

~ The Homemaker's Journal Featuring Articles on Pruning The Family Tree, Getting Rid Of Unwanted Cat Hair And Fixing Leaking Lavatories ~ by Aurelia

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

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

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

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

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

AUTHOR'S NOTE: This story takes place BEFORE "The Halloween Hunter's Guide to Trick-or-Treating Tots, Ambling Apparitions And Porta-Potties"

THANKS: To Poe, who lets me go out and play in the sandpit while she does grownup Beta stuff. I have a two-story mansion built on the shifting sand. I'm thinking about an Olympic-sized swimming pool.

FEEDBACK: I'm always open to comments, preferably nice ones, so let me know what you think at: aurelia_fan@yahoo.com.au

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Pitter patter... drip... drip... drip.

The water ran down in rivulets over the naked body standing in the tub. Heated streams followed the paths that had been chosen by the drops before them. Priory sighed. The warmth seeped into tired aching muscles, a welcome relief after an amorous bout of lovemaking the night before with Jacey. No one got much sleep last night. Not her, nor Jacey, nor their two freeloaders. She chuckled.

* * *

Cut it out, will ya?

Dylan had been livid. Was it because of what they were doing, or more of what she wasn't doing? "We're not keeping you up, are we?" Boy did that piss her off.

Nah. I'm just waiting for the pictures to develop. What do you think?

"I think you're peeking, Casper. What did I say about that, huh?"

Never wash your whites and colors together?

"Rhea!"

"Do you have to do this **now**?" Jacey felt particularly vulnerable at this moment, lying on the bed face up with Priory hovering over her. "Oh God...." She looked over to see the small apparition appear.

Ummm... errrr... oh! Oh! Oh! Oh my...

Despite her protestations, Rhea couldn't help but look.

"Will you tell that.... that... partner of yours that this room is out of bounds. This is not a baseball game and she is **not** going to sit in the bleachers and yell out obscenities at me. You got that?"

Unless you're planning on doing something totally disgusting to Jacey there, Convent, my lips are sealed.

"Casper, you couldn't keep your lips sealed even if they were super glued together."

"Look, I'm obviously a third wheel here..." Jacey just wanted to shrivel up and die.

"Oh, no, no, no. Just stay put there, young lady. I'm not finished yet."

"The moment has gone, Abbey."

"Not just yet, lover." "What makes you think I'm gonna stay put?"

"Because my ass is crying out for attention."

"You play dirty."

You can say that again...

"Desperate times call for desperate measures..."

* * *

Priory's mind returned to the present, her hands brushing the soap and washer over her sweaty body. Things had turned out pretty good despite the intermission. Rhea managed to keep her overactive partner busy while Priory finished what she had begun.

A shadow passed over the plastic shower curtain, disappearing as quickly as it had appeared. "Hello?" There was no reply. Priory stuck her head around the plastic. "Jace? Is that you?" She was alone in the bathroom, the door firmly closed. "Huh..."

Priory started humming to try and cover up the strains of Psycho playing in her mind. Considering the state of the household she wasn't going to dismiss any absurd idea that popped into her head. Her humming stopped. There was a click. Someone was in the room with her. A blinding flash bounced off the ceiling, followed by a second flash off the wall. Where was Jacey?

* * *

Dylan was still smarting over the dressing down from Rhea last night. Geez, talk about taking the fun out of life... death. What was she going to do now? The sound of running water reached her ears and a sly smile touched her lips. Old habits die hard...

Priory was in the shower, the shadowed body shifting as the woman washed. Hmmm... Dylan's mind was already in action. Smiling a ghostly smile she faded away, materializing in Priory's bedroom. In the top drawer of the bureau was what she was looking for. She floated back to the bathroom door, this time opening it instead of walking through it.

Now how did this thing work? She had watched Priory using it only yesterday. The small box was a mystery since she had been used to something much bigger and more cumbersome when she was alive. Dylan concentrated, applying pressure to a button on the top. Nope, that didn't work. She began pushing buttons randomly until the box opened, setting the camera lens into the ready position. A quiet snicker escaped her lips.

Thinking it only a matter of pushing another button, her ghostly finger pushed everything and the camera began to whirr, trying to keep up with the mixed instructions being delivered.

Oh crap...

Suddenly the flash went off in her face, blinding her for a moment with the white wash across her vision. Instinctively her finger was still on the button pushing it. Flash! Another splash of white hit the wall... then the toilet... and the sink. The floor tiles looked nice too. It was like when she first began to drive. The beast jumped into life and she grabbed the wheel and hung on for dear life.

The camera just wouldn't stop. Click... flash... click...flash. Whrrrrr.....

Holding it at arm's length, she pointed the camera around the curtain at Priory, hoping to God that the thing didn't jump out of her hands. Flash... flash... flash....

"What the hell...?"

He he he. Gotcha, Convent...

"Dylan? Stop that! Get the hell outta here!"

Not just yet. I'm gettin' some holiday snaps for the girlfriend.

"Don't make me ghost-proof the bathroom." Priory was fuming. "Rhea!"

Awww... why did you do that?

"Why? I'm in the shower dripping wet and you're scaring the beJesus out of me. You are a pervert, you know that?"

Hey, I wasn't the one... pre-verting last night, convent. I didn't know you could do that. Maybe I should report you to the pre-vert police.

"Rhea! Get her outta here! **Now!**" The shower curtain came back to reveal a mad dripping woman whose eyes were blazing at the hovering apparition. Priory stepped out of the bathtub onto a slippery floor, her legs sliding out from underneath her. "Shit!"

Ohhh, Convent, naughty naughty...

But the brunette didn't reply, lying on her back in silence for several moments. A moan finally escaped her lips.

Hey, that's not a bad impression. Can you do Jimmy Durante?

Rhea made an appearance, bracing herself for whatever complaint had been lodged against her partner. The last thing she expected to see was a naked Priory sprawled over the floor and Dylan standing over her taking photos. The toilet was flushing animatedly in response to the drama. It didn't take her a moment to realize that Priory was in trouble.

Oh God...

The words floated on the air as the smaller ghost disappeared, materializing next to Jacey in the kitchen.

You gotta come. Priory's in trouble.

Jacey's heart rate rose, more from the scare than the flight of stairs she was running up. She flung

the bathroom door open to find her prostrate lover on the floor, agony written over every single line on her face. "What happened?"

She slipped getting out of the tub. I...I didn't do nuthin'.

Dylan left, the camera falling to the floor with a clatter. Jacey doubted that was true but she was not going to argue the point. She rushed to Priory's side, dropping painfully to her knees. "Are you okay?" But the woman was just breathing in and out rapidly, her eyes fluttering. "Oh God, hon, talk to me."

The toilet burped, asking the silent question.

"I... oh crap... I think my ass is broken."

Her ass....? NNNnnnnoooooooooooo. That precious piece of anatomy was broken? Jacey's world started to crumble. Shakily she picked up the discarded camera and ran to the bedroom. She reached for her cell and threw the camera on the bed, her finger already punching in 911 on her way back to the bathroom. As her hand slid over Priory's wet skin in comfort Jacey placed the call.

"They'll be here soon, hon," Jacey cooed softly, her insides at odds to her external calm. "What happened?"

Priory just lay there. Pain lanced through her lower back and she was not game to move. She started to shiver as the cold from the floor flooded through her body.

"Hang on..." Jacey ran to the closet and pulled out a blanket. *Good plan, egghead... You were going to leave her lying in her birthday suit when the paramedics arrived?* She just couldn't think straight...

* * *

Just what do you think you were doing?

Not you too....

Yes, me too. Dylan, you've gone too far this time.

But...

No buts, hon. Priory is hurt.

I didn't mean it. Don't you believe me?

Sure I do, but you gotta be more careful. Think, Dylan, before you act.

Are you saying that I don't think?

There was no good answer to that question, so Rhea said nothing, which was probably a bad answer in itself.

Fine.

You know what you gotta do.

Yeah. Go play nice.

Good girl...

* * *

"I gotta get dressed."

"You'll do no such thing!"

"I am not going to be caught in the altogether."

"You've hurt your back. You're not moving until the doctor says you can move. You got me?"

"I'm fine... really."

"Which part of 'no' didn't you understand?"

"Now listen here..." Priory didn't like being bossed around when she hurt.

"Don't make me call your mommy..."

"Don't you dare!"

"You don't want me to contact your parents about the accident?"

"No... and **no**!"

Jacey was taken aback by the vehement negative response of her injured lover. From the toilet bowl came a squirt of water, hitting her squarely in the back. She wondered what had happened to garner such a response. "If it was my child I'd want to know."

"Not this child..." She wouldn't wish the consequence of phoning her parents on anyone, especially herself. She was hurt. All she wanted was to crawl into bed and die quietly. The air shifted. "Oh, great... Come to finish the job?"

Look, Convent.... I'm coming to...

Jacey studied Dylan and could see that she was trying to apologize. The ramrod torso told her

that much. It was costing the ghost a lot to grovel for forgiveness.

I'm sorry, okay? It was a joke that got out of hand.

"Why you..."

Jacey interceded before Priory told her off. "Fine, Dylan. I hope you learned something from this."

I'm not a five year-old, Jacey.

Those haunted eyes stared at her, not liking being talked to like a kid.

"But it was a five year-old trick, wasn't it?" She gently patted the fallen woman. "And this trick had consequences." Jacey's eyes shifted to Priory's. "You hurt something that is very precious to me."

Yeah, her butt...

"No..." How come that sounded like a lie? "Well, yeah there's that, but you hurt her, Dylan. Remember what I said?"

Yeah, I remember... oh crap.

"Remember what?" Priory may have been in pain but she picked up that particular threat. "What's going on?" She shifted to get up then thought better of it. "Oh.... My... God..." She blew out a rough breath in response to the shard of pain lancing through her back. "What did she say?"

"Nothing...", Jacey muttered, her lips firmly shut.

She said you would be a pain in the ass if you ever got sick... or something. I don't think she meant it literally though.

"You said that?" Her ass throbbed in time to her heartbeat and it was seriously pissing her off.

"Well... I... "

I'm outta here.

"Geez thanks, Dylan." Jacey muttered. "Just stay out of our hair for a while," she hollered to the ceiling. "Now..."

"You... think I'm gonna be a nuisance?" Priory was hurt. She thought that Jacey didn't possess a nasty bone in her body, but it seemed that she was wrong.

"I..." *Oh shit*. She had to move into damage control. "I was just trying to scare Dylan out of doing something stupid, that's all." She looked into hurt eyes. "I love you, you know that."

"But... a pain in the ass?" Priory was not going to drop it.

"You were, remember? A 'pain in the ass' boss. But as your ass is mine I suppose that it means your pain is mine." It was a stupid statement but it got a small smile out of Priory. The doorbell rang and Jacey made a move to answer it. "Now don't move..." Again Priory smiled.

* * *

Several hours later the two women returned to the house. Jacey resorted to following the ambulance in her own car. She had to come home sometime and her own transport would make the journey easier. As it turned out, the injury was not as bad as first thought. An X-ray confirmed no broken bones but the small of her back was swollen and bruised, the skin turning a nice shade of purple. The cheeks of her ass felt like she had been paddled to death by some demented dominatrix. The playground was off limits to Jacey for a while.

Priory was thankful for the injection from the doctor because the trip home on her stomach on the back seat of Jacey's SUV was a nightmare. Slide... bang... squish the face into the leather... repeat when necessary. She knew Jacey was trying to drive as carefully as possible, but between the turns and twists of the car and the sedative effect of the injection she wondered whether she should have just sat there and taken the pain.

Jacey struggled to get her out of the car, trying to back the woman out without grabbing her ass. Priory had to use her face as a crutch as she shimmied slowly out the door. What a sight! If the woman wasn't hurt it would be almost ludicrous.

* * *

"We're home!"

So, what did the doc say?

"Everything is fine."

"Everything is **not** fine," Priory replied grumpily. "I have an ass the size of Manhattan and it feels like Lizzie Borden has been taking out her rage on it."

"Lizzie Borden?" Jacey's eyebrows rose.

"You know, twenty whacks..."

"Okay, if you say so." Priory's comment came out of left field.

Quit the chatter. Fill us in.

"It's just bruised, that's all."

"That's all?" Priory glared at Dylan. "You gave me the ass from hell and that's all? Do you know how much one uses their ass?"

Oh dear...

"More than one thinks, let me tell you. Using the damned toilet is going to be a nightmare."

The doorbell rang. One looked to the other until all heads were swiveling wildly in all directions.

Anyone gonna answer that?

"You gonna stand there and watch?" Priory retorted.

Jacey opened the front door to see a short, dumpy woman of perhaps seventy years of age standing there. Her first thought was Aunt Clara from the TV show 'Bewitched', except without the crushed hat perched on top of her head and she was twenty pounds heavier. At least the woman wasn't living in the Sixties. A large white furball was tucked securely under one arm and a portmanteau sat on the doorstep.

"Oh no...", Priory's muttered words touched Jacey's ears.

"Yes?" But the small blonde was ignored as the woman pushed past her to envelope the brunette in her one vacant arm.

"Priory, darling, I heard the news..."

Jacey looked at the couple, taking in the storm clouds crossing her lover's face. She shook her head and shrugged. The anger turned to agony as the strong arm traveled down her back to the base.

"And who is this?" The bass voice held a touch of an English accent... or was that snobbery? Jacey couldn't tell. Maybe they were one in the same.

"This..." Priory tried to clear the stars in her eyes. "This is..."

"Hello, my name is Jacey Ryder. I work with Priory."

"Jacey, this is my great-aunt, Cloisteria Shepherd." She dared not to look at either of them, for fear of giving away too much. "What are you doing here?"

"I came to visit my favorite grand-niece. What's wrong with that?"

"I'm your only grand-anything, Aunt Chloe." Priory tried really, really hard to look pleased to see her only living relative, besides her parents of course. But Aunt Chloe was the last person she

wanted to see, and that included her parents.

Cloi-oyster-hysteria? That's a name?

"The name I was born with, dear." The matronly woman muttered over her shoulder, her eyes never leaving her grand-niece.

Jacey's hand came up to her mouth. Fervid blue eyes glared at her and she could only shake her head vigorously and point at the ceiling.

What's with the mutt?

Jacey's other hand came up and covered the other hand already over her mouth. She knew very well that Priory had been watching and listening.

"The *mutt*, as you call her, is my pussy... my angel... Bella."

"Pussy... cat. Pussycat." Priory's heart was beating double time. All she wanted was a quiet life with Jacey. Not Jacey, two ghosts, a mad aunt and a demonic toilet. She was cursed, she just knew it.

You have a white pussy...cat?

"Pussycat. Pleeaassee. Don't do this to me now!" The pain from her ass was traveling to her brain. Priory rubbed her forehead in frustration, trying to rub away the problem.

"Priory dear, let's get you tucked into bed. That headache needs to be attended to."

That's not the only thing. She's got a broken butt.

"Really? Priory? Why didn't you call me?" Aunt Chloe deliberately ignored the blonde standing behind her.

"Isn't that why you're here?"

"Nnnoooo. Your mother called telling me you had bought a house. I just had to come and look." Finally she looked around the interior. "How... quaint." The way she said the last word told Priory volumes. "So... how did you get this broken.... butt, was it?"

"I slipped while getting out of the tub this morning."

"And Jezebel was here to help you?"

"She was..."

"Jacey..."

"She is staying here while... while..." Priory looked frantically at her lover.

"While my apartment is being renovated."

"Yes! Yes! That's it." Priory cringed inside and her almost enthusiastic response to the excuse.
"You can go back to mom and tell her everything is okay."

"But I just got here." Aunt Chloe stepped further into the foyer. The cat in her arm finally woke up, stirring restlessly.

She placed the cat on the ground, its mass of fine white fur already shedding from a quick shake.
Bbrrroooooowwww... Bella growled in warning. Her nose twitched and sniffed the air.
Bbrrroooooowwwwwwwww.... The growl grew.

"What's the matter with her?"

"Maybe she doesn't like Justine here."

"Jacey..."

But Priory's mind had thought of another possibility. Dylan. The cat can sense the ghost and doesn't like her. Oh, this was delicious...

"Now, show me my room, honey. It's upstairs near you, I hope." The chubby woman steered Priory up the staircase, climbing as fast as her age would allow. She stopped them half-way up and turned to Jacey standing near the door. "Oh, Jacqueline, you can manage my bags, can't you?" Before she had a chance to respond the duo continued their journey to the first floor.

"The name is Jacey..." she muttered to no one in particular. The portmanteau was still sitting on the doorstep. How the hell was she going to get that upstairs? She tested it, barely able to lift its considerable weight. "One hernia coming up..."

Thud, thud, thud... Jacey didn't try too hard to lift the case, allowing it to bang its way up the staircase. The damn cat sat right in the middle of the foyer refusing to budge, instead content to lick its fur, its genitals and cough up a fur ball. The amount of luggage did not bode well. The woman was going to be here forever.

* * *

"Just what the hell were you thinking?" Jacey was still trying to get the kink out of her back and the pain out of her groin as she spoke to the two ghosts in the attic.

What?

"That stunt you pulled downstairs. What is the matter with you today? Is it a full moon or something?"

She didn't suspect.

"Now she thinks I'm some rude-mouthed bitch. Thanks... very... much."

Jacey, she hated you the moment you opened the door.

"That may be, but it was my mistake to make, not yours." Jacey began to pace, not realizing her voice was rising in volume. "Things are going to be on edge the next day or so, so I would lay low if I were you."

Next day or so? You're kidding, right? That trunk must be her entire wardrobe. Honey... you're in trouble.

"Yeah, I think I am too." Worry lines etched a face too young to be carrying the burden of such problems. Jacey walked over to the hovering Dylan, her finger jabbing into the transparent body. "Priory is probably digging a hole in the backyard as we speak."

Backyard? Wha...?"

She'll behave.

"Fine." The blonde took a deep breath and plastered a smile on her stressed face. "Now... calm blue ocean... calm blue ocean..." Jacey repeated the phrase over and over as she left the attic, using it as a mantra to calm her soul.

Dylan looked perplexed.

I don't get it.

No, honey, and that's the problem. You don't get it. She was saying any more hi-jinx from you and we could be getting buried after all.

Oh? Ohhhh.... It wasn't that bad.

Rhea had to admit that the jokes were not intended to be life-threatening but there was always the risk. The bath was an accident... a horrible accident. The aunt, however, was foolhardy.

I think you better just behave, honey. Stay clear of the old woman. We need Jacey on our side if we want to stay.

And what am I gonna do, huh? You've got your soaps.

What about that game Priory bought you?

I need the box for that, remember? You gonna give it to me? Yeah, that's what I thought.

What about your newspapers?

I've read 'em ten times over.

Well, read them eleven times. Ask Jacey if she can find more. What about reading some of the newer ones? Find out what it's like outside this house.

Why bother? We'll never experience it. And I've done the crosswords three times.

Rhea's eyebrow rose.

Okay... once.

Silence.

Okay, I tried one clue.

Never mind, hon. I'm sure one day you'll get it.

Rhea loved her partner with everything that she was, but even she had to admit that words were not Dylan's strong suit. They tended to get in her way and often got her into trouble. Street smarts she had in spades, but that was about it.

* * *

Aunt Chloe spotted the young woman passing the door. "You there... Jennifer..."

"Jacey..." The word was ground out between clenched teeth.

"Can you fetch the Tylenol? Priory seems to be in some pain."

"She has already had pain medication."

"Well it's not doing any good, is it? Don't argue. Just get the medicine."

"I can't. The doctor gave her a shot at the hospital."

"Tish tosh, what does a doctor know?"

"What's good for the patient?" Jacey could see why Dylan took a shot at her. After a day or two of this she would be taking shots herself.

"While you're downstairs, she could use a glass of water, oh and bring up the spare pillow from your room as well."

My room? Downstairs? Jacey glared at Priory, who was resting on her stomach, her ass perched

in the air. She could see the apologetic look in those blue eyes, mixed with a bit of pain and a lot of drowsiness. "Sure, no problem."

"That's a good girl."

Jacey left quickly so the older woman didn't hear her teeth grinding.

* * *

What's wrong, hon?

"I've just been kicked out of my own bedroom and sent downstairs. Can you believe that?" Jacey looked from Rhea to Dylan, her anguish clearly written on her face.

I keep tellin' ya, the old broad needs a good kick up the butt.

"Is that your answer to everything?"

Yep. I was a gangster's sidekick, remember, and she was a gangster's moll.

Hey! Do you have to be so crude?

Just tellin' it like it is, Rhea.

*You **are** in a mood today, aren't you?*

We're doing just fine without an interloper.

Rhea laughed.

What's funny?

I seem to remember this conversation around, oh, Halloween last year.

Yeah, well. They're house-broken now. I'm not having some mad old hag bossin' us around and the fur-covered colon she calls a 'pussy' struttin' around like it owns the place. Angel? Satan more like it...

"It's just a cat..." But Jacey could see that the battle lines had been drawn. Secretly, she had chosen her side. May the best ghost win.

Aren't you late for work, honey?

"I phoned from the hospital and told them what's going on. I'll call back in a couple of days with an update. If they need us there's always the cell phones and we have a fax in the study... well, it seems it's my bedroom now."

Never mind. It's only temporary.

Why didn't anyone believe her?

* * *

Priory lay there in pain, depressed and agitated. She felt like she was on the verge of crying. Aunt Chloe had commandeered the guest bedroom as her own, leaving her alone in a double bed that cried out for a warmth that would be missing for a while. "I want my baby...", she murmured.

"She's here, honey."

The prostrate woman felt a coldness across her lower back, which caused her to jump. "Shit!" she hissed.

"Sorry. I thought it may help with the swelling."

"It's okkkayyy..." Her body relaxed under the gentle hand caressing her. "Just took me by surprise."

"What are we going to do?"

"I..." Priory's mind was mush, muddled to perfection with drugs, pain and anger. "I can't think straight right now. But she's not staying any longer than two days, even if I have to get out of bed and throw her out myself."

"That's not a very nice thing to say about family." Jacey heartily agreed but she wasn't going to let her partner know that.

"This... this is why I didn't want you to call my parents," she mumbled. "When they're overseas, Aunt Chloe steps in and takes over."

"Well, she's... eccentric."

"Nuts. Certifiably nuts."

I can see where the rampant insanity comes from now, Convent.

Dylan made an appearance, closely followed by Rhea who closed the bedroom door.

Look... I didn't mean for this to happen, you know? I was just havin' some fun.

Bloodshot eyes looked up from the pillow. Priory was just too exhausted to fight. "Alright. Truce?"

You betcha. We now have Mother Superior to beat. Hey, what's with all this religious crap.

Priory? Cloi-clust-crew-oyster... whatever her name is. Are you religious fanatics or somethun'?

"Zealots."

No, I am not jealous.

"Zea... ahh, forget it. I dunno. There's me and Aunt Chloe. My mom's name is... Faith... yeah, I suppose we are preoccupied with religion. Huh... never thought about it."

So, how come Aunt Diarrhea thinks she's top dog in your family?

"Well, there's only her, my parents and me. That's it. She's just being protective."

"What does she think I'm gonna do to you? She doesn't like me." Jacey definitely felt the outsider in the house.

You don't say?

"Sarcasm doesn't suit you, Dylan."

Jace, if she disliked you any more you'd be dinner for Satan there.

"Satan?"

"The cat, hon. It seems Bella has declared war on Dylan."

Priory laughed. "Oh, crap, that hurt." Her face crinkled up in pain. "But it was worth it." She tried to relax her spasming back. Couldn't they all leave her alone... except Jacey, of course. She could use some comfort right now. "Outdone by a cat, huh?"

Not for long. That doormat is mine. That's if I can figure out which end is which.

"I usually find the end with the tail is the back end." Priory knew she should put a stop to it before it began, but she never understood Bella either. Things were going to be decidedly uncomfortable in the next day or so. Somehow she just couldn't work up the energy to object. "Good luck."

Good luck? I said I'm going after that cat.

"I heard you."

You're really not feeling well are you, Convent?

"Nope."

Come on, sugar, let's leave her be.

"Oh, and Dylan? We'll get you a second box, okay?"

The apparition smiled.

You're alright, Convent... sometimes.

The two ghosts rose into the air and disappeared through the roof. At that moment the door swung open. "You should be letting her get her sleep, Jaclyn."

"I was just... never mind." Jacey left without another word. This woman was wearing her down. Maybe a nice nap would make the day look better. At this point it couldn't hurt. She trudged down the stairs, taking refuge in the 'cellar'. It wasn't really the cellar but it certainly felt like it.

* * *

Jacey woke on the unmade futon in the study, unaware of how much time had passed. The toilet upstairs was flushing urgently and it was enough to arouse her curiosity.

"Ahhh... there you are..."

"...Jacey."

"Yes. You will need more toilet paper." Aunt Chloe passed her as Jacey approached the bathroom door. "And the bed needs to be made up. Why is that? I thought you were sleeping there."

"I did. I... I... I'm sleeping downstairs for the moment." *Because of you, you old bat...*

"Fine. If you need me I'll be in the lounge room."

Jacey watched the older woman descend the stairs stiffly, her hunched body visually reminding her that age was her enemy. Damn the woman. She so wanted to take out her frustration on Chloe and then the woman showed the ravages of old age and her anger ran into the shadows to fester. "Yes, your majesty."

The toilet flushed again. Jacey was getting used to reading the various flushes that emanated from the bathroom. Not as clearly as Priory but she knew agitation when she heard it. As soon as she opened the door she knew what the problem was. "Good God. What did that woman eat?" Quickly she reached for the window, throwing it fully open.

Jacey closed the door, vainly trying to hold her breath. "It's okay, Bova. I'm working as fast as I can." The cistern had barely filled up when the toilet flushed again, this time small squirts of water washed up around the lip. It was like the poor thing was trying to gargle. "That must have been nasty, huh?"

Burp... burp...

She rummaged around in the cupboard under the sink, finally laying her hand on what she was looking for. "Voila." The last of her breath escaped her lips and she was forced to take another breath. "Brussel sprouts. That was it."

Whhiinnnnneeee

"Or maybe she's been dipping into her darling's cat food. Either way, bad choice. Bad, **bad** choice." She popped the lid on the aerosol and sprayed the scent liberally.

Whimper.....

"It's over, Bova." She patted the cistern lid before placing the can on top of it.

Grrrr....

"Yeah, I know. Until next time. And I thought I had it bad..." Jacey closed the door behind her, trying to decide what to do next. She opened the closet and removed some sheets. Her eyes fell onto the two damaged sheets, the eye holes clearly visible. Priory just couldn't get rid of them. So, she did like them after all.

"Jocelyn?"

"Jac... oh why bother?" She threw the sheets on the unmade bed and walked to the top of the stairs. "Yes, Aunt Chloe?"

"Bella has made a whoopsie."

Whoopsie? "And?" She held her breath. *Don't say it... don't say it.*

"You better come and clean it up before it absorbs into the sofa."

The aunt and the cat were working together, she just knew it. They were trying to break her down. Jacey trudged down the staircase, each step another nail in her psychological coffin.

Suck it up, Jace. Aunt Gastriea's not gonna take over our home.

"I think it's a bit late," Jacey murmured. The woman had been here no more than a couple of hours and she already owned the place. But Dylan's presence galvanized her. At least she wasn't alone spiritually. Somehow they were going to have to take back their home.

* * *

The blonde stood at the doorway to the lounge room. The old woman was seated in the recliner, her head buried in a Barbara Cartland novel. *Figures*. The white ball of fluff that passed for a feline sat next to her pride and joy, her 'whoopsie', gazing at her fixedly with fiendish brown eyes. The fluffy antenna of a tail twitched in the air, expressing her joy at making such a mess.

The cat looked nearly.... happy.

"It's over there, dear." Aunt Chloe didn't even bother to look up from her book, a lazy finger pointing over the pages towards the 'whoopsie' as she called it.

Jacey muttered silently as she moved into the kitchen. She absently reached into the household cleaners cupboard and stopped. Without thinking, she had given away her intimate knowledge of the household. She only hoped that Aunt Chloe wasn't around when she slipped up.

Armed with a roll of paper towel and an upholstery cleaner, Jacey returned to the lounge room. She was being duly ignored by everyone. Aunt Chloe was engrossed in her romance novel, her hand reaching into a familiar bag of marshmallows, while the cat was busy licking her paws.
Enjoying yourselves?

She could feel two sets of eyes watching her clean up the mess. The cleaner sat on the fabric in a thick foam eager to eat up the stain underneath. She walked away, hoping the cat would be inquisitive enough to taste it.

Jacey made a point of fumbling around for the vacuum cleaner, opening several cupboards and doors before finding its location. She knew exactly where it was but Aunt Chloe didn't know that. Well, hoped she didn't. The seated woman barely blinked as she put the vacuum down next to the recliner.

The blonde walked upstairs to make the bed. She didn't want to be in the same room as that woman while waiting for the foam to dry.

"You okay?"

"What are you doing up?"

"I could hear your teeth grind from the bed."

"No, you couldn't." Jacey barely believed that.

"No, but I would be if I were you."

"Why aren't you in bed?"

"I'm fine. It's my bruised dignity more than anything else, hon. My butt is throbbing but that's it." Priory looked into strained eyes. "I think you need me more than the bed."

"I will never **ever** call your parents, okay. Never."

"That bad?"

"The toilet is stressed out, Abbey. The poor thing is flushing like a demon... well, you know."

Jacey sighed deeply. "I've been kicked out of my bed and I'm now in the study. The cat is marking her territory and Dylan is on the warpath. What do you think?"

"How long have I been asleep?"

"Two hours."

"What else can go wrong?"

Jacey watched her lover stand there dressed in tracksuit pants, T-shirt and fluffy socks. She was just so damned cute. Her dark locks were mussed and errant strands were hanging in her eyes.

Psssttt....

"Huh?"

Pssstttt.... Hey...

"Did you spring a leak or something?"

Get your aching butt in here, Convent.

The two women walked into the bathroom, closing the door quietly behind them. "What's up?" Priory nearly laughed at Dylan's disgusted look. The pain was making her feel a little out of control. Everything seemed tinged with the absurd.

So what are we gonna do?

"We, Casper?"

Yesssss.... We. It's our house, ain't it?

Priory chuckled.

What?

"Our house. Who would have thought?"

That's what I said...

Rhea appeared next to her partner.

Don't get comfortable, Convent. It's only a truce for now. Well... no more dangerous jokes. I got that. What about Aunt Clueless and Satan? They're taking over this joint.

"I know that only too well."

Well, leave it to me.

"Dylan, I thought you were going after the cat."

I'm talented. I can handle two things at the same time.

"Don't say it..." Jacey mumbled.

"But..."

The point is... it's got to be subtle.

Why does everyone think I can't do subtle?

"Dylan, camera in the bathroom. Need I say more?"

We could always try to ignore them and they would go away...

Bbuurrbbllleeee....

"I'm so sorry, Bova."

"What did she say?"

"She doesn't know if she can handle another visit by Auntie."

Bbbbllllluuuurrrrrbbbbbboooooooooooooooooo....

"Now stop that moaning. We all have our problems here."

"Hello?" Chloe knocked loudly on the door. "Can I come in?"

The four women moved in different directions, Dylan and Rhea crossing through each other before disappearing up through the roof. The door creaked open to reveal Priory and Jacey trying to stand nonchalantly in the room.

"Ahhh, you're up, honey. How do you feel?"

"A bit tender, but okay Aunt Chloe."

"Can I... errr..." At that moment, the older woman's stomach gurgled and popped.

"Sure..." As Priory left her hand touched the top of the cistern, giving it a gentle pat.

"Oh, and Joy, some toilet paper please."

Priory could see the stiff movements of her lover, anger written in every line and curve. She smirked as the bathroom cupboard was flung open more energetically than was needed, banging against the tiled wall. The roll was slapped into the older woman's hand before the door was swiftly closed.

"There, there..."

"Don't 'there there' me. You have been blissfully unconscious while all this has been going on."

"Unconscious and in pain..."

Jacey took a deep breath, allowing the anger to bleed off with the exhaled air. "Yeah, I'm sorry all this has happened, Abbey. I know Dylan didn't mean it. I know she's a practical joker but she doesn't want to hurt you. I think the second TV may help."

"And a satellite dish I think."

"Do you think that's wise? Aren't Rhea's soaps bad enough without giving her more choice?"

"Rhea's soaps or Dylan's practical jokes. Hmmmm..... Tough choice."

"Have you two finished?" Both looked up at Aunt Chloe standing in the doorway. "Is that a TV I hear?"

"Errrr..."

"You don't seem to have one downstairs. May I use it?"

"Well...."

"You wouldn't deny an old woman now, would you Joan?" Aunt Chloe shuffled off, descending slowly to the ground floor.

"Are you going to tell her or will I?"

* * *

You want to what?

"It's just for a short while, Rhea." Priory had expected the small ghost to be meek about the request, but instead she was digging her heels in.

You want to take away my box?

Oh oh....

Dylan took a step back.

***You** want to take away **my** box?*

Take cover...

"Why? What's going on?"

You shouldn't have said that.

"What is going on?"

No one is gonna have my box.

Why do you think I haven't been able to play my game, huh? She was a gangster's moll, for cryin' out loud. You think that was for show?

*She... is... **not**... gonna... have... my... box.*

"Please, Rhea. Just for one day." Jacey tried to come up with an argument. "Nothing's going to happen in the next day or so. You know how these things work."

But... but... 'The Day After Yesterday'... 'Goliath Awaits'... 'The Waves On The Shore'... 'Country Cedars'.... I... can't...

"Yes, you can. Show yourself that you can do this."

Why do I need to? I want to watch them.

"But, can't you see that you are addicted to them? Are you going to admit that to yourself?"

Sure, I have no problem with it. What else is there to do?

"I could point out that you two existed quite well before we turned up. Have you forgotten Dylan so easily?"

Yeah. What about me?

Ghostly eyes blazed at her, forcing her back a foot or two.

Geez, what did I say?

Those eyes softened. She was right. They were all right. The floating body slumped slightly.

Take it before I change my mind.

As Priory and Jacey went downstairs with the TV, Priory piped in, "Remind me never to come between Rhea and her soaps."

* * *

The TV had been set up and the mess vacuumed up, as well as the covering of white over everything. The cat was shedding like a trooper and Jacey wondered why she wasn't bald yet. It seemed a bit pointless putting the vacuum cleaner away so she left it where it had been, beside Aunt Chloe's commandeered recliner chair.

* * *

The two women stood in the kitchen sipping a coffee. Priory had eyed the chair with horror and resorted to leaning against a cupboard with her shoulder. The warm beverage was welcome as the pain slowly resurfaced.

"Jaime!"

"I don't know how much more of this I can take."

Priory watched her lover leave. What a mess. She needed to step in and soon.

* * *

"You called?"

"Be a dear and fill this up for me." Aunt Chloe handed over her empty cup without fanfare, fully expecting the young woman to grab it before she let go.

Jacey studied Priory's relative. She was perfectly at home in the recliner, her legs resting comfortably on the raised cushion. The TV remote sat in her lap and a bowl of treats resided on the small table next to her. On the other side of the seat was the vacuum cleaner. The cat had been busy shedding, a faint blanket of white already visible on the sofa, even after she had already vacuumed it up.

In the background the TV droned on. Jacey didn't really care what was on. If it kept the old woman busy then it meant she wasn't bothering her. The discarded novel was tucked down between the chair and the woman's ample backside.

Jacey couldn't stand it anymore. She turned on her heel and left. "A simple thank you would be nice..."

"Did you say something, dear?"

"No." She left before she caused some grievous bodily harm.

* * *

"I've gotta get out of here for a while. Can you manage on your own?"

Priory was surprised at the sudden request. "Sure. Should I ask where you're going?" She was expecting any answer, not eliminating driving off a cliff as an option.

"I have a feeling that your aunt hasn't even thought about feeding that damned cat of hers."

Rip... rip... rip.

Jacey looked into the lounge room. "And maybe a scratching post. Bella just found the curtains." She grabbed her keys and wallet, making a swift exit before Priory had even managed to move to give her a kiss. "Back soon." The lips were already gone and all that was left was the two words floating in the air.

* * *

Rhea, honey, think of it this way...

Just who the hell does she think she is, huh?

Priory's aunt? A guest?

This was foreign territory for Dylan. Usually it was Rhea placating her, not the other way round. She hadn't seen Rhea this riled up since before they had died. Normally Rhea was a gentle pussycat, but come between her and whatever her passion was at the time and she was a roaring lioness. For a moment she even felt sorry for the aunt who was in for a whole heap of pain.

I'll be back...

Rhea faded even as she spoke, leaving Dylan alone. *Oh boy.* And they talked about her being a troublemaker.

* * *

Dylan materialized in the corner of the lounge room, waiting anxiously to see where Satan was. She had yet to figure out what to do about that... that... thing and didn't want to engage the enemy until she did.

Rhea sat hovering in the air, perched over Aunt Chloe's right shoulder. As far as she could see the woman was asleep, her precious box playing some sort of... well, she wasn't quite sure what it was but it involved money. The remote was just sitting there in Chloe's lap. It was so close...

Chloe had been dozing, the sound of 'The Price Is Right' lulling her into a mindless sleep. Suddenly, the sound changed.

"Rick... don't do this to me."

"But, Rachel, I caught you sleeping with that man."

"That was no man, Rick..."

"Whaa....?" Chloe pushed the remote and the familiar sound of women screaming filled the room. She reached for a treat. Wasn't that bowl a little closer? Never mind. The candy touched her tongue as the titles came up on the screen, 'The Candle In The Window.' Without batting an eyelid her pudgy finger tapped the remote.

The show continued for a few moments and Chloe muttered, "Higher, you moron." The screen flickered and Rachel and Rick were on the screen looking at each other dramatically.

"No man? You are a sick woman, Rachel."

Again her finger poked at the remote and the screaming continued. The candy rolled around in her mouth, the sugar seeping into her system and giving her a nice buzz. She reached for another one, ignoring the fact that the bowl had once again moved to the far side of the table.

Dylan watched the whole scenario with one hand over her eyes, peeking through her spread fingers. And Rhea complained that she wasn't subtle. But Dylan just couldn't let her lover be caught, her protective instincts roaring into life. She jumped in front of the seated woman and pulled her pants down. She wiggled her ass at Chloe like a hula dancer on crack.

Rhea didn't know what to think. Had Dylan lost her mind? Yeah, that was it. A completely mad, slightly ignorant dancing ghost. She tried to change the channel again but her eyes were fixated on that wiggling butt. Damn. When did Priory say they could use their bodies again? Her transparent finger missed the box and prodded the old woman in the chair, shocking Chloe into action. The old woman startled, her left hand brushing the vacuum cleaner on the floor. It burst into life, the noisy humming drowning out the sounds of 'higher!' and 'lower!'

Dylan could feel the pull in the air as the machine sprang into life.

Oh, crap...

The suction continued, pulling at her life force. She tried to get away but she kept getting dragged in, her shape elongating into a thin stream the closer she got to the cylinder.

I could use some help here...

The tube finally caught her, dragging her along its length and into a bag filled with dust.

Oh... Oh... achoo... crap!

She now knew how a sardine felt, her form folded, molded and packed into a space where she could barely move. Dylan tried to meld through the outer casing but it held fast. She had never

had any trouble before, why not now?

Knock, knock.

Can someone get me out of here?

* * *

Rhea went into a panic. Dylan was gone. Oh God, where was Dylan. She was alone. She didn't want to be dead without Dylan. So she did the only thing she could do. She went in search of Priory.

Come... come... oh God... Dylan....

"Slow down. What are you talking about?"

That... that... thing... ate Dylan.

"Thing?"

Next to the seat where Aunt Chloe is sitting.

Priory stuck her head out of the kitchen and into the lounge room to see what Rhea was talking about. "She got sucked up into the vacuum cleaner?" Oh, this was too rich...

She can't get out. I can hear her knocking.

"What's Aunt Chloe doing?"

Nothing. She's a devil. She's letting Dylan suffer in there.

Priory looked again, studying the situation. Aunt Chloe was acting as if nothing had happened. Maybe she didn't see them and it was an accident. The vacuum cleaner was silent, the cat was on the sofa happily shedding away and The Price Is Right was blaring in all its high volume glory.

"Alright. Calm down. We can't do anything until Aunt Chloe leaves. I'm sure Dylan is okay."

But... but...

Rhea was wringing her hands nervously.

What if she can't breathe in there?

"Hey! You don't breathe at all. I don't think it's a problem. Just settle down, Rhea."

You wouldn't if it were Jacey...

"True. But then again Jacey needs to breathe." This was a touching moment seeing Rhea falling apart over a missing Dylan. Here was eternal love at its finest.

Priory looked once more and the room was empty except for the cat who had now curled up on the sofa. God, that was one ugly feline. She was a mass of white fur that seemed to be never-ending, if the amount of white hair liberally scattered all over the room was any indication. She looked like someone had slammed her face with a brick, her features sitting along one straight plane down her head.

"It's clear." Priory tip toed into the lounge room, her eyes flickering around for her aunt. Rhea flew straight by her, hovering in agitation next to the cylinder that had swallowed her love.

Hurry up...

"I'm moving as fast as a can."

Move faster...

"Yes, ma'am." Priory was not going to argue with the ghost in fear of her afterlife. Carefully she lowered herself to her knees and reached for the plug.

Sorry, Priory. I had forgotten about your injury.

"No problem. Let's get her out of here before something else happens." Priory could feel the pressure from inside even as she undid the clips holding the lid on. As the last one came free the lid flew off and Dylan emerged gasping for air that she didn't need.

That was nasty. What took you so long?

"So, what happened?" Priory averted her eyes as Dylan shook herself like a wet dog, sending a spray of dust and dirt all over the floor, the chair and her.

What does it look like, Convent. The damned thing ate me.

Well, d'uh. "Why couldn't you get out?"

I dunno. I couldn't get through the wall.

"Maybe it was all that dust inside you. If it was a tight fit maybe you weren't able to separate yourself from the solid matter inside." That sounded as good an explanation as any and it gave her hope. If that pain in the ass ever gave her trouble again all she had to do was to find the vacuum cleaner.

Dylan was perplexed. What did Convent say?

Errr... yeah... right.

Rhea smiled benevolently, knowing exactly what was going on in her lover's head, or, to be more precise, not going on. Hot air and the odd speck of dust. But it made Rhea realize how petty her search for the elusive soap really was.

Come on, hon. Let's get you home.

* * *

Why did you something stupid like that for?

I could ask you the same thing, Rhea. She's only got the box for a day or so. You couldn't wait?

The woman didn't even notice I was there.

Didn't notice? You were playing with the box in her lap, Rhea.

She didn't seem to mind.

You could have gotten into serious trouble.

Like you, you mean? What on earth possessed you to do that?

You were in trouble...

*I was **not** in trouble.*

WELL, YOU COULD HAVE BEEN! You could...have... been.

Why?

Rhea gently touched her partner's chin, tipping it up to look into those eternal eyes.

Why do you do it?

Because I don't want to be alone.

You won't be alone.

If something happened to you I would be. You are the only thing making this existence tolerable, Rhee.

Rhea didn't know what to say. Dylan would risk it all to save her. There was a depth to Dylan's love that she hadn't known about before. Sure, Dylan would stay with her for eternity, but to risk her eternal soul to protect her? Rhea was touched.

* * *

"What did I miss?"

"What didn't you miss..." Despite her aching butt, Priory was tempted to escape this mad house herself. If it wouldn't hurt so damn much she would have jumped in her car and driven somewhere... anywhere... just not here.

"See? Didn't I tell you? It's lunacy gone mad."

The brunette wasn't going to point out the bad grammar but just appreciated the sentiment. It made her realize just how delicately balanced this house was. The four of them and the toilet had worked out a system that was humming along nicely... except for the broken ass. Add one crazy aunt and a demented cat into the mix and it was pandemonium.

"Let's see... where to start."

Jacey just knew it was going to be bad. It was like passing a multiple pile up on the highway, one smash after another.

"Rhea just couldn't leave the remote alone. She kept flipping the channels while Aunt Chloe was watching the TV. Dylan flashed her ass in Chloe's face to face Rhea. The vacuum cleaner ate Dylan..."

"Hang on... Rhea did what? She actually got mad? And Dyl...? Ass?" Damn she missed that. Her ass tolerance was low at the moment and she needed some input. A good flash of bare ass and she missed it. Damn cat! "Vacuum cleaner?"

"Yep. It ate her."

"Ate?"

"Those were Rhea's words."

"Why do I feel there is a 'but' there. No pun intended."

"It seems Dylan couldn't get out."

"Nooooo."

"Yesssss. You could hear this tiny voice 'hhellppp mmeeeee'. I was nearly tempted to go looking for a spider's web." Priory grinned. It was just so... so.... funny. "I don't think we'll have any problems doing the housework anymore, love. Dylan's scared of that thing."

"Hmmm..." Jacey's mind was whirring.

"Yeah. I got my 'holy water' to exorcise her ass now."

"So, where are they now?"

"Upstairs, licking their wounds I think."

"And Aunt Chloe?"

"Where else? In that damned chair asleep with the TV blaring away."

"Let's get some lunch then while there is a lull in the mayhem."

* * *

To make Priory feel more relaxed, Jacey made sandwiches that could be eaten standing up. She felt for her lover, knowing that every move was painful. Dinner was going to be another matter, of course, requiring Priory to be seated. Maybe a pain pill and a sleep would help.

It took a while for Bella to take notice of the scratching pole standing in the corner. She had taken great delight in shredding the wispy curtains, feeling the tear of material vibrate along her claws and skin. It was a power thing to her, something she rarely had a chance to exercise these days. Her mistress's house had already been shredded long ago and the woman never got around to replacing the damaged items. It was boring. This new house had lots of things to shred, rip, destroy and mangle. Two feline fangs peeked through the curled lips in anticipation of the play to come.

Aunt Chloe had once again retired to the bathroom and Bova was complaining loudly. Jacey chuckled as she passed the door. Chloe was humming and Bova was groaning. It was moments like these that she was glad she was human.

* * *

Dylan materialized in the corner of the lounge room searching out her nemesis. Bella was asleep at the foot of the recliner, or so she was hoping. The specter approached slowly, waiting for the feline to jump into action and hiss and spit at her. But nothing happened. Only the gentle snore of the bundle of white fur touched her ears.

She hovered a few feet away from her... and it. The demonic sucker was sitting beside the cat, taunting the poor spirit with terrifying memories. But, hey! She was Dylan! She was afraid of nothing! But it didn't sound convincing even to herself.

The white bottlebrush tail twitched, the end flicking like a duster. So close... It was sitting just out of reach of the tube. A wicked smile touched those ghostly lips.

* * *

BBroooowwwwww.... A feline wail echoed through the house.

Aunt Chloe threw open the door, her hands still adjusting her clothes as she moved to the top of the stairs. "Bella?"

The vacuum cleaner was whining, blending in concert with the screaming cat. Jacey flew by Chloe down the stairs, taking them two at a time. "Oh, God..." The vacuum hose jumped around wildly, vigorously sucking up the mass of white fur trying to escape. Bella's tail had already been swallowed by the cleaner, the tube stuck to the cat's backside and eager for more. She reached for the off switch as the poor cat was scratching wildly at the carpet trying to hold herself from being swallowed up by the vacuum cleaner.

"Bella?" Chloe was a little out of breath and a bit shaken. She had taken the stairs a little quicker than she should have. "Oh, my poor pussy..."

The cat shakily stood, walking away stiffly as if her two back legs were in splints. Oh God, it was as bad as when that vet stuck his hand up her ass. She sat down and cried. No, it was worse, she thought as her tongue made contact with the sore part of her anatomy. Why didn't the licking help? It usually did. Not this time.

"Come here, Bella."

Her mistress called but she just couldn't give a damn. She had just sat down and there was no way in hell she was getting up again any time soon.

"Come on, puss, puss, puss."

Ah... puss yourself.

"Why isn't she coming? Is she deaf?" Now Chloe was worried. Her beloved pussy just sat there with a look of derision on her squashed features. She was not a happy camper.

"How about a cup of coffee?" Jacey said brightly as she steered the older woman towards the kitchen. She knew how the cat felt. Sometimes she just wanted to be left alone to wallow in her own self-pity.

* * *

Priory lay in bed that night, wishing for a warm willing body to comfort her. A gentle knock answered her call. "Wow! Thank you," she said to the heavens.

"Why? What did I do?" A cheerful face appeared from behind the door.

"You answered my prayers."

"Well... shhhhh. We don't want mommy breaking up the party." Jacey climbed gently onto the bed covers. "So, how are you feeling?"

"Like one big bruise." When her lover made a move to leave, Priory reached over and grabbed

her hand. "But not too sore for company." She arms opened wide and Jacey slid into her embrace, slowly shifting until the injured woman found comfort.

"Where did you go this afternoon?"

"Work sent a couple of faxes. I was just seeing to those."

"Ahh, watching my back as always, huh?"

"Of course..." But Jacey tempered the words with a big grin. "But I'd prefer watching your butt."

"You..." Priory placed a kiss on Jacey's nose, "...are...", another kiss, "...incurrigible." One more kiss found its mark on moist pursed lips. "Shhhhhh..."

There was a moaning and a groaning from the room next door. A muffled, 'yes... oh yes...' raised more than one eyebrow between the two women.

"Sounds like Aunt Chloe is having a good time."

"Hmmm... I wonder what he looks like."

"Probably a hairy goat of eighty-two." Priory could feel the chuckle vibrate through Jacey's body.

That woman has some imagination.

"Dylan, can you please knock or something in future?" Priory glared at the hovering apparition. "This popping in and out is getting annoying."

She disappeared, to be followed a second later by a verbal 'ding dong'.

"Come in... The damned woman thinks she's a comedienne," Priory muttered. "What do you want?"

Well I you don't want to hear the latest gossip I can always go...

"You're here now. Spill it." Priory decided if Dylan was going to disturb her, she may as well get something out of it.

Aunt Crustacean is having a wet dream.

"Well, d'uh. Even we can hear that."

A pretty good one too. Lou must be some Superman or something.

"Lou?"

Her man. He's really revving her engine. Got pretty good stamina too.

"You know what, Dylan. That's just too much information." Priory shuddered at the thought. "Now I have an image in my head and it ain't pretty. Ewww...." She glared at the deliverer of the news. "Good night, Dylan."

Geez, I do you a favor and you snap my head off! Just as well that part is immune to pain. But I can take the hint. You don't have to tell me twice...

"Yes, I do. Go!"

Dylan slowly disappeared, her hound dog face milking all the sympathy she could muster.

"She's only trying to lend you some moral support."

"I know. But that was gossip I could have done without."

"So what did you and Aunt Chloe get up to while I was working?"

"Trying to divert my attention?" But Priory knew better. Any hanky panky was out of the question, at least for a little while. *Thanks a bunch, Dylan.*

"What else is there to talk about?"

"You could always talk dirty to me." Priory wagged her eyebrows.

"And Aunt Chloe's sex-o-meter will go off." Jacey knew better than to start something that couldn't be finished.

"Okayyy," Priory sighed. "I showed her around the house and the backyard. We stood outside for a while and talked about what was right and wrong with it. Trust her to point out all the faults. You know, I love this damned house. She really rubbed me up the wrong way with "you should fix this" and "you don't need that." It's my house, dammit!"

"Don't worry about it. She's all talk, Abs. It'll be ours... **yours**... soon enough."

Priory smiled sweetly at that angelic face. "You were right the first time, Jace. Ours."

* * *

Jacey looked at herself in the bathroom mirror the next morning. "Bleh..." Her tongue poked out, the image doing the same. That's how she felt... bleh. She had spent the night on the futon downstairs and while it was comfortable, it was lonely and cold. "I want my bed back..." she murmured to no one in particular. "What the...?" In the sink was her razor... and it had grown a beard.

"Dyllannn....," she growled. She knew it had to be.

"Ohhh.... My..... Goodddd!!!" Aunt Chloe's voice rose to a shrill, the door to the spare bedroom banged against the wall as the angry woman stepped into the hallway. "Who shaved my pussy?!?!?!?"

Jacey's eyes widened and she looked at the razor. "Ohhh Christ...." She flung open the window and threw the offending implement outside. Quickly she scooped up the pile of white and threw that out too just as the bathroom door opened.

"It's you, isn't it Judith!" "Why on earth would I shave your..." Jacey gulped. "...pussy... cat?" She hoped to God that was what the woman was talking about. Anything else was just too horrific to even contemplate.

"You've been waiting for this chance..." Chloe stepped outside to pick up the poor cat, presenting her to the blonde. "Well! Look at her!"

"What's going on?"

Jacey took Priory's interruption as a chance to cover her mouth. The cat had an inch-wide gap of hairless skin from her forehead to the tip of her tail, accentuated by the strip of black paint covering it. Bella was an albino Pepe Le Pew.

"Dear Lord... That look will never work."

"Now is not the time for crass jokes, Priory. Just... just... look! Your... **friend**," the older woman spat out the word, "... here has been just waiting to do this."

"She did **not** do this, Chloe. I know Jacey. She is the sweetest person I know."

"Alright then. I am assuming it's not you and you say it's not Jodie, who else is there?"

"I don't know! I just know it wasn't us."

"Are you trying to say a ghost did this?"

Jacey's eyes flicked to Priory's at the mention of the name.

"No! Whatever made you think that?"

"Did we have a burglar break in and for the fun of it shaved my pussy?"

"Aunt Chloe, pleeeaseeeee. Bella is a cat, a pussycat. No more of this..." Priory gulped, "...pussy stuff. She... is... a... cat."

"Never mind that, what about my pu... cat?"

"Bella will live Aunt Chloe. It's just a little hair and paint. I'm sure her.... errr... hairdresser... whatever... will see it as a challenge."

"And whoever did this is going to get away with it?" Bella meowed pathetically, her tongue trying to lick the source of her indignity. Chloe put her down and she staggered off, still sore from the vacuum cleaner, trying to find somewhere quiet to affect a feline comb over.

"What else can we do, huh? I don't know, you don't know. Let's go get some breakfast and leave Jacey to have her shower." Priory steered the indignant woman out the door, looking over her shoulder at her lover standing ramrod straight against the far wall. She gave her a smile and a shrug as she closed the door.

Through the door Jacey heard, "Is she going to be long? I need to use the toilet. You really need to get a second one, dear."

"I know. I'll look into it."

The voices faded as the two women descended the stairs. As Jacey took her shower she didn't hear the rhythmic drip in the toilet bowl.

* * *

"Aunt Chloe. There's someone here to see you." How on earth could the woman be here just one day and have visitors already?

"Ahh. Gerald, there you are." Chloe stood at the top of the stairs. "The luggage is in the first room on the left." She passed the tall man on the steps as she descended.

"Gerald?"

"He's my chauffeur... Jewel." Chloe smiled at the confused blonde.

Jacey glanced outside and saw a powder blue 1967 Chevy Impala sitting at the kerb. "You're going somewhere?"

"Home."

Priory shuffled to the top of the stairs. "Someone going somewhere?"

"That's what I said..." Jacey mumbled. "It seems Aunt Chloe is leaving, Priory."

"Leaving? You just got here..."

Don't give the woman ideas. Jacey held her breath in anticipation of Priory's mad aunt changing her mind. *Let her go... let her go.*

Are you nuts, Convent? Here's your chance.

The whispering tickled her ear as she took each stair gingerly. The jarring travelled to her butt with each step and set off a painful vibration through her lower body.

"I've found out all I need to know, Priory honey."

"Know? What?" Priory was lost.

"I wanted to make sure you were being looked after both financially and emotionally." The older woman's eyes moved to the blonde standing in the background. "I can see that I have nothing to worry about."

"This was all a... test?"

"Test is such a harsh word. I was satisfying my curiosity."

"Noooo... it was a test. You wanted to know if I was good enough. But for what?" Priory's mind turned inward as she contemplated the problem. Her eyes fixated on her aunt. "Just what did you want to know?"

"Nothing, sweetheart." Chloe's wrinkled hand covered her grand niece's and patted gently. "It's a lovely house and..." Her eyes focused on the blonde. "...Jacey... is perfect for you."

Priory swallowed loudly. *She knows. Oh God, she knows.* "I don't know what you mean."

"I may be old, dear, but I'm not blind. Jacey took everything I threw at her and didn't lose her cool. She will do just fine keeping you in line."

"Keeping me... in line?" Priory didn't know if she was supposed to be annoyed or not. "Are you saying I'm a nuisance?"

"I love you dearly, Priory, but you get yourself in trouble. Jacey is just what you need to settle down."

Jacey was still trying to process that Chloe used her name... three times. Before the woman couldn't remember it to save her life and here she was using it like she was a long-lost daughter. And she knew about them. **Them.**

Looks like you've been duped, Convent.

Dylan hovered nearby, watching over Priory's shoulder.

Don't worry. She can't see me.

"Here... take this." Chloe reached into her purse and pulled out her cheque book. "I think you need another toilet downstairs. By the time you get to the one upstairs it could be too late."

"What are you doing?" Priory knew damn well what she was doing. She was writing a cheque. "Put that away, Aunt Chloe."

"Just indulge me, dear."

"I don't need it."

Chloe pressed the cheque into Priory's hand, closing her fist around it. "You will eventually get it all, Priory dear. Just let me enjoy this moment while I'm still alive, alright?"

Priory looked at the amount, a sweat breaking out on her brow.

Holy crap, Convent! How many zeros are there?

"This is too much, Chloe. I can't accept this." Priory handed over the cheque to Jacey, watching her partner shake.

"I'm sure a hundred thousand dollars could go a long way to fixing up the water pipes in this house. The toilet upstairs was making a terrible noise and I'm sure that second toilet downstairs would help a lot."

"But... why?" Surely this was the old woman's life savings.

"It's a drop in the ocean, Priory."

"But... but..." Chloe lived conservatively, rarely went on holidays, didn't own any expensive jewellery and did not head any multi-million dollar companies. Maybe she had finally snapped and was living in a fantasy world.

"I can phone your parents with the good news."

"News?"

"That you are being taken care of."

"But they don't..."

"Don't underestimate your family, Priory."

"Oh God, they know?" Priory would never be able to look her mother in the eye ever again.

"You worry too much. Anyhow, thank you for your hospitality dear. I'll show myself out. Gerald?" The young man staggered out with the portmanteau. "Lou would have loved this place."

She really would have."

She? Did Chloe just say she? Priory had to stop herself from sticking her finger in her ear and cleaning it out. Nah... she misunderstood what was said. It was he. She just had female on the brain.

"Bella? Where are you my sweet?" The cat finally turned up, walking gingerly to her mistress. "I think we better visit Madame Fifi's, eh? Let's see if she can do something about a new hairdo"

Just as Chloe's foot was about to step onto the stoop, she stopped. Her head turned and she looked Dylan straight in the eye. "Oh, and by the way... nice ass."

Priory had seen Dylan surprised but not completely gob smacked. Her jaw was open so wide that she thought of a cartoon jaw drop to the floor, as if her jaw had unhinged and just fell. All the pain and aggravation was worth it for this one moment.

Priory stood behind Jacey and wrapped her arms around her lover. They waited until the car pulled away, waving energetically at the Impala disappearing around the corner.

"I think she had the last laugh."

"Seems so..." Jacey still held the cheque. "What are you going to do about this?"

"First, I think I need to talk to my parents." As much as she avoided contact with them, Chloe raised some questions that needed answering. "I just don't know."

I can think of a hundred thousand good reasons why to keep it.

It's not your money, honey.

But Rhea... a hundred thousand dollars. A... HUNDRED... THOUSAND... DOLLARS.

So you keep saying. Maybe Aunt Chloe doesn't have that money. Maybe she thinks she has.

Aunt Crusty had us running around in circles, Rhee. She's not dumb. In fact she's as cunning as that pussy of hers.

"Cat! For the last time pussy-cat!" Enough was enough. "The next person that uses that word will spend a week in the basement. You got me?" Priory was mentally ripping out her hair.

"But, honey, we don't have a basement."

"I know!" But Priory's look told them that she was prepared to dig one if need be. "Now let's get this house back to normal."

Jacey chuckled.

"What's so funny?"

"We have two ghosts and a possessed toilet, and you consider this normal?"

"For us? Sure."

* * *

Priory sat down gingerly on the toilet seat. It had been one hell of a couple of days. A broken butt and a bruised ego was just the start of her troubles. From then it was all downhill. As she contemplated the rampant insanity that took place, it took her a moment to realize what the toilet had done.

She bolted from the seat, immediately regretting the action. "Hey... owwww!" Instinctively her hands reached for her bruised anatomy, her face grimacing in pain. "What..." she blew out a breath, trying to get some control over the agony. "What the hell was that for?" But her mind kept butting in and telling her her ass was on fire. "Jesus!"

Another squirt of water sprang from the bowl, aimed directly at Priory. "If I wanted a bidet I would have installed one!" She leaned heavily on the bathroom sink, her head dropping as the pain stabbed her in the back,.

Squirt... squirt.

"What is the matter with you?"

Burp.

"What? A bidet? It's a toilet that washes you after you... you know. The French love 'em." Priory shuffled her feet, trying to get some feeling back into her lower half. "Damn, that hurt!"

Ggrrooowwwwwllllll....

"What are you talking about?" She glared at the toilet, wondering if the insanity had been passed like a cold. "Toilet? What toilet?"

Spit. Spit. GGGrrrrrrrrrrr.....

"Downstairs? Yeah, I was going to install one downstairs."

Mmmmmmmmm..... Drip.... Drip.....

"Awww... please honey, don't cry."

Drip. Drip. Drip. Drip.

* * *

Jacey had thought she had seen and heard it all in this house. She passed by the bathroom door and saw her lover holding onto the bathroom sink while she was talking to the toilet. *Nothing new there.* The sound of dripping sped up until it was a small drizzle of water.

* * *

"C'mon Bova. Don't be like that. You know I love you."

Dribble.... Drrriibbblllleee.....

"Don't cry." Priory just knew she was going to regret this but she moved to stand in front of the fixture and, with difficulty, dropped to her knees. "C'mere." She wrapped her arms around the bowl and gave it a hug.

* * *

Nope. She definitely had **not** seen it all. Jacey shook her head as Priory continued to hug the toilet, the sound of running water slowly easing to drips.

* * *

"That's my girl. Now dry your... errr... whatever. Tell me, what's the problem?" It was damned uncomfortable and, needless to say, painful on her knees. If it wouldn't have hurt like hell, she would have sat on the floor, so she had to settle for kneeling instead.

GGrriinnddd... grind... sshhhuuudderrr... grind...

"I just thought it would be easier than having to climb the stairs all the time. After what happened with Sophie I'd have thought you'd be begging me for a second one."

Pop... Pop pop pop pop. SSssccrrreeeecccchhhhh...

"Awww, honey. There will never be another toilet but you. Don't you know that?"

BBuurrrppp. Tap tap tap...

"Work? Bova, I am **not** coming home every time I have to take a leak, okay? Those other toilets mean nothing to me. They are merely conveniences, nothing more." She looked at the white ceramic. "Look, if it'll make you feel any better I'll even put crappy toilet paper down there. You can have the good stuff. How about that?"

Wwhhhiiinnneeee.....

"Okay. How about a new toilet seat, huh? A nice soft squishy one."

SSSqqqquuueeeee.....

"Oh yeah, for real. My butt could sure use one right about now."

Plop plop rrummblllee plop plop....

"Do you know that there are toilets out there that you have to pay to use?"

The pipes squealed.

"Prostitute toilets selling their seats for a dime. The hussies."

Wwhhheeeee...

"That's my girl. If you think about it, the second toilet could be your home away from home."

* * *

Jacey left the conversation, wandering along the corridor to the main bedroom, finally glad she could claim it as her own again. After Sophie's visit, Priory placating a jealous crying toilet was a snap.

* * *

Dylan had been hanging around in the background listening to Priory's rantings. The woman was better than Rhea's soaps any day. She was a bit jealous that her nemesis spent so much time talking to a bathroom fixture, after all she was a ghost and it was just... just... Damn it, she couldn't even come up with a decent insult. She watched Priory leave, materializing in front of the said fixture and studying it. It was a toilet. She looked hard, as if the meaning of life was floating in the water, but she couldn't see anything.

Dylan stuck her head out the door at the receding back of Priory.

Hey, Convent!

"Yeah?" Priory turned around to face the bathroom door.

What is it about the toilet?

"Nothing..." The whole scene had exhausted her and she wanted a nap. Priory turned again and walked into the bedroom. On the bed lay Jacey, a gentle smile crossing her lips. "Hey."

"Hey. You look tired."

"All that bickering. Geez, if it's not Casper, it's the damned toilet..." she mumbled as she lowered her aching body to the mattress.

Jacey slowly approached, nestling into the warmth lying next to her. "It's good to be back in this bed."

"Yeah, it was lonely without you."

"Tell me about it."

"Sorry about that. Still... everything worked out... sort of."

"No more talk. Let's sleep."

"No argument... from... meeee..." Priory's eyelids slowly closed as sleep overtook her.

The last thing Jacey heard as she drifted off was Dylan's voice hovering in the air.

* * *

Awwwww..... I get it now. All this pesky demon crap. You think I was born yesterday? Not even the day before, convent. Your trick ain't gonna work on me.

THE END

If you want to see more of the girls, feel free to drop me a line at aurelia_fan@yahoo.com.au

[Aurelia's Scrolls](#)
[Index Page](#)