happy. When your dad retired, they moved and let you take over the ranch, but they are fine. They’ve actually been in town, and I just called them a few minutes ago, so they should be on their way here.”

Satisfied with that answer, Drew turned her attention back to the photo. She noticed that she was wearing flowing white pants and a long white jacket buttoned all the way up to the collar with long tails in the back. “Nice monkey suit I’ve got on.” she mumbled.

“You looked so sexy in that.” Lola commented earning her an uncomfortable stare. Heeding Melissa’s warning about sexually charged comments and touches, she said nothing else on the subject.

“You look beautiful, though.” Drew complimented seeing the simple white off the shoulder dress that Lola had worn. Lola was holding her bouquet, and Drew had her arm around Lola’s waist. When Drew had seen enough of that photo, she glanced up at Lola and inquired, “We really are married?” Lola nodded. Drew furrowed her brow. “Please forgive me if this hurts you in any way, but I just can’t understand why and how that was possible.”

“I know. Hopefully it’ll come back to you, honey. It’s going to take a long time to explain, and I think it would be best if Mom and I talked to you together about it.”

“Okay. Is Kate coming here today?”

“Yes. She should be here this afternoon. Would you like to go on to the next picture now?”

Drew nodded, so Lola flipped to one of Drew, Jack, and Drew’s father, Jackson. “Is that my dad?” Drew inquired looking closer. “And who is this young fellow?”

“Yes, that is your father, and that is our son, Paul Jackson Emerson-Bailey. We named him after our fathers, but we call him Jack. He’s five. He’ll be starting pre-school this fall.”

“What’s he like?”

“Surprising with the way we conceived him, he’s a lot like you, highly intelligent but also very sensitive and down right precocious at times. He’s been having a hard time with you being in the hospital. Normally he isn’t overly affectionate, but he’s been down right clingy since your accident. I know that he feels responsible even though he can’t really express himself adequately.”

“Why is that?”

“Well, he was there when the accident happened. You were actually saving him when you got hurt. The two of you were down at the outside training ring, which we added on after we got married, and one of the horses got spooked and almost trampled him, but you pushed him out of

the way and ended up getting hurt yourself. I know you might not remember our children, but I hope you can find it within yourself to at least pretend for their sake. They adore you, Drew. Jack idolizes you, and he and our two girls need assurance that everything will be all right and that they are well loved by us.”

“Of course, Lola. They’re only children. I certainly understand your concern, and just because I don’t remember doesn’t mean I’m going to turn my back on them. I would never do that. I take responsibility seriously.”

“I know you do, Drew. Let’s look at the next picture. This one is of my mother, our daughter, Libby, and myself. You took this picture of us last fall at Thanksgiving.” she mentioned showing Drew.

Drew looked at the three towheads in astonishment. “Oh my God. If it weren’t for the age differences, you’d never be able to tell the three of you apart.”

“I know. Kind of creepy, isn’t it?” joked Lola.

Drew gave a small nod as she looked intently at Kate. “Your mother certainly has aged well, better than I have. Are we still close?”

“Yes. You’re still the closest of friends, Drew. You always have been.”

“And why did we name our daughter Libby?”

“Well, her real name is Elizabeth, but we just call her Libby, because you thought Elizabeth sounded too pretentious for a toddler. I’ll admit that she is almost exactly like me in every way. There’s one last picture here of all of us right after Emma was born.” Lola flipped to the final photo and held it up for Drew. “Don’t we have a beautiful family, Drew?”

Drew eyed the photo of Lola and her surrounded by their children. Even though she couldn’t remember any of them, she could see the happiness on all the faces. “They are all very beautiful.” Drew conceded. “I assume you gave birth to all of them.”

Bewildered at the comment, Lola said, “Yes, actually I did.”

“Then they aren’t really mine. We just tell them they belong to both of us.”

Lola felt her heart breaking at Drew’s comment. “Drew, they are as much a part of you as they are me. Just because I gave birth to them doesn’t mean they aren’t yours. We petitioned to have you become their legal guardian, but that’s still pending, because we added Emma to it. Drew, they call you Mommy, and they have your last name. Just because you aren’t related to them in blood doesn’t mean they aren’t yours. I gave you these children as gifts as a sign of our love for each other. Please don’t let such a little detail stop you from being the mother that they need.”

“Who’s the father?”

“We used a sperm donor. All three kids have the same donor, Drew.”

“Do we know him, or does he know us? How did it work?”

“We don’t know the donor or vice versa. We decided that was best for us given the potential legal problems if the father could find out. We are the only two parental influences our children have, Drew. They need both of us.”

“Could we stop talking for awhile? I’m getting tired from trying to take all this in.” Drew mentioned feeling like she was on overload.

“Sure. You rest. We have lots of time to talk.”

Lola simply sat quietly once Drew closed her eyes, wondering about their future until Drew’s father arrived a little later. “Hey. I thought you said she was awake.” he said.

“She was, but she wanted to rest a little. We’ve been talking since she awoke.”

“Oh, okay. How’s her memory and her condition? Rose didn’t tell me much, just to get over here as fast as I could.”

“Melissa says she’s physically weak, but she expects a full or near full recovery. However her mind is different. When she first awoke, she claimed to be a twenty-one year old senior at UVA. Melissa got her to understand that she is actually forty-eight and a sheriff, but she’s lost twenty-seven years worth of memories. She didn’t recognize me at first nor do I think she does now, but I think she’s accepted Melissa’s explanation that I am not only Lola, Kate’s daughter grown up, I’m also Lola, her wife. I don’t think she’s really come to understand that, though.”

“Well, it was hard enough the first time for her when she was going through it. It doesn’t seem that surprising that she would have a hard time grasping that in her condition but don’t worry, dear. It’ll come back to her.”

“I hope so.”

“Why don’t you go home for awhile and be with the kids? Rose is waiting on you to come home before coming up here. She wasn’t sure bringing the kids up on the first day would be a good idea.”

“She’s probably right. I’ll go, so she can come up here. Just so you know I showed her some pictures, so she will recognize you as her father, but it’s from the picture. I don’t know what her response will be to Rose.”

“All right. You go on home now and try to relax. This is the hardest part, and you need to be even more rested now.”

The next time Drew awoke she looked around for Lola, but she was met with two interested faces. Recognizing her father from the photo, she quietly inquired, "Dad?"

"Hey, Drew. How are you, tiger?" he asked with a relieved smile.

Looking to the woman next to her father, Drew figured it had to be her mother. "Mom, is that you?"

"Yes, honey. It's me." she replied taking Drew's hand in her own.

"I'm so glad you two are here." Drew said feeling overwhelmed with emotions. As tears began to spill out of her eyes, she whispered, "I'm so scared. I can't remember hardly anything."

Jackson put his hand consolingly on her shoulder as Rose stroked her arm soothingly. "We know, Drew, but you're surrounded by people who love you regardless. We won't let anything happen to you."

"Am I really married to Lola Emerson?" she asked, knowing her parents would never lie to her.

"Yes, you are, Drew." her mother answered.

"How? Why?"

"Only Lola can explain that but I assure you that you are deeply in love with her, Drew, even if you don't remember."

"I don't feel that for her, Mom."

"It'll come back to you, Drew. Give it time."

"What if I don't want it to come back? Doesn't Kate hate me?"

"Of course not. Why would you think that? Why wouldn't you want to remember your love for Lola?"

"I was always meant to be with Kate. Why did I settle for Lola?"

"Honey, I know this is hard for you to comprehend, but you did not settle for Lola. You love her, and you are utterly and hopelessly in love with her. You have been for the last ten years."

"Ten years? You mean to tell me I was in love with her when she was still in high school?" Rose nodded. "Did we date when she was in high school?"

"Yes."

"Impossible. I never would've done that."

“Well, you did. I don’t think you were a willing victim at first, but she wouldn’t take no for an answer. You did fall in love with her, though. You told me so.”

“I did?”

“Yes, dear, you did.”

Drew thought it over for a moment before saying, “I just don’t feel that way now.”

Drew’s parents stayed the day with her until that afternoon when Kate arrived. The moment that she walked into the room, Drew graced her with a charming smile. “Katherine, so nice of you to come see me.” she said.

“You know who I am?” she asked in surprise given that Lola had told her Drew thought she was Kate at first.

“How could I ever forget a beautiful woman like you? Come give a hug.” Kate moved to the bed and leaned down to give Drew a light squeeze and kiss on the cheek. Unable to get her own arms completely around Kate, Drew responded with a lingering kiss on Kate’s soft cheek as well. “Sit down next to me and tell me how you are.” Drew requested tapping the bed with her hand. Kate did as asked, sliding the side rail down so that she could comfortably sit on the bed next to her best friend. Taking Drew’s hand, Kate placed it on her thigh, stroking the back of it lightly as she looked at Drew in fondness. “It feels so nice to touch you, Kate.”

Kate flushed slightly as she grinned. “Well it’s nice to see you with your eyes open, Drew. You gave us quite a scare.”

“I’m sorry to have worried you, Katie. It wasn’t my intention.”

“Katie?” Kate questioned with a smile. “You haven’t called me that in a long time. It still makes me feel young when you say it.”

“You are young, Katie, young and beautiful.”

“Well, I would say you certainly are back to your bewitching ways. I bet the women around the hospital aren’t feeling short on compliments now that you’ve come to. You’ve always had a way with ladies.”

“But have I ever had my way with this lady?” Drew flirtingly teased patting Kate’s leg.

Realizing what Drew was implying and that she didn’t actually know the answer was yes, Kate blushed badly. Turning to Drew’s parents, she inquired, “Do you think it would be possible for me to talk to Drew privately for a few minutes?”

“Sure, Katherine. We could use a little break.” Rose mentioned, taking her husband out of the

room.

“Kate? What’s the embarrassment about? I didn’t mean to make you uncomfortable.”

“It’s all right, Drew. I’m just embarrassed to talk about it in front of your parents, not you. To answer your question, yes, you have had your way with this lady. In fact calling me a lady after some of the things we’ve done together might be too chivalrous.”

“What? Kate, you’ll always be a lady to me. What did we do?”

“For now let’s just say I had the most adventurous sexual encounters of my life with you and leave it at that. I don’t really feel comfortable reminiscing, especially since you’re married to Lola.”

“You mean you and I made love on several occasions, and I don’t remember it? How long were we lovers?”

“Almost two years. We lived together and were planning on getting married, but I couldn’t let you go through with it.”

“Why not? That’s all I’ve ever wanted, Katherine. My whole life all I ever dreamed about was being with you and loving you the way you deserved. I wanted to marry you. Why didn’t we?”

“Because you still loved Lola, and I knew I couldn’t let you settle for me, especially since you wanted children, and I couldn’t give them to you. I didn’t want to be second best, and I didn’t want to ruin my daughter’s chance at happiness, so I stepped aside to let nature take its true course. Not long after that I met Jim, my new husband. This is the way it’s supposed to be, but I’ll always hold those years in my heart that we finally had a chance to live that one dream, at least temporarily.”

“But I love you now, Kate. I don’t love Lola like that.”

“You just think you don’t, but you do, Drew. Furthermore, I’m married again, so there’s no place in either of our lives for anything other than friendship. That’s the way it’s meant to be.”

Drew pondered the conversation for a moment before clarifying, “I really chose Lola over you?” Kate nodded.

The rest of the evening passed easily between Drew and Kate as Kate told her stories about her life to try to help her remember. When Lola came back to take the night shift, Drew insisted that she start staying at home for the sake of the kids now that she was conscious, and after much discussion Drew got her way, leaving Drew alone for the night with a promise that Lola would bring the children by for a visit the next day.

The following day Lola didn’t arrive at the hospital until after lunch that day thinking that the kids probably didn’t need to see Drew’s physical therapy session, especially since it would cause

her pain. By the time she and the kids got to the room, Rose was helping Drew finish her lunch. Abandoning her food Drew gave the kids a happy smile. “Hey, crew. How are my kids? I missed you two.” she said happily.

“Mommy!” Jack and Libby screamed in unison making their way over to the bed. Rose lifted each of them up, so they could give their mother a hug and kiss. Once they were satisfied with their greetings, they settled down next to Drew in the bed.

“So, how have you two been?”

“I missed you, Mommy.” Jack said quietly.

“I missed you too, Mommy.” Libby added.

“Mommy, when can you come home?”

“I don’t know, Jack. It could be a little while.”

“I’m sorry you got hurt. I didn’t mean to be bad.” Jack tried to apologize in his five year old way.

“Jack, it’s okay. I’ll be fine, but thank you for saying you’re sorry. That’s what you’re supposed to do when you do wrong. I love the two of you so much.” she said struggling to get her arm around them for another hug.

Seeing Drew striving to find a comfortable position, Lola suggested, “All right you two. Mommy needs some space now. Why don’t you come over here and start coloring those pictures you promised to give her?” Settling the kids to their project, she looked at Drew. “Would you like help finishing your food?”

“That’s all right. Mom’s got it.” Drew replied eying her mother to continue. Rose reluctantly went back to the task, knowing that Drew was uncomfortable having Lola assist her.

When Melissa came around to do her afternoon check, Lola introduced her to the children before requesting to speak to her alone. Going out into the hall, Lola said, “I’ve been thinking about what you said yesterday about couples counseling, Melissa. I think it might be a good idea to get Drew some individual counseling in addition to that. She doesn’t recognize me as her wife, and furthermore she’s avoiding me. I don’t want it to get worse.”

“All right. I’ll talk to her about it. I’ll let her know that it would be beneficial to her. She’ll probably do it.”

“Thanks.”

“Other than that, things are okay?”

“I guess. She’s being great with the kids. I’m just anxious.”

“It’s natural. I’ll get some counseling set up for you two. You just have to keep trying, Lola. I told you this would be difficult.”

Continued: Chapter 7

The Athenaeum's Scroll Archive

~ Time: Clock of the Heart ~

by Alex Tryst

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Disclaimers: This is a sequel to Persistence and would be difficult and confusing to read if you haven’t read Persistence first. Some of you may recognize the title of this book as a song title from my favorite 80s band, Culture Club, but I assure you that no infringement was intended. I simply felt that George O’Dowd’s (Boy George) song of loving, losing, and learning to love again perfectly expressed the sentiments of this piece. I also must state that there are several songs in this book that have been modified from their original content, and even though I attribute them as original works by one of my characters, they really were written by Babyface and on his “For the Cool in You” CD (which I only bought because the sales girl was flirting with me and I wanted a date, but that’s a story for another time). Due to the unfamiliarity of these songs, most people won’t know the melody, but they read more like poetry, so this shouldn’t hinder your enjoyment. As for sex, violence, language and so on, this is a rather tame story. Of course there is sex between two consenting adult women, and if this is illegal where you live or offensive to you, you must do a 180 degree turn immediately. There isn’t any violence that I can think of, and I could count the uses of foul language on one hand, well maybe two.

Dedication: To my wife, you are my fondest wish. To my fans of Drew and Lola, this one is just for you. You asked for it, and you got it. Enjoy!

Now on with the show.....

Chapter 7

Over the next month Drew’s daily schedule remained fairly constant. She had PT twice a day, daily visits with the kids, and psychological counseling every other day. Even though there were vast improvements in Drew’s physical abilities, her memories had failed to resurface leaving Lola frustrated, because Drew had no interest in her other than through the kids. They had only friendly exchanges, nothing that Lola was used to from her usually passionate partner.

Once Drew was cleared to be discharged from the hospital, Drew's positive demeanor became agitated. It was clear she had no intention of even trying to become close to Lola again, sleeping alone in the downstairs guestroom while Lola took the couch and Drew's parents stayed upstairs in the master bedroom. Drew always demanded that her parents help her with her therapy, leaving Lola completely out of the process. Not knowing what else to do, Lola relented, letting Drew have her way and focused solely on the children.

Two weeks after being discharged, the situation at home had not improved between them. Drew's parents had left in an effort to get Drew and Lola to deal with things, but the first night they were alone after the kids had been put to sleep was filled with awkwardness. Drew was sitting at one end of the couch drinking a cup of tea and just reading a book as Lola straightened up the living room. Once that was complete, Lola took a seat next to Drew, closer than she had over the passed several weeks. Drew scowled at her but then continued to ignore her.

"Drew, can we talk? We need to discuss what's happening here."

"Nothing is happening here, and that is fine with me." she grumbled.

"Well, it's not fine with me. You owe it to me as my wife to at least entertain this conversation." Drew sighed and closed her book, giving Lola her attention. "Drew, what's really going on in your head? You've been avoiding contact with me since you regained consciousness, and now that you're home, you act as if I'm not even in the room. I can't go on this way. I love you, and I need you to treat me at least with common courtesy. I can't stand being pushed aside like this by you, especially since I've been nothing but supportive of you. Why are you doing this?"

Drew looked at her lap, knowing that Lola was right. She had been less than receptive to the young woman's efforts to talk and be close to her. "Lola, I'm sorry. I know this has to be hard for you, but it's even harder on me. I don't remember anything, not you, not our kids, not our life, and not our love. Everyone around me keeps telling me how much I love you, how in love I am with you, but I can't remember it, and I don't feel it. You are Kate's daughter, and for that I do care about you. I love you like a second mother, not a wife or lover. I've tried to picture it, but I can't. It makes me ill with guilt. I can't pretend that I do feel something that strongly, and I shouldn't have to. I'm sorry. I know this has to hurt you, but I can't be what you need. I just can't."

Lola felt her heart being ripped from her chest at the admission. At that moment she wasn't sure if she could even speak as the tears began to fall in rapid streams down her face. Seeing that her confession had completely shattered the younger woman, Drew reached out to her in sympathy but was rebuffed. "Please don't touch me, Drew. I could very likely die from your touch right now. It's too painful. I don't know what to say. I guess I asked for it by forcing you into a corner about it. I should've just let us work it out on our own time."

"My feelings are not going to change, Lola. I'm sorry to hurt you this way, but I can't go on living as life companions when I don't feel that for you. Would you really want me to go on this way?"

Lola let the question sink into her brain. She knew she and Drew would both be miserable if Drew really didn't feel deeper for her. It wouldn't be the marriage they once had. There would be no intimacy or physical contact, and even though Lola didn't rely solely on those things in their relationship, they were too important to her to forgo just for the sake of calling themselves a couple. "I would never want to put you through anguish like that, Drew. I do love you enough to spare you pain whenever possible, but I refuse to call it quits on our marriage. The doctors said this would take time, not to rush into things. I'm begging you to heed that advice. Please don't make any decisions in haste."

"I want to leave, Lola. I want out. Please let me go."

"I can't." she hoarsely replied putting her hand on Drew's arm. "You are my world, Drew. You are my life. I need you. The children need you."

"I'm not going to walk out on the kids. I'll be there for them. I promise. I'll be as good of a mother as I ever was, but I need you to release me of this burden. Being your wife is not something I can do. I don't know how I did it then, but I can't do it now." Hearing Drew call their relationship a burden shredded that last piece of Lola's heart. She began to uncontrollably weep as she rocked herself back and forth on the couch. Not knowing what to do to bring the blonde consolation, Drew quietly got off the couch. "I'll pack my belongings in the morning." she mumbled softly before beginning to walk away, but Lola's hand shot out and grabbed a hold of the hem of her khaki shorts.

"Wait, Drew." she whispered. Drew looked down at her expectantly. In all her life Drew had never seen such a wounded expression on anyone before, and her heart went out in compassion to the young woman. Lola took a deep breath and stood, gazing at Drew with unguarded complete love and adoration. "Do you have any idea where you're going to go?"

"No. I hadn't thought that far ahead. Why?" Drew asked suspiciously at the unexpected turn of the conversation.

"Do you want the kids and me to move out instead?"

"No. I want you and the kids to stay here for now. This is their home, and I don't want to upset them any more than necessary. At some point a move might have to happen, because I think they'll be better off with you on a daily basis, but for now the four of you stay here."

"I'll make you a deal, Drew. I'll give you the keys to Mom and Dad's old place and let you stay there as long as you want, but you have to do something in return for me."

"What's that?"

"Promise me that you won't start any proceedings to legally end this relationship for six months and also keep supporting the kids financially until I can find a job."

“You and the kids will be taken care of financially. Don’t worry about that. As for the relationship, I will do as you ask but only because I can see how much I’ve already hurt you. Maybe in six months time, it will be less painful. I’m going to go to bed now, so I can be rested for tomorrow. Good night, Lola.” Lola said nothing as she collapsed onto the couch again.

The following morning Lola and Drew were both up before the kids. Coming across each other in the kitchen, they each mumbled a morning salutation before going about their own business. As Drew left the kitchen with a cup of coffee, Lola stopped her. “Just so you know, I’m taking the kids to Mom and Jim’s to go swimming today. I don’t think they should be here to watch you move your things.”

“I think that’s a good idea.”

“I’ll give you a call later as we head back, and maybe you could come see them to bed tonight.”

“All right. Thanks, Lola.” Drew said before taking her leave.

Picking up the phone, Lola called her mother. “How are you this morning, Lola? You don’t sound good. When are you, Drew, and the kids coming over?”

“Um, the kids and I will be there before lunch. Drew’s not coming.”

“Why not? She’s still on leave, isn’t she? She’s not ready to go back to work.”

“She is still on leave, but she had other things she needs to do today.” Lola whispered trying to hold herself together over the phone, but her mother sensed something wrong instantly.

“Lola, what aren’t you telling me?”

“I don’t want to do this over the phone. We’ll talk when the kids go down for their naps this afternoon.”

“All right. If that’s what you want. See you in a bit.”

When Lola arrive with the children, Kate cast a concerned glance in her direction as she hugged her grandchildren but she respected Lola’s wishes not to discuss it in front of the kids. However as soon as they went down for naps after lunch, Kate pulled Lola onto the couch in the living room. Silently she held her youngest as Lola cried what seemed to be an endless river of tears. After several minutes Lola simply croaked, “She’s leaving me.”

“What? What do you mean she’s leaving you? You mean she’s ending your relationship?” Lola nodded trying to wipe her wet face with her hands. “Why on earth would she want to do that?”

“I don’t know, Mom. She refuses to give us a chance. She won’t listen to reason. She won’t heed the doctors’ advice to take it slowly, not to expect miracles.”

“Exactly what did she say?”

“Just that it made her ill to think about us together sexually. She thinks of me as a daughter, not a wife or lover, and she couldn’t pretend to be anything else. I don’t know what to do, Mom. I can’t go on without her.”

“I know it feels that way now, sweetie, but it will get easier. I promise. What happens now? You both aren’t living in the house I suspect.”

“No. She’s agreed to let the kids and me stay at the ranch, and I gave her permission to stay at your and Daddy’s old house. In exchange for that she has to wait six months before filing a request to split our assets. She promised to keep supporting the kids and me until I found a job. I really do think I’ve lost her, Mom.”

“Don’t give up, Lola. Just because Drew has doesn’t mean you should. I don’t know why she has decided to go against all the advice of the doctors, but if she ever does remember, she’ll live to regret it.”

“Maybe but that doesn’t do anything for me now. She’s determined to just walk out on everything we’ve built together. Something is going on with her, and I don’t know what it is. I know Melissa said Drew was thinking as her twenty-one year old self and that included being in love with you, but surely she knows that you two could never be together. Could you? Would you leave Jim for her?” Lola asked, suddenly unsure of where her mother stood on the subject of Drew’s affections.

“No, I would not leave Jim for Drew. I don’t love her that way, not the way you do. You have nothing to worry about between Drew and me, Lola. I would never do something like that.”

“I’m sorry to question you. I’m just feeling so lost right now.”

“It’s understandable. You’re going through a trauma yourself. Drew is not the only one who has suffered.”

“What am I to do, Mom?”

“I don’t know, but I am sure of one thing. You can’t give up. You fought so hard to win her, fighting against everything, me, her, society. She meant that much to you. If she still means that much to you, you have to fight for her love, even if it means fighting her.”

When Drew arrived at Kate and Paul’s old house, she felt awkward at first. The last recollection she had of the place was the time she had sat with Kate and the girls the summer vacation between her junior and senior of college, and her feelings for Paul were less than friendly. In fact she had been seethingly jealous of the man who had stolen her beloved Katherine, even though she never dared mention it to her friend.

Opening the door she set her bags down at the entrance as she looked around the living room. All

the furniture was covered in sheets or plastic to keep dust away, and it was clear that no one had been there for awhile. Experimentally flicking on the light, she was pleased to see that there was electricity. Drew's first order of business was to open all the windows to air out the house, so she slowly made her way to each window. As she moved into the master bedroom, she felt uncomfortable as if she was intruding on the privacy of Kate and Paul. Looking around the room after opening the blinds, a picture on top of the dresser caught her eye. Going over to it, she picked it up for further inspection. Wiping the dust off the glass with her hand, she studied the photo of herself with a man she assumed was Paul. They were older than Drew could recall, thinking that they were at least in their late twenties if not early thirties. They had embraced each other around the shoulder for the picture even though both sported dirty clothes. Drew was holding a string of fish while Paul had two poles, and they were both smiling brightly at the camera. Drew wondered if there was any information on the back, so she proceeded to open the frame. Sure enough on the back of the photo said in Kate's distinctive handwriting, "Paul and Drew taking the girls on their first camping trip." Suddenly a grin broke out on Drew's face as the memory seemed to hit her out of nowhere.

Paul, Drew, and the girls had just come back to their camp site with their dinner, and as the two adults chatted about the best way to cook their recently caught meal, Natalie called their names to gain their attention. When they looked over at her, the nine year old was standing there with the camera she had received as a birthday present from Drew. Immediately Paul and Drew embraced each other, smiling proudly as they showed off their fishing efforts.

Later that night as the four of them settled down to sleep in their tent, Drew slept on one side and Paul on the other with the two girls between them. There had been a disagreement between the girls as to who was going to sleep next to Drew, the winner having been decided with a coin toss by Paul. Drew was awake listening to the sounds of the night when she saw Lola's little head pop up from her sleeping bag. Whispering the eight year old's name, Drew reached out for her. Lola whimpered said she was scared by the noise. Drew brought the little girl into her arms as she assured her that nothing would ever happen to her as long as she and Paul were around. She stroked Lola's blonde hair gently until they both fell asleep.

"I remember." she whispered to herself, relieved that something had returned to her as she placed the picture back where it belonged. She had Paul must have become friends somewhere along the line, meaning that Drew had ultimately gotten over the loss of Katherine. Drew knew the only way she could've been friends with the man was if she no longer had feelings for Kate.

Leaving the master bedroom, she wandered through the rest of the house, hoping for more clues that would unlock her mind. When she came to the last closed door, she figured it had to be Lola's room, one of the previous bedrooms obviously belonging to Natalie with some of the memorabilia. Drew took a deep breath, not knowing if she was prepared to enter the childhood room of her wife, wondering what might be inside, especially since her mother had told her that she and Lola had dated while the blonde was still in high school. Knowing she had to face whatever might be on the other side of the door, Drew pushed it open and stepped into the room.

The bed was bare just like all the others except for a tiara that had seen better days hanging from one of the bedposts at the head of the bed and pom poms hooked over the other. Surprisingly

there weren't any pictures anywhere out in the room. Seeing a photo album on the bookshelf above Lola's desk, Drew went over to it. Flipping through it, she realized she didn't recognize any one in there, figuring they were all friends of Lola's from school by their ages, but just before she put the book back on the shelf, a large envelope fell from the back, spilling its contents on the floor. Drew leaned down to retrieve them when she noticed that they were pictures of her. Drew put the book on the desk to use both hands to pick up the massive collection before glancing through them. Every single photo was of her alone spanning her life from the time she was in high school herself standing in her basketball uniform to her leaning next to her squad car in her sheriff's uniform. With over fifty photos in the collection, it spanned her entire adult life. Drew turned them over looking for any sort of background information, seeing some of them marked by Kate's hand but the other handwriting was unfamiliar. Drew reckoned it was Lola's, and each picture was meticulously documented with the date and event. Drew was amazed at the opportunity to glimpse back through her entire life even though most of the pictures she didn't recognize and learn about what she had been like as well as realize that Lola's fascination with her was more equivalent to an obsession than a crush. Having that realization dawn on her made Drew really uncomfortable as she moved to put the book back in its place. She put the pictures of herself back in the envelope but decided to keep them close to her, thinking that they might help spur some memories if she studied them enough.

Having gone through the entire house, Drew decided to stay in Natalie's room, feeling the safest there, so she moved all her bags in there before heading out to the garage for more exploration. Hitting the garage door button mounted just inside the doorway, the door creaked open, letting the stale air escape. There was an vintage yellow Volkswagen Beetle in the garage as well as several boxes and miscellaneous items. Drew moved to the car. Trying the door, she was pleased to find it unlocked. Drew slid into the passenger's seat as her hands roamed over the dashboard. Another memory flashed before her mind as she sat in the car of she, Natalie, and Lola.

It was sometime after Natalie's sixteenth birthday, and the young brunette had insisted on showing off her new car to Drew the day she got it. Having gotten into the passenger's seat, Drew allowed Natalie to chauffeur she and Lola down to the old Baskin Robbins for ice cream. Drew had bought them all cones which they ate outside leaning against the car, but once they were finished, Lola, who only had her driving permit, begged for a chance to drive the car. Natalie adamantly refused until Drew took her aside out of Lola's earshot. Subtly slipping the teenager a twenty, Drew requested that Natalie allow Lola to drive. With an annoyed sigh, Natalie snatched the money and relented. Lola squealed in delight as Natalie handed her the keys, but instead of thanking her sister, Lola grabbed Drew for a grateful hug and kiss on the cheek before excitedly jumping into the driver's seat.

Drew grinned to herself but abruptly a black guitar case caught her eye on top of a pile of boxes. Retrieving it off the top of the pile, Drew squatted down to put it on the floor. Even though the case had been banged up through the years it seemed to still be strong with very little rust around the joints. Drew's name had been scratched into the paint onto the top of it. Drew smiled as she recalled Kate doing that with Drew's knife one night when they had spent the night together in high school.

Popping open the locks, Drew gently opened the case. Pages and photos fell out of it first,

revealing Drew's old guitar that looked like it hadn't been used in years. Drew thought of the last time she played it, the night before Kate was married to Paul, but it certainly looked like it hadn't seen the light of day since. Picking up some of the pages that had fallen from the case, Drew smiled as she saw some of the songs she had written in high school and college but felt a bittersweet tug at her heart as she came to the last sheet. It was the last song she had ever played on her guitar, the love song that she had written for Katherine, the one that had expressed her undying love and devotion. At the time she knew Katherine had not known it was written for her, because Drew had been too scared to admit her feelings, especially since Kate was engaged to Paul, but Drew had sung it to her with all she felt in her heart before locking her old guitar away along with her emotions never to be seen again.

Drew picked up the two photos next, smiling when she realized they were of she and Kate in high school. The first one was of just Kate, sitting in the bed of Drew's father's truck in her cheerleading uniform giving the camera what Drew used to call Kate's bedroom eyes. Even as Drew looked at the picture that look jumped started her libido as it had always done every time Kate ever gave her those eyes. The second picture was of the two of them on the porch swing at Drew's ranch. They were both dressed in jeans and sweaters, and Kate was sitting in Drew's lap, Drew's arms around Kate's waist and her head on the blonde's shoulder as they smiled brightly for the camera. Drew remembered the picture as her favorite couple photo of the two of them. Putting them aside with the sheets of music, Drew gently picked up the guitar itself and tentatively plucked at one of the strings. It struck a flat note before snapping. Drew smiled nevertheless before putting everything back in the case and taking it back to the house.

Knowing there was work to be done, Drew began unpacking her clothes before making a list for the grocery store of the things she would be needing. As promised Lola called that evening as she was leaving her mother's asking that Drew meet her at the ranch to spend time with the kids.

Drew went over to the house after a stop at the music store to buy new strings for her guitar and arrived before Lola and the kids had returned. Nevertheless Drew made herself comfortable in the living room watching tv. When she heard the garage door open, she went to meet the kids.

"Mommy!" Libby and Jack exclaimed racing to her.

"Hey, kids. How was swimming?"

"We had so much fun, Mommy. I wish you had gone though." Libby mentioned.

"Me too but I had a lot of work to do today. Maybe next time. Did you eat already?"

"No. I thought you might make cheeseburgers here for them. They are their favorites you know."

"You mean they're your favorites." Drew teased, suddenly wondering where the comment had some from.

Lola shot her a curious glance. "Drew? They are my favorite. Did you remember that?"

“I don’t know why I said that. They really are your favorite?”

“Yeah, the way you make them they are.”

“Well, let’s hope I remember how to make them then.” she joked, trying to bring light to the situation that neither of them really felt. “Speaking of remembering things though, some things did come back to me today.”

“What?” quickly Lola inquired, hoping that it had to do with their relationship.

“Camping with you, Natalie, and your dad when you were eight. I saw a picture of Paul and me, and it just came back to me. I also remember the yellow Beetle. The day Natalie got it the three of us went out for ice cream, and you drove us home.”

“Well, that’s good. I’m glad.” Lola replied trying to cover her disappointment that it wasn’t something more intimate between them.

“I think it was the picture itself that helped me remember your father. Do we have any photo albums around here? I thought maybe if I looked at some more photos it might trigger something.”

“Yeah. We have lots. I’ll dig them out for you.”

“Great. What about at your parents’ house? Are there any around there that you know of?”

“I don’t think so. I think Mom took most of that stuff to Jim’s. I’ll ask her next time I talk to her if you want.”

“That’s okay. I’ll ask her myself.”

Lola nodded, ending the conversation as she sat at the table with her children helping them complete a puzzle they had started earlier in the day while Drew prepared them all dinner. Lola kept an eye on Drew however, feeling small comfort that Drew seemed to know exactly where everything was in the kitchen without asking. Neither of them spoke about their separation in front of the children, so they spent the remainder of the evening as a family until the kids had been put down for the night. When Lola returned for putting the kids in bed, she found Drew cleaning the kitchen from supper.

“You don’t have to do that, Drew. I’ll get it later.”

“It’s okay. I’m almost finished.”

“How’s the house? I haven’t been over there in forever. Is everything all right?”

“Yeah. It’s a little dusty, but everything seems to be okay. It was interesting to be there, because I’m sure so much has taken place there that I can’t remember. I took a tour every room. Your

room was enlightening.”

“My room? Why’s that?”

“I found something that kind of disturbed me. I didn’t mean to snoop, but I was looking through a photo album you had, and an envelope fell out of it. You had quite the extensive collection of my life in pictures. I’ve been told that we had a relationship when you were in high school by my mother, but I have to say that when I found those photos today, it seemed to me like your feelings for me, at least then, bordered on obsessive. Is that true?”

Lola gave a small nod. “I guess you could say that. It’s true I did have a lot of pictures of you. I even had many of you out in my room until you broke my heart the first time by breaking up with me right after I went to college. When that happened I took them all down and stuffed them in that envelope you found. I didn’t want to look at them, but I knew I couldn’t throw them away either.”

“Why did we break up?” curiously Drew inquired.

“You wanted me to have freedom, said I needed to live my life the way college kids were met to live.”

“Is that the only reason I gave you?”

“No. You saw me kissing another girl. I cheated on you, Drew.”

“Why?”

“Because I wasn’t ready for commitment I guess. Even as much as I loved you, I was only eighteen. I didn’t really know who I was or what I wanted from my life except when it came to you. I’ve always known that I wanted to be your wife, but for some reason the time and distance got to me. This other girl was there, and it was just one of those things. I was crushed that I had done that to you. I felt so terrible, and even though you never said it, I could see the pain in your eyes. Knowing I was the one that put it there was almost too much to bear.”

“I see. When did we get back together then?”

“Right before my senior year of college.”

“What happened in the meantime?”

Lola rolled her eyes and sighed. “In the meantime I cried my eyes out while you proceeded to fuck my mother.”

“Oh. I take it this is a sensitive subject. I’m sorry I brought it up.”

“It’s okay. You don’t know. It is a sensitive subject for me. You and Mom basically lied to all of

us about it, by hiding the relationship, because you knew it would destroy me or so you said when I finally confronted you about it. As much as I care about you and Mom, it still hurts to think about, because you both knew I was still in love with you when you two were sleeping together, but you did it anyway.”

Drew nodded feeling guilty about the incident even though she couldn’t remember it. Just the look on Lola’s face told her that it was traumatic for the young woman, so she felt sorry for her part in the matter. “For what it’s worth, I’m sorry for hurting you like that, Lola.”

“It’s in the past.” Lola mumbled. “Listen, I want to talk to you about something serious, Drew. Why don’t you come sit down?” she suggested gesturing to the chair next to her at the table. Even slowly took the indicated chair, wondering what Lola was about to say. “Drew, your moving out of the house could cause us a serious problem.”

“How’s that?” Drew asked, already not liking the direction of the talk.

“The petition for you to become legal guardian for the children hasn’t been granted yet. I’m afraid that if anyone finds out we aren’t living together, it will be denied, and I don’t want that. Regardless of our relationship, you are the children’s mother just as much as I am, and they need you. You deserve to be their guardian, but us splitting up could make it more difficult to be approved. I just want you to be aware of the fact that your actions effect more than just you and me. Our children’s lives are in the balance as well.”

“Then we’ll just have to make sure no one finds out that I’m not living here at the house with you all.”

“I already told my mother, but I don’t think she’ll tell anyone. She feels the same way we do about the kids. I think it would be best if you spent as much time as you could around the house with us. I know you don’t want to be anywhere near me right now, but the kids need you, and we need to make it at least look like you’re still living here. We need to look very familiar with each other. You know what I mean?”

“Yeah. I need to make it look like I belong here with you. We need to pretend everything is fine.”

“Exactly. Now we’ve already been through all the interviews and stuff when I was pregnant with Emma, but because we recently added her to the petition, it hasn’t gone through yet. We have a hearing in a couple of weeks. We’re going to have to do one hell of an acting job to pull this off, Drew, or we can have it rescheduled for a later date.”

Drew thought about it for a moment before replying, “I think we should do it as soon as possible. We can blame my accident for any incongruencies, even get Melissa in there to say that I’ll eventually recover to make it believable if we need to. It might be harder for me later.”

“All right. If that’s how you want it, that’s what we’ll do, but I have to tell you that this means everything to me, to us, Drew. If you’re not ready, we shouldn’t go in there. We can’t afford to

blow it.”

“I’d do anything for my children, Lola, and I’ll do this. I’ll give you the act of a lifetime if that’s what it takes. Don’t worry about that.”

“I am going to worry, Drew. It really does mean everything to me. Outside of us, this means more to me than anything else in this entire world.”

Drew gazed at the young woman who’s eyes were conveying the seriousness of the matter. Instinctively reaching to touch Lola’s cheek, Drew whispered, “I can see that. You have my word that I’ll be everything you need me to be in that courtroom. I swear it on all I am, Lola.”

Lola leaned into Drew’s hand, indulging in the unexpected caress for a moment. “Thank you, Drew.” she whispered.

Drew nodded before pulling her hand away. “Could you round up those photo albums now? I’m about ready to get out of here.”

“Yeah. Sure. One more thing, I haven’t told the kids you aren’t sleeping here at night. With your work schedule you never saw them in the morning anyway, so maybe with a little luck, they might not even notice as long as you make your nightly appearances.”

A couple of days passed with Drew visiting every day in the evenings. The kids seemed none the wiser about the situation much to Drew and Lola’s relief. However one day Kate had taken the children for the day with plans not to return them until it was their bedtimes, so Drew stayed at her own place, figuring Lola could come up with a reason of why she wasn’t there if need be.

Drew spent the evening on the porch watching the setting sun and strumming her guitar when she saw a car turn into the driveway. As it came to a stop, Drew smiled as Kate emerged from the driver’s seat. “How are you, Katherine?” she asked casually.

“Fine. You?” Drew shrugged. “Nice hat you’ve got on there. You look like a regular cowboy in that outfit. Lola would be drooling over you about now.” she teased referring to the cowboy hat adorning Drew’s head and the tight jeans and boots she was wearing.

“Well, this hat is better than this God awful haircut they gave me at the hospital.” Drew joked. “What are you doing here?”

“I just wanted to see you and drop off those photo albums you asked for. Is that all right?”

“Sure. That’s fine. I just figured you’d leave them with Lola, though.”

“Well, my ulterior motive was to see you. It’s been awhile. May I sit down?”

“Yeah. Be my guest. Is it strange to see me now occupying your house?”

“A little, yes. When did you start playing again?”

“I didn’t realize I had stopped permanently. You mean to tell me this is the first time you’ve seen me with a guitar in years?”

“Yeah. The last time I heard you play was the night before my wedding. You left your guitar at my house, and it stayed there forever until my parents moved. They brought it me, and I just stored it in the garage. I didn’t want to get rid of it, because I had so many fond memories of you playing.”

“You want to see something funny?” Drew inquired opening the case and pulling out the pictures. She handed them to Kate.

“Oh my God. Look at us. We look so young. What a nice looking couple we made, huh?” she mentioned.

“Yeah, I think we did. Too bad I never got any action out of you, though. I wish I hadn’t been so scared to make a move on you.”

Kate laughed. “I probably would’ve given in had you put the moves on me.” Neither spoke for a few minutes as Drew idly plucked at the strings of her guitar until Kate said, “Hey. I recognize that song.”

“ You do? What is it?” Drew challenged, knowing there was no way Kate would remember that it was one Drew had written.

“I don’t remember what it’s called, but it’s the one you played for me the night before I got married. It was such a beautiful song. Didn’t you write it?”

“Wow. Ye

“Do you remember the words by chance?”

“No but I do have them written down.” she mentioned holding up the sheet she had been referring to as she played.

“Would you sing it for me, Drew?” Kate asked quietly. Drew hesitated but Kate gave her a pathetic pout whispering, “Please, Drew.”

Drew laughed. “God. So that’s where Lola got that pouting lip? All right. I’ll play it but only because you begged.” Drew plucked the strings a few times as she cleared her throat before beginning to sing. “I can’t imagine living one day without you I’d rather just lay down and die ‘Cause all I care about is what I mean to you Sweet lady just knowing you is heaven I’ll always want you in my life I can’t explain, I can’t explain the way I feel You are the rhythm of my heart And every beat you give is just how I make do Swear girl nothing else could matter Just stay hear in my heart And I’ll always love you Deep in my heart Always love you, always

love you And I'll always love you Deep in my heart Always love you, always love you There's not a feeling in this world that can describe All of the joy you bring to me I can't believe you found a way to maximize All the love you give and do commit Stay here in my life And I'll always love you Deep in my heart Always love you, always love you And I'll always love you Deep in my heart Always love you, always love you And only everything that your heart could desire Is all that I want for you That's all I desire And everything and anything you wanna give Say the word my darlin' and I'm there to commit You can think it, you can dream it And I'll make sure you receive it And I'll always love you Deep in my heart Always love you, always love you And I'll always love you Deep in my heart Always love you, always love you I can't explain, I can't explain the way I feel You are the rhythm of my heart And every beat you give is just how I make do Swear girl nothing else could matter Stay hear in my heart And I'll always love you Deep in my heart Always love you, always love you And I'll always love you Deep in my heart Always love you, always love you"

As the last chord faded into silence, neither woman spoke at first. Drew took a deep breath and sighed as she placed the guitar aside. When she looked over at Kate she found the blonde near tears. "Why did I never see it, Drew? Everything I ever needed to know about the way you felt was in that song. How could I have missed it?"

"You didn't want to see it, and I wasn't very good about showing it, especially since I knew I had lost you."

"All these years I believed that lie you told me about it being for your girlfriend whatever her name was. It wasn't for her at all, was it?"

"Nope. It was for you, Katherine."

"Of all the cold, heartless things that have ever happened to you, I inflicted you with the worst pain by making you stand up next to me in a church as my maid of honor while I gave my life to another the day after you sang me that song. I never understood your reluctance. You really didn't want to do it, did you? What kind of a friend was I?"

"No. I really didn't want to do it, but you wanted me to, and even then I could never say no to you, Katie. You shouldn't give it another thought. It was a very long time ago, and I was dead inside long before you and Paul took those vows. It actually hurt worse the night you told me you were engaged. That was the worst night of my life. After I left you, I went to the bar and got wasted and proceeded to try to drive my truck home. I didn't even care about anything any more. I could've cared less if I killed myself. In fact that's probably what I wanted to do, which is why I got hammered. I got pulled over on the way home, but fortunately for me, the officer was my father's best friend. Thank God he didn't drag my ass to jail like he should have. I wouldn't be the sheriff today, wouldn't have even been able to get into law enforcement if it weren't for him. He simply brought me home and let my dad deal with me. My father tore me up one side and down the other the next day, but I still didn't even care. Finally after about four hours of him screaming at me, he asked what I had to say for myself, and do you know what I said? I looked up into his face and simply said that you were engaged to be married. It's the only time in my life that I can ever remember my father cradling me like a baby as I wept. I swore I couldn't go

on another day, another hour, another minute, that I would surely die from heartbreak. You see, he always assumed you and I were together, and I never told him differently, because I wanted to believe that I could win you. He and I have never talked about that day again as far as I can remember.”

“I never knew that, Drew.” Kate said softly touching her friend’s arm.

“I didn’t want you to know that I had been so stupid. I could’ve killed myself or someone else. That really was the dumbest thing I have ever done that I know of in my entire life. And for what? A broken heart.” Drew mumbled taking up the guitar again and beginning to strum, signaling the end of the conversation.

Taking the hint Kate asked, “So, when are you planning on going back to work?”

“Probably next week. I’m doing all right physically. I can drive, and I can fire my side arm, so as long as there isn’t too much activity, I should be okay. I think it’ll help a lot. I can’t stand being cooped up like this.”

“I know. You never could handle too much inactivity. Tell me. How are you and Lola doing?”

“Fine I guess. We see each other every day to spend time with the kids. Since the custody hearing is coming up soon, we’re trying to familiarize ourselves with each other enough to make it seem like we’re still together. As of now, you’re the only one who knows we’re not living together. We don’t want that to get around at the hearing.”

“Don’t worry. As far as I know, you’re spending all your nights in Lola’s bed. You and Lola deserve this no matter what your troubles. The kids need you both. I’ll do all that I can to assure that they get that.”

“Thanks, Kate. We appreciate it.”

“Now how about you play me some more songs? I know you have other songs in there. It’s been forever since I’ve heard them.” Kate said with a smile. Returning it Drew agreed before taking off into another tune.

Continued: Chapter 8

The Athenaeum's Scroll Archive

~ Time: Clock of the Heart ~

by Alex Tryst

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Disclaimers: This is a sequel to Persistence and would be difficult and confusing to read if you haven't read Persistence first. Some of you may recognize the title of this book as a song title from my favorite 80s band, Culture Club, but I assure you that no infringement was intended. I simply felt that George O'Dowd's (Boy George) song of loving, losing, and learning to love again perfectly expressed the sentiments of this piece. I also must state that there are several songs in this book that have been modified from their original content, and even though I attribute them as original works by one of my characters, they really were written by Babyface and on his "For the Cool in You" CD (which I only bought because the sales girl was flirting with me and I wanted a date, but that's a story for another time). Due to the unfamiliarity of these songs, most people won't know the melody, but they read more like poetry, so this shouldn't hinder your enjoyment. As for sex, violence, language and so on, this is a rather tame story. Of course there is sex between two consenting adult women, and if this is illegal where you live or offensive to you, you must do a 180 degree turn immediately. There isn't any violence that I can think of, and I could count the uses of foul language on one hand, well maybe two.

Dedication: To my wife, you are my fondest wish. To my fans of Drew and Lola, this one is just for you. You asked for it, and you got it. Enjoy!

Now on with the show.....

Chapter 8

The day of the custody hearing Drew and Lola arrived together with the children. Even though most of their friends and family had already been interviewed prior to the court date, Kate and Jim came to show their support for them as well as babysit the kids. When it was time for them to enter the courtroom, Drew stood and began to give their kids hugs and kisses before leaving them in Kate and Jim's care. Lola picked up Emma to get her situated on her hip before giving the older two the same treatment as Drew had. Kate hugged Drew before moving to Lola.

Leaning into her daughter's ear, she whispered, "You have to have faith, Lola. Believe in the love you have for Drew. Let them see that. You can do this."

"Thanks, Mom."

As Drew and Lola walked toward the courtroom, Drew paused just before they got to the door. Lola looked up at her questioningly when she stopped. Drew extended her hand to the young woman and waited for a response. When Lola hesitated Drew whispered, "For the children, Lola."

Lola suddenly realized Drew was planning on giving the acting performance of a lifetime by pretending that they were indeed still in a loving relationship by showing affection to her. Nodding in understanding Lola said, "Of course. For the children." Slipping her hand into Drew's she suggested, "Why don't you hold Emma as we go in?"

They entered the courtroom just behind their attorney before moving to sit next to her. Drew held out Lola's chair for her and waited until she was settled to sit in her own before the hearing began. The judge they had was a woman and seemed sympathetic to their situation, but she raised issues about Drew's ability to provide and protect the children given her accident. Fortunately for them Melissa had volunteered to come speak on Drew's behalf. However Drew insisted on addressing the judge herself much to the disapproval for their attorney, but Drew felt compelled to answer to the questions raised by the judge. Standing up Drew moved around in front of the table.

"Your honor, I appreciate you giving me the chance to speak. It's true that I was recently involved in a serious accident, but as you heard from the specialist that attended to me, a full recovery is definitely possible if not expected. No one has mentioned the reason I was in an accident, but I would like to tell you about it. Even though I don't remember the details, I've been told that the child that I call my son, five year old Jack, had gotten into some mischief with some of the horses at our ranch, and I actually had to save him from a potential accident himself. The point, your honor, is that I would do anything for these children to ensure their safety and well-being. From the moment each of them has entered our lives, they have brought nothing but happiness to Lola and myself. Lola and I have been in a serious committed relationship for six years, and even though it is not recognized by our state, it's recognized in our hearts and in the hearts of our family and friends. She is a special woman to give me these three gifts, and I love and cherish each one of them. It is Lola's and my greatest wish that I become the children's legal guardian, and it is my desire to give my wife everything I can within my power. However this is not within my control, but it is within yours. I am a good mother to those children and a good wife to Lola. We have an ideal home full of love and understanding. The kids live in an atmosphere where they can grow and be their own people with our complete support. I provide well for them financially and will continue to do so. The kids already recognize me as their mother, even share my last name, and heaven forbid anything ever happen to Lola, I need the law's protection to do what is best for these kids. If the children and I ever lost Lola, it would be devastating, but I could and would go on, because the children would need that from me. However if I lost the woman I love and then my children on top of that because of a law that doesn't recognize me as their legal parent just because I'm another woman, I don't think I could go on, and I know my children wouldn't be able to either. They need me, your honor, for their emotional, physical, and financial well-being, and I want to have that responsibility. Regardless of the ruling here today, Lola and I will continue to raise the children as if they are of my flesh and blood, but it would be a great comfort to us to have the state's assurance that I can continue to adequately protect these kids in case something were to happen to Lola. Please show my children that our judicial system is not prejudice against two people who love each other completely and have the means of supporting them simply because we are not what is considered a traditional family by society. Thank you."

When Drew took her seat again, she spared Lola a smile as she squeezed her hand on the top of the table. They all looked at the judge expectantly who was staring back at them with equal intensity. "Well, Sheriff Bailey and Ms. Emerson-Bailey, this is a difficult decision to make, because your relationship is not recognized by the state. If you were a man and a woman, you wouldn't even be here, but since that is not the case, you have come here seeking legal protection

under the law, the same law that does not recognize you. Sheriff Bailey, I understand the way you feel about these children. Children are easy to love, especially when someone you adore gives them life, but the fact remains that they are not of your blood regardless of their name, and I could deny your petition on those grounds alone. Plus the fact that you are not in your top emotional shape as admitted by your own doctor, should give me more of a reason to dismiss this case. Thirdly you are indeed a woman who has chosen to spend her life with another woman, making it extremely difficult to grant your petition for custody.” The judge paused for a moment as if she was collecting her thoughts. Drew cast a look over at Lola, seeing the young woman’s eyes full of unshed tears. Drew’s heart was beginning to sink as well, but she refused to let the judge see her emotions. Setting a determine stare on her face, Drew looked back at the judge. “Having said all that, Sheriff Bailey and Ms. Emerson-Bailey, I am granting legal guardianship to Drew Bailey effective immediately.” Both Drew and Lola gasped as the judge continued. “Sheriff Bailey, you have proven yourself to an excellent provider for these children thus far, even putting your life on the line to protect them from harm. Between you and Dr. Johnston, you have allowed me to see that your feelings for these kids as well as Lola extend far beyond what some parents have for their own flesh and blood. You have taken this role seriously since day one according to the interviews of your family and friends, and you have demonstrated to my satisfaction your commitment to the well-being of these three children, so from this moment forward Jack, Libby, and Emma will have two legal parents, Lola Emerson-Bailey retaining her rights as the biological mother, but you, Drew Bailey, having the rights and responsibilities of their legal guardian. Your petition is granted. Case dismissed.”

Without even thinking about it, Lola threw her arms around Drew’s neck, hugging and kissing her frantically as the reality settled. “We did it, Drew. We really did it.”

Drew smiled demurely, allowing the blonde her moment of excitement. “Yes, we did, Lola. Come on. Let’s go get our children and celebrate.” she stated taking her wife by the hand and leading her from the courtroom. As soon as they cleared the doors, Drew dropped Lola’s hand and moved to where Melissa was standing waiting to hear the verdict. “Thank you for coming today, Melissa. Your testimony made a difference.”

“Glad to have been of help, Drew. It means a lot to Lola.”

“It means a lot to both of us even though things are not going they way she wished them to with us.”

“She told me you had moved out. Drew, it’s going to take time to get back to the way things were. You really shouldn’t be making moves in haste.”

“Thanks for the advice, but I know what I’m doing, Melissa. The time away has been good for me. I’ve started to remember some things.”

“That’s great. Every memory recovered is one more piece of your life restored. Hopefully it’ll all come back to you eventually.”

“We’re having a little celebration back at the ranch, Melissa. We would love it if you could

come.”

“It would be my pleasure. Thank you, Drew.”

The rest of the afternoon passed pleasantly. While Drew played with her children, Lola entertained their guests. However once everyone had left the party, leaving the two of them alone, they didn’t speak directly as they sat next to each other on the floor with the kids. When it was bedtime, Drew helped Lola give the children their baths and tuck them in before they found themselves alone in the family room.

Lola looked at Drew who she knew was only pretending to be engrossed in the tv to avoid conversation. Even though she knew Drew was only acting, Lola had felt so close to her during the hearing. Drew had gone out of her way to give her emotional and physical support, making Lola’s heart ache at what they once shared. “Drew, I want to thank you for all that you did today. You really are a born actress I guess. You nearly had me convinced that everything was fine between us.” she mentioned.

“I told you I would do whatever it took for the kids, and I did. I knew we had to look like we were really together. It was a means to an end, Lola.”

Lola gave a nod as she tried to retain her composure. “Well, thank you anyway. Now I can be assured that our children will always be safe if anything should ever happen to one of us.”

“That’s why I did it.”

A moment passed before Lola tried again to get the older woman to talk. “Listen, Drew. Jack is going to be starting school in a few weeks. I was thinking that maybe we could both take him on his first day. I know he’s a little anxious about it.”

“Okay. That’s fine with me. I’d like that.” Drew answered still not opening up at all.

“Drew, please. I’m trying to have a conversation with you. Even if we aren’t going to be a couple any more, we still should at least be friends for the sake of the children. Don’t you think?” Lola inquired in exasperation.

Drew looked at the young woman. Giving a small nod, she conceded, “You’re probably right. They’ll begin to notice something wrong if we don’t try harder.”

“If you don’t try harder, Drew. I feel like I’m out on this limb alone. Give me something to work with.”

“You’re right. I’m sorry. I just don’t know what to do here, Lola. I’m really uncomfortable around you, knowing what you want from me and that it’s an impossibility.”

“I guess I understand, but we’re still going to have to try to move beyond that, both of us are. I’ll do my best to stop trying to see you as the woman I love, but you have to stop seeing me as your

enemy. I am not some sort of vixen who coerced you into marrying me in the first place even though that's the way you're making me feel. Even though you don't remember it, we did love each other at one point enough to believe that we could have a marriage, and furthermore we believed that it would last forever, or else we wouldn't have done it in the first place, not to mention added children to the mix. No one could convince you to do something you didn't want to do in the first place. I know you know that much about yourself, Drew. Things have changed now much to my disappointment, but we both have to deal with that. As much as it hurts me, I have no choice but to let go of the best thing that ever happened to me, because you refuse to believe in us. You want me to give up on you, Drew, but I'm having a hard time with that. However, I will do my best to respect your wishes, but I need you to do that same for me. I need you to respect that fact that this is a difficult situation at best. The children need us to get along regardless of how we feel about each other, and I need you to at least pay enough attention to me, so we can get along amiably. I'm tired of being ignored by you, Drew, because you're uncomfortable. Well, guess what? You're not the only one. Do you think it's easy for me to sit here knowing how you feel about me?"

"I guess I never thought about it that way. I'm sorry, Lola. I will try to do better with this."

"I'm going to hold you to that, Drew. Now that the hearing is over, I wanted to talk to you about something else important regarding the kids."

"What's that?"

"I know we agreed that you would continue to support the kids and me until I got a job, but there is a distinct possibility that even with my getting a job, it could cost us both more money with trying to find full-time childcare for three kids. Are you prepared to deal with that issue? The reason I quit my job in the first place was because neither of us liked the idea of having strangers look after our children."

"Yeah, I don't like that thought. It would be better if one of us could look after them."

"I agree, so that begs the question of which one of us is going to do it. You are too busy with your career to take a leave of absence for the kids. You wouldn't have anything to go back to, Drew."

"That's true. I'd have to retire, and I don't want to do that. If you didn't mind, you could always keep looking after them."

"I don't mind. In fact I enjoy it, but are you prepared to support me financially for the next five years until Emma enters school? You really will have to pay for everything, except mortgage or rent. Mom has already said I could move into the old place when you're ready to take the ranch back, but I would need help with everything else."

"I know, but I don't see another way around it, Lola. If that's what I have to do to ensure my kids' well-being, I'm prepared to keep supporting you and them for as long as it takes. I do feel a sense of responsibility to you too, Lola. I will take care of you."

“Thank you, and when the time comes that I can return to work, will you allow me to take my job back as the office manager at the stables?”

“I don’t see why not? Horses are your life. You should do what you enjoy.” Drew replied.

Lola looked at her quizzically. “How did you know horses were my life? I mean it’s true, but where did that come from?”

Drew shrugged. “I just knew. Well, I better get going. I’ll see you tomorrow.”.

Chapter 9

Life between Lola and Drew began to settle into a routine over the course of the next few months. Even though Drew couldn’t remember her life as Lola’s wife, the two of them had formed a congenial but tentative friendship. Drew spent all her free time with the children, allowing Lola time of her own to relax and enjoy some of her forgotten hobbies such as riding. One afternoon Drew had picked Jack up from school and took him home to find a strange car in the driveway. Escorting Jack into the house, Drew was surprised to find Lola and Melissa having lunch at the kitchen table.

“Hey, Drew. How are you?” Melissa greeted with a smile.

“Hi, Melissa. What surprise to see you here.” she stated looking to Lola.

“Oh, Lola was kind enough to invite me to go riding with her this afternoon. She’s convinced she can turn me into an equestrian.”

Seeing the uncertainty on Drew’s face, Lola asked, “You were planning on staying with the kids this afternoon, weren’t you? Did I get that wrong?”

“No. I was going to stay here. You two go have a good time. Don’t worry about us.” nonchalantly Drew replied feeling an emotion that she could’ve sworn was jealousy strike her at the thought of Lola spending time with the attractive doctor. Dismissing it she continued into the family room where she and Jack promptly started to play. She barely even looked up when Lola announced that they were leaving and would return in a few hours.

Drew didn’t give Lola any thought until Jack had been put down for his own nap. Since neither of the girls were awake yet, Drew just straightened up the house before sitting out on the back deck to enjoy the fall weather. She let her thoughts wander to Lola and Melissa. Even though no one had said anything, Drew sensed that Melissa had more than friendly interest in the blonde. Drew thought about what she knew about Melissa. The doctor was in her mid-thirties and beautiful. Lola had made her admiration known for the young brunette on several occasions, making Drew wonder if there was a budding romance between them. Drew admitted to herself that she could see Lola with the doctor, but the thought of Melissa living with her children made

her uneasy. She had never considered that Lola may find someone else, potentially making the children have a three-parent household, which made her concerned. To her knowledge the kids still believed that Drew was living there so to introduce a new adult into the equation might confuse them. Drew was still contemplating the situation when she saw Lola and Melissa riding back toward the barn triggering a recollection of a time when Lola had gone riding with another brunette.

Drew noticed Lola and Jess, her friend from college, coming back from their ride. She and Kate were setting the table and placing the food down, when Kate suggested, "Why don't you run down to the barn, and tell them it's ready? I'll finish this."

Drew sauntered down to the barn to do Kate's bidding. The barn door was open enough that Drew could step through without opening it further. As she rounded the corner to the row in which Lola stabled her horse, she stopped short in shock. Lola was leaning against the stall door, her arms around the young brunette's shoulders. Jess was leaning into her, and they were exchanging a methodical kiss. Drew felt her stomach lurch. They didn't notice her presence, so she quickly retreated back to the barn door. Even though she felt pain searing through her, she knew she couldn't let on that she knew anything. Slamming the barn door open as loud as she could, she announced herself. This time as she rounded the corner, the girls were just casually standing next to each other looking at Lola's horse. Drew saw Lola cast a guilty glance at Jess, but she didn't comment on it. "I just wanted to tell you that supper was ready, so hurry up." Drew turned and left without waiting for a response.

Drew's heart seized in her chest and she suddenly found it difficult to breathe. Taking to her feet she began to pace as she pondered the memory that had just come back to her. She had learned from Lola and Kate that she had broken up when Lola was a freshman in college, so Drew wondered if she had remembered the moment of catching her in the act of cheating that Lola had previously confessed to. The pain associated with the recollection was almost too much for Drew to bear as she realized she had to have cared a great deal for the blonde to be hurt so badly. Hastily the knowledge that she had loved the young woman enough to be crushed swept over her, and Drew wasn't prepared to deal with the fact that she truly may have had romantic feelings toward Lola at one time. Trying to regain her composure, Drew convinced herself just because she may have felt that way once held no bearing on their current relationship. She didn't have those kinds of feelings toward the blonde presently, which calmed her almost immediately.

When Lola and Melissa returned from the barn, Lola sensed something amiss with Drew instantly. "Hey, what's up? You look like something is bothering you." Lola mentioned with concern.

Drew shook her head trying to clear her thoughts as she answered, "No, I'm fine. Just taking it easy. You know how I am. I can't stand to sit still too long."

"Ain't that the truth." Lola joked patting Drew on the shoulder.

"So, how was the ride?" Drew inquired of Melissa as the doctor took a seat at the table next to her.

“Great. Lola was right. It’s a great sport. I can’t wait to go again.”

Lola poured two drinks and brought them to the table, passing one to Melissa as she took a seat. Drew was quiet as the two women conversed, but she kept sneaking small glances at Lola throughout the conversation, realizing Lola could talk easier to the doctor than her. Feeling like an outsider, Drew excused herself from the room.

“What’s up with her?” Melissa asked when they were alone.

Lola shrugged. “I have no idea, but she didn’t look right. I wonder if she remembered something.”

Drew was quiet the rest of the evening, making Lola curious as to what was going on in her head, but she didn’t ask. Instead she and Drew went about their roles of caring for the children until it was bedtime. Then as soon as that was complete Drew excused herself for the night. Going back to her place, Drew sat out on the back porch and closed her eyes, willing any memories to come to her. Abruptly she was struck with one of Kate and her on that very porch.

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

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

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

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

“Good.” Drew answered quietly.

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

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

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

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

“What?” Kate asked in shock.

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

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

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

“I have to talk to her.”

“I haven’t told you everything yet.”

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

“Hate you? Oh, I hate you all right!”

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

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

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

Drew scurried down from the porch and walked around to the front of the house where her truck was parked. Leaning into the driver’s side window, Drew wept uncontrollably, mourning the turn of events. She had no idea how long she had stood there, and to her it didn’t matter. All that did matter was the fact that her beloved friendship with Kate was gone. She never even heard a car pulling up behind her but felt a disorienting blow to the back of the head. She tried to recover but felt a punch to her kidney, shooting pain throughout her entire body. Her assailant grabbed her by the shoulder to turn her around. Her eyes were so blurred by tears and the knock to the head that she couldn’t see the punch to the jaw. There was an audible crack as Drew went face first into the window before falling to the ground. Gaining enough sense, Drew reached for her gun in her side holster but found it empty.

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

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

“Oh God. I ruined my relationship with Kate.” Drew mumbled. “How could I have done that? What kind of hold did you have on me, Lola?” she asked aloud. “How could you ever forgive me, Kate?” Just then another memory struck.

As she came up the sliding glass door on the porch, she saw Kate standing in the kitchen draining the end of a bottle of vodka. Drew knocked on the door but was ignored. She then tried to open it but found it locked. Banging louder Drew yelled, “Katherine, open up.” Drew saw Kate look over at the lock but didn’t acknowledge that Drew was there. Suddenly Drew caught a glimpse of what was in Kate’s other hand as it came off the counter. Drew’s eyes grew wide in fright as she noticed Paul’s .45. “Katherine, let me in or I’ll break down this door!” Drew yelled.

Once again she was ignored, so Drew took a running start at the door barreling through it with her shoulder and stumbling onto the floor. When she rolled over to rise, she found the gun pointed between her eyes.

“Dammit, Drew! I said 5:00, not 4:30! You’ve ruined everything!”

“Katherine, I don’t know what you’re about to do, but I suggest you put down the gun. Killing me will only make it worse.”

“I don’t want to kill you, Drew! I was supposed to be dead by 5:00! You were supposed to find my body, but you ruined it!” Drew gulped. “Doesn’t matter, though! I’ll be dead soon enough!” she screamed taking a few steps back from Drew.

“Kate, have you taken something that I should know about?” Drew’s eyes scanned the counter and saw several bottles of pills. “Okay, Kate, I’m going to stand up now.” Drew slowly got to her feet. “Will you please put down the gun?”

“No! I don’t want you trying anything either!”

“Katherine, you don’t want to die. Think about your family, children, friends. Think of the pain it’s going to cause them to know you’re gone. Your daughters are too young to be without a mother.” Drew stepped toward her. “Please, Katherine. I love you. Let me help you.”

“I can’t go on, Drew. It hurts too much.” Drew noticed her body start to sway. “I’m so tired.” she mumbled lowering the gun to her side.

“I know. Why don’t you sit down?” Drew suggested stepping to her. Kate didn’t move, so Drew pulled the gun away as she collapsed into Drew’s arms. Immediately Drew put her on the floor and called for an ambulance.

“Drew, I don’t feel good.” Kate mumbled incoherently.

“I know, sweetie. Help’s on the way. Hang in there. I won’t let anything happen to you.”

Grasp her head in her hands, Drew frowned as a headache came out of nowhere from all the recollections surging through her mind at once. “Too much! It’s too much!” she cried out, realizing that last one was of a suicide attempt that Kate had made in the house she now occupied.

Going into the house, Drew took some aspirin as she tried to clear all the thoughts from her head. Even though things were coming back to her, she still couldn’t make sense of them. Picking up her guitar, Drew found solace in playing well into the night before falling asleep in exhaustion on the couch. The following morning Drew was aroused from sleep by a vision in her mind of she and Kate in the living room.

“You want something to drink?” Kate asked from the kitchen.

“Sure. I’m going to start a fire if that’s all right.” Drew answered.

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

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

“To Lola.” Kate replied sipping her wine.

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

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

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

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

“Bulletproof vest.”

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

Drew looked down into Kate’s hazel eyes as she untucked her shirt. Kate’s hands joined Drew’s in working open the buttons. Neither spoke as they stared deeply into each others eyes before being drawn into a gentle kiss.

The shirt was soon forgotten as their mouths communicated latent needs. Drew smiled to herself, wondering if that had been a dream or a real memory of her best friend. Regardless it left Drew feeling amorous at the thought of being sexual with Kate. Concentrating Drew tried to recall any other memories of Kate together and grinned as their first intimate encounter came to her mind.

Raising a glass in toast, Kate whispered, “Happy Valentine’s Day, Drew.”

Silence prevailed for awhile as they drank their champagne and watched the fire as they listened to soft music. Finally Drew extended her hand to Kate in invitation to dance. “You look absolutely beautiful, Katherine, and you smell incredible.” Drew whispered as their eyes met.

“Drew, there’s only one thing missing to make this perfect.” she mentioned softly.

“What’s that?”

Kate said nothing as she brought her hand up to Drew’s face. She tucked some of Drew’s graying hair behind her ear before her hand moved to cup Drew’s cheek. Drew saw the answer in

Kate's eyes. Slowly she leaned down and gently claimed Kate's lips in a tender kiss. It was full of softness at first, but just as Drew was pulling away, Kate's tongue licked Drew's lower lip before sliding into Drew's moaning mouth. It left them both breathless momentarily.

"Do you know what you're doing?" Drew hoarsely inquired.

"Yes."

"And you're sure?"

Kate stared deeply into Drew's eyes. "I'm sure. Twenty-four years has been enough of a wait, don't you think?"

Drew's heart quickened as she realized what Kate was saying. "Yes, it has." Drew answered.

They began to kiss again, and Kate pushed off Drew's jacket before beginning on the buttons of her shirt as Drew's fingers found the zipper of Kate's dress. The foreplay was gentle and methodical. Once Kate was down to her undergarments, Drew's hands came up to cup Kate's breasts through her silk bra as her head dipped to taste the flesh of Kate's cleavage.

Kate whimpered softly. "Drew, Drew, take me to bed." she begged.

Drew hoisted Kate up, so Kate could wrap her legs around Drew's waist. They continued to explore each others mouths as Drew ascended the stairs to the bedroom. Drew laid Kate against the bed. "May I turn the light on? I want to see you, Katherine."

"Yes."

Drew turned the bedside lamp on low and gazed over at Kate lying there, wantonly staring at her. Kate sat up keeping her eyes glued to Drew's. Her hands worked open her bra before slowly pulling it from her shoulders, baring herself to Drew for the first time. Drew sucked in a sharp breath. "You are...wow. I never knew you still looked like that after all these years. You're... magnificent."

Taking one of Drew's hands, Kate guided it to one of her soft mounds, seductively whispering, "Touch me, Drew."

Drew gave her a dreamy smile. "Anything you desire is yours, darling Katherine." she replied pushing Kate down into the mattress.

Moaning her best friend's name, Drew drifted back into slumber until a ringing phone woke her a second time. "Morning." she mumbled beginning to stretch.

"Well, I didn't expect to wake you, Drew. You're usually up by now. Do you have the morning off?" Kate inquired.

“No. I had a hard night last night, so I just slept in a little. What’s up?”

“Not much. I was just calling to check on you. It had been a couple of days. I talked to Lola yesterday, and she mentioned that you didn’t look to good. Are you feeling all right?”

“Yeah, I’m doing all right. I had a lot of things come back to me yesterday, and it really threw me for a loop I guess.”

“Really? What did you remember?” Kate asked in excitement.

Drew grinned into the phone. Dropping her voice to a sexy timbre, she replied, “Making love to a beautiful woman in a red dress on Valentine’s Day.”

Even though she couldn’t see her friend, she knew Kate had to be blushing. “Oh. Anything else?” she asked, choosing not to ask for details on that memory.

“Yeah, there were some other things. I’d like to talk to you about them in person if that’s all right. They all involve you. Could we met for lunch today?”

“Sure. You want me to come out there?”

“That would be great. I’m planning on being in the office most of the day, so if you could just stop by the station.”

“Sounds good. I’ll see you about one. Does that work for your schedule?”

“Yep. I’ll see you then, Kate. I’ve got to get going.”

“All right. See you then.”

When Kate got to Drew’s office, Drew took them over to a small café for lunch. After placing their orders, Drew began, “As I said earlier, I remembered some things yesterday and this morning, but I have no idea where they fit into my life. I was hoping you could help with that.”

“I’ll try. What was the first memory?”

“Well, this morning I recalled us making love for the first time. That was incredible. Glad that one came back to me.” she joked.

Kate gave a shy smile. “Well, that took place after you and Lola had broken up, so that would’ve been the second semester of her freshman year. We actually started dating from that point, and you proposed to me shortly after that.”

“I see. So that would’ve made me about thirty-eight then?”

Kate nodded. “Yeah. Sounds about right. What else?”

“There was also a moment of dancing with you in your and Paul’s living room by firelight. There was something about Lola becoming Homecoming queen or something. We were making out.”

Again a flush came to Kate’s cheeks. “Yeah. I do remember that as well. That was Lola’s senior year of high school. You two hadn’t started dating then, and you and I had been feeling each other out a little, but we decided that night after Lola and her friends walked in on us that it would be best not to pursue anything. At the time I was still mourning Paul, and I didn’t think it was fair to either of us. Was there anything else?”

“Actually, yes there was, and these three are more disturbing to me. It was Lola’s eighteenth birthday, and you and I were fighting about Lola. Apparently I had done something with Lola. I couldn’t gather exactly what had happened, but you and I got in a huge fight, and you threw me out. Then I ended up getting shot.”

“Not one of my finest moments.” Kate mentioned. “That’s the first time you admitted to me that Lola had stated her sexual interest in you, and you had fallen to her wiles.”

“You mean I had sex with her?” Drew inquired in confusion.

“No. You didn’t have sex with Lola until Valentine’s Day of her senior of high school.”

“How do you know that?”

“Because we fought about that too, and even temporarily stopped speaking to each other, but what came back to you was the day Steve shot you. He was one of your farmhands, and he tried to rape Lola.”

“Oh God. He didn’t, did he?” Drew asked with fear.

“No, he did not, because you came to her rescue. He was arrested but out on bail when he shot you. You almost died, Drew, and that’s when Lola told me how she felt about you. That was basically the moment your relationship with Lola began, her eighteenth birthday.”

“Interesting. I’ve got one more for you, and if I tell you about it, I want you to promise not to tell Lola.”

“Okay, if that’s what you want. What is it?”

Drew paused to clear her throat. “I recalled Lola kissing a girl in the barn and it destroying me emotionally.”

Kate smiled at her friend. “That’s wonderful, Drew. You’re finally starting to remember your relationship with her. That was Lola’s freshman year of college. You broke up over that.”

“Yeah, I know. Lola told me about it. I guess I just wasn’t prepared for the feelings that

accompanied that memory. I can't even describe the pain I felt when that came back to me, like my heart had been ripped from my chest."

"I know, Drew. You were crushed. You ran off to a bar and got drunk, and I had to come get you. The following morning you broke up with Lola. It was a terrible time for you emotionally, Drew. I think you had honestly believed at that point that Lola was the one, and it hurt me to see both of you suffering. Out of curiosity why don't you want me to tell Lola?"

"I just don't want her to read into it is all. Just because I'm starting to remember her then doesn't mean I will ever remember our marriage or the feelings we supposedly shared. I have no feeling for her beyond friendship, so I don't want her to get the wrong idea."

"All right. I won't say anything right now, but you can't expect me to keep this a secret forever. She would want to know that you're recovering your memories."

"I'll tell her, Katherine. I'm just not ready to deal with her like that yet."

"What was the last memory that came back to you?"

Drew looked her friend deeply in the eye and reached for her hand. "I remember you trying to take your own life with pills and alcohol. You had a gun, with which I assume you were going to shoot yourself, but somehow I arrived to the scene before you did, and you were madder than hell about it. Why did you try to do that?"

"That was the one year anniversary of Paul's death, Drew. I was in mourning, and I was emotionally dead inside. You saved my life that day, Drew. It's because of you, we shared all those wonderful things that developed between us, and it's because of you that I met Jim. Had I died life would've been very different for you and the girls. I've always been glad that I didn't succeed."

There was a pause in conversation as their food arrived. Trying to be subtle and change the direction of their talk, Drew inquired, "May I ask you something? When I was in a coma, how did Melissa and Lola interact?"

Kate gave her a quizzical look asking, "Why are you interested in that? She was a fabulous doctor to you, and she went out of her way to be there for Lola. I truly think Dr. Johnston is one of the finest doctors I've ever seen. Why do you ask?"

Drew attempted to be nonchalant as she stated, "It just seems to me that Melissa might like Lola as more than a friend. That's all."

"What if she does? How is that any of your concern, Drew? You've made it clear you have no interest in Lola that way yourself. Melissa is nice woman, and she treats Lola well. If you and Lola can't work things out, I'd like to see Lola get on with her life by being with someone else. You're not jealous, are you?" challenged Kate.

“Of course not. Lola can see whoever she wants, but I am concerned about my children. I don’t want them to be confused. As far as I know, they still think Lola and I are together. It would be traumatic for them to see her with someone else intimately. They are too young for that. They wouldn’t understand.”

“Well, if you’re really distressed over it, you should talk to her. The two of you are going to have to deal with each for the rest of your lives, because of these children, so you better get used to sensitive chats. She needs to know where you stand. There may come a time in which you or she may want to be with someone else. You’re going to have to figure out how the kids will play into that. This is just like any divorce. Compromises will have to be made. You both gave up your freedom by getting married, and just because you’re calling it quits, doesn’t mean you get it back. You’ve got three children that are the priority. You and Lola’s thoughts and feelings should be secondary to them.” Kate took a sip of her tea before stating, “Personally, Drew, I just think you’re scared. You’re scared of her finding someone else, because you might come to realize that you really did love her, but I also think you’re just as scared of realizing that you still love her.”

“I don’t, Katherine, not like that, not like a lover. I’m still stuck on you that way.” Drew teased with a sexy grin.

“Drew, I’m flattered, but you’re going to have to get over that. Not only are you married to my daughter, I’m married. Even if you were to divorce Lola and I divorced Jim, we could never go back to way it once was, because you still were married to her. It was weird enough the first time. I wouldn’t do it again. Talk about confusing to your kids, having Grandma in a relationship with Mommy. I would never do it. There are so many levels of why that’s impossible. Surely you can see that.”

“I know. Part of my mind tells me it’s impossible, and for the kids alone, I wouldn’t really try to do it, but there’s just that part of me, I guess it’s just the frame of mine of being stuck in a place where I’m still mostly twenty something years old, that still gravitates toward you, Katherine. When that memory of us came back to me, it about knocked me for a loop. It was hot. I just want to know what it was like between us, Kate. Please tell me. What were we like as a couple?”

Kate sighed at the request. She didn’t normally like thinking about her sexual relationship with Drew too much, but knowing it was important to her best friend, she relented. Leaning in toward the sheriff, she whispered, “Drew, what we shared was nothing short of amazing. You opened my eyes to a world I never really knew existed. I mean I knew about lesbianism. After all you have been my best friend forever, but what I thought I knew and what was out there was completely different. You touched me in ways no one ever had and probably never will again. What we had was so loving and tender but also torrid and passionate. The sex was undeniably the best I ever had, because you really brought me out of my shell. You encouraged me to be experimental and wild. I mean some of the things you convinced to do with you sexually were things I never would’ve imagined doing with anyone else. It was incredible between us sexually, and the other facets of our relationship were easy as well, because we had been so close so long, but the fact that we had to hide from our families did make it difficult. With Lola being in love with you, I felt guilty for our relationship, even as much as I was enjoying myself. When I felt

you pulling away from me, the summer before her senior year of college, I knew what we shared was coming to an end. I couldn't give you everything you wanted, Drew. You wanted children, and I didn't want to be pregnant again, but more than that, you really were in love with Lola. There was just no way that we could go on."

"Did you hate me for that?" hesitantly Drew inquired.

"No, not at all. There was a part of me that knew when we got involved that it wouldn't last. I mean after all you had already been with my daughter in a relationship, even had sex with her, but I just so wanted to know your touch once. Fortunately once turned into two years. I always appreciated that opportunity to be with you that way, Drew, even if it was twenty-five years later than you would've liked."

Drew nodded as she took all the information in. "So, we weren't in love?" she clarified.

"No. We loved each other deeply, but we were not in love."

"Then why did we get engaged?"

"Because we both wanted the other to be happy and thought we could provide that. We were going to be content to settle for each other. In the end I'm glad we didn't."

"Well, thank you for sharing that with me. I know that talking about us that way makes you uncomfortable. You really have shed some light on the situation for me."

"Then it was worth it, Drew. I hope you realize that Lola was truly the most important woman in your life, even then. She was the one you were meant to be with. You reluctantly recognized it then, and I hope in time you come to know it again."

Continued: Chapter 10

The Athenaeum's Scroll Archive

~ Time: Clock of the Heart ~

by Alex Tryst

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Disclaimers: This is a sequel to Persistence and would be difficult and confusing to read if you haven't read Persistence first. Some of you may recognize the title of this book as a song title from my favorite 80s band, Culture Club, but I assure you that no infringement was intended. I simply felt that George O'Dowd's (Boy George) song of loving, losing, and learning to love

again perfectly expressed the sentiments of this piece. I also must state that there are several songs in this book that have been modified from their original content, and even though I attribute them as original works by one of my characters, they really were written by Babyface and on his "For the Cool in You" CD (which I only bought because the sales girl was flirting with me and I wanted a date, but that's a story for another time). Due to the unfamiliarity of these songs, most people won't know the melody, but they read more like poetry, so this shouldn't hinder your enjoyment. As for sex, violence, language and so on, this is a rather tame story. Of course there is sex between two consenting adult women, and if this is illegal where you live or offensive to you, you must do a 180 degree turn immediately. There isn't any violence that I can think of, and I could count the uses of foul language on one hand, well maybe two.

Dedication: To my wife, you are my fondest wish. To my fans of Drew and Lola, this one is just for you. You asked for it, and you got it. Enjoy!

Now on with the show.....

Chapter 10

That afternoon when Drew came by to see the kids, she gave Lola a friendly smile as she entered the house. "You're looking better today." Lola mentioned. "I was worried about you yesterday. You looked sick."

"Oh. I just had a terrible headache. I am feeling much, much better. How have the kids been today?"

"Good as always."

"Great. I was thinking that tonight we could all go out for dinner, you know kind of a family night. What do you think?" Drew suggested testing the waters with Lola's receptivity for spending time together.

"Yeah. I'm sure the kids would love to do that. Did you have a place in mind?"

"I figured I'd let you pick it. We'll go wherever you want. I'm going to go say hi to the rascals." Heading into the living room, Drew greeted all her kids with hugs and kisses as usual before settling down to play with them. A few minutes later Lola joined in as well and soon both of them were laughing together at their children's antics.

At dinner time the five of them went out for a relaxed meal before the kids convinced them to go by the video store for the latest Disney movie. Once they were back at home, all five of them piled on the couch, Lola and Drew at opposite ends with Jack and Libby between them. Drew held Emma on her lap, and all was quiet as the kids became engrossed in the film. About half way into the movie Emma began to fuss, so Lola took her from Drew, knowing that the infant was probably hungry.

Only a few moments after Lola left the room, Jack turned to Drew and inquired, “Mommy, can we have some cookies and milk?”

“Yeah, Mommy, please.” Libby added.

Drew thought it over a moment before replying, “Okay. I guess so. You both ate a pretty good dinner. You stay here and watch the movie. I’ll be right back.” Getting off the couch, Drew made her way into the kitchen to retrieve the snack when she saw Lola sitting at the table breast feeding Emma. Adverting her eyes she mumbled, “Sorry about that. I didn’t know you were in here.”

“It’s all right, Drew. I don’t mind. You used to love to watch me breast feed.”

Drew shyly took a peek at Emma taking nourishment from the blonde. “It is rather fascinating.” she admitted bashfully.

Lola smiled at Drew’s modest interest. “You once told me that it was the second most beautiful thing you had ever seen.”

“The second?” she inquired curiously. “Did I say what the first was?” Lola blushed as she nodded, but she didn’t answer the implied question to give that information. When Drew saw Lola hesitate, she asked, “Well, what was it?”

“I don’t think I can tell you, Drew. You were a different person when you said it, and I feel fairly sure you wouldn’t agree with it now.”

“Tell me anyway. How am I supposed to come to know myself again if you don’t help me?”

Lola looked away from Drew’s eyes, knowing she couldn’t tell her without it showing how much it affected her. Keeping her eyes focused strictly on Emma, she stated, “You said the most beautiful was me when I would... during sex.”

“When you would what during sex?” Drew inquired with a hint of playfulness, intrigued with this development and Lola’s growing blush.

“You know.” Lola whispered with an embarrassed grin.

“No, I don’t. You better tell me.” innocently Drew stated, even though at that moment she knew precisely what Lola meant. For a spilt second she felt completely comfortable with tormenting the younger woman this way.

Lola sensed the teasing in Drew’s manner and thought that maybe she too could push the envelope with her wife for once. “Well, I’m not going to yell it out, Drew. You want to know you need to come a little closer.” she demanded beckoning her with a gesture of her hand.

Drew took the bait and leaned down to hear what Lola was going to say. Lola leaned up towards

Drew's ear, almost touching it with her mouth as she held the collar of Drew's shirt in her grip. "You said the most beautiful thing you had ever seen what the sight of me reaching orgasm while you were inside of me." she whispered sexily.

Drew didn't even hear the whimper that escaped her lips as Lola's hot breath tickled her ear. The simple confession shot sexual pulses throughout her entire body as for one moment she imagined what it could possibly be like to see Lola that vulnerable. Clearing her throat of the sudden lump, Drew moved away as she replied, "I see."

Collectedly Lola mentioned, "Of course, you were a little more romantic about expressing that sentiment."

Drew just stared at Lola who seemed unfazed as she focused on Emma. However Drew felt a flurry of mixed emotions at the revelation. Before she could comment further however, she heard Libby call from the other room, "Mommy, I want chocolate milk instead."

"All right. I'll be right there." she stated trying to clear her head of what had just transpired..

The rest of the night passed quietly between Lola and Drew. Neither said anything about the incident in the kitchen as they tended to their children. Once Drew had left for the night, Lola pondered the interesting direction she and Drew had suddenly taken and hoped it meant Drew was on her way to remembering their relationship. Lying awake in bed, Lola thought back to the last time she had made love to her beloved Drew. It was the same time Drew had confessed to Lola how beautiful she thought the moment always was between them. Lola allowed her mind to fantasize about her muscular lover and the weight of Drew on top of her as Drew brought her to release. It was her favorite way to be intimate with the sheriff, because she felt totally consumed by the older woman's larger, heavier frame. Instinctively Lola pleased herself as she dreamed of Drew's hands and mouth all over her body until she was exhausted.

When Drew got back to her house that night, she immediately went to the photo albums documenting her life with Lola. The first set of pictures she came to were of Jack's birth and with it came the recollection of that magical day.

Drew looked down at her wife of less than a year. Lola's blonde hair was matted around her face and damp with perspiration as a whimper escaped her. Giving her a sympathetic smile, Drew quietly said, "You're doing so well, honey. It's almost time. Just try to breathe."

"It hurts." Lola whined. "Whose idea was this to have a natural birth? Why didn't I take drugs when I had the chance?"

"Come on now, Lola. You can do this. Hold on to my hand." Drew said lending her hand to her wife to squeeze until the contraction passed. She looked around for Lola's mother, Kate, who was hovering around behind her. The two best friends exchanged smiles.

"How are you holding up, baby girl?" Kate asked moving to the opposite bedside.

“When is it going to be over?” Lola moaned looking pitifully at her mother.

Kate gave a little laugh. “Soon, very soon. Just think, Lola. In a few minutes you’re about to become a mother. That’s what you’ve always wanted. You’re about to make me a grandmother before my prime.” she joked.

“Where’s Natalie?” Lola inquired.

“She went out to wait with everyone else. She couldn’t take seeing the pain.” Kate teased. “She was about to pass out.”

The conversation was abruptly interrupted by the midwife saying, “Okay, Lola, it’s time. Kate, I need you to hold one leg, and Drew, you get the other.” The two older women did as they were told, giving Lola something to brace against. “All right, Lola, it’s time to push. On the count of three. One... two... three...” A loud scream broke through the air as Lola followed the midwife’s instructions.

Drew started to feel nauseated at the sight and sound of Lola’s pain, but she was determined not to faint. Trying to stay strong for her wife, she began to talk to her. “You want to know something weird, Lola? The last time I was in a room with a woman giving birth, guess who it was? It was your mother, and she was giving birth to you. Bizarre, isn’t it?” she said conversationally.

“Oh my, God. That’s right. I had forgotten about that.” Kate mentioned. “How weird is that?”

“Come on, baby. You can do it. You’re doing so well.” Drew stated turning her attention strictly to her wife. Even though labor seemed to take forever to everyone in the room, the delivery was relatively quick as a wailing baby boy entered the world fewer than ten minutes after Lola had begun to push. As the infant was laid into Lola’s arms, Drew embraced Lola and their baby. “Oh, Lola, can you believe it? He’s here. You did it, love. I love you so much.” she whispered, leaning down to kiss Lola’s wet forehead.

“I love you too, Drew. Thank you for making me so happy. You’ve given me all I’ve ever wanted.”

Drew smiled as she flipped through more photos of their family. Almost every major holiday had been well-documented in pictures and as Drew studied them, she realized that she was recalling almost every event, including the births of their other two children. Even though she was flooded with fond memories of her life after her marriage to Lola, the essence of their relationship still eluded her. She needed to know how they were with each other, and she knew she wouldn’t be able to find that in any pictures.

Sighing Drew wondered if she would ever remember the way it was between them. “Somewhere in my mind is the key. I’ve just got to find it.” she mumbled to herself as she thought about the little blonde..

Chapter 11

That Saturday Drew arrived at the ranch early in the morning. She had planned on surprising the children by making their favorite pancakes for them, but when she got to the house there was an unfamiliar car in the driveway. Using her own key, Drew admitted herself through the side door that led into the kitchen. Walking in she stopped short at the site of Lola and Melissa sitting at the kitchen table.

“Good morning, ladies.” Drew greeted, taken completely back by Melissa’s presence at the ranch at such an early hour.

“Morning, Drew. Can I get you a cup of coffee? What are you doing here?” Lola inquired cheerfully.

“Sure. Thanks.” she replied looking at the doctor, who looked a little sleepy even though she was dressed in riding attire. As Lola stood to go to the coffee pot, Drew took in Lola’s sleeping apparel and suddenly questions arose in her mind as to what was really going on.

Melissa just smiled. “Morning, Drew. How are you?”

“I’ve been better, Melissa. How are you? What time did you get here?” she asked pointedly.

“Actually, Drew, Lola was gracious enough to put me up for the night.” Melissa replied with a grin, intentionally being vague in front of Drew.

“Well, Lola certainly can be a cordial hostess.” she stated before turning to the blonde. “Lola, I need to speak to you about the kids alone for a moment. Do you mind leaving Melissa to her devices for a few minutes?”

“Sure. No problem. Here’s your coffee.” Lola placed the mug in Drew’s hand.

“Thanks.” Drew mumbled leading the way back into what used to be her office. When they were alone with the door closed, Drew scowled at Lola. “What is she doing spending the night here?”

“I invited her to stay. She came over last night to keep me company, and since she was coming back this morning to go riding with me, I suggested she just stay the night. Why? Is that a problem?”

“And just where did Melissa spend her night, Lola?” Drew accused.

“What kind of question is that, Drew? She stayed downstairs in the guestroom.”

“I bet she did.” Drew sarcastically commented.

Lola glared at her. “Are you saying I am lying, Drew Bailey? What is your point?”

“My point, Lola, is that our children think I still live here. For them to see another woman up in her spending the night could be harmful and perplexing to them. Did she spend time with the children last night?”

“Well, yeah. She came over right before I put them to bed. She even read Libby and Jack a story.”

“She read my children a bedtime story? That is unacceptable, Lola. I don’t want her spending time with my children.”

“Our children, Drew, and I think it’s perfectly fine that she be with the kids. They like her.”

“Well, I don’t like her, Lola! The children already have two mothers! They don’t need a third!” Drew yelled slamming her cup against the desk. Coffee spilt over the dark wood. “Dammit!”

Lola scrunched her brow in thought at Drew’s reaction, wondering if the older woman was jealous. Tentatively reaching for the older woman’s arm, Lola asked, “Drew, are you implying that I’m having a relationship with Melissa outside of just a friendship?”

“She wants more than that from you.”

“Well, did you ever think that I didn’t want that? Drew, you and I are the parents to those children. I would never let another woman come in here and try to take your place. Furthermore, regardless of what you may think, Melissa is my friend. She helped me through a tough time when you were in the hospital, and she even helped us at the hearing. How could you think her feelings extend beyond a friendship?”

“Because I see the way she looks at you, Lola.” Drew stated seriously.

“Drew, I love only you. I always have and always will. You may be unable to return those feelings, but I have them nevertheless. It would be impossible for me to be with another woman given what I feel for you. Any advances from Melissa or any other woman would be harshly rebuffed.”

“Okay but do me one favor. Please don’t allow women to spend the night here. I don’t think it’s good for the kids.”

“Fine. I won’t do that any more. Are you happy now?”

“No, I’m not happy, but I’ll deal.”

“Now why are you here so early? You usually don’t come by until later.”

“I wanted to surprise the kids with pancakes. Seems like I picked the right morning. I take it you and Melissa are going out for a ride.”

“Yeah, we were, but if you would like for me to cancel, I will.”

“No. Don’t do that. Actually, I need to go down to the barn myself. I haven’t been there in awhile, and I want our employees to at least see my face, so they know I’m still around. Why don’t I do that, and then by the time I get back the kids will be up.”

Heading back into the kitchen, Lola said she would clean up the mess Drew had made in the office, so Drew headed down to the stables. Running into one of the trainers, Drew greeted him warmly. “Hey, I’ve got a question for you. Has there been a new rider here by the name of Melissa Johnston?”

“You mean Dr. Johnston?”

“That would be the one. How often is she here?”

“Once or twice a week, has been for the last couple of months.”

“Have you ever seen her go up to the house?”

“Yeah, of course, all the time.”

“What about seeing her car up in the driveway without her coming down here? Ever seen that?”

“Sure. I’d recognize that fancy sports car of hers anywhere. Why do you ask? You don’t think Lola is getting cozy with another woman while you’re at work, do you? She’s not that kind of girl, Drew. Lola is the faithful type.”

“I don’t doubt Lola’s fidelity. I just don’t think I trust the good doctor as far as I could throw her. She’s trying to put the play on my woman, and I don’t like it.” Drew grumbled.

“Well, one thing is for sure, Drew.”

“What’s that?”

“Lola is your woman, and there is nothing in the world that can change that. As long as I’ve known that girl, she’s always had her eyes on you. Now that she has you, she’s never going to let go.”

Drew just nodded as she thought about Melissa some more. Having her suspicions confirmed by her employees, left an uneasy feeling in the pit of her stomach, but somewhere deep inside her heart, she also knew that Lola really never would stray. She would always be available to Drew. Drew went about her business in the office before heading back up to the house. As she came in, she found her kids at the kitchen table.

“Well, Mommy, your crew is up and ready for your special breakfast. If you don’t mind, Melissa and I are going to take off now.”

“No problem. Have a good time. By the way, Melissa, how are you taking to this sport? You getting the hang of it?”

“I think I’m starting to.”

“You getting a chance to do much riding?” casually Drew inquired as she went about her work on breakfast. Drew cast a glance over her shoulder and caught the doctor’s eyes.

“Not as much as I would like.” Melissa answered holding the gaze.

“That’s too bad.”

“Well, hopefully in the future I’ll be making more regular appearances.”

Drew detected the slight challenge in the doctor’s voice. Smirking she replied, “We’ll see about that. You two have fun.”

As the two younger women left the house, Lola cast a look at her friend. “Melissa, I might be totally out of line, and if I am I’m sorry, but I can’t help but think you and Drew are having some sort of ego war. She thinks you’re coming onto me. I assured her that wasn’t the case, but I feel like she still thinks that.”

“Drew’s a smart woman, Lola.” Melissa mumbled.

“What does that mean?” Lola questioned, suddenly concerned that Drew had been right, but she had been too dense to see it.

Melissa sighed deeply. Turning to the petite blonde, she put her hands on Lola’s arms and looked into Lola’s hazel eyes. “Lola, ever since Drew came out of her coma, she’s treated you like dirt, like yesterday’s garbage just thrown to the curb. In the last few months, she’s made no attempt to rekindle the relationship you two once shared. She’s hurt you so deeply, more than you even admit, and I can’t stand to see that. From the moment I laid eyes on you, I was captivated. You are such an incredible woman, Lola, and you deserve to be treated with love, adoration, and respect. It was my job as her doctor to get her to the best health possible, but it was hard for me to see you struggling to accept the new her. You deserve better than Drew can give you now, Lola. You deserve a lover and life partner that completely supports you.”

Lola looked up at the brunette as she contemplated her words. “And you want to be the one to give me that, Melissa?”

Melissa gave a noncommittal shrug. “Only if you want me to.”

“Why did you help us at the hearing if this was the way you felt?” Lola inquired, pulling away from the doctor’s arms.

“Because I knew that’s what you wanted. You wanted Drew to have legal guardianship, and I wanted you to be happy.”

“It’s that simple?”

“It’s that simple, Lola. Isn’t that a good enough reason?”

Lola nodded slightly. “Was every moment you’ve spent with me over the last several months in an effort to get me to leave Drew for you?”

“Lola, I’ve enjoyed your company tremendously. I just thought that over the course of time you would see that Drew would never come back. I was more than willing to wait for you to come to that conclusion on your own.”

“So you were just waiting to pick up the pieces, is that it? My marriage falls a part and Dr. Johnston is there to make me all better? Were all the efforts you made on Drew’s and my behalf at the hospital fake? I mean with getting us counseling and all that?”

“No. At that time I did want you to be happy with Drew if it could work out that way, but over the past few months, it’s become obvious that Drew doesn’t want to come back. Can you really just wait around for something that’s never going to happen? Don’t you want to find happiness again?”

Lola dropped her head and kicked at the ground with her riding boot as she debated the question in her mind. After a moment she answered, “I’m not ready to give up on Drew yet. I don’t know if I’ll ever be. She means the world to me, Melissa. You have no idea how much history Drew and I have. She will never be out of my life, because she is the mother of my children, my mother’s best friend, and my sister’s godmother. There are so many levels in which our lives are entwined, and if for some reason we were to end our relationship, she would still be a part of my life. I don’t honestly think I could be with someone else.”

Melissa stepped in closer to her as she whispered, “What about last night? You see that shows me that you have already given up on Drew.”

“Why? Because I let you put your arm around me while we were watching tv? If it wasn’t you, it would’ve been whoever was there, my mom, one of Drew’s parents, one of the farmhands. I would’ve been like that with any of my friends or family. I needed a shoulder last night, because I was confused about what was going on with Drew. It wasn’t an invitation to make a move on me by any means. I’m sorry if you thought otherwise.”

Melissa sighed as she backed up a few steps. “Lola, are you honestly going to wait around for Drew forever? Can’t you see that she’s not coming back to your bed or your life? For all you know she could already be with someone else herself. She doesn’t strike me as the type to go without female companionship. What if she finds someone else? What if she already has?”

“Stop! Just stop, Melissa! I don’t want to hear any of that! Drew loves me! She just doesn’t

remember it yet! She will! She's not with anyone else!"

"How do you know?"

"Because I know her! She would tell me regardless of how much she thought it would hurt. She respects me enough to give me the truth."

"I'm sorry, Lola. I didn't mean to upset you. Obviously this was the wrong time to talk about this. Maybe I should just go for now."

"That's probably a good idea."

"Listen, I know that you think Drew will recover eventually, but there is a chance she won't. I'm just trying to offer you a better life than pining away for a woman that might never return your feelings. I can make you happy if you let me, Lola. I'll wait if I have to until you're ready to accept the facts. Drew's a lost cause. She hasn't remembered anything substantial since the accident, and she probably won't at this point. You need to move on emotionally. You won't ever be happy again until you try to find someone else."

Lola looked at the ground again as she felt tears threaten. "I think you should go now, Melissa." Melissa didn't say another word as she walked away toward her car. Lola watched until the sports car turned out of the driveway as she thought about the doctor's words. Even though she wanted to believe in Drew's full recovery, she did have her doubts about ever being with Drew again. However even if that were the case, Lola wasn't sure she could ever find happiness with anyone else even if Drew did.

Heading back into the house, Lola leaned down to kiss each of her children's heads as she passed through the room on her way up the stairs. Drew thought it was strange that she was back so soon, knowing that she hadn't gone riding by her short absence. Wondering if Lola had gotten into a fight with Melissa, she resolved to talk to her about it after breakfast.

After their meal Drew decided to take the kids out to enjoy the fall weather, so after bundling them all up, they went out into the front yard. Sitting on the porch with Emma, Drew watched her older two as they played in the leaves. They had only been outside a few minutes when Drew heard the front door open. Turning to look over her shoulder, she saw Lola. The blonde came to where she was sitting on the stoop and took a seat.

"You all right? Earlier you looked like you had lost your best friend." Drew mentioned.

"I lost my best friend months ago, Drew." Lola mumbled, looking out over the yard. "When you lost your memories, I lost not only my wife but my best friend in the entire world. I know you and Mom refer to each other with that title, but you really were mine over the last six years."

Drew let the comment slide for the moment as she inquired, "Did you and Melissa get into a fight?"

“No. It wasn’t a fight really, just a difference of opinion. She thinks I should be more realistic about your recovery.”

“How so?”

“She thinks that because you haven’t remembered much, you probably won’t at this point. I just can’t bring myself to believe that, Drew. I know somewhere within you is the secret to unlocking your memories. It’s not even so much for me any more. I just want you to know who you really are again, for the sake of yourself. I can’t help but believe. That’s all I can do.”

“Well, thanks for the support.” Drew answered as she contemplated telling Lola that she had remembered more than she had admitted. Lola sighed as she hesitantly leaned into Drew, placing her head on the sheriff’s strong shoulder. Without thought Drew curved an arm around the lithe blonde in consolation. “It’s going to be all right. You’ll see.”

Part of Lola wanted to tell Drew that she had been right about Melissa’s intentions, but knowing it served no real purpose, she kept it to herself as she just enjoyed the feeling of being wrapped in the embrace of her beloved. “Drew, I want to thank you for putting such effort into the kids. I know it’s difficult for both of us sometimes, but it means a lot to me, and I’m sure it does to them as well.”

“I love my children, Lola. They are my life. Ever since the recollection of their births, I’ve felt that much closer to them.” confessed Drew, knowing that by revealing that information Lola would ask the inevitable question about them.

“You remember that? That’s wonderful. When it come back to you?”

“A couple of days ago.”

“If you remember them, does that mean you remember me?” timidly Lola inquired.

“Lola, I didn’t want to tell you about that, because I knew you would ask me that question about us. Lots of things have come back to me, but the one thing that still evades me is our real relationship. I mean I have memories that include you, but I still don’t know us. I can’t be with you the way you want me to if I don’t know who we are. I only feel friendship for you. You can’t expect me to have a sexual relationship with someone when that’s the way I feel, can you?”

Lola sighed again. She knew she wouldn’t be able to do that, so she shouldn’t demand that Drew try either. “No. I can’t expect that of you. However I guess I should at least feel lucky you don’t feel maternally for me any more. That was a little more than I could handle.” To herself she hoped that if Drew’s feelings continued to evolve they may have a chance at being together once again.

Drew smiled at her blonde companion. She knew that she truly no longer felt motherly with Lola, much to her own relief, because she knew it would be almost impossible to reconcile it with the brief sexual stirring she got every once in awhile when those hazel eyes gazed at her.

Changing the conversation completely, Drew inquired, "So, have you got plans for your birthday yet? We only have a week until you're twenty-nine. It's the last one before the big 3-0."

"Don't remind me, Drew. I'm well aware of how old I'm getting." Lola joked.

"You old? What does that say about me?" she asked with a smile.

"You're way over the hill already, hot stuff, but that doesn't change the fact that you are still the most desirable woman that's ever walked the face of this earth in my opinion." she flirted teasingly.

Drew suddenly felt a flush rising to her face at the unexpected compliment. Trying to hide it Drew said, "You're just trying to get a good gift out of me with flattery. Seriously, what do you want?"

Lola shrugged. In her heart she knew the only thing she ever wished for was to be reunited with Drew. She wanted them to be a real family again, but she wasn't sure if it was conceivable. Deciding to ask for something more reasonable, she stated, "Well, I'd kind of like to have an evening alone with you for my birthday. Maybe have dinner or something while Mom watches the kids. Would that be within the realm of possibilities?"

Drew shrugged. "Sure. Why not? If that's what you really want, I'll take you wherever you want to go. Just name the place."

"Would you make me dinner, Drew? I'd really like it if you did. We could do it over at your place."

"All right. Dinner it is. You tell me what you want. I'll make anything."

"Let me think about that for awhile." Looking at the kids, she mentioned, "We should get them back inside. It's a little too cold to stay out for long. I think we're having some sort of cold front."

Collecting the children they all moved into the living room where Jack and Libby convinced the both of them to participate in a rousing game of Candyland. Slipping off her boots, Drew stretched out on the floor on her stomach and braced up on her elbows as she helped them set up the board. Lola took a seat near her cross-legged with Emma sitting next to her on her own, so she could see the game as well. Neither adult spoke to each other directly, but Lola kept a close eye on her wife.

Unbeknownst to Drew, she was stirring the blonde's libido to life by the way she was sprawled out on the rug. Lola studied the curvature of Drew's back just being able to make out the definition of her cut shoulders under her tight long-sleeved t-shirt. Lowering her sights she took in the snug seat of Drew's jeans, perfectly exhibiting the strong muscles that Lola knew were there. Drew's legs were slightly staggered exposing the seam of her jeans and the treasure Lola recalled hiding just underneath the material. Lola was so close to Drew's enchanting body that

all she had to do was reach out to touch the frame that filled her sexual fantasies. Knowing she couldn't deny herself the chance to touch the female Adonis, she casually leaned into Drew to support herself against Drew's leg. The powerful thigh flexed for a fleeting moment as Drew glanced over her shoulder at the blonde, but she only gave a grin that Lola thought was incredibly sexy before returning her attentions to the game.

Drew almost jumped when she felt Lola leaning on her. Drew had been aware of their physical interaction since she arrived that morning. Seeing Melissa at the breakfast table had made her envious, and she knew she could only attribute it to her growing sexual feelings for the twenty-eight year old. Even as much as she denied it, Drew knew her physical attraction to Lola was returning, but she didn't feel completely comfortable with it given that she couldn't remember them together that way. Every member of their families kept telling her that she and Lola really were loving and passionate with each other, but Drew could only feel the sexual magnetism mixed with her feelings of friendship. She still didn't feel the love they had, but she certainly was beginning to understand the blonde's allure. Idly Drew pondered how long it took the first time to crumble to Lola's wiles, sensing that regardless of whether she remembered Lola as her wife from the past, her current feelings for the blonde would continue to flourish. Finally trying to clear her thoughts of Lola, Drew focused on the game.

Lola participated enough to make it seem like she was paying attention, but her concentrate was really on Drew and savoring the feel of the sheriff. Even the smell of Drew's old barn work boots that she normally detested due to their smell was enticing her, because they reminded her of Drew after the gray-haired woman had been strenuously exercising. Her lustful thoughts were broken by seeing Drew's hand moving seemingly unconsciously over a small spot on the rug. Lola instantly remembered what had caused the stain, the fruition of their sexual relationship, further fueling the desire that had begun run through her veins. Not being able to resist trying to bring that memory back to her lover, Lola inquired, "Drew, what are you doing?"

"Hum? What do you mean?" Drew asked as she moved her blue piece around the board.

"With your hand. What are you playing with?" she prompted.

"Oh, I don't know. There's just this stain on the carpet here. It's got a funny feel to the fibers. It's weird, because it's the only spot on this rug, even with all the drinks the kids have had in here. It kind of bothers me."

"Funny you should mention that. You used to say that you liked it."

"What? Why's that? I take it you know what caused this."

"Actually, I do know, Drew."

"What?" she asked as she took another card to see where to move next.

"Well, where you and our son are sitting is where we first consummated our relationship."

Drew shot her a look over her shoulder. "What?"

"You heard me."

"You mean right here?" Drew questioned thoroughly intrigued.

"Right there, Drew, in front of a fire while it snowed outside on Valentine's Day my senior year of high school." Lola told her, hoping that the extra information might spark the memory.

Figuring there had to be more to the story, Drew inquired, "Why the discoloration?"

Lola grinned. Even though she knew her children couldn't follow the conversation, she took the opportunity of answering Drew to get a little closer to the sheriff. Getting onto her knees, she crawled up to where Drew's ear was, subtly nestling one of her legs between Drew's as her breasts rubbed Drew's back. Leaning into Drew's ear she whispered, "Because you were my first and only, Drew. I was a virgin."

Drew felt weak at the combination of Lola's words and body against her own. Lola's lips had faintly brushed over the rim of her ear, sparking a yearning for the younger woman. Before she could even stop it, a whine escaped her when she felt the slight grind of Lola's pelvis against her backside as Lola's voluptuous breasts pressed into her. Immediately her heart began pound as her breathing turned ragged at the raw sensuality of Lola's small form on top of her. Not able to form any other words, Drew simply croaked, "Oh."

Just then the spell was broken when Libby said, "Mama, it's your turn." When Lola dismounted, Drew regretted the loss of contact immediately. Looking back to the rug, her fingers ran over the spot again as the moment came to her.

Drew was poised above the eighteen year old that held her hear completely, gazing at her longingly. "I want to make love to you, Lola. I have to feel you. I want to make you the woman you've always wanted to be if you'll let me."

Taking Drew's hand, Lola moved it into position so all Drew had to do was slide in. Holding Drew's gaze Lola softly confessed, "I'm yours, Drew, always have been. Take me. I want to feel you inside of me."

Drew leaned down to give Lola a deep, reassuring kiss as she made that wish come true. Lola cried out faintly as her innocence slipped away with Drew's tender entrance. Drew shuddered at the feel of her from the inside and was humbled and honored to know she was the first to touch her this intimately.

"You're so tight and wet." Drew moaned. "Let me know if I begin to hurt you. I don't want you to feel any unnecessary pain."

Lola nodded clutching Drew's back tighter as her muscles stretched to accommodate Drew's gentle manipulation. Drew worked her steadily knowing the worst pain would come when she

finally push through the thin barrier that separated Lola from womanhood. Every time Drew pushed against it, even in the slightest, Lola jumped in anticipation. Trying to distract her from it, Drew began to kiss over her bare torso. Lola quickly approached fulfillment, and Drew knew the moment Lola has longed for was at hand. Looking to Lola's face, she met her hazel eyes to see the love that mirrored her own.

Drew lingered momentarily until Lola urgently begged, "Please, Drew."

Resolve slipping away, Drew pierced through to claim her as Lola had always dreamed. Drew saw the pain in Lola's face quickly be replaced with pleasure as spasms rocked her body, draining her. Drew remained deep within her until all the contractions subsided. They were both crying softly as she pulled out. Their wet eyes met.

"I love you, Lola Emerson." Drew confessed.

Drew jumped, startled at the revelation that struck her. Turning onto her side, she cast a look at Lola, who for the moment was paying attention to the children. The rhythm of her heart had increased exponentially as the feelings of their first encounter overcame her. The mutual devotion and ardor surrounding the moment was overwhelming, shaking her to the core.

"Mommy, why are you crying?" Jack inquired. "It's just a game. We can play again." he stated reasonably.

Knowing he thought she emotions were about the end of the game, she gave him a reassuring smile. "Oh, my eyes are just tired. I didn't sleep well last night. We can play again if you want." she replied more for Lola's benefit since she knew the five year old wouldn't be able to comprehend her explanation anyway.

Lola gave Drew a smile as she patted Drew's leg soothingly. She knew at that moment Drew had recalled exactly what she had wanted her to by the emotions playing across the older woman's face. Deciding not to address it in front of the children, however, Lola simply returned her attention to the new game.

That evening Drew stayed for awhile after the kids had gone down for the night. Neither of them talked about what had taken place earlier that day in the living room, but there was a peace surrounding them that hadn't been there since the accident. When Drew finally got ready to leave, Lola stopped her saying she had a gift to give her. Drew patiently waited for the blonde as she excused herself. Returning a few minutes later, Lola handed Drew a large envelope. Curiously Drew peeked into it to see a video tape that had been labeled, "Happy forty-fifth birthday, Drew. Love, Lola" as well a plastic bag of what looked like pictures.

"What's this?" she asked.

Lola shrugged. "Hopefully it will help spur something. I didn't give this to you earlier, because you said you felt motherly toward me, but I think you can handle it now. Let's just say it's a more intimate look at our relationship. I don't want to force you to look at this if you really are

against it but just consider it.”

“What’s on the tape?”

“Well, it’s your present from your forty-fifth birthday just like it says, at least the first part is. The second part is your reaction to your gift. It’s not a PG or even PG-13 feature. I’ll just say that as a warning.” Lola admitted with an embarrassed flush. “I don’t want to push you, Drew. I just want you to have the resources to remember us if you want to try.”

Seeing the adorable blush on Lola’s face, Drew caught on to what she was saying. However after what she had recalled that day, she felt safe pushing a little farther. “Would you give it an R rating?” she asked flirtingly as she moved into Lola’s space.

Gamely Lola replied, “More like triple X because of the girl on girl action. Just the way you like it.”

At the moment Drew desperately hoped Lola’s answer meant that the younger woman was the star of the feature. Unsure of whether to stay longer to be with this woman that was quickly pushing her toward arousal or to rush home to see what was on the tape, Drew simply stood there for another moment. “Well, I guess I better get out of here. I’m sure you’re about ready to go to bed yourself. I’ll see you and the kids tomorrow.” Drew finally stated evenly.

“Okay. Sounds good.” Lola replied knowing the sensual moment was over for the time being.

When Drew got back to her place, she put the envelope Lola had given her on the coffee table before going into the kitchen to retrieve a beer. Taking her beverage back to the living room, she fell onto the couch. For several minutes she just stared at the gift Lola had presented her, debating if she was ready to view whatever might be on the tape. Curiously she picked up the envelope and dug out the pictures, figuring it would be safest to look at those first before committing herself to watching the film.

“Oh my God.” she mumbled as she stared at the first photo of her wife dressed in a bikini consisting of small patches covering the most vital parts of her body lounging on their back deck. The next photograph was of Lola sans top grinning wickedly at the camera. Even though Drew wanted to linger on the picture, there were a few more, so she flipped to the next one in which it was obvious Lola was only wearing a brilliant smile even though her legs were strategically positioned to keep from being totally indecent. Moving on the next set, Drew realized they were of Lola in skimpy lingerie lounging on various pieces of furniture in the master bedroom at the ranch.

Drew tried to control her breathing at the sight of Lola’s beauty laid bare in front of a camera. Taking a big swig of her beer, she moaned as she recalled the photo shoots. The one of the bathing suit was the summer just after they were married before either of them knew Lola was pregnant with Jack, but the lingerie was fairly recent, only a month after Emma’s birth while Lola was still trying to recover from the delivery. Drew chuckled as she thought about the occasion in greater detail.

Emma was only five weeks old, and even though Drew and Lola were totally in love with the new addition to their family, Drew was already wanting to venture back into their sexual relationship. Even as much as Lola wanted to as well, Emma's delivery had been more strenuous than the previous two, leaving her out of commission longer than either of them would've liked. However in an effort to give her wife some relief, Lola had suggested Drew take the sensual photographs in order to give the older woman something to fantasize about until they could once again be intimate.

Putting the pictures aside, Drew picked up the video tape. Knowing she couldn't resist the temptation, Drew put the tape in and turned on the tv. She knew whatever was on there could only serve to further spark her memories of her lover, so she got comfortable on the sofa to enjoy the film. When the movie began, Lola was standing in front of the camera in what looked like her childhood room, but even before there was any action, Drew sensed where things were going when she heard the sexy music. Within moments Drew was riveted by screen as Lola revealed her form to the camera before performing a solo exploration of all of Drew's favorite features on Lola's body. Drew felt her own body pulsing with sexual energy as she continued to watch the film. Right before the screen went black, Lola's last words were wishing her a happy birthday. Drew was tempted to rewind it, but remembering Lola saying something about a second part, she simply waited.

After an extended period of nothing, the screen came to life again. The new location was in their master bedroom, but Drew had to think about the angle of the camera, finally realizing it had to have been on top of the dresser aimed right at the bed. The bedside lamps were on low setting a romantic ambiance, but as Lola suddenly entered the screen dragging Drew behind her, Drew realized she was also a participant. Drew could tell she was hesitant at first, but Lola was persuasive with her promises of how much Drew would later love to watch the film of them together. Even though the camera caught the whole scene on tape, Drew barely even registered it as her mind took her back to the encounter.

Drew was shy about being in front of the camcorder at first, but Lola's words and kisses were overpowering, making Drew finally succumb to her overwhelming need to possess the woman in her arms. Taking control of the situation, Drew made quick work of their clothes as she pulled Lola down on top of her with their heads at the footboard to optimize the angle of the camera on Lola's body. Knowing the younger woman wouldn't be able to resist the urge to straddle her as she often did when they were in that position, Drew hoped the camcorder could at least film her favorite part of their lovemaking, Lola's face as Drew pushed her over the climatic edge. The more involved they became with each other, Drew forgot about being filmed as she guided her wife to the pinnacle of pleasure several times.

When the sex was over, Drew was about to stop the tape, but she noticed that she gently moved Lola under the covers before joining her, wrapping her strong arms around the petite blonde as they merely talked. They discussed the arrival of Libby and then moved on to considering a family vacation. The tenderness of them lying in each other's arms talking about life moved Drew more than anything she had seen on the tape, because she finally saw who they really were as a couple. Obviously they had forgotten about the camera, because it continued to roll even

when Libby's cry broke them out of their embrace.

Seeing Lola exit the room, she returned with the little girl a few moments later. Drew had moved to sit up against the headboard and opened her legs so that Lola could sit between them. Lola reclined against Drew as she brought Libby to her naked breast to feed. Drew watched herself adoringly stroke the heads of both blondes whispering endearments of affection and adoration to her girls. Once Libby had been satisfied, Lola returned her to her room and came back to the bed. From there the conversation continued as they gently exchanged kisses before once again becoming totally involved with each other. However the second time Drew noted was drastically different than when they first entered the room and what she was watching was a true expression of her deepest feelings of love for the woman she held in her arms as they touched just to feel each other. It seemed neither of them were looking to bring the other fulfilment and that it was just a byproduct of their caressing. This was not sex like the earlier passionate display but the meeting and merging of two hearts, bodies, and souls.

Drew could feel her eyes begin to water for the second time that day, because after such a long absence she finally remembered her beloved Lola. Inspired by what she had just seen, Drew began to devise a plan to share the news with the love of her life. Picking up her guitar from its case, she began to strum as the words and melody of her heart poured itself out into song.

Continued: Chapter 12

The Athenaeum's Scroll Archive

~ Time: Clock of the Heart ~

by Alex Tryst

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Disclaimers: This is a sequel to Persistence and would be difficult and confusing to read if you haven't read Persistence first. Some of you may recognize the title of this book as a song title from my favorite 80s band, Culture Club, but I assure you that no infringement was intended. I simply felt that George O'Dowd's (Boy George) song of loving, losing, and learning to love again perfectly expressed the sentiments of this piece. I also must state that there are several songs in this book that have been modified from their original content, and even though I attribute them as original works by one of my characters, they really were written by Babyface and on his "For the Cool in You" CD (which I only bought because the sales girl was flirting with me and I wanted a date, but that's a story for another time). Due to the unfamiliarity of these songs, most people won't know the melody, but they read more like poetry, so this shouldn't hinder your enjoyment. As for sex, violence, language and so on, this is a rather tame story. Of course there is sex between two consenting adult women, and if this is illegal where you live or offensive to you, you must do a 180 degree turn immediately. There isn't any

violence that I can think of, and I could count the uses of foul language on one hand, well maybe two.

Dedication: To my wife, you are my fondest wish. To my fans of Drew and Lola, this one is just for you. You asked for it, and you got it. Enjoy!

Now on with the show.....

Chapter 12

On the evening of Lola's twenty-ninth birthday, Drew didn't go to the house as normal. Kate had agreed to watch the children, so Drew could make dinner for Lola at Drew's place. Knowing that Drew was going to reveal her feelings to the young woman that night, she set about trying to make the house look perfect. Hoping that her words might inspire the blonde to move to action, Drew put sheets on the childhood bed of her sweetheart, remembering a time when Kate had banned them from any physical activities in her home and chortling at the prospect of breaking that rule after all these years.

Moving into the living room, she lit the candles she had strategically placed for a romantic mood. Leaving her guitar propped up against the couch, she set the vase of red roses on the coffee table. Next she went into the dining room to make sure the table was set perfectly and that the white roses matched her place settings before lighting those candles as well. Finally knowing everything was just as she wanted it to be, she focused on her outfit. Even though part of her wanted to dress up for the occasion, she knew Lola liked her better in her jeans, so she slipped on her tightest pair before tucking in the flannel shirt she knew Lola liked the best. Sliding her boots on, Drew went into the bathroom to spray herself with the cologne Lola had given her last Christmas. Drew inspected herself in the mirror, playing with her gray hair momentarily. It had grown out a bit since being in the hospital, but it wasn't back to its original chin length. Nevertheless Drew wasn't going to let her bad hair ruin her excitement as she went back into the kitchen to check on the progress of dinner.

Exactly at eight, the doorbell rang. Knowing it was Lola, Drew scurried over to the coffee table to swipe one of the roses from the vase before going to the door. Opening it she gave Lola her most charming smile. "Hi. Come on in."

Lola smiled back as she walked through the door. Drew closed it behind her. "Happy birthday, Lola." Drew said presenting her with the flower.

"Thank you, Drew." Lola whispered blushing slightly as she took the rose. Looking around the living room, Lola sensed something was up with her wife as she took in the atmosphere of candles, flowers, and sensual, soft Latin music.

"Come sit down." Drew instructed taking Lola by the hand and leading her to the couch. "Dinner is almost ready. Would you like something to drink? Wine perhaps?"

"That would be wonderful. Thank you."

Drew went into the kitchen and poured two glasses before coming to sit next to Lola on the sofa. "We have about five minutes until we eat. How are the kids?"

"They're good. They were so cute today. I think someone told them it was my birthday and maybe helped them make me cards and gifts." she lightly accused.

"Maybe." Drew answered with a smile.

"Well, you should've seen them. They were on their best behavior all day."

"I see you're wearing the jewelry they gave you." Drew mentioned lightly fingering the tri-colored macaroni necklace.

"Of course. They suggested I wear it when I told them you were taking me to a nice dinner."

"Well, it does match your sweater perfectly." Drew stated teasingly, touching the arm of Lola's red cashmere sweater. Lola looked at Drew shyly as she placed her hand on top of the sheriff's. Neither spoke for a few moments as they just gazed at each other, but the buzzing of the timer broke them apart. "That's dinner. Why don't I show you to your seat, and then I'll bring it out?" Drew suggested escorting Lola to the dining room table. Drew held the chair out for the young woman and then once Lola was situated went to retrieve the food.

As Drew placed the two plates on the table, Lola grinned. "Wow. I'm really impressed, Drew. This is quite a meal." she mentioned.

"Anything for you, Lola." Drew stated with a smile at her companion. Raising her glass she toasted, "To you on your birthday. May it be full of wonderful surprises." The meal conversation centered around the children as well as Drew's work. However once the main course was finished, Drew announced that she had dessert as well. "I'll admit that I didn't make this myself as you'll be able to tell, but I know how much you love chocolate." Coming back from the kitchen, Drew set the decadent cake lit full of candles on the table before preceding to sing the traditional birthday song to her wife. "Make a wish, Mrs. Emerson-Bailey." Drew quietly said.

Lola smiled at what Drew had called her. In her mind she wished that she could be together with Drew again in every way, and she hoped that it could start that night as she blew out her candles. Lola cut two pieces of cake for them, and they ate quietly as they just looked at each other across the table. Finally when neither of them could eat any more, Lola said, "This was a fabulous dinner, Drew. Thank you so much."

"It was my pleasure. Now I have a gift for you." Drew mentioned taking the small box off the seat next to her and putting it on the table. "I hope this doesn't overshadow the present the kids gave you."

"You didn't have to do this. Dinner was enough." Lola said as she began to unwrap her present.

“I wanted to. You’ve been through so much this year, and I know I haven’t been easy to deal with. I wanted to do something nice.”

Lola popped open the box and looked inside. Shining in the dim light was a silver necklace with an intricate cross pendant. “This is beautiful, Drew. Thank you. It’s almost exactly like the one that I lost at the hospital when I had Emma.”

“I know. I felt bad about that, because it was your favorite, so I thought you might like another.”

“Would you help me put it on?” Lola inquired holding it out to Drew.

Drew obliged coming to Lola’s side of the table and clasping it around her neck. Then extending her hand to the blonde she whispered, “Would you like to dance?”

Lola felt her heart jump into her throat at what Drew was suggesting. Even though Lola and Drew were on friendly terms, the intimacy required for dancing was almost more than Lola thought she could bear. Nevertheless she decided that it was a rare chance to feel the sheriff’s sinewy frame against her own, so she took Drew’s offered hand. Drew moved them into the living room where they had more room to move. Wrapping one arm around Lola’s tiny waist, Drew took Lola’s hand in her other. Automatically Lola slipped her arm around Drew’s shoulder as she began to move in time with the body pressed lightly into hers. Both of them were totally silent, each of them focusing on the feel of their partner.

Getting bolder as the songs passed, Drew put her other hand on Lola’s waist as she ground her hips against the blonde. Lola whimpered as her fingers lightly dug into the back of Drew’s shirt. Ducking her head into Drew’s chest, Lola felt the heart of her lover pounding in a rapid cadence, matching her own. Knowing that Drew was feeling the same, Lola risked a look up into Drew’s dark eyes. What she saw there took her breath away completely, a look of pure desire coupled with undying love. They held each other’s eyes for several songs. To Lola it was almost as if they were making love with the way their bodies moved in time together and the stare that held them captive. Finally feeling as if she might explode from the sexual tension, Lola pulled out of Drew’s arms.

“Will you excuse me for a moment? I need to use the bathroom.” she stated as evenly as possible.

Drew knew she was playing with Lola’s senses, so she acquiesced to Lola’s request to put a temporary end to their dancing. “Sure. No problem.” While Lola rushed to the bathroom, Drew went over to her guitar. Taking it out of its case, she plucked the strings to make sure they were tuned and then waited for her wife’s return, knowing that the moment of truth was upon her. When Lola came back in the room, Drew was reclined against the armrest of the couch, one foot propped on the coffee table and the guitar resting between her legs. Smiling at the blonde, she gestured to the sofa. “I have another present for you. Would you like it now?”

“All right.” Lola stated hesitantly unsure of what Drew was about to do. Drew sat upright as she strummed the guitar a few times to calm her nerves, but Lola broke her concentration by asking,

“When did you learn to play the guitar?”

“That’s the one good thing about losing my memory. Somehow I recalled how to play. I hadn’t played since before you were born, but lately it’s been very comforting to have this guitar. When I was young, I used to write songs, and I’ve actually written you a song for your birthday, so here it goes.” nervously she explained.

“Lady, if you care for me Then let me know That you care for me, sweet lady And that you’ll care for me the rest of your life That’s what I’d like to hear I don’t mean to be a bore but I was hoping you would know what Just what you feel girl, what you feel inside And the reason I’m insisting ‘Cause my heart just needs convincing That you care Before I ask you to be my Lady, lady, lady For the rest of our lives Can you take forever Till the end of our time Lady, lady Say you’ll be mine Always, my lady For the rest of our lives Lady, will you please grant me My miracle And say you’ll be my lady And cherish me till the day we die That’s what I need to hear I’m not even sure you know What I feel inside, nor how much How much I love you, you’re my whole life And the reason why I pressure You, because I need to measure How you feel Before I ask you to be my Lady, lady, lady For the rest of our lives Can you take forever Till the end of our time Lady, lady Say you’ll be mine Always, my lady For the rest of our lives If there’s one thing I know Girl I’m sure how much I love you But I’m not quite sure you’re feeling The same Could you please let me know If I do anything for you, oh lady Could you let me Know right away Lady, lady, lady For the rest of our lives Can you take forever Till the end of our time Lady, lady Say you’ll be mine Always, my lady For the rest of our lives”

As Drew ended the song, she met Lola’s hazel eyes that were shedding tears. “That was the most beautiful song I ever heard, Drew.” she whispered.

Drew put her guitar down and reached for the woman she loved. Bringing her into her arms, she whispered, “Lola, I remember everything, everything that matters. I remember you, and I remember us. I love you so much, Lola Emerson-Bailey, my precious wife and mother of my children. You are the light of my life, and I want to be with you again, Lola, the way we always were meant for each other. I want to be your best friend, your lover, and your wife if you will take me back into your life forever.” Drew paused to tenderly wipe the tears from her beloved’s face.

“Oh, Drew. I love you too. I’ve never stopped, and I want you back with me. I married you for life, for better or worse, and I’ll never let you go. I’m yours forever.” Drew smiled as she leaned in to give Lola a soft kiss. Both of them moaned as their lips merged, reuniting their bodies after such an extended absence. “Oh God, Drew.” Lola whimpered. “This is what I wished for tonight.”

Drew grinned against Lola’s lips. She knew that would be what Lola wanted, which is why she waited for this special moment. Dropping her voice to a sexy tone, she inquired, “Are there any other wishes I could make come true, baby?” Drew’s mouth trailed to Lola’s neck as one of her hands slid under the blonde’s sweater to her lace-covered breast.

Lola moaned, dropping her head back to allow Drew further access. “Make love to me, Drew. I

need you inside of me to feel whole again.”

“I was hoping you’d say that.” Drew replied scooping the young woman up in her arms as they continued to exchange methodical kisses. Taking them into Lola’s old room, Drew placed her gently on the bed. Giving Lola a reassuring smile, Drew began to remove the necklace their children made saying, “We wouldn’t want anything to happen to this priceless piece.”

Lola grinned at her partner as she began to unbutton Drew’s shirt. “God, you still are one of the sexiest woman I’ve ever seen. I love undressing you.”

“Well, that’s good, because I love undressing you as well.” she mentioned slipping Lola’s sweater over her head before starting on the zipper of her black slacks. They took their time removing each other’s clothing, kissing and caressing every piece of skin as it was revealed. Once they were naked, Lola spread her thighs inviting Drew’s body into the place they both knew she belonged. When Drew’s frame slid between Lola’s legs, the blonde wrapped all four of her limbs around Drew’s body, bringing them together tightly. Drew regarded her lover fondly stroking back her blonde hair as she murmured, “You look so beautiful like this.”

Lola flushed as she caressed Drew’s face. “I love you so much it hurts inside, Drew. Never leave me again.”

“Never again.” Drew promised with a smile as she leaned down to kiss her lover adoringly.

Leisurely they explored each other’s bodies as if it was the first time. Drew kissed every inch of Lola’s form, tasting and savoring the salt of the tears rolling from Lola’s hazel eyes and sweat of her body as Drew directed her slowly to fulfillment. Staring intently into Lola’s eyes, Drew watched as her lover peaked. Allowing the blonde a moment to relish in it, Drew gave her a loving smile. “You know, I was right. Watching you like this really is the most beautiful thing in the world.”

Lola gave her a content grin. “Well, I think we have a difference of opinion, Drew, because I think the most beautiful thing is watching you.” she stated as began to return the love Drew had bestowed upon her. Hours later they were lying in each others arms relaxing from their passionate exertion. Drew was on her back with Lola lying partly on top of her. Drew’s fingers were idly caressing the skin of Lola’s back as her other hand played with her wife’s fair locks. Lola’s head was nestled in the crook of Drew’s neck, one of her arms cradling the sheriff’s head as she traced a random pattern over Drew’s naked shoulder and chest. “Drew, may I ask you something?” she whispered, breaking the stillness. “When did your memories come back to you?” Lola felt the rumble of Drew’s chest as the older woman laughed softly.

“I knew you would ask that. It was actually that day I came over early to fix the kids breakfast. Melissa was there, and I was insanely jealous. That was my first clue that something was happening to me. Then when you were being a little temptress on the rug in front of the kids, I recalled our first time together but what really made it click was the tape.”

“I knew it. I knew you couldn’t resist watching that. Well, I guess I should be glad that it all

came back to you even though it took a porno to make it happen.” she teased.

“Actually, Lola, it’s not what you think. Have you ever watched that tape?”

“No. I really never felt the need to watch myself on video. It was for you, not me.”

“Well, after the second segment of us, we accidentally left the tape running, and what happened after that is what unlocked everything.”

“What’s on there?”

“Us lying in each other’s arms after making love and just talking about our life together, and then there’s a point in which Libby started crying, so you brought her back into our bedroom to breast feed her. You and I were both still naked, but I held you as you fed her, and I played with her blonde hair and stroked your arm lightly. We just talked to her. It really was so moving, and as I watched us together like that, it all snapped into place like all the pieces finally fitting together. Of course after you put her back in bed, we made love a second time but it was more gentle and giving than the first. It perfectly captured the essence of who we were together, Lola, and I knew that we were meant to be a couple. It was the best thing that has happened to me since the accident. I was so elated when it made sense, when we made sense.”

Lola sighed. “I’m relieved that it finally came back to you. It’s been so hard to deny my urges to touch and hold you. I needed you so badly. I’m glad you’ve returned.”

“Me too.” Another few minutes passes before Drew mentioned, “I guess we should probably head on home to relieve your mother of her babysitting duties. It’s late, and she has to drive all the way back to the city.”

“No, she doesn’t. She’s staying the night at the ranch.”

“But still, she shouldn’t have to watch the kids all night.”

“She wanted to. I told her you were making me dinner over here, and she insisted on staying the night with the kids just in case. I told her that I had hoped this would be a special night for us. Somehow I sensed something was up with you over the last couple of days. She’s doesn’t expect us back until morning.” Lola stated propping up on Drew’s chest and looking at her playfully. “That means we’re all alone for the rest of the night if we want to be.”

“Really?” Drew asked in interest.

“Yeah. What ever will we do with our time?” innocently the blonde inquired. “We could go to sleep.”

“Try again, baby.” Drew mumbled, nibbling Lola’s ear.

“Um, well, we could watch our movie.” she suggested, seductively meeting Drew’s lips in a

probing kiss.

“Good idea, but maybe we could think of something else.” Drew whispered as her hand trailed to Lola’s breast.

Smiling as if the thought had just come to her, Lola said tantalizingly, “We could continue to defile my mother’s house like I always wanted.”

Drew grinned in approval as Lola straddled her hips and sat upright. “How about we just continue to do that right here in this warm bed?”

Lola sat on top of Drew, pretending to contemplate the offer. Her eyes strayed to her Homecoming tiara that was dangling from the headboard. Lola reached for it and placed it on top of her tousled golden head. “You know twelve years ago on the night that I won this crown, I fantasized about us just like this.” Her voice dropped to a lower octave as she said, “You were naked in my bed, and I was on top of you wearing my crown like a queen sitting on her royal throne. You made love to me in excruciating slowness, leisurely driving me to the brink of ecstasy over and over again. At the time all I ever wanted was to know your touch, Drew. I never could’ve imagined what fate had in store for us.”

Drew looked up at her wife sitting across her hips in all her naked glory with the tiara on her fair head. Placing her hands on either side of Lola’s waist, Drew sat up in the bed as she gave her wife a naughty grin. “You are my queen, Lola, and as your humble servant, I am here to give you whatever your heart desires. I’ll make all your fantasies come true. I love you.”

“You already have. I love you too, Drew.” Lola murmured, kissing Drew deeply as they once again began to love each other, pledging themselves with every touch to their eternal bond.

The End