

~ How To Go From A Medium To An Extra-Small Without Losing The Family Jewels ~

by Aurelia

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This is the sixth installment of the tales of Priory/Jacey and Dylan/Rhea. The other tales are linked below:

http://xenafiction.net/scrolls/aurelia_tdiygtbfncmy.html

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http://xenafiction.net/scrolls/aurelia_thhgttottaaapp.html

http://xenafiction.net/scrolls/aurelia_thjfaoptftgrouchafll.html

THANKS: To Heather, who lets me go out and play in the sandpit while she does grownup Beta stuff. The Olympic pool in my sandpit hardly got used so I filled it in with sand. Back to the drawing board.

FEEDBACK: I'm always open to comments, preferably nice ones, so let me know what you think at: aurelia_fan@yahoo.com.au, or visit my Yahoo Group at http://groups.yahoo.com/group/aurelia_fan/.

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The sun beat down mercilessly onto the sand. A stunningly beautiful brunette was buried in the heated soil, her head, hands and feet the only parts of her visible to the light. A large woven hat was perched rakishly over her face, protecting her eyes from the glare.

Swell holiday, huh?

The soft, lilting voice belonged to her companion, a smallish blonde woman seated on a folding canvas deckchair that looked like it had been stolen from the Titanic. She rested a large reflecting board under her chin, directing the sun's rays to her face.

Hmmm... Don't get burnt, will ya?

The deep rumble touched something in the blonde woman's heart.

No chance of that happening, Lany.

But she was too relaxed to say anything more. Sighing deeply, she closed her eyes behind the large sunglasses, a gentle smile touching her lips.

Sure a nice day.

The soft sound of waves lapping the shore hovered in the background all the time and, along with the heat, it lulled them into a creeping lethargy.

"You should put on some sunscreen." Another holiday maker, albeit temporary, approached the duo. Dressed in a suit, she was a petit brunette with a sunny smile and a willing heart.

Suncream? What's that?

"It's a cream you put on your skin to stop yourself getting burnt."

Ahhh... a bit pointless I think.

"Nevertheless..." She threw the plastic bottle at the seated woman, watching it slip through the transparent body to the seat below.

Verrry funny, Jacey.

"I came up to tell you dinner is about to be served." Although the two ghosts didn't eat, Priory had decided that dinner time was a time to share gossip and talk, something that Jacey secretly applauded. It was a time of coming together... as a family.

Jacey wandered over to the overhead lights and switched them off. "Sunset, Dylan."

Awww... can't we play just a little longer, Mom?

She moved over to the CD player and switched off the sound effects. It had been a brilliant idea she had come up with, one that Priory didn't want to know about. If Dylan and Rhea couldn't go on holiday, then she would bring the holiday to them. She watched the taller ghost rise out of the sand then shake herself like a wet dog to get rid of the errant grains that had embedded themselves inside her.

Jacey tried really hard not to reach for a broom to clean up, instead eyeing the "beach" in front of her. Dylan had been lying in a kiddie's pool full of sand while Rhea had been lounging in a deckchair she found at a garage sale. Large travel posters adorned the far wall, covering destinations far and wide. Two halogen lamps hung in the corners of the scene, imitating the sun by casting a warm light over it. Finally, the music, if she could call it that, was some sort of New Age Music that filled the attic with sounds of the sea. If Jacey closed her eyes she was there herself.

"See you two downstairs."

* * *

Priory sat at the table waiting. They were late again. Maybe she should put a clock upstairs so they could be on time once in a while. "What took you so long?" She had felt the shift of air a moment before the two ghosts materialized in their seats.

Can't a gal have an uninterrupted holiday?

"Casper, you're lucky you're having *any* sort of a holiday at all."

"Now, children. No fighting at the table." Jacey stood at the door watching the interaction. Why didn't she just give up trying to beat Dylan to the dinner table? After all, the ghost had the advantage of taking the most direct route through the floor. She had to negotiate two flights of stairs plus two rooms and a hallway.

So here was her family. Priory and Dylan sat opposite one another, staring at each other as if they were about to wrestle. Rhea just sat there amused, hovering slightly above her seat.

Jacey moved swiftly to sit down, hoping to begin the meal as soon as possible. At least with food in her lover's mouth conversation would be limited... or so she thought. It amazed her that Priory could eat and speak at the same time. Maybe it was the fact that Dylan knew the right buttons to push to antagonize the woman just as her mouth was full.

At first this daily ritual was uncomfortable for Jacey. She felt guilty eating when their two houseguests couldn't. Even the watching was unnerving for a while. But she had learned to cope, foregoing the guilt for the joy of them coming together as one.

"So what did you do today, Rhea?" Priory started the conversation politely.

So what am I, huh?

"You're a chump, Dylan. I was talking to Rhea."

Jacey just rolled her eyes. She hadn't even swallowed her first bite and the fight was on. "Hey! Please! Can we have a meal without a fight?"

Eh. She says tam-ay-to I say to-mar-to. She just has to be in the same room...

"Casper here is right, Jacey. We are forces of nature." The words were swallowed up as a forkful of food landed in Priory's mouth.

"Uh huh." Jacey bit her tongue to stop herself replying to such an open statement. Her eyes flitted to the smaller ghost and an understanding passed between them. They were forces of nature alright, like two tornadoes on a collision course.

"So, Rhea, did you enjoy your day?"

Jacey, it was the most wonderful day I've had in... ahhh.

Seventy years? What about that time we were in their bodies, Rhea?

That was a night, not a day. That doesn't count. Besides that was something on a whole other level.

Oh, yeah... Speaking of which, Convent...

"Oh no, uh uh. My body is my own." Priory's head shook so hard it looked like it was about to topple off her shoulders. "It took me days to get over the swelling."

That was not my fault. If anyone is to blame, it's Jacey.

"Hey!" A bean hung out of Jacey's mouth as she tried to sound indignant. "If you don't want my help..."

YES! We do!

Rhea glared at her partner, making her feel guilty enough to duck her head.

Well... you did good, shorty. And today was... good....

Dylan glanced sideways at Rhea, as if waiting for some sign of approval from the small woman.

...yeah... I'd forgotten what it was like. Ahh.. err.. it was different than I remember it. After all, I couldn't be in the sand when I was alive, but... err... yeah... thanks.

Dylan stumbled for the right words and eventually just gave up, deciding the chosen few she had uttered was enough.

"Speaking of holidays..." Priory pushed a piece of potato onto her fork, resting it there for a moment while she continued. "...how about we go somewhere for a holiday?"

"You... and... me? On a holiday?"

"No. Me and Dylan! Of course you and me!"

"What about these two?"

"They've survived here for seventy years, Jace. I'm sure they can survive for a week or two without us around."

And therein lay the problem. It was obvious that Priory hadn't thought the idea through otherwise she wouldn't be suggesting the holiday in the first place. "But... but..." Three sets of eyes watched her keenly and she just couldn't say it. "We'll talk about it later..." She stuffed a forkful of food into her mouth to stop the conversation from going any further.

So where are we going tomorrow?

"Are you tired of the beach already, Dylan?" Priory expected it and **that** was why she tried to discourage Jacey from setting up the whole scenario. Pandering to the two ghosts was just asking for trouble.

No, she's not, Priory. She just gets a little... impatient.

Rhea didn't want to say that Dylan was a big kid, and like a kid she tired of her toys easily, but by the look in the eyes of her human friends they already knew that. She was aware of how much work Jacey had put into giving them the dream and she was going to make sure that their enjoyment was at least equal to the amount of effort put in.

Tomorrow we're going to build a sandcastle.

A sandcastle? Are you sure?

"That's what it's usually called, airhead. You need to get out more." Priory smiled wickedly at the ghost's glare.

Did the funnyman deliver your jokes this morning, huh? Oh ho ho, I am laughing so hard.

Dylan's deadpan face nearly was nearly Jacey's undoing. It was going to be another meal of pointed stares and snippy remarks. She was beginning to wonder whether they would ever truly be a family. *No, scratch that, she thought, we're exactly like a family, sisterly arguments and all.*

* * *

Later that night as they lay in bed, Jacey broached the subject of the impending holiday.

"I don't think the holiday a good idea, hon."

Priory rolled over onto her side to face her lover. "Why not? Wrong time of year? We can always go later..."

"It's not that, Abs. Do you really want to leave these two or, more to the point, Dylan alone in this house?"

"We do that every day when we go to work, Jace."

"That's different. They know we're coming home. It doesn't give Dylan time to get into trouble."

Hey! I do not get into trouble! I'm no Dumb Dora ya know! It just follows me around.

"Dyllannnnn.....," Priory growled. "What did I say about eavesdropping?"

Make sure you get the facts right when you pass gossip on?

"This is a private conversation!" she hollered.

You're talkin' about me, Convent. That makes it my business.

"And what about when you talk about me, huh?"

Well, if you were home more...

"Uh huh." Priory started to rise but stopped at the hand grasping her arm. "What?"

"Forget it." Jacey thought for a second. "We could always ask Aunt Chloe to housesit."

*You are **not** going to have that... that... that **thing** in this house!*

"Hey! She may be a little crazy but that's no reason to call Aunt Chloe a thing!" Priory was incensed. Aunt Chloe was the only person in the world who fully understood their situation.

But... but... Aunt Crusty and that doormat she calls a 'pussy'. You'll be gone and I'll be left holding the bag. It ain't right!

"I told you never to use that word again, didn't I?" Priory's voice rose in volume. "If you can't call it a pussy-cat then use her name. And in case you've forgotten, it's Bella." For the hell of it, she added, "But it's not a bad idea. I'll just have to make sure to take down all the curtains before I go."

But if she's here then so is that noisy beast.

"Ohhh yeeahhhh, that's right. The vacuum cleaner will be used a lot more, especially with Bella's shedding and all." Priory chuckled and gave Jacey a tiny wink.

You are such a pill and I wish I was dead.

"Don't say it....," Jacey whispered.

"But it's just too good an opportunity to pass up." Priory stuck out her bottom lip in an exaggerated pout. "Pleeeasee, Jace. I'll... I'll... awww, it doesn't get any easier than this one. Can't I bribe you with my ass?"

"Your ass is mine anyway, Abs, so don't go there." Jacey had to stifle the laugh that sat in her mouth. Her lover's pout was just so damned cute.

"How about a couple of days then? Just you and me. We don't even have to leave the state. Hell, we don't even have to leave the city! Just a break for a day or two. You and me and a bed for a couple of days." The more she thought about it the more it was appealing. Two uninterrupted days with Jacey in bed? She was there.

"Hmmm..." Jacey had always felt they were being watched and she could never fully relax whenever they made love. And two days? No getting up with the alarm. Lounging around all day buck naked. Breakfast, lunch and dinner in bed? "Sure. Why not?"

Don't I get to say something?

"NO!" The word was unanimous.

Two days. I can behave for two days.

A small hand came up to smother Priory's reply.

"I'm sure you can, Dylan, but what happens if there is an emergency, huh? What if the house catches fire or the plumbing becomes blocked?"

"I knew I loved you for a reason..." Priory whispered.

Then I suppose the house burns down or becomes flooded. And your point?

"That **is** my point, Dylan. You need someone here to **actually** call 911."

We manage okay when you go to work.

"True, but we have an effective phone plan if you need us."

Then give me the number to that box thingy you always carry around.

"Box thingy?"

"She means the cell, Priory."

"Box? Thingy? You constantly amaze me, Casper."

But-

"Look, it's not up for discussion. Aunty Chloe is coming. Besides, it'll be good to see her again."

You are such a wet blanket, Convent.

Jacey's eyes widened. "Did you just say 'good' and 'Chloe' in the same sentence? Is this the

woman who nearly took my head off for suggesting to phone said Aunt in the first place when you had your accident?" Jacey placed her hand on Priory's forehead. "No, you're not running a temperature..."

It's the McAllister Madness, shorty. It's finally kicked in.

Rhea materialized in the midst of the conversation.

I got tired of waiting for you in the attic, Dylan. What's going on?

Clueless here wants to bring back Aunt Cluster and that damned pussy... cat.

Well, she's not having my box!

Jacey did a double-take. Rhea's eyes burned like fire at the mention of the relative. She had not forgotten the incident so easily.

"Don't worry, Rhea," Priory piped in cheerfully, "we'll just give her Dylan's television."

Hey!

"Don't tease her like that..." Jacey mumbled.

"Who's teasing?" Priory smiled widely at the ghost's discomfort.

"Dylan without her TV is asking for trouble. Remember what she was like BTV?"

"BTV?"

"Before TV. Let's see... walking chickens, demonized toilets and let's not forget the candid photo shots that I still have in my top drawer." Jacey melted at the thought. Despite the rampant camera Dylan managed to get some damned fine photos of Priory's butt. Whenever she felt the urge the photos came out of the drawer for a while, allowing Jacey to drool over Priory's gorgeous butt without the woman actually being there. This fetish of hers was way too disturbing.

"You still have them?" Priory thought it was amusing that her lover scrambled around in the garbage bin to retrieve the photos. While she didn't think much of the poses, Jacey was positively salivating. "I thought you wanted the real thing."

"It's just a little..." Jacey searched for the right word, "...pick-me-up in between 'the real thing' as you call it."

"I'm starting to worry about you, Jace." But the words were said with a smile. Priory knew Jacey was apprehensive about her little predilection, like it was something socially abhorrent. She herself thought it was cute, but maybe it was more a matter of the 'who' with said fetish. Now if

it was Dylan... ewww.

Okay, no more bare butts. Back to fuzzy and Aunt Cretaceous.

"The decision has been made, Dylan. Just accept it."

Stop giving me the bum's rush!

"**Goodnight** Dylan!"

Rhea glared at her partner and they both left, taking out their frustration upstairs. They were not happy campers.

Jacey turned her attention to the woman facing her. "Are you sure this is a good idea?"

"Hell, I'd go just to piss Dylan off!" Priory chuckled. "Let's just say this is payback for breaking my ass." She was hoping that bringing up that particular incident would bring Jacey over to her side. The woman was practically inconsolable when that happened.

"I would have thought that after her last visit you wouldn't want her back in the house."

"Who else can we call on, huh? Besides, I want to show her the plans to the extensions. After all, she paid for it."

"But why call on anyone? If it's only a couple of days..."

"True, but if I have you captive in bed for two days I may just find that it's not long enough."

"Abs, after two days in bed with you coming back **here** will be a holiday."

Priory swatted her tormenter on the butt before rolling onto her back. "Let's just sleep on it, okay?"

"Okay." But Jacey had her reservations. The infamous Aunt Chloe visit was still fresh in her mind.

* * *

By the time they could arrange a mutual weekend a month had passed. Priory was so wound up with the thought of a marathon in bed with Jacey she was climbing the walls. She was snapping at Dylan every minute of the day, to the point that the ghosts were nearly pushing her out the door. Suddenly Aunt Chloe was looking good.

* * *

The doorbell rang and Jacey's stomach dropped. The last time she answered the door was the beginning of two days of hell. The woman had left the house in good spirits, finally remembering

her name in her final breath. She only hoped that Aunt Chloe didn't suffer from dementia otherwise they would be going through the whole nightmare all over again. Jacey plastered on her very best 'welcome' smile and opened the door.

"Ahhh, good to see you..."

The older woman stood there as she had arrived that first day, portmanteau on the doorstep and fluffy under her arm. Jacey held her breath for a wrong name.

"... Jacey." Chloe grinned widely. "You didn't think I would remember your name, did you?"

"Errr, yes of course!"

"And you're a bad liar!" Rosy cheeks plumped up as she laughed merrily.

"Come in."

"Ah, Priory dear, how are you?" Her favorite niece appeared in the hallway.

"Good thanks, Aunt Chloe. Thank you for babysitting."

"Not a problem, my dear. I was surprised to hear from you so soon." She chuckled as Priory's cheeks flamed at the admission. "Never mind, let's go get a cup of coffee." The two women wandered towards the kitchen, leaving Jacey standing at the door.

For Jacey it was all so ominously familiar. Didn't the last visit start out like this, with a strained groin and a broken back? It looked like this visit was going to be no different. She wrestled the bag in the door and slammed it shut.

"Ah-hemmmm..." A muffled voice came from the other side of the door.

As no one else was expected Jacey shrugged her shoulders and walked the suitcase over the floor to the stairs.

"Hello?" There was that voice again.

This time Jacey went back and opened the door just in case. Standing in front of her was a mini-Chloe. She blinked once then blinked again. "May I help you?" The tiny woman stood there dressed like Priory's aunt... well, more like she was dressed in Chloe's clothes that had shrunk in the wash.

"May I come in?"

"Errrr... why?"

"I'm with Cloisteria." The woman's height barely hit Jacey's chin but she strode in with the

authority of a six-foot amazon. "Cloisteria?" The tiny voice rose to a yell, the high timbre sounding like nails on a chalkboard. "Where are you?"

"In here, Zelda dear!" A second voice echoed through the house. "In the kitchen!"

Without another thought of the person waiting at the door, the middle-aged midget walked down the hall, her heels sounding loud and portentous on the hardwood floor. Double trouble, that's what it was.

Who the hell was that?

"Damned if I know," Jacey muttered, not even batting an eyelid when Dylan asked the question.

You sure this is a good idea, shorty?

"Damned if I know," Jacey began pack-muleing the luggage to the first floor, "...and damned if I want to know."

* * *

"So how long will you be away, Priory dear?"

"Just a couple of nights, Auntie. We just need a... break." Priory smiled.

"A break? Is that what it's called these days?" The resulting blush answered her question. "I thought as much."

"Cloisteria!"

"In here, Zelda dear!"

"Huh?"

"In the kitchen!" The portly woman turned her attention to her host. "I brought someone with me, dear. I hope you don't mind."

"I... errr... of course not." What could she say? The deed was already done.

Standing at the door was a child, or so Priory first thought. It wasn't until the person moved further into the light that she saw it was in fact a woman... a rather short, middle aged, slightly overweight woman. She reminded her a bit of that medium in the movie 'Poltergeist'.

"Zelda dear, this is my grand-niece Priory McAllister. Priory, this is my friend Madam Zelda."

"Madam?" Was the woman a brothel owner?

"Madam Zelda is a medium." Chloe answered mischievously.

A medium? She looked more like an extra small. "Really?" Priory said brightly. This was going to be trouble.

"Yes, I am," Zelda replied, her pride in her profession lacing the words. "I hear some interesting things about this house."

"Really? Is that so?" Priory couldn't help but let her eyes find her aunt. "I wonder where you heard that."

"I just mentioned that you had bought an old house, dear. Zelda here did the rest."

"So you're here to investigate the house?"

"It was too good an opportunity to pass up. So I invited myself along. I hope you don't mind."

"No, knock yourself out." Suddenly the holiday seemed more an exercise in futility. She'd be worrying too much about what was going on in her absence rather than enjoying the company. She finally figured out why she had two ghosts and a demonized toilet in her home. They were there to stop her having a normal sex life. She was cursed in this life, she just knew it.

"Well, I'm sure you'd both like to get settled in."

Priory guided them to the upstairs bedrooms, depositing Zelda in the spare bedroom and giving Chloe the main bedroom. When she finally got her aunt alone she whispered, "You're a troublemaker."

"I had no choice, dear. She ambushed me."

"They're not going to like it."

"They?"

"You know..." Priory pointed to the attic, "Dylan and Rhea."

"Err...?"

"The ghosts, Auntie. Oh, and before I forget, watch out for the toilet."

"Another ghost?"

"A demon. But a nice one."

"Good grief! What's next? Tinkerbell in a light globe?"

"Please! Don't even think it!" But Priory had to laugh. Their house was becoming a netherworld

menagerie. She sobered. "Look, please don't encourage the woman. If she told the world about this we'd never have a moment's rest, and neither would they. We've finally found our status quo and we're all happy."

"You're happy with two ghosts in the house?" Chloe was surprised. Most people would be running screaming from the house with that discovery.

"Well, it's something that we've learned to live with. I'm not giving this place up and they're not ready to leave yet. We've compromised."

"Interesting." Chloe was as impressed by the person who delivered the information as the information itself. Her grand-niece had found it within herself to adopt two ghosts and this had moved the woman up a notch or two in her estimation of her. "So they live up there?"

"Yep. Sorry about the TV. Rhea watches soaps day and night and she was a bit upset that you took it." Priory could see her aunt prepare to say something. "Before you say it, there's a new one downstairs. Whatever you hear upstairs you don't know about, okay? And that includes whatever Zelda hears. You know nothing."

"Right." Suddenly this babysitting job was going to be fun.

"Now there's time to have a nap before dinner. I'd like you to see the plans for the extensions to the house before we go. After all, you're paying for them."

Chloe watched Priory as she talked, the woman's eyes sparkling with love as she talked about the house, her life and her own place in it. "It was my pleasure, dear. And now I know everything, it's a worthy cause."

"Well, come down when you're ready. We'll be leaving before dinner and be back in a couple of days. I'll show you where everything is before we go."

"It's all so much to take in. I think I will take that nap." As Chloe turned to close the door she observed her niece standing in the hallway benevolently smiling at her.

* * *

"There's still time to change your mind." Jacey sat at the kitchen table sipping her coffee. The packing was finally done and all that was needed was to say goodbye.

"You're not trying to get out of this, are you?" Priory's bottom lip stuck out in an exaggerated pout.

"Awww, Abs, don't do this to me." To make a point her lover turned around and wiggled her butt. "That is **so** not fair."

"All's fair in love and war, hon. I have had a hell of a week and now you want to take away my present?"

"You're not the only one..."

"Pardon? What do you mean?"

You and your big mouth, shorty.

"What **are** you talking about?"

She's trying not to say that you've been a right bitch, Convent.

"Hey!" Priory looked hurt.

"I... I..." Jacey's mouth opened and closed as she tried to think of a way to get out this sticky situation.

"I wasn't a bitch, was I?"

You can't help it. After all, you've had plenty of practice.

Priory moved closer to Jacey. "Hey, I wasn't that bad, was I?" she whispered.

"You've been a little on edge, Priory."

Yeah, like I said. A bitch.

"I didn't mean to, hon." Priory's hand came up to cup the face of her lover. "I'm sorry." Jacey chuckled lightly. "What's so funny?"

"Two years ago you wouldn't have even acknowledged that there was a problem, let alone apologize for it. You've come a long way, Abs."

Yeah, you're almost bearable now.

"And you're nearly housebroken, Casper."

"Can I join in this conversation?"

Dylan faded out in the blink of an eye, leaving the two women to face the crotchety old aunt. So far the ghost's nemesis had been noticeably absent and she decided to find out exactly where the fur ball had holed up.

"Come in." Priory seemed unconcerned with Chloe's presence while Jacey fidgeted with her cup. "Sit down. Would you like a cup?"

"Yes, please. Cream, two sugars." Chloe looked around the room. "So where did she go?"

"Who knows? She thinks she owns the place." Priory pulled the plans from the sideboard and laid them out on the table, returning to fetch a fresh cup of coffee for herself.

Chloe got out her glasses and perched them on her wrinkled nose. Her eyes scanned the large drawing, taking in the planned additions. "And what's this for?" Her finger tapped the piece that represented the back verandah.

"We're going to add a room there and extend the roof to make it an indoor spa with one-way windows."

"And who's this for, eh?" The twinkle in her aged eye told them they didn't fool anyone.

"Yeah, well, I keep trying to tell myself it's for me and Jacey. They seem to think it's going to be their own personal playground."

"You are just too soft-hearted."

"Oh no, no, no. Jacey is the soft one here. When you get the chance, go up to the attic and see what my friend here did."

"I see you're adding a second bathroom downstairs. About time." Chloe looked closer. "But it seems a bit overdone. Who is this for I wonder?"

"What?" Priory feigned interest in the plans. "It's just a bathroom."

"Uh huh. What was the name of that toilet demon of yours?"

"I don't know..." But Chloe's upraised eyebrow stopped her in mid-sentence. "...Bova."

"So my money is being spent on dead people."

"I wouldn't put it exactly that way."

"I would."

Now just one minute, Aunt Crusty. This is my home and I don't take kindly to you sprouting some garbage about dead people.

Dylan materialized in a flash her form shimmering with anger.

Convent here is not a bad broad, as humans go, and if she wants to spend her money that way then let her be.

"I'm not objecting-"

She is my fr... What did you say?

"I said I'm not objecting to the way she is using her money, and it is her money. I was just amused that she seems to be making sure that you two... sorry, you **three**... are living quite comfortably."

Is that true, Convent?

"Nooooo!" Priory's finger wandered over the plans, her eyes firmly fixed on the lines in front of her. The silence was maddening. "No! No, no, no, no. Nothing you can do will make me admit it."

Don't be chicken, Convent.

"Don't you talk about chicken to me, clucky."

And you have no sense of humor.

"I have plenty of humor. Just not **your** humor." Priory was nearly standing toe to toe with the ghost. "Now speaking of admitting, what were you about to say?"

Nuthin'. I didn't say nuthin'.

"Well, that was a double negative so you must have said **something**. Come on, Casper, cough it up."

"Girls! Girls! Stop this bickering!" Chloe stopped. "Where did that come from? Did my mother just leap out of my mouth?"

Dylan took the opportunity to make her escape.

* * *

Dylan wanted to kick something so she went looking for the one thing that she had no qualms about kicking. She searched high and low and was about to give up when as a last resort she peeked in the bathroom. Perched on the toilet seat like a gargoyle was the white fur ball loosely described as a cat staring intently into the bowl, her white tail swinging like a pendulum.

She hovered there, watching the cat pawing at the water. It was just too easy...

* * *

BBrrroooowwww!!!!!!

The ungodly howl filled the house, sending the women in the kitchen running up the stairs. As Priory reached the bathroom door, the guest bedroom door flew open. "What was that?" The squeaky little voice of Zelda grated on Priory's nerves.

Priory pushed the door open to find a bedraggled cat splashing around in the toilet bowl. "Bella's in the toilet." But she wasn't worried about the cat. Hurriedly she slammed the door, leaving her and Bella alone in the bathroom. "Hold still you stupid cat," she hissed.

Her hands surrounded the sopping wet animal, trying to help her out. When the claws sank into her skin she dropped Bella back in the water, setting off another sorrowful howl.

"Is my pussy alright?" Chloe's concerned voice floated under the door. Moments later the door opened, Chloe watching over Jacey's shoulder at the mess of water on the floor.

Priory just wanted to slap her aunt upside the head. "Yeah, she just slipped out of my hands. Chloe, how about you take Zelda downstairs for a coffee?" Her eyes pleaded with her aunt. What she was about to do needed no witnesses. "You can show them where everything is, Jace."

As the door closed quietly, Priory turned her attention to the drowning cat. "Listen you piece of shit! If you've harmed her I'm going to make ear muffs out of you." Not in the mood for any arguments from the feline, Priory's hands firmly grasped the wriggling cat around the middle and lifted her up, allowing the excess water to run back into the bowl.

"*Mmeoowww!*" It was such a pitiful moan from Bella, who look emaciated with all her wet fur plastered to her body.

Priory started to gently shake the cat, drawing distressed moans from the feline. "Come on! Come on! Drop that water!"

Bella started to object to the rough treatment, wriggling around to try and get a purchase with her claws.

"Don't even think about it, cat! There's an open window over there," she growled, tempted to throw the cat out anyway. All the grief from the last visit bubbled to the surface and, well, she could always say that the cat was slippery and fighting her and she just accidentally flew out the window.

"Bova? Honey? Are you alright?" It was hard to tell if there was any response because of the constant dripping from the cat. "Bova? You've got to give me a sign here." When nothing was forthcoming, Priory stared at the cat. "Are you in there?" She stared long and hard into those blue eyes, trying to find her lost friend. "Say something!"

"*Bbrroowwww.*" It was pitiful really. Bella had just about had enough of this human having a strangle hold on her abdomen. How many times had she said to let go? If this woman didn't understand catspeak then it was her loss. She just wanted to find a warm spot and dry off. They could all just go to kitty hell.

Priory's hands had twisted around the fur and she began to tighten, her action stopped by a clearing of a throat.

"Just what do you think you are doing?" Jacey couldn't believe what she was seeing.

"Just getting the last piece of Bova."

"Then why do you look like you are about to wring the cat out like a shirt?"

"This is not my fault! This... this... **thing** has Bova all over her! I'm going to do whatever it takes to get her all back."

"And what are you going to tell Chloe?"

"I don't know. She drowned?"

"I'm sure that will explain why the cat's head is on back to front." Jacey sighed. "Put the pussy down and step away from the toilet."

Priory glared at her lover. "You said that on purpose!"

"Of course I did. This is ridiculous. You don't want a wet pussy, Abs."

"It's too late for that, you troublemaker!" Finally a gentle gurgle came up from the bowl. "Bova! Honey!" Priory let go of the cat in mid air, forcing Jacey to make a dive for the falling animal.

"Are you alright?" Priory fell to her knees and looked into the bowl. "Did she hurt you?"

BBllluuurrbbbllleeeee.....

"I'm so sorry. That nasty beast scared you, didn't she?"

Meanwhile, Jacey had slammed the door and was trying to corner the frantic cat, armed with a towel and a certain amount of indignation. "You are **not** going to drag your sorry wet ass around my home!" It was then that she realized how small the bathroom actually was as she tried not to bump her head, or other body parts, on the pipes, the bath, the vanity, the toilet, Priory, and anything else that had been packed in the small space. Unfortunately, it gave the cat a lot of leeway to stay just out of reach. "Are you going to help me here?"

Bubble... bubble... bubble...

"Sorry? What was that? Jacey was talking." Priory leaned in closer, lowering her ear past the rim.

Spit... spit...

"Hey! What was that for?"

Blumbllummbbblllummmmmrrrrppptttt

"I know I invited them, but I was not going to leave Dylan alone in this house."

GGGuuuuuurrnggggle. Plop plop plop.

"I know Rhea is here but what if the house burnt down?"

Drip... drip... drip... drip.

"Don't cry, Bova honey, we're only away for a couple of nights. You can manage without me, can't you?"

Jacey had finally cornered the cat who was left with no option but to surrender. It was either that or jump out the window. As she rubbed the feline down briskly with the towel she had been listening to the exchange with some amusement. At least now she could justify her little fetish. Priory was just as crazy as she was.

When finally satisfied the cat was as dry as it was going to get she opened the door and let her go. "Now stay out of trouble." She turned her attention back to the woman leaning over the toilet bowl. "Now, you...", Jacey clicked her tongue. A squirt of water came from the bowl. "Bova! Stop that!" A series of thin streams came towards her and she was forced to hold up the towel to intercept them. "Hey! I was quite prepared to stay at home! Blame your friend here!"

"Everything will be fine, Bova honey. All you need to do is behave around the new one."

Whhiinnneeeee?

"Awww, don't beg. Pleeaassseee!" Priory hated to see the toilet cry. "We go to work every day without a problem. Why now?"

Glug glug glug drop drop drip plop

"I **am** thinking of you. That's why we're only going away for two days. **Two** days, Bova. That's all and then we'll be home. Now you behave yourself or no cushy toilet downstairs for you."

Bbbrruuuurrbbllleeeeeee

"Don't sulk." Priory leaned in and hugged the ceramic.

"I wouldn't believe it if I didn't see it for myself." Chloe stood in the doorway observing the little ritual.

"Errr, you weren't supposed to see that."

"I can see why, dear. Just as well I don't believe in sanitariums, not that I hadn't been threatened with it a few times in my lifetime." Chloe's eyes shifted to the toilet. "Are you going to introduce

me?" she asked with a certain amount of amusement.

"Bova, this is Chloe. Chloe, meet Bova."

Burbleburbleburbleburble.

A tiny water fountain appeared, skillfully managing to stay within the walls of the convenience.

Chloe reached out and patted the cistern. "Nice to meet you too, Bova." But she wasn't quite sure she believed it. There were many strange things in this world and a demonized toilet rated right up there. If it meant keeping the status quo then she could play along. "So where's Bella?"

"Mopped up and probably drying off somewhere. She's fine, Aunty." Priory glanced at her partner. "Now I think it's about time we left."

Clunk clunk clunk clunk, the pipes replied noisily.

"Stop that! Let's get out of here before we all break down."

* * *

"Are you sure we're doing the right thing?" Jacey looked over the shoulder and through the back window of the car as they moved down the street. Chloe and Zelda stood on the stoop and waved goodbye, disappearing inside the house before they had even driven out of sight.

"Too late now."

"It's never too late, Priory."

"Chloe would be upset if she thought that we didn't trust her to look after the house. She has our number and we're not too far away." One hand came off the steering wheel seeking out the warmth of another. "I've been waiting weeks for this, hon, dreaming of this alone time with you. No ghosts, no toilets, no phones and no work. Please..." the last word came out as a whisper. "I need this... **we** need this."

Priory was right. There was that element of exhibitionism whenever they made love that she hated. Jacey felt that Dylan was hovering around somewhere, watching their every move, and while their love was always good it was never perfect. They needed a bed with just the two of them. Alone.

"Let's go."

* * *

"Well, Zelda dear, it's a little early for dinner. How about we watch some television or maybe play some canasta?" But Chloe knew Zelda was itching to investigate the house.

"If you don't mind..." the small woman hedged around what she really wanted to do, "...I might go and lay down. But don't let me stop you from watching TV."

"Are you feeling alright?" Chloe's lips pursed as she tried not to laugh. "Dinner will be in an hour."

A small hand came up in dismissal and the medium went off to find herself some ghosts.

"Good hunting..." Chloe detoured to the window and snatched up Bella. "You poor thing! Look at you! Another visit to Madame Fifi's will be in order, don't you think?"

"*Meeeeooowwww.*" Bella pleaded for some pampering. She was beginning to hate this place. Every time she was here it ended in a visit to the hairdresser from hell. She nestled into the expansive lap and snuggled until a roaming hand came up and massaged her fur. *That was better. Ahhhhhh! Ppppuurrrrrrrrrr.....* Her body rumbled with the purr, running like a V8 motor waiting for someone to push down on the accelerator. But Bella was content to sit on idle, as long as that hand kept moving.

"Do you think she knows what's in store for her, Bella?" Chloe chuckled. She remembered only too well the antics that were pulled on her when she first visited. Now the orthopedic shoe was on the other foot and she was delighted. Zelda was a little snobbish about her so-called 'power' to communicate with the dead. Chloe thought Zelda was about sixty per cent fake and forty per cent wannabe, so this would be a good wake-up call for the pocket-sized woman.

PPpuuuurrrrrrrrrrrr..... Bella couldn't have cared less about the other human that came with them. She leant into the hand fingering her fur, trying to find that elusive spot that revved her motor. *PPprrrrrrrrrrrrrr.....* The sound became louder as Chloe scratched behind her ear. *Oh yeah... right there... yes! Yes! Oh... no...no...nooooooo!* The hand moved away and Bella's head tried to follow. *Come back! More!*

Chloe's hand reached for the remote to the new TV, surfing the channels to find something suitable to occupy her time. It was a much larger model than last time but knowing the history of the first television she rather wished for that smaller model. It was... was... she tried to remember the name of the ghost... Rosanne? No, that wasn't it. Rachel? Huh, she'd just have to ask her next time she literally popped in.

* * *

Zelda's snooping had revealed nothing so far but she was not one to just give up so easily. Her clientele had been slowly dropping and she needed this. The discovery of a haunted house by a renowned medium would just look great on her resume. *Ka-ching! Ka-ching!* Dollar signs flashed in front of her eyes. And, well, if the search proved fruitless then she was prepared for that.

The bedrooms were clean and except for a leaking toilet the bathroom looked fine too. However, there was a staircase at the end of the hall that was very inviting, and she couldn't stop herself from snooping up in the attic either. As she ascended the stairs her hair stood on end and her spidey senses tingled. If the ghosts were anywhere they were up here.

The door creaked as Zelda opened it, her head quickly popping around the edge as if to catch the ghosts unexpectedly. The creaking continued as she opened the door fully, standing at the entrance of the room to survey the surroundings. It was a strange setup, nearly as if children played here. Two televisions were at opposite ends of the room facing away from one another. In the far corner was a beach scene, with a small pool filled with sand, an opened beach umbrella and a deck chair. There was a partially built sandcastle next to a bucket and spade, looking as if the play had been interrupted suddenly.

Cloisteria hadn't mentioned that the woman had children. Maybe it was neighborhood kids, she didn't know, but with all that cleaning up afterwards she would have thought that they would have put the sandpit outside. Still, it was their house and they could do what they wanted with it.

Actually the strange behavior didn't surprise her one bit. Cloisteria was a bit eccentric. Others called the woman everything from demented to just plain crazy, so Zelda wasn't surprised that it ran in the family. Still, it was the last thing she expected in an attic.

Zelda closed her eyes to get the 'vibe' of the room. Was there something there? There was a very faint sensation but she wasn't sure whether that was because she wanted there to be something. Her eyes opened and she tried to view the room again objectively. The curtain at the end of the room rustled gently, the movement catching her eye instantly.

"Yesssss," she hissed her heels clip-clopping over the wooden floor as she hurried to the source. This was it. She could feel it. The curtain moved by itself and she had seen it. To prove to herself that it was paranormal Zelda moved the curtain aside to look at the window. "Damn." It was slightly ajar and the breeze was coming in. So close.

Now if only Zelda had turned around at that moment because Dylan was behind her hovering in mid air, her smile giving her the look of the Cheshire Cat. Maybe she could give the white fur carpet a break and pursue this woman instead. Dylan faded away grinning. She had a new toy to play with.

* * *

The hotel was a bit further than Jacey was comfortable with but she had to admit it was rather snazzy. "Did we have to come this far?"

"Only the best for my baby," Priory said absently as she carried in their luggage. "Only God knows why you brought this much. We're not going anywhere, honey."

"It's not much, only my makeup and a couple of changes of clothes."

"Jace, you're not going to be wearing makeup for long, I promise you that. And as for the clothes... unnecessary." Priory dropped the luggage where she stood and sauntered over to her lover. "In fact," she caressed Jacey's blouse, "...**this** is also unnecessary." Her fingers began to deftly undo the buttons.

Jacey slapped Priory's hand away. "Hang on! Let me get in the door first!"

"Jace, you are past the door and half-way to the bed. That constitutes settling-in time. Now let the games begin..."

* * *

Chloe eyed the toilet bowl with some trepidation. Now that she knew what resided there she was apprehensive about using it. "You're not going to squirt me or anything, are you?" How did Priory use it without thinking about what was living there?

Half a dozen bubbles rose to the surface as she sat herself down on the seat. The old woman hummed to herself as she did her business, hoping against hope that whatever happened next was not going to be nasty or life-threatening. At least this time she took notice of what was going on and took action, finding a deodorizer under the vanity and spraying the room liberally before opening the window.

During her search for the spray she found a toilet sanitizer, one of the solid block variety that hung daintily from the rim of the bowl. She added that to the already smelly room and left content in the knowledge that she had done her part to ease the demon's discomfort.

After her departure Bova vainly tried to flush the block away. It tasted something horrible and she wanted to be rid of it as quickly as possible.

* * *

Zelda found Chloe right where she had left her, seated in the recliner flipping through channels. "There seems to be something wrong with the toilet, Cloisteria dear. It won't stop flushing."

"Oh dear." Chloe jumped out of the chair as quickly as her aged bones would let her, heading for the distressed toilet. She had taken the news of the demon with a certain amount of skepticism but maybe there was something to what Priory had said. She arrived as another flush began. "Are you alright, dear?" A tiny water fountain erupted in the middle of the swirling water.

"I don't understand you." Chloe looked for some clue as to what the problem was.

The water fountain changed direction, hitting the toilet deodorizer frequently. Bova was getting impatient. Priory always knew what was wrong and now she wished the woman was here to interpret. The bad taste was giving her indigestion and if this human didn't want an accident all over her nice dry floor she had better remove that thing before it was too late.

"Is it this?" Chloe pointed to the offending accoutrement hanging from the rim.

Of course it's that! Put your hearing aid on, old woman!

"But I thought it would help."

Does it look like it's helping, you old bat?

Bova wasn't one to speak ill of the living, or the dead for that matter, but Chloe's slow uptake of the problem was pissing her off. If Chloe waited much longer it was going to be too late and there would be a 'whoopsie' on the floor. Bova's head started to swirl around with the water as the chemicals in the block started to take effect. 10...9...8...

"All right!" Chloe reached in to recover the deodorizer, her hand splashed several times with the water until she finally wrestled off the clip that held the block in place. "Better?"

Bova was too sick to answer, her body swaying with the rough water. In a moment of madness she wished she was back in Hell, but it was fleeting. She never wanted to return to that place. Besides, she was promised a new abode and she was going to make sure Priory delivered on that promise.

Chloe held up the item in question, water dripping off it back into the bowl. "Such as fuss about a little thing."

Bova kept her non-existent mouth shut, instead content to wait for her chance for retribution. *A little thing, huh? We'll see...*

* * *

Jacey lay spent on the bed. Priory was a crazy woman, trying to get all her pleasure at once. She had tried to allay her lover's fears by telling her that they still had plenty of time before they had to go home but Priory wanted it all and no amount of reassurance that she wasn't going anywhere seemed to satisfy her.

"Are you trying to kill me?"

"Maybe."

"You know, if you do that there'll be no more of this... unless, of course, you like doing things to dead bodies."

"Ewww... what a gross thought!"

"Hey! I'm not the one trying to give me a heart attack, Abs. Slow down, will you?"

"Sorry." Priory started to withdraw but she was held in place by two strong arms. "I didn't mean..."

"Come here." Jacey pulled her closer. "You didn't even give me a chance to play with your ass."

Priory smiled. Jacey knew just what to say to pull her out of her funk. The last few weeks had been hell for her. Work had been so frantic that by the time they got home at night both of them could do little more than cuddle. When she had told Jacey that she needed this it was no idle

comment. Her head was about to explode if she didn't make love, and soon.

So seeing Jacey naked short-circuited any intention she had of taking it slow. She had to have the woman and have her fast and furious. But it was not enough. It would never be enough. She had known the truth for some time now and this feeling only reinforced that truth.

"Why are you in such a hurry?"

"I don't know. I needed this... needed you."

"And you've got me. You keep wearing me out like this and I'll sleep through the rest of the weekend. Were you planning on continuing while I was asleep?"

"I hope not. Two is much better than one. If that was the case I could have left you at home and come by myself."

"Come! Ha!"

Yeah yeah, ha ha."

"What is the matter with you?" Jacey sensed there was more to this conversation than frantic sex. "Come on, tell your old secretary what the problem is."

Old secretary. Maybe that was one of the problems. "Since our promotions I don't get to see you as much, Jace. I miss that."

"You didn't want the promotion?"

"Sure. It means more money but being the CEO takes more time than I'm prepared to give." Priory lay her cheek on Jacey's bare breast and chuckled. "I have to admit it was worth the looks on the Board's faces when they found out the truth about Rayann. Old man Harris nearly had a conniption."

"But you can't very well fire Grace just because you want to see me more. She's a very good personal assistant."

"Not as good as you."

"That's very nice of you to say that but we both know that Grace did most of Miss Stephenson's work. I wouldn't see you at all if it weren't for Grace. Maybe you should think about giving her a raise."

"Or a raise in exchange for more responsibility. That would work for me." Priory's eyes looked up to the angelic face above her. "But that doesn't solve my problem of not seeing you."

"Someone had to stay behind." Jacey felt the movement of the head on her chest and looked

down. "Besides, I'm still not used to being your replacement. It... it's weird being on the other side of the employer-employee fence."

"So how's Serena working out?"

"Didn't you hear? She no longer works for the company."

"No!" Priory lifted her head up. "What happened?"

"She was caught with Nathan from the Mail Room doing it on the photocopier. I believe there are some nice paper copies circulating around from that tryst."

"It couldn't happen to a nicer person."

"Yeah, I thought so. I should see if I can snatch a copy before they all disappear. You know, for prosperity."

"Prosperity? Hah!" Priory just wanted to see what Nathan saw in the woman. Then again, maybe not. "Then who took her place?"

"I'm still looking." Jacey stared off into space. "I hope this is not going to ruin what we have, Abs. I'd rather leave than lose you."

The words meant everything to Priory. A tear welled up and ran down her cheek, landing on the soft skin below. "I love you, Jace."

"And I love you, Abs." She felt the wetness but let it be, not wanting to embarrass her lover if she didn't want to be discovered crying. Instead her hand rose to the dark hair and began stroking it, allowing the tendrils to run between her fingers.

Priory rose and sat on the edge of the bed, her hand wiping away any evidence of tears. "I'd been thinking about this for a while and I suppose this is as good a time as any..." Actually, she had planned to spring the surprise on Jacey this weekend. She made her way to the small suitcase and opened it extracting an envelope. "Here." She handed over the paper to the lazily lounging naked woman sprawled over the rumpled sheet.

"What's this?"

"It's an envelope, dummy," she muttered amusedly. "Open it."

Jacey wasn't sure what to expect so she tried not to expect anything. She unfolded the sheets of paper, her eyes scanning over the written words there. "This is the deed to the house."

"I know." Priory smirked at Jacey's confused look. "Go on..."

"But... but..." Jacey looked up into amused eyes. "This says that we both own the house."

"Well, I thought since you are my partner..."

"Partner, Abs?"

"If you'll have me," Priory whispered. It was the moment of truth and she held her breath in anticipation of the answer.

"You mean, make it official?"

"Well, official in my eyes. The Governor would probably disagree though." The silence was almost deafening. "Well?"

"You are always in such a hurry."

"Please, Jace, don't do this to me. We've been together for two years now. I think it's time to take it to the next level."

"Next level? You make it sound so..."

"Jacey, please! I..." Priory tried to calm herself, exhaling forcefully in an effort to relax. Her hand rose to run through her hair in frustration. When Jacey rose and lowered her legs over the side of the bed she knelt in between them, resting her hands on the velvety soft thighs of her lover. "This...means...everything to me. I've never asked anyone this before..." A finger came up to rest on her shaking lips.

Priory's heart was thumping as she waited. What if Jacey didn't want this? She had laid her heart on the line and to be rejected now would just break it.

"Yes." Jacey brought her lips down to touch Priory's to affirm her answer. "Yes."

Priory's heart pounded even harder with the answer. It was a monumental step for both of them, one that would present them to the world as a couple.

Priory's hands wandered, slowly shifting along the sweet skin she ached to taste. When she reached her goal her thumbs began to softly caress the dark hair that resided there, teasing Jacey's libido to come out and play. Her lips and tongue ran along the fiery path that her hands had just followed, knowingly plying the right amount of pressure where and when she knew Jacey liked it.

Restless hands ruffled her hair, grabbing it forcefully when she applied a sharp nip to the sensitive skin. But that didn't stop her. Priory knew all the signs that her partner used to convey her wishes, with a grab of hair, a gentle thrust of hips, an agonized shudder and a tumultuous cry. All these sounds painted a mental image of supreme ecstasy in a woman she loved with all her heart.

Priory lay her head in Jacey's lap, content to listen to her lover trying to catch her breath. She chuckled.

"What's so funny?"

"I was half expecting Dylan to pop in and give her opinion."

Had they gotten so used to it that they had to think twice about the fact that they were alone?
"And that's why I said 'yes' to this weekend. Don't you ever feel strange about having someone watching your every move?"

"At first, yes, but what's a girl to do? We either ignore her or we don't make love."

That was true. They didn't have a lot of options. Going to a motel every time they wanted to be together would get too expensive and Dylan didn't listen to a word they said about staying away. Besides that home was as much theirs as it was their houseguests, and because of that they were within their rights to expect some privacy at such times.

"Maybe we should just vacuum her up and let her out when we've finished."

"Hmmm... you know..."

"I was joking, Abs."

"No, you have an idea there. Maybe we could..."

"Don't even think it. It's cruel."

"And watching us make love isn't cruel?"

"Not cruel exactly. Uncomfortable, yes. Creepy, yes. Cruel, no."

"We could always run the vacuum cleaner in the room while we do it."

"Do **it**? How romantic. Not only is our love now an 'it' but I have to contend with the noise of a vacuum cleaner running next to the bed? Uh uh, no way, nada, I... don't... think... so."

"Well, what's left?"

"Nothing, for the moment. I suppose I'm just going to have to get used to someone looking over your shoulder." Jacey leaned back on her elbows. "Now, how about feeding me before I pass out from hunger?"

"Really, so soon?"

"Food, Abs." Jacey clicked her tongue. "Geez woman, you have a one-track mind."

"True, especially this weekend." She grinned. "Can I use you as a table? Better yet, how about as a plate then I can lick up all the spilt food."

"Spilt food? Yeah, right." But that didn't stop a saucy chuckle escaping Jacey's lips.

* * *

Chloe and Zelda sat at the kitchen table eating the casserole Jacey had left for them. "So how was your rest, dear?" Chloe knew damned well that Zelda did no such thing but she was interested to see if the woman fessed up to snooping.

"Fine, thank you. The bed's a bit lumpy but I managed to grab forty winks."

Play it your own way. "What do you want to do tonight?" The old woman cut a piece of meat and pushed in onto her fork. "I didn't bring a lot with me." The truth of the matter was that she hadn't been expecting Zelda to accompany her when the arrangements had been made with Priory so she was prepared to just watch television to occupy her time. "There's always canasta."

"Sorry, Cloisteria dear, I don't play cards." Zelda was itching to do something else but revealing it would give away her motive for being there.

Chloe took pity on the poor woman, suggesting what she thought Zelda wanted to hear. "You know, we could always have a séance. Just for the fun of it of course."

"Of course." Zelda remained calm on the outside but inside she was jumping up and down with giddy glee.

Chloe's deadpan face nearly slipped as she watched Zelda's reaction. The woman was nearly salivating while trying to appear that she didn't care. She only hoped that Darren... errr... Debbie... ahh hell, whatever the ghost's name was, put on a good show for them.

They finished their meal in silence but Chloe couldn't help but watch Zelda trying to hide her excitement. *Woman, you have no idea...*

* * *

Despite her protests to the contrary Zelda had her tools of trade with her. She had the necessary items laid out on the kitchen table, an abundance of candles sitting squarely in the middle. The sheer brilliance was like a forest fire about to consume everything in its path. She didn't have the heart to tell Zelda that the fire power on the table just cancelled out the reason for switching off the lights in the first place.

Chloe internally rolled her eyes at all the mumbo jumbo Zelda had brought out. She was afraid to move in case she set the house on fire. The woman was certainly intent on dazzling the ghosts with every trick in the medium's book. She reached across the table to join hands and closed her eyes for a moment, at least until Zelda had done the same. Chloe wanted to watch the show and

keeping her eyes closed definitely hindered that.

Chloe sat across from the diminutive woman watching her intently as she closed her eyes in an attempt to 'communicate with the dead'. If Zelda had been paying attention she could have looked over her shoulder and found what she was looking for. Chloe's eyes flitted between the medium and the ghost, amused at the specter's antics mimicking the spiritualist as she 'made contact'.

Dylan had never heard so much clap-trap as was spouting from the midget sitting in the adult's chair, and she was itching to get a telephone book just to raise the woman to be level with the table.

"Beloved spirit of this house we bring you gifts from life into death. Commune with us so we may know your name. Move among us so that we may know your form." Zelda's voice sounded like a squeaky hinge on a barn door and Dylan was tempted to appear just to shut her up. Maybe that was how she was successful. Zelda had a voice that could raise the dead.

Dylan wanted to show the woman her own repertoire, after all she had seventy years to perfect it, but Chloe's slight shake of her head reminded her what was at stake. Giving the medium what she wanted would seal their own fate with a never-ending procession of mediums, spiritualists, psychics, academics and the just plain curious through their lives...err, deaths... well, she knew what she meant. It was time to consult Rhea.

* * *

Why can't you just leave well enough alone?

But Rhea, honey, you should take a gander at the old bat. She is barely eye level with the table. It's a riot!

And what if she catches you horsing around, huh?

She won't.

Dylan, you can't help yourself. I don't want to tell you this but you may think you're the bee's knees...

Rhea didn't have the heart to say any more so she said nothing.

Oh, horsefeathers! Fine! I can do subtle.

Dylan disappeared in a wink of an eye leaving Rhea to sigh deeply. Her partner had too much free time on her transparent hands.

* * *

Zelda was disappointed that there was no immediate response to her plea. Se repeated the

summons a number of times, blissfully unaware of Chloe's grimace every time she opened her mouth. Finally, the refrigerator shook, clunking a number of times in rapid succession.

"Please commune with us, oh gentle spirit. Knock once for yes or two for no." The small woman kept her eyes closed in an effort to concentrate and keep the connection she thought she had. "Do you reside in this house?" The fridge rumbled once, the milk bottles gently tinkling as the movement settled.

Chloe whispered, "Wow!" She knew it wasn't the ghost but she didn't have the heart to burst the woman's balloon. What were the odds of the fridge shifting at the exact moment Zelda asked her question? Whether it was a coincidence or not, at least there was a logical reason for the noise should Zelda try to claim it as a miracle.

"I can feel your presence," the tiny squeaky voice exclaimed.

Chloe looked to Dylan but the specter just shrugged her shoulders. Zelda's eyes were still closed when Chloe peeked under the tablecloth. Bella was brushing up against the medium's leg, her long wispy hair barely touching the skin. Actually, Zelda's feet were propped up on the rung of the old wooden chair, just like a child, her knees sticking out at an odd angle to allow such a maneuver.

The medium was a ripe candidate for 'the little man syndrome', overcompensating for her small stature with a personality that was suffocating. She strode through life demanding that she not be overlooked. If she didn't need the assistance of the netherworld Zelda would have brow-beaten the ghost into submission, demanding a full corporeal visitation immediately.

"Can you talk to us?" With her eyes still closed she let go one of her hands and felt around for the Ouija Board, pushing it towards the centre of the table. If it wasn't for Chloe's quick action, and the fact that Chloe's eyes were open, the mass of candles would have set the tablecloth on fire.

Dylan floated nearby snickering in silence. The woman was such a pill. Did she honestly believe that she could conjure up a spirit just like that? Dylan could feel the woman's power but it was so weak it barely registered at all. It was all a matter of a little knowledge being a dangerous thing. Little! Ha! Her power perfectly matched her stature.

Still... the board called to her and she so wanted to spell out to the medium what she could do with her board. There were two fingers already resting on the planchette in the middle, what was one more? All it would take was a little nudging here and there...

Chloe felt the tugging as the pointer skated across the board. *Stupid... stupid...* her mind muttered. Had the ghost no sense at all? Still, a few smart ass comments might shake Zelda up a bit.

Why?

"Oh gentle spirit, who am I speaking to?"

Me

As the letters were touched a smile came to Chloe's lips. At least the ghost reacted in the way she had hoped.

"Don't you have a name?"

Yes

"What is it?" Zelda was getting frustrated. All she wanted was a simple answer, but not that simple.

Ouija board

The planchette flew around quickly and the medium was hard pushed to keep track of the letters.

"Goddamit! Just answer the question!"

Bye

"No! NO! Don't go!" The high pitched voice grated on human and spirit alike as it screeched out in protest. She had the phantasm in the palm of her hand and now she had lost it. Still, she had a witness to the whole proceedings who would back up her claim. She had never actually contacted the dead before. Oh, she had come close a lot of times, or so she thought, but to actually talk to one? It was a first. "Did you see that?"

Chloe could hear the excitement in Zelda's voice but she had to stop it before the situation got out of hand. The last thing her grand niece needed was wave after wave of the morbidly curious on her doorstep day after day. "See what, dear?"

"That!" Zelda's finger pointed to the now silent board. "We contacted the dead!"

"Not that I could see, dear. It is so hot in here my finger must have slipped. I'm sorry."

"You did not!" Chloe was not going to take away her moment of victory.

"Well, if you didn't have so many candles around, Zelda dear, it might not have been a problem. My God! It looks like my last birthday cake." Her hand patted Zelda's wrist. "I'm sorry, Zelda dear, but I don't think anything happened."

"Well, what about the knocking... and the presence I felt."

"It's on old house, dear, lots of things creak, groan and shake. The refrigerator shuddered because its engine stopped. And the presence? I looked under the table and it was Bella brushing up

against your leg." Was that going to be enough? She hoped so.

"But... but..." Had she got it all wrong? Was it a series of coincidences? Never mind, she still had a few tricks up her sleeve to make it happen.

"How about a nice cup of coffee? I'm bushed." Chloe stood before Zelda had a chance to continue, moving to the kettle to begin the chore. "It might be wise to put out all those candles dear before you set off the smoke detector." She had been surprised that it hadn't gone off sooner but she was not one to push her luck.

Reluctantly, Zelda admitted defeat... for now.

* * *

Meanwhile, outside the house a pair of eyes watched intently for the lights to go out.

* * *

Jacey stared at the darkened ceiling. "God, woman!"

"Something wrong?" The deep voice cut through the night, followed by a knowing chuckle.

"I have to go to work Monday and I'm not going to be able to walk."

"And?"

"God, I'll probably go to sleep in the middle of the morning meeting."

"Tell one of your girls to phone me. I'll come over and wake you up."

"You wouldn't dare!"

"It'll give them something to talk about."

"What have you been sniffing?"

The chuckle increased to a seductive laugh.

"Oh." She didn't even want to think about it. "How about we get some sleep?"

"You have no stamina, Jace."

"No, I have no sleep, Abs."

"Then how about I give you a massage?"

Jacey knew it was a trick to lull her into a false sense of security. Once those wonderful hands

had relaxed her she knew Priory would pounce. But who was she to refuse a backrub? "Sure. You may have to help me roll over though."

* * *

The house was in darkness, the timbers quietly creaking as they settled for the night. The snick of the lock was barely heard in the near silence. A lone figure entered quickly and quietly, closing the front door the same way it had been opened. A stream of light cut through the darkness, wandering over the floors and interiors of the downstairs rooms. He knew where the women were. Upstairs. But he checked out downstairs first, seeking out anything valuable and unaware he was being watched.

Dylan sensed something was wrong the moment the human stepped into the house. So an intruder dared to enter her home. Fooling a small medium was one thing but a thief entering her home was another. Dylan protected what was hers.

She watched him as he moved around the property, carefully opening drawers and cupboards to see what was there. He took out a couple of items and lay them carefully on the dining room table before turning his attention to upstairs.

* * *

Priory's cell rang in the middle of the night.

"Abs, the phone," Jacey mumbled, nudging her sleeping partner in the ribs. "Abs. PRIORY!"

"What!" Priory sat bolt upright in bed. "What's wrong? Fire!"

"No! Phone."

She rubbed her face before reaching for her cell. "Hello?" The word was barely recognizable.

There was three knocks on the other end. "Damn it, Dylan! This had better be good!"

Jacey moaned. She needed sleep. "Tell her no more sandcastles." Jacey's speech faded out as she rolled over to sleep.

Three knocks, two knocks, three knocks. That was their secret signal for help. "Ok, don't panic. Is Chloe hurt?"

Two knocks for no.

"Is the house on fire?"

Two knocks for no.

"Then what is it?" Priory didn't even realize that she asked a question that Dylan couldn't answer.

"Oh. Errrr." Her hand rose to her face and she rubbed it again, hoping that it would clear her brain. "Police?"

One knock for yes.

"Police? Is there somebody in the house?"

One knock for yes.

"Oh God. Then stay... stay put, we're on our way!"

One knock for yes.

Priory prodded her sleeping partner. "Jacey, get your butt in gear. We have to go home."

* * *

The robber opened the door to the main bedroom, seeing the old woman sleeping in the center of the bed. He moved slowly, pausing every now and then when the woman shifted. His torch light swept over the chest of drawers as he opened them. Priory's jewelry and Jacey's family heirlooms were extracted and placed on top of the bureau.

Chloe wasn't quite sure what had woken her up but the sight of someone standing not five feet from her sent her heart a flutter. The torch light partially lit the room and she could see he looked young and fit. Her chance of subduing him was nil, her age, weight and the fact that she was lying down all conspiring against her.

Before she was even aware of it the light shone directly into her eyes and blinded her. That was the last thing she remembered.

* * *

Dylan had been pacing around in the air for all of thirty seconds before she made a decision. She had had an earful of leaving this stuff to the cops. It was her house so she was going to give this felon the bum's rush herself. Of course, she wouldn't do such a thing without letting Rhea know first. Something this important needed the two of them.

She found her companion where she always did, in front of the damned box watching her soaps. The only difference this time was that the sound was way down low in deference to the visitors. Trust Rhea to follow the rules.

Rhee, we've got to go downstairs.

Not now, Lani. Garrett just proposed to Alison.

Will for forget those damned soaps for a minute?

Dylan, please! It's just getting good.

Dylan sighed. So it was left up to her... again.

She materialized in Priory's bedroom and found Chloe wrapped up, effectively held prisoner in the bed sheets.

Are you alright?

Chloe just nodded.

Be right back.

Zelda was similarly incapacitated but Dylan didn't say a word. The knowing creak on the stairs to the attic sent her flying to Rhea's rescue.

As she arrived, the thief stepped in through the door. The television was still on as Rhea barely had a moment to disappear. Dylan wanted to give the tall intruder the full treatment but she was desperately trying to not reveal herself. She smiled. Who would have thought that she would be hiding herself two years on? She was way too attached to the two women who lived here.

He was already beginning to unplug the two televisions so he could move them downstairs.

Dylan could feel it. A crackling set the air alight with energy. Rhea was not happy.

Oh oh. Now Rhee, honey, calm yourself.

He... has... my... soaps, Dylan.

And we'll get them back. We have to think smart.

Rhea blinked once, and then again. Did Dylan just say smart?

What did you have in mind?

And that was the problem. Dylan wasn't one for fancy rescue plans. She was the practical joker of the family. Maybe that was it...

* * *

The robber had transported down one television and was on his way up the attic stairs to retrieve the second one. He was near the top when his foot slipped from underneath him, sending him crashing down the stairs to the bottom. Pain lanced through his chest and head. There was a constant thunk, thunk, thunk, down the stairs, like marbles rolling and hitting the wood. What the hell was it? There was barely any light to see by so he picked one up. As soon as it came within range of his nose he knew what it was. "Mothballs," he murmured.

He lay where he had landed for a few moments, quietly checking that nothing was broken. He certainly wouldn't walk away unscathed from this job. The bruises he knew were there were already beginning to ache. The shock, and the sudden stop at the bottom, had loosened his kidneys and he needed to use the bathroom. As the two old women were safely tucked into bed he took the time to relieve himself.

As he stood in front of the bowl staring into space he was hit by a fountain of water hitting him directly in the groin. "What the...?"

The bathroom door slammed shut and he abandoned what he was doing to reach for the doorknob. The heat from the metal caused him to jump back, holding his singed palm. "What the hell is going on here?" Another spurt of water found him in the muted light and he found himself jumping in all directions to avoid getting soaked by the toilet.

The window seemed to be the only way out but on investigation it was a dead end. It was a two storey drop straight down to the ground. Unless he was prepared to walk away with a broken bone or two the door was his only escape.

He grabbed one of the towels and tried the door again, tolerating the heat coming through the material to open the door. "This place is definitely weird," he said to the night air, striking it off his list for a return visit. It was better to grab what he had already had and get the hell out of there.

He detoured to the main bedroom to collect his booty. "Thanks, old woman," he murmured, patting her on the head before he left.

He was about to descend the main stairs when his feet tangled and he fell down the remaining stairs to the foyer. As he hit the bottom stop he yelped. Someone had put a porcupine there to meet his face, or that's what it felt like. "Oohhhhhhhhhh..." The moan drifted through the house, airing his need for help but no one was there. "Shiiittttt..." He had definitely injured something this time besides his pride. Lifting his head, he felt the needles come with him, dangling from every pore in his skin.

Slowly he rolled onto his back to look up at the darkened ceiling. His hand came up and gently prodded his abused skin. There was a clatter, then another, then a few more, making a God awful noise on the wooden floor and echoing through the silent house. Someone had planted cutlery on the floor for him to find him as he fell down the stairs at the speed of a bowling ball.

His feet wouldn't move, at least not independent of each other. Somehow his shoelaces had become tangled together, sending him on that painful downward journey from the first floor.

His hand swiped at his nose and he felt wetness. "Oh shit," he mumbled. His jaw cracked back into place but his nose was rapidly swelling. The pain spread out from there, across his cheeks and up over his brow. "You broke my nose!" he called to the darkness. "I'll sue!"

As if adding insult to his injury something came out of nowhere and knocked him out cold.

* * *

Time seemed to drag by as Chloe lay helpless in her cloth cocoon.

Rhee, help me here.

Chloe heard the words and felt the lifting as she began to unroll from the sheet that had held her captive. "Thank you, errr.. Doris... David.... Dorian.... Thanks."

It's Dylan, you old hag.

Dylan! Now apologize. That was rude.

Well, if she gets my name right it wouldn't be a problem now, would it?

The robber is on the floor at the front door. You might want to tie him up.

"As if they'll believe I did it."

There's no other explanation so they will.

"What about Zelda?"

I'm sure she can manage for a while longer.

"Thank you." But that was all Chloe could manage to say before the ghosts vanished into thin air.

* * *

"God, are you alright?" Priory scanned the old woman quickly for any sign of injury.

Priory arrived at the same time as the police, saving her front door in the nick of time as the law prepared to knock it down. Inside on the floor was the robber, barely tied up with the cord from her own dressing gown. She knew if it wasn't for the fact that the thief was still groggy he would have been long gone.

"Fine dear, just a little tired from all the excitement."

"You.. bwoke...ny... nozzeee."

"I did no such thing. Besides, you broke into my house."

"I'll sue." He tried to stand but fell on his backside. "God."

"Just try. I'm a lawyer and I'll take you for everything you have."

"NNahhh...." He sat there moaning, his face covered in red dots from being skewered with forks. "Your howwwwssee is... is...", his brow screwed up as he stumbled for a word, "...stupid!"

"Why thank you," Priory said brightly. She was proud of her home.

"Your toilet's a demon." The thief's eyes turned to Chloe so he didn't notice the younger woman's eyes widen. "Mothballs... shoelaces... forks." He barely made any sense. He looked down at his free feet. "Weird."

"Is it weird enough for you not to come back?" Priory hoped that it was enough.

Before he could answer he was taken away by the police, replaced by a detective who wanted a statement.

"Could we do this in the morning, detective? My aunt is very tired and I think we could all use a good night's sleep."

As they watched the thief being taken away Jacey murmured, "You're not a lawyer."

"Yeah, but he doesn't know that."

Jacey went upstairs to release Zelda while Priory made arrangements for the detective to return later.

"Well, that was an adventure!"

"How about we get a coffee?"

"Sounds good, Priory dear." The adrenaline was wearing off and Chloe was slowing down. Suddenly she stopped. "I've lost my pussy!"

"You're pussy isn't lost, Cloisteria dear, it's where it always is."

Priory ground her teeth while Jacey just chuckled. She had tried to educate those around her to use the proper term but they were all blissfully ignoring her. Or were they doing it on purpose to get on her nerves? While she knew Dylan and Jacey were troublemakers, Priory gave her aunt the benefit of the doubt and opted for the former explanation. As for Zelda, well she hoped she never saw the woman again in this lifetime.

"Where?"

"She's sleeping on the recliner, dear, and snoring if I'm not mistaken."

"Did you hear that, Priory? Your aunt has a snoring pussy." Jacey could nearly see the steam coming out of her lover's ears. All this teasing had probably pushed her partner to the edge but it was just too much fun.

"Poor Bella. I was worried about her." Chloe finally had the chance to sit down and she was forever grateful for that. Zelda took the other seat, leaving Priory and Jacey standing up and leaning their butts against the kitchen cupboards.

"Do I smell smoke?" Priory's nose had begun twitching the moment she walked into the kitchen.

"It was just an odd candle or two." Zelda said off-handedly.

"Odd candle or two? Priory, do you remember my last birthday?" Chloe asked knowingly. Priory has teased her mercilessly about the fire hazard sitting in the middle of the table that day.

"And the smoke alarm didn't go off?"

"What?" Jacey was missing some of the conversation.

"That means there were probably thirty-odd candles sitting on the tablecloth."

Chloe didn't have the heart to tell her how close they had come to burning the house down.

"And why did you need so many candles? Did the power go off?"

"We had a séance," Zelda's tiny voice piped up. "And we contacted the dead."

"We did **not** contact the dead, Zelda dear. I thought we had settled that."

"What is she talking about?" Priory feigned incredulity.

"She thought a spirit was talking to her. I tried to explain that the house makes noises from time to time."

"Sure it does. Pipes squeal, the fridge shudders and the timbers creak. All sorts of funny things happen but we've gotten used to it, haven't we Jacey?"

"Yeah. Sure." She kept her mouth shut and let Priory do all the lying. She was the diplomat of the family so the outright fabrications were left to her more inventive partner. Instead she drank her coffee.

"Maybe you don't know it." Zelda was clutching at straws. The house was calling and only she was listening.

"We have been in this house for two years now, Zelda. We should know whether the house is haunted or not."

"There's just too much coincidence..."

"Now stop it!" Chloe interceded. "We have all said our peace and the matter is settled. Zelda dear, you are just going to have to accept that you were wrong on this one." Chloe stood quickly to end the matter. "Now I, for one, am really tired and would like to get some sleep. Where would you like me to sleep, Priory dear?"

"You stay put, Aunt Chloe. Jace and I will take the foldaway in the study."

"But dear-"

Priory held up her hand to stop any further argument. "Really, it's fine. We can rough it for one night, can't we hon?"

Chloe's eyebrow rose at the endearment, chuckling at the goo-goo eyes the girls were giving each other. "Sorry to interrupt your..... break."

"Yeah, well. My partner here," Priory grinned, "decided she needed a rest."

"Ahhh-she hasn't got the McAllister stamina."

"Please!" Jacey begged for them to stop. It was embarrassing enough with Priory but to talk about sex with an aged relative? It was just too shocking to mention.

Chloe passed her by and patted her on the arm, whispering conspirationally, "Welcome to the family, Jacey."

"Yeah, it was a bit of surprise to me as well."

"I saw it the last time I visited, my dear. It was only a matter of time. However, I was surprised how long it took my grand-niece to get off her ass and do something about it."

Chloe saw Priory's jaw drop. "Don't act so high and mighty, young pup. You know where your genes came from."

"Yeah, the upstairs closet you old faker." She drew Chloe into a warm embrace. "Good night, Aunty."

Zelda followed the old woman out the door and up the stairs, unhappy that her claims had been rebuked. Luckily she had a nephew who was a whiz with something called Photoshop. All she needed was the right setting.

* * *

The household had finally settled for the night. The excitement of the thief in their midst had faded and now exhaustion had set in. The home was once again in darkness, the timbers creaking as the heat bled out of the wood. All was quiet.

Rhea hadn't missed a second of her soaps since the robber was apprehended. Dylan had decided it was time to do something about her companion's obsession, well maybe at the end her current reality show. She had no problem with her shows, knowing that she could walk away any time

she wanted to.

Oh geez, man! You got voted off, now go!

Dylan couldn't figure out why they wanted to stay. On an island with some bozo who didn't give a shit about her? They could have it.

There was a squeak that told her that someone had walked on the bottom step. Priory was going to fix that but she wanted it to stay if, for nothing else, to warn her when Convent was coming. Dylan popped out to see who it was. It couldn't possibly be another robber so soon, could it?

But Dylan found someone that wasn't expected, or maybe she was. The mighty midget was trying to sneak up on them, holding something in her hand that looked a bit like Priory's picture box.

Dylan barely had time to appear in the attic to warn her lover before the door opened. Rhea had just switched off the television a second before the squeak from the hinges echoed through the partially-empty room.

What's she doing here?

How do I know, Rhee? But she's got that camera thing.

The two ghosts kept their conversation to themselves, watching the human move about their room. They knew very well that Priory didn't know anything about it, so Zelda was here without permission, much like the thief.

Does that mean I can fork her too?

You get a taste for violence and now you want to injure everyone who comes into the house.

Sometimes you can be a wet blanket, but why not? It's our home.

Yours and mine?

Rhea thought she knew who Dylan meant but it would be nice to hear it from her lover's transparent lips.

Yeah. Oh, and Convent and shorty. But don't tell them that.

What's she doing now?

It looks like she's taking pictures of the room. Why doesn't she just beat it?

The flash went off a number of times as Zelda took various shots of the room. "Yesss, yes, yes," she whispered to no one in particular. "If at first you don't succeed..." Zelda left the room as she

found it, softly chuckling as she closed the door.

This isn't good.

Maybe I could bump her off.

* * *

Rhea struggled to convince Dylan to wait until the morning with her news. Her lover would have woken up the women any time day or night if she thought she had something important to say. While she understood the need for humans to sleep Dylan just saw Priory and Jacey as two more of them, and as such they could be disturbed whenever she felt like it.

* * *

Dylan hovered overhead the next morning waiting for some sign that Priory was waking up. When she thought no one was looking, she prodded the woman trying to hurry up the process.

"Whaaa....?" Priory smacked her lips and snuggled in closer to Jacey's back.

Pssssttt.

"Jace, honey, do we have a snake in the house?" Priory said drowsily.

"Hmmm?" Jacey lazily hummed, not willing to face the day just quite yet.

"A snaakke," Priory mumbled before yawning loudly.

"Let him find his own bed." Jacey just couldn't care.

Oh for Gawd's sake, wake up.

"Not now, Casper."

I got somethin' important to tell ya.

"And I've got something important to tell you. Go away."

Dylan floated down to within arm's reach of the sleeping women.

That Medium-to-Well-Done has been taking pictures in the attic.

Dylan moved back out of reach waiting for a response.

"So? Maybe she likes Jace's sandpit. Who cares?"

She said something about 'if at first you don't succeed'?

Priory's eyes opened and she stared at the back of Jacey's head.

She seemed awful happy about them pictures.

"If at first...", Dylan said slowly, trying to gather her scattered, sleepy thoughts. "That little witch!"

"Hmmm?" Jacey rubbed herself against her sleeping partner. "Who's a witch? Not another one!"

"No. honey, but I think Mini-Me is trying to pull a swift one on us."

A swift... one?

"She's going to doctor some photos to make it look like we have a ghost."

Are the photos sick? Doctor?

"Sorry, Casper. She's going to make some fake photos of this house."

How's she gonna do that?

"Things have come a long way since your day, Dylan." Priory was now fully awake, but she was not ready yet to leave the cosy little love nest she was ensconced in. "Those pictures she took of the attic? She'll find someone who can put a ghost or two into those pictures and make it look real."

She can do that?

"She sure can. And unless we stop her, she's going to use that as evidence that the house is haunted and we'll have every ghost hunter, paranormal investigator and skeptic in the world on our doorstep."

Do you want me to rub her out?

"That's a bit extreme. No, I have another idea..."

* * *

There was no opportunity early that morning for any action. The detective returned right after breakfast to get Chloe and Zelda's statement about the robbery. Dylan coached the old woman beforehand about what she had done so at least the story to the police would be nearly right. Satisfied with their statements the detective left, leaving the household to solve its latest problem.

Since the girls had come home early, arrangements had been made for Gerald to pick up the two women up after lunch.

* * *

"I don't know how to tell you this, Aunt Chloe, but it looks like Zelda is going to take matters into her own hands as far as the ghosts in this house are concerned." Priory spoke softly. It was hard to hear bad news about someone you liked.

"I thought we had settled the matter last night."

"Apparently not to her satisfaction."

Will you all stop beating your gums and take some action?

Rhea and Dylan floated nearby while the women held their meeting, as usual, in the bathroom.

"So what are we going to do?"

"Casper, you go and do what you do best."

Really? You're not teasing me now, are you?

"Nope. Go and cause some mayhem."

There was a ghostly laugh as Dylan faded.

"Don't break anything or set the house on fire, alright?" Priory murmured to herself.

"Maybe we should build a room just for family meetings. We seem to congregate here an awful lot."

BBlluuurrrrrbbllelelellleeeee...

"As Bova so eloquently pointed out she is part of the family too." Priory ignored her partner's pointed stare.

"She's not going to touch my pussy, is she?" Chloe cursed her slow memory.

"Who? Bova? Well unless she falls in again..."

"No! Derek... Doris... ahhh, whatever her name is!"

"Sorry, Aunt Chloe, I can't promise that **Bella** won't be touched. We are talking about **Dylan** after all."

"Well she doesn't like being played with."

"Oh, I don't know-" Jacey was rather enjoying the banter.

"I'm sure that Dylan will be gentle with your....," Priory gulped and closed her eyes, "...pussy."

"Couldn't win, huh?" Jacey whispered to the defeated woman.

"You are enjoying my suffering too much, young lady. I have a basement planned with your name on it."

"Well, it could be cosy. I can put up all those photos..." Jacey replied wickedly.

"What photos?"

"Naughty ones, Chloe."

"Oooo, tell me more."

"That's enough!"

"Ahhh, now I understand." Chloe giggled and winked. "Got caught, Priory?"

"I plead the Fifth."

* * *

Dylan was so excited. She had been given the key to the candy store and she couldn't decide what to do. As if answering her plea, Bella sauntered down the stairs and crossed the foyer to head towards her favorite sleeping place, the sofa. The ghost had been ignoring her arch-nemesis for a while now and it was about time she showed the white wig who was boss.

* * *

Bbrroooooowwwwwww!!

"Right on time." Priory knew she could rely on that pain the ass to get right to the point.

"My poor pussy!" Chloe flung open the door. "If she pulls out one hair..."

"Don't say it," Jacey hissed, "Just don't say it."

"Do you ever have one of those days?" Priory followed her aunt out of the bathroom.

"Often." Jacey sighed. If only Priory walked a mile in her shoes.

* * *

Priory showed up a second after Chloe's arrival and they both stood there in awe. Bella was vainly holding onto one of the blades of the ceiling fan as it rotated slowly.

"Can't you do something?" Chloe was having second thoughts about the plan.

Priory just wished that Jacey was here so she could see the sight for herself. This was better than the vacuum cleaner as far as she was concerned. The clip-clop of shoes on the stairs announced Zelda's arrival.

"What are we going to do?" The inane words came out of Priory's mouth.

"What's wrong?" The familiar child-like voice was now simply annoying.

"My pussy is hanging from the ceiling fan."

"How did it get up there?" Zelda tried to think of a number of scenarios and none of them resulted in the cat hanging from the fan. Her eyes narrowed as she watched the pitiful animal.

"I have no idea." Priory tried to sound innocent but Bella looked so ridiculous lying along the flat of the blade. She just liked watching the cat's eyes bulge out every time her head came into view. Now she only hoped that the feline didn't puke on her carpet.

"Here, let me..." Zelda went over to the fan switch to stop it, instead twisting it the wrong way and increasing the speed. "Oh... Oh..."

Priory jumped into action and lunged at the wall. She managed to shut the motor down but it was already too late. The blades were spinning faster than when they had first arrived.

BBroooowwww.... rrrroooowwww..... rrrroooowwwwww.... rrrroooowwwwww...

The ball of white fluff rotated around and around, her pitiful cries growing and fading with each rotation. There was an almighty screech as Bella's claws tried to find a hold on the smooth blade. Finally her grip gave way, sending a streak of white towards the window. For a moment Bella just hung there, her face squished into the glass and her legs flung out like a huge X, looking like a toy Garfield stuck to a car window. She slid down the glass with a squeak, dropping like a stone until she hit the carpet with a thud.

"Oh, my poor dear." Chloe quickly scooped up her furred companion and gave her a suffocating cuddle.

Priory had to stifle a laugh. The cat's eyes nearly popped out as her aunt tried to squeeze the life out of her. Finally Bella gave up being nice and started to fight the strong arms around her.

"How about we get a cup of coffee?" If all else failed, offer a cup of coffee. That seemed to be the motto in this household when something strange happened.

"I'll get it." Jacey's voice joined in the conversation, her final step leaving her at the bottom of the stairs.

Bella finally won her battle with her owner and ended up on the carpet. But the room was swimming and her legs made her stagger like some drunken catnip-sozzling she-cat.

Priory laughed as Bella lurched from side to side towards the kitchen. The cat had a hard time negotiating the doorway, bouncing from one side to the other as she tried to walk through.

Priory's smile dropped as Bella stopped and began to heave, like she was coughing up a fur ball. "Oh no, no, no, no, no!" In one swift motion she scooped up the cat and headed out the back door.

Jacey arrived in the kitchen just as Priory's voice cried out.

"Oh, damn it you piece of crap!"

"Priory!" Chloe objected to her beloved cat being mercilessly sworn at.

"She just threw up on my back porch!" The disembodied voice floated into the kitchen.

"That's still no reason to cuss, young lady!"

But Jacey knew that Priory was holding back. Her lover knew a lot worse words than that.

"And who's going to clean it up, huh?" Priory indignantly asked.

Me. Jacey just sighed.

* * *

"So, did you fix it up?" Priory muttered out of the corner of her mouth.

"Mmmm-mmm," Jacey hummed behind closed lips.

Chloe was fussing over her sick cat and Zelda sat back confused about the whole situation.

"How did she get up there?" Zelda wasn't convinced that it was an accident.

"How do I know? That damn cat nearly got sucked up the vacuum cleaner the last time she was here." Priory was glad at least that was the truth. The one thing about telling a lie was that it led to more lies, and the more lies there were to keep track of the higher the risk of getting caught out.

"Jerbil... errr Jacey?"

Jacey gritted her teeth, knowing that the midget did that on purpose. "Well I was with Priory and Chloe when the cat screeched." Another truth. So far so good.

"But there's no way she could have gotten up there."

"Well, she found a way that we couldn't see." Chloe was tired of the constant criticism. "Look, just accept that she got up there somehow."

"And the fact that the fan was running?"

Can I kick her butt now?

Dylan whispered in Priory's ear and smiled when she tried to hide a snicker.

You want to do it as much as I do, Convent.

"I'd been meaning to get that thing fixed. I think there's a short circuit."

"Zelda! Enough!" Chloe stood with Bella in her arms. "Let's go pack. Gerald will be here soon." She moved out of the room fully expecting the medium to follow her.

Priory took another sip of her coffee, allowing a few moments to pass before speaking. "Whew! I'm glad that's over."

"And I missed it."

"If I hadn't seen it for myself I wouldn't have believed it myself. That poor cat."

"Poor cat? Are we talking bout the same feline?"

"Any animal facing Dylan is poor."

"Then poor Priory," Jacey cooed, planting a kiss on her lover's cheek. She earned a glare for her comment but she was unrepentant.

"So what happened?" Priory was eager to find out what Jacey did.

"Let's just say, thank God for lens caps."

"Priory!" Chloe's voice called urgently.

"Now what!" Priory put her half-empty coffee mug in the sink. "I think I'm going to need another holiday."

Jacey relaxed and sat down at a now vacant chair to finish her coffee. Priory could handle whatever new catastrophe that had erupted.

"Aunt Chloe?" Priory called through the closed bathroom door. "Are you okay?"

The door creaked opened an inch. "Can you get me a change of clothes, dear?"

"A...change... of..."

"I've had an accident."

"Okkayyy."

Priory reached the portmanteau and gave up trying to lift the baggage onto the bed. Maybe her aunt brought some of her house with her, because the bag felt like it had bricks in it.

She was uneasy about rifling through her aunt's clothing, especially her unmentionables. She was family. You just didn't go through a relative's underwear.

"Priory, dear, are you having a problem?"

"Be right there!"

Priory quickly glanced at the mass of cloth and closed her eyes as her hands delved into the pile. When it felt like she had enough to clothe her aunt she carried them to the bathroom door.

She knocked loudly. "Here you go!" The door opened more fully and she managed to find an interesting spot on the wall to stare at.

Priory felt the material leave her hand and heard the door close. She hummed quietly as she leant against the wall waiting for the door to re-open. Nothing happened and time seemed to drag on. She was just about to go in and rescue the old woman when the door opened once more.

"Priory!"

Chloe was annoyed, Priory could hear that in her voice. Then she looked and could see why. "Oh."

"Yes, oh." Chloe looked down at her state of dress. "I look like a bag lady! Did you look?"

"Of course not."

"No? Why on earth not?"

"Chloe!!! You're... you're my aunt!"

"Great aunt!"

"Exactly. I wasn't going to look at your stuff."

"You've never seen an old lady's underwear before? You should you know. You'll be there soon enough."

"Awwww, Chloe," Priory whined. "I gave you enough to get to the bedroom."

"Once I stop looking like I slept in a dumpster I want to have a word with you!"

Once Chloe disappeared Priory walked into the bathroom and closed the door. She lowered herself to her knees and peered into the bowl. "Oh God!" She instantly regretted getting close to the action and had to reach for the air freshener. While Chloe visited the can didn't stray too far from pride of place on top of the cistern

Priory opened the window and breathed deeply to replace the odorous air in her lungs. "What *does* she eat?" No wonder Bova was upset.

When the room had finally cleared enough for Priory to approach the toilet without suffocating, she knelt in front of the bowl. "Now, what's the problem?"

Ggrrrrruummbbllleeeee

"Wow! Are you okay?"

Bbllluurrrrrrbbbb

"You poor thing. But I don't think Chloe did it on purpose. I think she was just trying to help."

BBlub bblub pop pop pop trricckllleeee

"That wasn't very nice." Priory tried to sound sincere but if someone had tried to poison her she'd probably take more drastic action than a mere ass washing.

There was a knock at the door a second before it opened. "Now if it had been Zelda..." Chloe pointed out.

"I would have told her I felt sick. Now," Priory rose to her feet, "what's going on between you two?"

"Me and Zelda?"

"Nooo, you and Bova. She said something about being poisoned."

"I did not poison her. I found the toilet block in the cupboard and put it in. How was I to know she would react to it?"

"See?" Priory addressed the water, "I told you she didn't mean it."

B... l... u... b

"Don't sulk. And she apologizes. Don't you, Chloe?" Priory's eyebrow rose to reinforce the request.

"Yes, I do. I'm sorry, Bova. I thought I was helping you."

"There. Now it's all settled. Let's shake hands and make up."

Pop pop pop..... whoooosshhh

"See? That wasn't so hard, was it?"

Burpleburbleburble

"Stop mumbling. You know I can't understand you when you mumble." Priory turned her attention to Chloe. "Okay, Aunty. No retaliation. You tried to poison her and she washed your ass. The score is even. Am I understood?"

The doorbell rang just at the right moment. "How fortuitous." Priory grinned. "You like that? Fortuitous. I didn't even know I knew the word. So on this fancy-schmansy word your visit is finished."

"Don't call me anytime soon, honey."

"I'll try not to, except maybe for the unveiling of the extensions."

"Sure I'd be happy to come, but as far as babysitting is concerned I think I've had my fill." Chloe backed out of the bathroom and headed towards the top of the staircase. "Ahh, Gerald dear, the bag is up here." Chloe banged on the spare bedroom door. "Zelda, dear, time to go!"

The door creaked open and Zelda walked out with her suitcase, a hint of a smile crossing her tiny face.

I bet that'll change when she gets a load of them pictures.

"Let's hope so," priory muttered.

"Did you say something, dear?"

"I was just hoping that Bella will be better when she gets home."

"I'm sure she will, after a visit to Madam Fifi's."

Priory glanced at the cat and saw a woe-begotten look there. It was as if the cat knew what her owner was talking about. "See you around, Bella. Don't catch any rotten mice now, you hear?"

Zelda walked down the stairs to the front door, stopping momentarily to look at her salvation one more time before leaving the house once and for all. She could just see the front cover of Medium Weekly-'House of the Week'-and her name would be right under it. Oh yes, her future was assured.

Priory hugged her aunt at the top of the stairs.

"Is everything alright, dear?"

"Yep. Jacey took care of it." Priory pulled back. "Look, I know you like Zelda and all, but don't **ever** bring her here again."

"What ever gave you the idea that I liked her, Priory dear?"

"Well, errr...", Now Priory was confused. "You brought her with you and I thought-"

"I told you before, dear, she ambushed me. I just couldn't say 'no'."

"Well, say it next time, will you?"

"Rest assured, she won't be back, and I'm sorry that your 'break' was cut short."

"Don't worry, Aunt, I'll make up for lost time."

"Then I feel sorry for poor Jacey." Chloe caught Gerald signaling in the corner of her eye. "Well, there's my ride. You take care of yourself."

"You too, Aunt Chloe." Priory lent her arm to assist Chloe down the stairs.

"I'm not that old that I can't get down the stairs by myself."

"I know but I wanted to." That sentiment earned her a squeeze of her arm.

They stopped at the door and Chloe drew in Jacey for a hug. "You look after her now, you hear?"

"I will, Chloe."

"And you two," she said to the ceiling, "try to give my Priory some relief, alright?"

Chloe stepped out into the sunshine and started to walk down the footpath. She stopped and turned back. "Oh, before I forget. My love to Bova," she said with a wink.

Priory could hear the chuckle as her aunt continued down the path to the Chevy waiting at the curb.

So the old duck finally gone, huh?

"Yep, and so has your play toy"

Who? Zelda or the fluffy mitten?

"Take your pick, Dylan. Take your pick." Priory closed the door. Finally the house was theirs again and life was sweet.

THE END.

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