

~ From This Day Forward ~

by Cheyne Curry

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Disclaimer: The main characters might slightly resemble two gorgeous women we know and love, so no infringement is intended to the powers that be at MCA/Universal/Renaissance Pics. Despite that, the story and the characters are mine.

Rating: R

Warnings: Yes, this story involves a romantic relationship between two women.

Summary: Riley and Kya brave the storm and attend the family wedding for their first official date.

Spoiler or Other Information: This is the sequel to "[In The Light of Day](#)," "[Decisions](#)" and "[Chance and Choice](#)." It would help to read those first. My apologies for not getting this out sooner. My bad.

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The doorbell rang amid a flurry of cursing.

"Just a second, be right there!" Kya hopped to the entranceway while she attempted to remove her high heels. She unlocked and opened the door.

"Wow," Riley said, appreciatively. Normally, Kya Liberis was a beautiful woman but the vision standing before her now was stunning. "Who knew a bridesmaid dress could look so attractive?"

"Thank you. Come in, come in," Kya said and appraised her date as she stepped into the apartment. "You look quite fetching yourself."

Riley wore a bold, formfitting, sleeveless, satin teal dress. It was short without being daring and displayed a hint of cleavage without being scandalous. It hugged Riley's body enough to show off her tantalizing curves and yet did not give too much away. On someone else, the dress might have been considered sordid, especially if they were too thin, too full-figured or disproportionate but on Riley, it was ideal. Kya knew she wouldn't be the only one salivating around Riley that day. The younger, blonde woman was just breathtaking.

Kya gestured down the hall to her bedroom, holding her high heels in her hand. She held up an object in her other hand. "My right heel broke. I'll just be a moment. I need to super glue it back on."

Riley nodded as she took in the vision that was Kya. She wore a sleeveless gown with a sweetheart neckline. The dress matched the design of the bridal gown minus the train, veil and

color. While the bride's gown was white, each bridesmaid wore a different pastel shade. Kya's was what the bridal shop called Columbia Blue. It matched her eyes and perfectly complimented her Mediterranean skin tone.

Both women grinned at each other, nervously. First dates were always awkward but this one had a particularly complicated twist to it. Riley Vaughn, cousin of Danielle, the bride, was Kya's escort to the wedding. Kya was an out lesbian, proud and open regarding who she was and how she lived her life. Riley was an avowed heterosexual right up until the week before, when she got drunk at Danielle's bachelorette party and woke up the next morning in Kya's bed.

The incident prompted intense introspection in both women, surprising them with the conclusions they individually came to. Kya had cloistered herself from any deep feelings, following the death of her partner of ten years. Her love life was nonexistent and her sex life was detached and calculated, as she was still devastated by Jillian's physical absence and spiritual presence. She wanted nothing to do with relationships of any kind. There were still too many memories and reminders of what she no longer had or felt capable of having. Jillian had grounded and anchored her and since Jillian's death, she had felt aimlessly drifting through darkness. She immersed herself in her work and sleepwalked through any expected social life her job required her to have. She slept with unavailable, neglected, curious, straight women to fill her own carnal needs without the risk of any kind of commitment. She thought she was happy with that arrangement...until, without warning, Riley Vaughn suddenly popped into her life.

One drunken, seductive lap dance later, Kya was hooked. Her body was sending her signals she had not felt in years; desires that, if she didn't act on them, she would surely explode. She obeyed the urges of her out-of-control libido and left the party with hope in her embrace.

Riley had been floored by the revelation that she was attracted to women. More specifically, this particular woman. She had been even more knocked out by the fact that she went home with her and had sex with her the night they met. Except that, thanks to an indeterminate amount of alcohol consumption, Riley had not remembered much about the encounter until later the next day, when she sobered up.

It wasn't that Riley blamed her behavior on having been intoxicated; she took full responsibility for the fact that she slept with Kya. Her rumination of the situation reflected what Kya had said to her that morning; that people say and do things when they are drunk they don't have the courage to say and do when they are sober. According to what her friends from the party told her, she was the initiator of the seduction, so it must have been subconscious to begin with. And, in the week after getting to know Kya, Riley was pretty sure the results would have been the same. Kya's allure was just too strong to fight, even if she'd wanted to.

Clearly, she didn't want to.

Kya had been completely upfront about wanting to see Riley again but left it up to the perplexed blonde to make the next move. After much soul-searching and not being able to get the drop-dead gorgeous brunette out of her head, Riley chose to see Kya again. They were obviously quite harmonious in bed, if the flashbacks she'd had of that night were any indication. The real test was

to see how compatible they were in life.

Today, at the wedding and reception of Danielle and Todd, they would, hopefully, see all they needed to see in order to decide on another date or shake hands and go their separate ways. Both silently acknowledged that it would have to take something pretty unacceptable not to agree to go on another date.

Riley watched as Kya affixed the heel to her shoe. "Do you think that will hold?"

"It better. It only has to hold through the ceremony. By the reception, the shoes will be off."

"Oh, good. You're already a foot taller than I am. That's intimidating enough."

Kya smirked at Riley. "I intimidate you?"

"Of course you do," Riley said, honestly. "Although, I'm not sure it really has anything to do with your height." Her smile bordered between bashful and naughty.

Kya chuckled. "Huh. Intimidating. I'll have to put that in my Riley notes."

"You keep notes on me?"

"Only mental ones. The last thing I want to do when I need to recall something about you is to take the time to consult a book." She winked at Riley who turned crimson.

"Um...that's a lovely necklace." Riley tried not to let her eyes wander below the gem that dangled close to the top of Kya's cleavage.

"It was my bridesmaid gift from Danielle."

"That's a topaz...that's my birthstone." Riley was slightly surprised that Danielle would buy Kya a gift with *her* birthstone...that was taking a big, perhaps unrealistic, chance.

"Really? That was Jillian's birthstone, too. Your birthday isn't December 10th, is it?"

"No, December 22nd." *Ah, Jillian.* That explained it. She didn't know whether to be relieved or disappointed.

Kya smiled. "It's an apocalyptic stone, did you know that?"

"No. What does that mean?"

"It is supposed to protect the bearer against enemies. It is supposed to drive away anger, sadness and nocturnal fears."

"Do you put a lot of faith in that?"

"Not really. It's also supposed to protect you from sudden death." She didn't need to remind Riley that Jillian, had been killed instantly in a car accident.

"Well, it looks wonderful on you."

"Thank you." They stared at each other, mesmerized. Finally, Kya said, "You want to have sex?"

Riley looked at her, startled. "I'm sorry, what?"

Kya burst out laughing. "You seem very nervous. I thought you might need to relax before our debut with your family."

Suddenly, Riley was at a loss for words. The idea of hitting the sack again with Kya was extremely enticing and terrifying at the same time.

She patted Riley's arm. "Probably not a good idea. We'd both mess up our dresses."

"Why? We'd take them off, right?"

"Where's the fun in that?" Kya grinned at Riley, who reddened from her neck to her hairline. "That over-active gullibility gland you have is just too damned cute."

"How's that heel holding?" Riley said, purposely changing the subject. She silently agreed that she needed to relax. Kya made her heart pound unlike anyone had ever done before. She still couldn't believe how much she wanted to be with this woman, how much sexual adrenalin surged through her system so hot yet left her extremities so ice cold that she shivered.

Kya examined her shoe and tried to wiggle the heel. It didn't budge. She ran her finger along the seam where she had applied the glue and it felt dry. She put the high heel on the floor, stepped into both shoes and walked up and down her hallway a few times. "Feels good. Are you ready?"

"Ready as I'll ever be." Riley drew a deep breath. She turned and bumped into Kya.

Kya cupped Riley's face and placed a brief, gentle kiss on her lips. "Relax. It'll be fine," she whispered.

"I...I know." She stood on her tiptoes and kissed Kya again, only this time was more enthusiastic.

Kya finally moved back. "If we continue, we'll never leave this house. As much as I would like that, I'm not going to be the one to ruin Danielle's ceremony by choosing to nail her cousin instead of standing up for her at her wedding." Kya smiled, suggestively. "Not that I wouldn't prefer to spend the day in bed with you."

Riley nodded. "I don't know what comes over me when I'm around you. I'm not ordinarily this brazen. And I haven't even been drinking. Yet." She removed a tissue from her purse and wiped

remnants of her coral-colored lipstick off Kya's mouth.

"I don't mind. I like my women cheeky."

Riley passed Kya as she walked out the door. "Then you're going to love my cousins."

At the church, Riley let Kya off at the side door where the bridesmaids were told to enter. Once Kya was inside, Riley parked in a space that had just opened up near the church and waited for her parents, who were just getting out of their car.

"Where's your date?" Tim Vaughn, Riley's father, asked. He was anxious to meet this woman who seemed to have such a sudden, momentous influence over his daughter. Even though his wife assured him she was gorgeous, he knew Gloria had a tendency to be very kind in her assessments. He expected the worst.

"She's already inside with the other bridesmaids. You look very handsome, Daddy." Riley grinned at her father, proudly. He was twenty-two years older than she but he still had those boyish good looks and athletic build that attracted her mother all those years ago. He wore black dress slacks with a sage-colored, short-sleeved shirt and matching tie.

"Thank you, brat," Tim said. "And you look very...grown up."

"I am grown up," she reminded him.

"Not to me. You'll always be my little brat."

"You look amazing, honey," Gloria Vaughn, Riley's mother, said, as she adjusted her light peach-colored summer outfit.

"Thanks, Mom. I love your dress." She leaned over and gave her mother a kiss on the cheek. "Oops." She removed the lip smudge she left. "I keep forgetting not to do that."

"Why? Who else have you left your mark on today?" Her mother asked, with a smirk and a raised eyebrow. She linked arms with Riley as they strolled to the front door of the church. Her question was answered by her daughter's blush.

It had been two days since Riley had told her parents that she was going to be at the wedding with Kya and, more importantly, was probably going to pursue a relationship with her. Her father initially took it better than her mother but now that Gloria was over the shock, she seemed to be much more accepting of the idea than Tim. At first, Gloria wasn't keen at the thought of Riley flaunting her recently developing interest at a big family wedding but then she agreed with Riley; they might as well be out in the open about it. Then no one would be able to think they could somehow use it against the new couple.

Gloria did bring up the grandchildren issue but Riley reminded her that it was still a possibility. Gloria then had to admit that if there were to be grandchildren, she'd rather have Riley happy with a female partner, if that's where her true orientation was, than miserable with a husband like Ryan, the ex-fiancé, just to please them with a society-accepted marriage.

By last night, Gloria appeared to have reconciled her feelings regarding the significance of Riley's announcement. It was awfully soon and Riley wondered if her mother somehow suspected all along that Riley was going to discover an attraction to women. Riley hadn't had a clue but her mother may have been able to sense things she couldn't. Even though they didn't always see eye to eye on issues, especially, until recently, concerning her wicked Aunt Virginia, they were close. Fortunately, Gloria 'got' her daughter a lot better than Riley 'got' her mother, something Riley was thankful for, knowing she would really need her mother's support regarding her liaison with Kya.

Tim, on the other hand, was more concerned about Riley's safety. The town in which they lived was populated with good ol' boys and overzealous religious-types. Not that Tim Vaughn had a problem with people who practiced their faith - as long as they kept it in their places of worship. There were more than a few ministers in town who didn't believe in freedom of religion, they believed in force-feeding their "Christian values" to sinners, who in reality were people who did not practice whatever the individual clerics preached. Homosexuals were always a target and that unnerved Tim, now that his precious daughter, to all intents and purposes, had become one.

A father's pride aside, Riley was a beautiful girl; all his friends, neighbors and relatives had made mention of it. It wouldn't take long to get around that Riley was off the market and why. Tim's fear was that the misguided miscreants would come looking for her to "teach her a lesson" or want to "turn her straight". These preachers would work their flocks into frenzies about this issue and then set them loose to do their bidding. There was no hate-crime law in place and there had been crimes committed across the state where judges and juries blamed the victim and his/her 'lifestyle' instead of the perpetrator. Tim was terrified that his daughter would become a statistic. This mixed with Tim not really understanding homosexuality just ratcheted up his anxiety. There was no doubt that Tim loved his daughter to excess, regardless of what or who she did behind closed doors, and he would protect her no matter what but the idea of it all paralyzed him with fear. Not that he would ever voluntarily show that fear to Riley.

"You okay, Daddy?" Riley asked. Her father appeared to be unusually preoccupied.

"I'm fine, Rye. I just hate getting dressed up, you know that."

"I know but you clean up so good," Riley told him, tugging on his shirtsleeve.

"You know your father. By the time the ceremony starts, he'll have that top button undone and the tie pulled down or completely off," Gloria said.

"Yeah. Don't do that with your dress," Tim said to Riley, mock warning filtering his tone.

"That's okay, Daddy, I won't take off mine until Warren takes off his."

"Riley, really," Gloria said, "we don't know that your cousin, Warren, is gay."

"Well, if I was a betting man..." Tim said and winked at Riley.

"My God, you two," Gloria said.

They entered the church and waited in the vestibule to be escorted to the bride's side of the nave. Riley felt a yank on the hem of her dress and looked down to see a young boy, maybe six-years-old, dressed in a tuxedo.

"And who are you?" She asked him, sweetly.

"I'm the ring bear," he answered.

"I think you mean the ring bearer."

"Yeah. Ring bear," he said, almost annoyed at her for not hearing him correctly the first time.

"Ah. Right. You said that. What's your job? Do you have to growl or something?"

"No. I tried that at the practice but they said not to do it. They don't know much about bears."

"No, I guess they don't. So what's your name?"

"I'm Brent. Uncle Todd is getting married today."

"Yes, I know." She wondered why this adorable little boy found it necessary to have this conversation with her, not that she minded but it seemed odd. "So, Brent, I need to go sit down with my parents. Was there something you wanted?"

"Yup." He grabbed her hand and pulled her over to a man who looked like an adult version of him, matching tuxedo and all. "My daddy wanted to meet you."

Riley looked at the man as Brent let go of her hand and ran off to a room where the groomsmen were. He was a nice-looking man, clearly close to Riley's age and also, apparently, closer to being drunk. His eyes showed it and the minute he opened his mouth, Riley could smell second-hand whiskey.

"Hi there," he extended his hand. "I'm Alex St. Peter, the groom's brother."

Riley cautiously shook his hand. "Hi. Riley Vaughn."

"I know. You're the bride's cousin. I've wanted to meet you for a while."

"Really?" *Oh boy.* She didn't ask him why. She instinctively knew and didn't want to hear him

say it out loud. "Your son is very cute."

"I'm divorced. From his mother. Just in case you were wondering."

I wasn't. "So are you the best man?"

"Well, *I* think so," he said and gave her an unseemly wink, "but Todd chose our younger brother, Cory."

"I see." *Okay. One more minute of polite at the most.*

"Nope," Alex shoved his hands in his pockets and continued the conversation as though he never heard her, "Todd picked the faggot. Unreal, isn't it? Problem with Cory being best *man* is he'll never be able to prove it." He wagged his eyebrows at Riley, hoping she got his innuendo.

Riley stared at him, gaping. "I need to go inside now." She turned away from him and walked to the usher waiting to bring her to her seat.

"Hey, nice finally meeting you, Riley," he shouted. His voice echoed through the west side of the church "Save me a dance later."

She didn't look back at him but noticed the first five rows on either side of the aisle, were looking at her. As she took the arm of the usher who walked her up the aisle to her parent's pew, she saw heads meet and heard whispers abound. Danielle must have already mentioned something to someone about Riley's date.

Riley sat down next to her father and mustered up her friendliest smile. When she looked around the nave and met with anyone's gaze, she nodded and maintained her amiable expression. In the second row, behind where her Aunt Penny and Uncle Luc would sit was her Aunt Virginia. When their eyes met, Riley's eldest aunt glared at her with such disdain, Riley wanted to run up to her and slap the meanness right out of her. Next to her was her Uncle Ted, the poor sap, saddled with Aunt Virginia for the last fifty-four years, although he seemed to be able to hold his own. Seated next to Ted was Warren, Ted and Virginia's only child and his "friend," Sean, who everyone suspected was really Warren's boyfriend.

When Virginia turned and whispered something to Ted, Warren turned around and looked at Riley. He returned a sincerely friendly grin and wiggled his fingers at her in a gesture of 'hello.' Riley responded in kind.

"Where's Anna?" Riley asked her mother in a hushed voice. Anna was a woman who usually accompanied Warren and Sean to all family functions. Anna was supposed to be Warren's girlfriend but nobody believed it except his mother and father.

"According to Virginia, she has the flu and had to stay home."

"Warren's pretty brave to come here with just Sean," Riley said.

"Why?" Tim asked, wiping some perspiration off his brow. He unbuttoned his top button and pulled his tie down to accommodate the open first button. "He thinks everyone buys the best buddy thing."

"Tim! I expected you to at least wait until Danielle walked down the aisle to remove your tie," Gloria whispered, surprised.

"It's already too flippin' hot in here. Don't churches believe in air conditioning?" Tim pointed up. "Those ceiling fans are just circulating more hot air. And with most of your side of the family here, dear, we don't need any more hot air." To that remark, he received a rather enthusiastic jab to the ribs.

Alex, the tipsy groomsman, escorted a cosmopolitan, middle-aged woman up the aisle to the front row on the groom's side, followed by a debonair man who sat next to the obviously cultured woman. Riley had only met Todd a few times but he resembled his brother and they both clearly favored their father. She would discover that Cory, the best man, was the spitting image of his mother. Riley hadn't thought much about the St. Peter family but, for some reason, she was surprised they appeared to be so sophisticated. It wasn't that Todd wasn't refined in his own way but she was a little nonplussed that they approved of Danielle.

Her cousin was a woman who thought nothing of burping in syllables and/or sentences in the middle of a restaurant. While she could always get Riley to laugh when she did it, Riley didn't think it was an accomplishment that would have impressed Todd's family. Danielle was as earthy as a woman could get and still be allowed in public places but maybe Todd liked the contrast.

Her Aunt Penny was then escorted up the aisle. She beamed and looked elegant in her mother-of-the-bride gown. Her smile faltered when she saw that Virginia had been seated in the second row, directly behind where she was to sit but she regained her joy when Riley reached out and touched her arm as she passed and gave her a thumb's up.

Moments later, the organ music became louder and indicated that the ceremony was about to begin. The minister, Todd, his best man and groomsmen entered the south side of the chancel and stood. Riley looked back to the vestibule and saw Danielle's cousin, Marie, from her Uncle Luc's side of the family. She stood at the doorway until she was gently eased forward by the bridesmaid behind her. Four-year-old Marie then ran down the aisle, flinging her basket of flower petals as she went. Instead of stopping at the chancel rail, she ran right up the steps, passed the minister and the alter, to the organist, who was her grandmother. Her grandmother continued to play, while she leaned down and spoke in the child's ear.

Marie stubbornly shook her head and stayed glued to the spot. Reverend Mahler held out his hand to Marie as the organist nudged the little girl toward him. She let the minister lead her to where she was supposed to stand. The minute the first bridesmaid started down the aisle, Marie ran back to her grandmother.

All those in the church, including the group who had been assailed by flying flower parts,

seemed to think the little girl's behavior was precious; all except Virginia who tsked and harrumphed so loud, even the minister looked annoyed. Reverend Mahler normally wasn't so defiant; after all, Virginia's generous donations kept that house of worship running...as long as everything was run Virginia's way. The church was in Virginia's will so Mahler never did anything that could even be remotely misconstrued as insubordinate to the Weston matriarch.

The bridesmaid, a friend of Danielle's whose name Riley could not remember, shuffled down the aisle, a terrified expression on her face. She looked straight ahead and seemed very relieved once she reached the chancel rail. Gina, Riley and Danielle's mutual friend, was next. She glided down the aisle and took her place next to the first bridesmaid.

Then came Kya. Most brides didn't like when someone in their wedding party looked better than they did but there was no way anyone could have competed with Kya. At least not in Riley's opinion. Kya could have worn a burlap sack and still outshone the bride. Not just Danielle, any bride, as far as Riley was concerned. A few gasps of appreciation were heard when Kya began her walk toward the alter. Her mesmerizing eyes searched for Riley in the crowd and held her captive. When she passed Riley she winked and Riley's heart fluttered uncontrollably.

"Who was that gorgeous woman who just winked at me?" Tim whispered to Riley, whose eyes were following Kya up to the rail.

"Daddy, she didn't wink at you, she -" As Riley turned to address her father, she saw the mischievous gleam in his eye. She then glanced at her mother who covered her mouth to stifle a giggle.

"Told you she was gorgeous," Riley boasted, playfully.

Tim shook his head. "Wow. Lesbians sure didn't look like you two when I was growing up."

"Oh, hush, they did, too, you probably just never realized they were lesbians," Gloria told him.

Riley chuckled and returned her attention to Kya who had taken her place with the other two bridesmaids. She finally tore her eyes away from her date when the organist began The Wedding March.

Everybody stood, as was tradition, but more in anticipation of seeing the bridal gown. Riley had to admit, even though she wasn't particularly fascinated by wedding dresses, Danielle's was magnificent and she looked spectacular in it. As Danielle started her stroll, everyone started laughing. Riley couldn't imagine what embarrassing thing must be happening to cause such frivolity until she spotted her Uncle Luc, one arm escorting his daughter and the other hand holding a shotgun. Even Reverend Mahler was amused until a glare from Virginia indicated it was an unsuitable gag for her, er, *his* church.

Reverend Mahler asked everyone to be seated. By special request, he began the ceremony by asking if anyone objected to the joining of these two people, speak now or forever hold their peace. Luc turned to everyone in the nave and moved the shotgun slide forward to cycle a round.

Everyone laughed again.

The ceremony then began for real. Mahler welcomed the wedding party and guests, relieved Luc of his fatherly duty as Luc gave Danielle's hand to Todd. Mahler read a few short passages from the bible and then each bridesmaid and groomsman were asked to read excerpts from literature they believed would signify the moment for the bride and groom. Most selections were short and sweet. When it was Kya's turn, she melodiously recited a piece from an Apache joining ceremony, "The Journey Begins."

*"Now you will feel no rain, for each of you will be shelter for the other.
Now you will feel no cold, for each of you will be warmth to the other.
Now there will be no loneliness, for each of you will be companion to the other.
Now you are two persons, but there is only one life before you.
May beauty surround you both in the journey ahead and through all the years,
May happiness be your companion and your days together be good and long upon the earth."*

"That was beautiful," Riley sighed. She thought she had said it under her breath until she looked up to see Warren nod and give her a thumbs up.

"Good thing red goes with your dress," Gloria leaned over and said.

Riley pursed her lips and stared at her folded hands in her lap. Warren must have been tipped off about her date, Riley thought. He was being awfully daring, openly showing his support in front of his mother.

When the entire bridal party, minus Brent and Marie, finished reading what they had selected, Danielle spoke her romantic self-written vows to Todd. When it was Todd's turn, he knelt before his bride and started to deliver words of love that declared his devotion. It would have been much more effective, if someone hadn't painted "Save" on the sole of one shoe and "Me!" on the sole of the other.

A collective snicker rippled throughout the church and Todd looked perplexed until his brother, Cory, leaned down and explained to him what everyone found so amusing. He smiled and took it in stride. He waited until the chuckling settled down and continued his personal vow to Danielle. He stood up and Mahler sermonized the legal portion of the ceremony, which bound them together in contract. They exchanged wedding bands, Mahler pronounced them husband and wife and, without any prompting, they embraced and their lips met in a long, involved kiss.

At the clearing of Mahler's throat, the kiss broke to applause, hoots and hollers from the younger members of the guests. All the groomsmen pulled what looked like Olympic score cards out of their tux jackets and held them up. Each card had a number on it, rating the kiss.

Once again, Mahler moved his hands in a motion meant to quiet the crowd. Finally he was able to say, "Ladies and Gentlemen, may I present for the first time, Mr. and Mrs. Todd St. Peter."

Another raucous cheer rose. Mahler nodded to his organist who pealed forth the Wedding March

Recessional and the bride and groom walked the aisle, holding hands and looking quite blissful. Row by row, they were followed by the wedding party, the new in-laws and the rest of the guests.

Kya found Riley before Danielle corralled her to get back in the church. "Hey, can you hang out? We won't be that long."

"Of course. I thought you had a ride to the hall with the other bridesmaids."

"I did but there's been a little glitch. Todd's parents rented limousines to take the entire wedding party and in-laws to the reception. The bride and groom are to ride in the first one."

"Okay...and...?"

"Someone has to drive the original 'Just Married' car to the reception hall."

Riley looked over at the vehicle that had been affixed with tin cans and other decorations that usually indicated newlyweds were in the car. "You want me to drive that?"

"No. I volunteered to drive it but I thought maybe we could ride in it together."

Riley studied the ridiculously adorned vehicle. "Yeah. I can see where you'd be embarrassed to be in that thing by yourself." She looked back at Kya. "Let me catch my folks before they leave. I'll have my dad drive my car to the reception."

"Great. Thanks," Kya said, obviously relieved.

Fifteen minutes later, they were on their way to the grange hall where the reception was being held. It was ten miles away, twenty miles of horns honking and people yelling congratulations out their windows to the 'newly married' couple. Riley almost wet herself from laughing so hard at passing drivers expressions when they realized it was two women in the car as opposed to what was clearly expected. Kya only made it worse by smiling and waving to everyone and honking back. Occasionally, she grabbed Riley's hand and held it up to her lips and kissed it lovingly to the delight or dismay of traffic that drove by them.

"You are truly disturbed," Riley said, wiping tears from her eyes as they parked the car.

"It helps to make the best of what you have," Kya said. "Why don't you go inside and find your seat. I have to wait for the wedding party to get here. I need to enter with the groomsman I was matched up with."

"Alex."

"Yeah. I wonder why he's almost drunk already."

"I think he may have issues. He asked me to save a dance for him."

"Hopefully he can still stand by then." She alerted on Riley's negative expression. "What?"

"I'm just not impressed. He introduced himself when I was on my way into the church. We hadn't even been talking a minute before he referred to his brother, Cory, as a faggot."

"Oh." Kya nodded. "Hmm. Do you think he might be trouble if he finds out you and I are here together?"

"I don't know. I hope not. He already has a problem with Todd because he wasn't picked as best man and he's already disrespected him by getting drunk before the ceremony, who knows?"

Kya patted Riley's arm, reassuringly. "We'll handle it." She glanced in the rearview mirror. "They're here."

"Okay, I'll see you inside." Riley opened the car door. She stopped when she felt Kya's hand take hers.

"Save a dance for me?" Her smile was dazzling.

Riley had to concentrate with everything she had not to become a puddle right there in the seat. "Um...if not inside, maybe later?"

"Count on it," Kya said.

Riley got out of the car, breathless, and walked toward the grange entrance.

"I wish I could have taken a picture of you two in that wedding car," Tim kidded his daughter as she sat down next to him.

"Yeah. That would have been one for the wedding album," Riley said and rolled her eyes.

"There's an extra chair here for Kya," Gloria said. "But I assume she will be spending most of her time at the wedding party table."

"Only for the meal, I think. Have you received any comments yet?"

"Not outright. A lot of looks. Your cousin Meredith seems shell-shocked."

"I guess she can't continue to spread around that I sleep with every man I meet so she'll have to find another target."

"No, she'll just say that you've had every man in town and now you're moving on to women," Tim said.

Riley looked at him. "I can't believe I'm having this conversation with my parents."

The DJ hired for the reception activated his microphone and introduced the wedding party, starting with Marie and Brent. When he got to Kya and Alex, he mangled her name like a pro and Kya seemed to be holding Tony up as they walked to their seats. Riley wondered which Kya enjoyed more: holding up the groom's brother or holding up Danielle's wedding dress before the ceremony so Danielle could pee. Riley guessed it was neither.

Everyone applauded as Danielle and Todd were introduced and made their way to their honored place at the front table across the small dance floor that faced all the guests. The disc jockey played Guns and Roses' *Welcome To The Jungle* as they did their walk from the entrance to their seats.

Virginia was highly offended and displayed her appall by covering her ears. Most of Riley's older cousins bobbed their heads in time to the beat, reliving their head banging years of yore.

While the bridal table was served, the rest of the guests lined up to get their food at the buffet. Once everyone had overstocked their plates and were reseated, Cory, the best man, got everyone's attention. He spoke while champagne glasses were being filled.

"Hello everybody. My name is Cory St. Peter and I'm the best man, so it's my job to give the toast. First, I'd like to say congratulations again to the newest Mr. and Mrs. St. Peter." There was applause and hoots and hollers. Cory put his hand up and the noise halted once again. "A lot of people think Todd and Danielle met through adult night classes at the college. Not true. The real story is that Todd and Alex were at Clancy's Pub - for those of you who aren't familiar, it's the biggest dive in town - and they saw the only two women in the bar who hadn't hooked up yet, tossed for them and Todd lost." This got a raucous laugh out of most of the crowd, including the bride and groom. The elder relatives and guests may have thought Cory was handsome and charming but they weren't as amused by his attempt at humor.

"Seriously," Cory continued, "this was a very nice wedding and, so far, a beautiful reception." Cory looked out over the guests and grinned. "Todd is very lucky to have Danielle. Because of her love, companionship, devotion and support, he has become the man he'd always wanted to be." He looked down at Todd who grinned up at him and nodded his agreement. "So I have a little advice for you, Bro. Follow your own path because you seem to be doing well so far. Don't be like Dad." Cory looked respectfully at his father and a playful expression graced his boyish features. "I love you, Dad, but that 'She can go from lipstick to broomstick in 60 seconds' bumper sticker should really come off the car."

"I didn't put it there, son, your mother did," Eric St. Peter said back to him. That got a few more laughs.

"And don't be like Alex, who thinks wedding rings are the worlds tiniest handcuffs."

"But that's so true," Alex said.

"I guess you just didn't know how to use handcuffs correctly," Danielle said to Tony. That remark drew some whistles and more applause.

Virginia could be seen whispering something to Ted. He shook his head and looked just as perplexed as she did. Warren then mumbled something in her ear that prompted a horrified expression to cross her face.

"Alex and Dad both gave me advice to give you, Bro. Alex said to always remember you're anniversary and dates that are important to Danielle. If you can do that, he thinks it should be smooth sailing. He told me to tell you the best way to remember these dates is to forget them just once." Everyone looked at Alex, whose head bobbed up and down. "Dad's advice was to never, ever forget these three magic words: 'You're right, dear'. And Mom is just grateful to have a girl in the family."

"Damn, Cory, I thought she had that wish fulfilled with you," Alex said, his eyes cast downward. When he looked up, he saw his father glaring at him.

Cory shook his head at his oldest brother. "You never learn." He then raised his champagne glass and everyone followed suit. "So here's to the groom, one of the best guys I know. I'd say that even if he weren't my brother. And here's to the beautiful bride, who deserves better but if she hadn't settled for Todd, I would have missed out on the opportunity of knowing and treasuring one of the most caring, giving, warmhearted, understanding people in the world. May you both share a long, loving, prosperous life together."

Everyone joined Cory in toasting the newlyweds and the reception officially began.

Subsequent to the meal, Danielle and Todd shared their first dance as husband and wife and Kya fulfilled her minimal obligation of pairing with Alex as the wedding party rounded out the next dance. Riley observed that he appeared to behave himself but she presumed that was because Kya clearly intimidated the hell out of him. Kya's 'don't fuck with me' expression had not escaped him, nor did the fact that she was taller and, no doubt, stronger than he was. When the music ended, Eric St. Peter discreetly collared his son and they walked toward an exit. Kya found Riley's table and sat next to her in the empty seat.

"That looked relatively painless," Riley said.

"The dance? You weren't watching his feet then. I swear someone needs to invent steel-toed high heels." She removed her shoes and placed them by her chair.

Riley gestured to her parents. "Mom, Daddy, this is Kya Liberis."

It wasn't Kya's beauty or crystal blue eyes or perfect, white smile that disarmed them; it was the way she interacted with their daughter. It was the way she so visibly adored Riley and Riley was

so clearly crazy about her. Their unusually strong connection seemed irrepressible and genuinely magnetic.

Kya shook Tim and Gloria's hands. "Nice to meet you both." She focused on Gloria. "Riley tells me that you knew Jillian."

"Yes," Gloria answered, warmly. "Jillian was always so nice to deal with. She bent over backwards to make sure her bank customers were accommodated with the least amount of stress. She obviously loved working there."

"She did."

"I am so sorry for your loss." Gloria rested her hand on Kya's wrist.

"Thank you." Kya looked at Riley. "It's time I moved on. Your daughter seems to want to help me through that phase."

"I can't think of a better person for the job," Tim Vaughn said, amiably.

"Thanks, Daddy," Riley said to her father. She then looked at Kya. "I think he was prepared to not like you and give you the third degree."

"I'm still considering the third degree," Tim said and smiled.

"Interrogate away, Mr. Vaughn. I have nothing to hide," Kya said, pleasantly. She couldn't take her eyes off Riley.

"Tim, let's take a spin on the dance floor," Gloria suggested. She suddenly felt like she was trespassing in the Riley-Kya universe.

"Have fun," Riley told them as they left the table.

"Your dad's cute," Kya said. "He looks torn between protecting you and patting you on the back."

"He's adjusting to...um...the new me."

Kya reached over and squeezed Riley's hand. "You're still you. He realizes that, right?"

"He's trying. He's a little stunned, I think. He told me he was expecting you to look more like the stereotypical butch woman as opposed to Wonder Woman."

"Wonder woman?" Kya grinned. "I'll take that as a high compliment. Wonder Woman was pretty hot in your father's generation."

Gloria and Tim moved closely together around the dance floor, to the song "Truly, Madly, Deeply" by Savage Garden. They both stared at the table they had just left.

"I remember when you used to look at me like that," Gloria said, softly.

"I still look at you like that," Tim said, protesting mildly.

"When?" Gloria asked.

"I guess when you're not looking," he answered, sheepishly.

"That's love if I've ever seen it," Gloria said. She rested her head on her husband's shoulder and watched Riley and Kya.

"They've only known each other a week," Tim said. He kissed the top of his wife's head.

"That's about as long as it took me to realize I was in love with you." She looked into Tim's eyes. "We can't judge them, Tim. We slept together on our first date."

"Yes, I remember." Tim smiled fondly at her. "But this is their first date. They slept together last week. Is Riley sure this isn't a phase?"

Gloria nodded her head in the direction of their daughter. "Look at her. The way she looks at Kya. Does that look like a phase to you? Her engagement to that abusive butthead, Ryan, was a phase. This looks very real to me."

"Doesn't any of this bother you?" Tim asked.

"I guess it should. In accordance with my upbringing, it should. But I just want our daughter to be happy. I don't want her to be with anyone she doesn't love just because she thinks it's what *we* want. You and I, we've had our fairy tale. We've been very lucky, Tim. I want Riley to have her fairy tale...I want her to be as lucky in love as we have been. Your parents didn't want you to have anything to do with me, remember? They thought I would make you unhappy. I don't know what else they thought, other than they didn't like me with you."

"That's because they found out we did the deed before we were married. They thought you were a bad influence on me."

"Little did they know that I wasn't the slut, *you* were," Gloria teased.

"Yeah but in their generation, boys were boys and girls were always virgins."

"And in Riley's generation, boys end up with boys and girls with girls. We need to respect her judgment and her whatever path she chooses to follow. Remember, your parents lost out on two years of your life because they forbid you to marry me. They relented after Riley was born

because they wanted a relationship with their only granddaughter. I don't want to us have that kind of parallel with our child because we may not understand why she's happier with women than men. I know about Kya Liberis. She works hard and puts a lot back into this town. She is noble and upstanding, she makes a great living and doesn't lay a straw in anyone's way. Riley could do a lot worse."

Tim glanced over at his daughter again. She was laughing. Kya was holding her hand on the table, talking to her and making her laugh. His daughter beamed. She was radiating. Riley was in love and if he wasn't mistaken, Kya was in love, too. "Are you prepared for the crapstorm from your family?" He said to his wife.

"It's none of their business. When they are ready to let Riley pick and approve of their partners then I'll let them have their say. Until then? They can kiss my cottage cheesed ass."

"I love your ass. Don't make fun of it. Dimples are cute."

"On golf balls, not on my butt."

Tim grinned. "Hey, that's my wife you're talking about. I have to warn you, if you keep it up, I'll have to ask you to step outside."

"Yeah? And then what, tough guy?"

"I'll just have to give you 'what for'."

"Oh, is that what they're calling it these days?" Gloria arched an eyebrow.

The song ended and they shared a quick kiss. Hand-in-hand, they strolled off the dance floor, toward the bar. That gave Riley and Kya a few more minutes alone.

"Are you going to dance with me?" Kya asked.

"If a song comes on I like, sure." Riley's insides shook at the prospect. Would she really get up and dance with Kya in front of all her relatives? She studied the breathtaking woman seated next to her. Of course she would. Right now, her entire world revolved around Kya Liberis.

"Excuse me, could I steal my cousin for a dance?" The voice belonged to cousin Warren, Virginia and Ted's only child, the one they viewed as the messiah, the one everyone else always suspected was gay.

"Warren, hi!" Riley stood up to hug him. "This is Kya Liberis, my...date."

Warren and Kya shook hands. "So I've heard," he said to Riley. "What a brave little priss you are to bring a same-sex date to a family function. You're my new hero!" He leaned down and gave

Kya a kiss on the cheek. "You are just gorgeous," he gushed. "My goodness, cuz, when you do it, you do it right." He pulled her toward the dance floor.

"Do you mind?" Riley asked Kya.

"Of course not. Enjoy."

As Riley started to dance with Warren, Kya went up to speak with the DJ.

"How've you been, Warren? Sorry to hear that Anna's sick," Riley said, politely, as her oldest cousin whirled her around the dance floor to "At Last" by Etta James.

"Anna's fine. She's just tired of being my beard and she despises my mother. She said if I forced her to another one of my family's events, it was the end of our friendship."

"Jeez, Warren, that was kind of harsh."

He shrugged. "I don't know. Everybody despises my mother, including me, and I *have* used Anna for the last twenty years or so. She's got a partner. She can't be running off with me every time I ask. Then I heard that you were disgracing the family name by bringing a female date to the wedding and I figured if my youngest cousin had balls enough to be who she is, I guess I should stop hiding behind Anna."

"Wow. You're actually coming out?"

"Oh, like anyone will be shocked. Please!"

"Your parents will."

"Just my mother. Dad isn't as oblivious as everyone thinks he is. He and Mother go their separate ways a lot. He stays with her for appearances but the less he has to deal with her, the better."

"I thought your folks were happily married."

"Well...Mother is." Warren grinned.

"So...you and Sean have been together a long time," Riley stated.

"Yes, we have. We love each other very much. It's not all hearts and flowers, believe me, but no marriage ever is."

"Are you two legally married?"

"Yes. With my mother's hate-filled scheming, I wanted to make sure Sean was protected. Almost

everything we have, we collected and bought together. I don't want my mother to be able to come in after I'm gone and take everything away from him. It's rightfully his, not hers."

"God...you talk like she's going to outlive you. Like Sean is, too, and he's ten years younger than you."

"I'm HIV-positive, sweetie, it's a possibility."

"Warren!" Riley's hand went to her heart. "I'm so sorry, I didn't know."

"Don't be sorry, Rye. I've been HIV-positive for eleven years. I'm doing fine. Really. But it doesn't hurt to have all my ducks in a row."

Riley digested his information. He looked healthy and he seemed upbeat and happy. "When are you going to make the big announcement?"

"Probably today. Do you think Danielle will mind?"

"You'll have to ask her. Your mother will kill you."

"Maybe. If she still has her wits about her. I collected all the fruit out of the punch bowl, put it on a plate and gave it to her. She has no idea it's been soaking in ninety proof spiced rum and 7-Up for the last three hours."

Riley looked over at the table where her Aunt Virginia was seated. She was popping pieces of fruit in her mouth like she hadn't eaten in weeks. Riley started to laugh. "That's really devious...I *love* that in a person."

Suddenly the beat of the music changed and Riley recognized the introductory drum pattern of "Say It Right" by Nelly Furtado. Kya stepped up next to Warren.

"I do believe they're playing our song." Kya smirked and arched her eyebrow.

Warren smiled and took a step backward. He bowed. "By all means. You go, girls."

Riley turned to Kya. "Please don't say you want a lap dance."

"If your parents weren't here, I'd consider it." She took Riley's hand, spun her and pulled her close. "Just follow me, okay?"

"Sure," Riley said, unable to resist the seductive aura of her date.

Kya moved herself and Riley to the rhythm. Their dance was far from indecent but it certainly drew attention to them. Kya held Riley against her, her hand on Riley's hip as Riley mirrored Kya's every step and body gesture. It bordered on risqué and the two women performing the dance were not the only people in the room aroused. At one point during the song, there were so

many camera clicks, the music was almost muffled.

Kya escorted Riley back to the table when the song ended. "I so want to kiss you right now," she said just loud enough for Riley to hear.

"I'm not so sure I could stop with just kissing," Riley responded. She tried not to look at anyone during the short walk back to her seat. She didn't want anyone's expression of disapproval to spoil the moment.

"Fine by me."

"I don't want to scare either of you," Tim said as they sat down, "but your mother just went to check on Aunt Virginia. Your mother thinks that dance you just did may have given her a stroke." A tiny smile curled his lip.

Riley glanced over to Virginia and Ted's table and observed her overbearing aunt's head lolling around, her body sprawled, unladylike, on the chair. Warren stood over her with his hand over his mouth, stifling a laugh. "She didn't have a stroke, Daddy. She's hammered."

"What?" He looked back over at the table, where Gloria tried to get Virginia to sip from a glass of water. "You know your Aunt Virginia doesn't drink. She's the chairwoman of the church's temperance league. She'd never survive the scandal."

"Sucks to be her then," Riley said. She smiled at her father's inquisitive expression. "Aunt Virginia's been eating all the fruit out of the punch bowl."

"The bowl with the rum-laced punch?" Tim asked.

"Yep."

"Good Lord. I'd better find Ted and get him to take her home. She is going to have the hangover from Hell tomorrow morning," Tim said.

"Couldn't happen to a more deserving person," Riley said. She didn't feel at all sorry for her tyrannical aunt.

Tim excused himself and left the table, in search of Virginia's husband. When Ted approached Virginia, he and Tim attempted to help her stand up. Their first two efforts were unsuccessful because she flailed and fought them. She began to yell the most unladylike sentences, everything from 'those Goddamn perverts' to the diminutive size of her husbands 'equipment'. Before they were able to escort her from the reception, she reached down and grabbed a handful of Tim's crotch. "Oh my, Timothy. No wonder Gloria smiles all the time..."

Tim turned scarlet and gingerly removed Virginia's death grip on his private parts while he and Ted left the room with her.

"Oh my God. That's the last thing I needed to hear about my father," Riley said. She buried her face in her hands.

The crowd had just settled down when Danielle asked the DJ for his microphone. "Can I have everyone's attention, please? My cousin, Warren, would like to make an announcement." She handed the mic to her ebullient oldest cousin.

"Hey everybody! Since this is such a day of joy, I asked Danielle if I could share mine with you, too." Warren was holding hands with Sean. "I just wanted to tell everyone what they probably already knew anyway." The normally quiet and subdued Warren was now very loud and animated. "I'm gay and always have been and Sean is my spouse. We're legally married!" There was some applause but mostly silence. Warren didn't seem to notice. He grabbed Sean, kissed him and led him to the dance floor. The DJ squinted at the couple, shrugged and then played the requested Whitney Houston version of "I Will Always Love You."

Riley spotted Danielle, who downed a shot of something dark and was quickly handed another by Todd. "I get the feeling that the reception isn't going exactly as Danielle planned," Riley said.

Kya looked over her shoulder at the bride. "Thankfully, we aren't a part of the surprise. She's thrilled about us. But let's go see if there's anything we can do to help get things back on track." They both stood and felt an immediate presence behind them.

"Fuckin' A, man, this place is loaded with fucking queers." Alex stared at the dance floor where Warren and Sean danced cheek to cheek and Cory moved in tandem with his male date.

"And two of them are standing right in front of you," Kya said, crisply.

"Huh? What?" Kya's words registered with him. "You two? No way! No fucking way!" His voice could be heard over the music.

"Yes. Kya and I are together." Riley faced him squarely. "And would you mind watching your language? There are children here and other people who may be offended by your cursing."

"What?" He took another swallow of his drink. His demeanor was now nasty. "Do you think children and people here aren't offended by what you are? Are you honestly lecturing me about improper behavior? With what you do with your mouth? My mouth may spew some offensive words but I can guarantee my mouth has never been where yours has."

Riley knew she shouldn't egg him on but she couldn't resist. She gave Kya a blatant once-over and winked at her. "Your loss," she said to Alex.

"And another reason why your marriage probably didn't last," Kya added.

He focused on Kya. "So what happened to turn a big babe like you? Rape? Daddy get a little too friendly? Couldn't outrun your brothers?" He looked her up and down. "Can't imagine that with those legs."

Kya stepped close to him. Her tone of voice was very calm and she smiled patiently at him. "Alex, Riley and I aren't the ones with issues here. We're not the ones angry at people who aren't exactly like we are, or how we think they should be. You're the one who so obviously hates your own life that you can't even be respectful during your brother's special day. Drunk before the wedding even begins? Being obnoxious and calling people names? You have the problem, Alex. We don't. So, if you don't want to feel what these legs are really capable of, I suggest you turn your ignorance and bigotry elsewhere. At least for the rest of this day."

There was something about Kya's expression that made Alex pause but he was drunk beyond reason so his unpleasant posturing continued. "So are you going to beat me up? There's one for the cause."

Kya crossed her arms. "I don't have a cause. I am who I am. But if you want to keep on trying to pick a fight and spoil your brother's and my good friend's wedding day? I'll walk you out of here myself while Riley gets your daddy to have another little chat with you. Clearly his first one didn't do any good."

Alex slammed his glass on the table, drawing all attention to him. He took a step back and gestured toward himself with both hands. "Bring it on, dyke!"

"You're pathetic," Riley said to him and shook her head sadly.

"*I'm* pathetic?" Alex shouted. "You two better look in a mirror." He pointed to the dance floor. "You all are twisted. It's fucking wrong!"

"Daddy, stop it!" Suddenly Brent was there. He pounded on Alex's leg. "Why do you always do this? You're such a dickhead!" The little boy screamed at his father and ran out of the grange hall, crying.

Riley glared at Alex. "Wow," she said, quietly, "you must be so proud of the example you set for your son." Before Alex could respond, Riley spun on her heel and walked in the same direction as Brent ran.

Alex's face was beet-red, a combination of anger and embarrassment. Todd and Eric St. Peter grabbed Alex and dragged him out of the building. Seconds later, Todd returned but Eric and Alex did not.

"I apologize for my brother, Kya. There's no excuse for his behavior. As you can see, he has serious anger issues and alcohol doesn't help." He placed a hand on her arm. "Come sit with us for a minute?"

"I should go find Riley..."

"She was sitting on the steps with Brent, calming him down."

Kya nodded and accompanied Todd back to the bridal table, where they sat down on opposite sides of Danielle.

"This could be going better," Danielle said and gestured to the crowd.

"Dani, I apologize if Riley and I were, in any way -"

"No. You don't owe me any apologies. Alex does. And I don't blame Warren for finally wanting to tell everyone the truth, although his choosing this day to leap out of the closet was a little disconcerting. As was Aunt Virginia falling off the turnip truck." She hesitated, then cracked a hint of a smile. "I *really* hope someone has that on film."

Todd glanced around the room then back at his new wife. "Actually, the incidents seemed to have only stopped the frivolity momentarily." He gestured toward the dance floor. "Everybody still seems to be having a good time."

"I can't speak for your family but you know mine. None of them would run from a party. Even if they will all viciously gossip about it tomorrow."

He put his arm around Danielle. "It's not that bad. There's still the dollar dance, cake to cut, there's still the bouquet and garter to toss...tons of fun left." He leaned over and tenderly kissed her cheek. "Are you having a good time?"

"Maybe after another shot...or six." She finally smiled under his winsome gaze. "Okay...it could be a lot worse."

"What's Alex's problem?" Kya asked. "No one else in your family seems to have homophobia; what's up with that?"

"I don't know," Todd said and sighed. "Pick an excuse from one to infinity. He's the oldest, too much responsibility, not enough responsibility, his wife left him to explore her sexuality, he's an asshole, he...? There is always something."

"I would say that his wife leaving him to explore her sexuality, especially if it involved exploration with another woman, might be a reason, in his mind, as to why he has a problem with our festive subculture."

"He had an issue with gays before that happened. Knowing his ex, she probably left him with that excuse because she knew how much it would piss him off," Todd said.

"My guess is the only woman she left him for was herself," Danielle said.

"Doesn't matter. If it wasn't that, it would be something else. He was an asshole growing up, he's an asshole as an adult, he was an asshole husband and he's an asshole father. He's a raging alcoholic and won't seek help. For anything. Whatever the problem is, it's always somebody else's fault, never his. He promised me, *promised*, that he would be on his best behavior today.

He had a half a bottle of Johnny Walker in him before we even got to the church. I've had it with him. We've all had it with him. Brent's right. He is a dickhead."

Kya stood back up. "I think I'll go check on Riley and see how she's doing with the little guy."

"Probably a good idea. Poor kid continues to see his father in a bad light but usually it's in private. Today Alex showed what an asshole he is to everybody in the room and he didn't even think about how it might affect anyone, most importantly, his kid." Todd looked up at Kya. "If it's really bad, come and get me, okay?"

"Okay," Kya said and smiled warmly at him.

Riley had settled on the third step of the grange staircase that led to the second floor offices. She had her arm around Brent who was all cried out and now snuggled into her side. He sniffled, wiped his nose on the back of his hand and rubbed his snotty hand on his tuxedo pants.

"Are you okay, honey?" Riley brushed his hair off his forehead with her fingers. She didn't see Kya in the doorway taking stock of the situation. Kya remained silent and just observed the exchange.

"I hate my dad," Brent said and wiped his eyes again.

"No you don't. You don't hate your dad, you're just mad at him." Riley's voice was soothing. "Does your dad get like that a lot?"

"All the time. He's always sore at something or somebody. Nobody wants to come play with me when I'm at daddy's. I hate going to dad's every weekend. He's a dickhead."

"Where did you learn that word?"

"Billy Conrad at school. He says it all the time."

"Do you know what it means?"

Brent shook his head. "Nuh uh. But I know it's not nice because the teacher puts him in time out."

"You're right, it's not nice and," Riley tapped Brent's nose a few times, "you probably shouldn't call people that anymore."

He looked up at her. "What does it mean?"

Oh, boy. "I, uh, bet if you ask your Uncle Todd some time, he'll tell you."

"Why can't you tell me?"

She looked down into innocently curious brown eyes. "Because...it's a bad word and I don't like to say bad words." *Oh, God. Is my nose growing?*

Kya placed her hand over her mouth to stifle the sound of her laughter. She lightly shook her head and watched Riley in adoration.

"Okay. Then I won't say any more bad words. Do you have any kids?"

"Nope. Do you?"

"Nawww...I am a kid! I can't have kids." Brent giggled. "Are you married?"

"Nope. Are you?"

"Nope. You wanna get married?" He grinned at her.

"Don't you think I'm a little old for you?"

"Nope. I think you're just perfect." He ended the sentence with a vigorous nod.

"Well, thank you for the compliment, Master St. Peter, but I'm kind of seeing somebody right now so it wouldn't be fair if I married you, now would it?"

He bowed his head. "No," he sighed. "I guess not."

Riley stood up and held her hand out to him. "But I don't see any reason why we can't have a dance, do you?"

He stood up and took her hand. "You sure your boyfriend won't get mad?" They walked back into the grange hall.

"I'm sure."

He pumped his little fist in the air. "All right!" He was beaming.

Kya returned to the wedding table before Riley and her small companion entered the room. She watched as Riley led Brent to the dance floor, extended their hands out and moved around the floor like the perfect ballroom couple. Riley towered over Brent and he seemed okay with letting her lead. When the song ended, Riley leaned over and whispered something to Brent and he took a step back, then bowed. Riley curtsied and gave him a kiss on the cheek. Brent blushed and ran off to sit with his grandmother but not before whispering in her ear and grinning. Mrs. St. Peter looked over at Riley and smiled. She ruffled Brent's hair and he ran happily out of the room.

"You just charm everyone, don't you?" Kya said at Riley's return.

Riley smiled in acknowledgement and pulled a chair out and sat at the wedding table. "I'll have you know I just got a marriage proposal."

"From Brent?" Todd asked. At Riley's nod, he said, "Don't get your hopes up, yesterday he proposed to Gina."

"He did? Why that fickle little monkey..." Riley said and laughed. "I told him I was seeing someone. He took it rather well."

"Good thing. I'd hate to have to fight him for your honor," Kya said.

Riley flushed at the thought of meaning that much to Kya. "Too bad his father isn't as likeable. What is his problem, Todd?" Riley asked.

"I'll explain it to you later," Kya told her.

"What's to explain?" Danielle said. "Other than being a complete jackass, he's easy to explain."

"And now the bride and groom will do the obligatory dollar dance," the DJ announced, taking both Danielle and Todd by surprise.

"Oh. I guess this is where we go make money for the honeymoon," Todd said as he stood and extended a hand to his new wife.

Danielle rose from her chair. "Oh, boy...just what I was waiting for," she said, sarcastically. She pointed to the men lined up. "Uncle Wayne said he'd give me a hundred dollar bill if I would dance with him first."

"A hundred dollars?" Riley scrunched up her face. "That would not be anywhere near enough for me to dance with Uncle Wayne."

Danielle drank the last of her double shot and rolled her eyes. "Hey...a hundred bucks for a five second grope and feel isn't that bad." She put on a mock brave face and walked to the dance floor.

"Still wouldn't be enough for me," Riley mumbled. Both Riley and Kya observed a short man with a massive comb-over and a stringy mustache practically leap to Danielle, cup her rear end with one hand and stuff something down the front of her dress with the other. As they moved to the music, he kept the hand on her behind and slowly pulled the other one out of her dress, lingering at her breast when he did. He smiled at her lasciviously until he was interrupted by the next man in line with a dollar for the bride. Reluctantly Wayne relinquished Danielle to Warren's husband, Sean.

"How did you know he was going to do that?" Kya asked.

"He does it at every family wedding. He's my cousin Meredith's father and he's the family lech."

"Maybe I should go dance with him," Kya said and smirked.

Riley laughed at the visual that popped into her head. "Gee, maybe you should."

Kya reached over and took Riley's hand. "When would you like to leave?"

The expression on Kya's face was so wanton, Riley couldn't answer her until she remembered to breathe again. She wanted to say 'Right now!' as she knew the wedding was just a formality and a prelude to another mindblowing lovemaking session that Riley was definitely going to stay sober for. "I think we should stay for the cutting of the cake and the throwing of the bouquet and then we could leave."

"That long, huh?" Kya arched an eyebrow in amusement. She raised Riley's hand to her lips and kissed it, lingeringly.

"Or not," Riley said, hoarsely.

"No, you're right. That would be a more appropriate time to leave."

"Yes," Riley agreed. The look in her eyes told Kya that she wished they had already left.

Following the dollar dance, the newlyweds announced that they wanted to cut their cake. Tim and Gloria had returned to the table with slices for themselves and Riley and Kya.

"We weren't sure if you two wanted any cake but we brought you some anyway," Gloria said.

"I'm actually still full from the dinner," Riley said.

"I might have some, thank you," Kya said and pulled the plate to her.

"Who made the cake this year, do you know? Was it Meredith?" Gloria asked, between bites. She turned to Kya to explain. "Meredith is the family wedding cake baker. She's been doing it for ten years now."

"No, Danielle said Meredith was going to let Ashley do it this year." Riley looked at Kya.

"Ashley is her daughter and studying cake making in school. I understand she's done quite well...so...far..." Riley stopped and put her hand on Kya's arm just in time to stop her from taking her first bite of cake. "Mom? Smile at me."

"What?" Gloria heard Riley but wasn't sure she understood. As requested, she smiled at her daughter. Her teeth were blue and her lips were a gorgeous shade of purple.

Riley then addressed her father. "Daddy?"

Tim looked up at her and grinned. His teeth were blue and his upper lip was bright red. Just then, little Marie ran by, her face mostly covered with red icing rubbed into blue. She looked as though she had been beaten to a pulp.

"Oh my God," Gloria exclaimed. "What on earth -?"

Riley scanned the room. Various guests, kids mostly, had deep blues, reds or purple on their teeth, tongue, lips, face and fingers. Anyone walking into the room might have thought they were entering a crime scene. "I think Ashley may have used a very potent food coloring in the roses on the cake."

Kya followed Riley's gaze and put her fork down. "It looks like a Sam Raimi movie in here."

A small ruckus erupted on the other side of the room and Ashley ran out of the grange hall in tears, her chastising mother close behind her. Seconds later, Danielle passed their table with blue frosted lips and three red dots on her cheeks and nose. Thankfully, she was smiling.

"Poor Danielle," Gloria said and shook her head, sympathetically.

"Danielle seems fine. She didn't want a big wedding or reception in the first place, she wanted to elope but Aunt Penny and Uncle Luc insisted on a family ceremony, with all the bells and whistles. All she cares about is that she and Todd are finally married," Riley said.

"This wedding has to go down in your family archives as one of the most interesting," Tim said to Gloria.

The disc jockey announced it was time for all of the single women to gather on the dance floor as the bride was about to throw her bouquet.

"Are you two going to join all the bachelorettes?" Tim asked Riley and Kya.

"Sure, why not?" Kya nudged a surprised Riley toward the crowd of women in front of them.

"Then let's stand in the back. I'm too short to catch the bouquet back here and you really don't want it, do you?" Riley asked, as they rose from their chairs.

Kya just smiled as the countdown to the toss began. When Danielle threw the bouquet behind her, it sailed in a wide arc, just enough for Kya's long reach to snag it. She tapped it on the tip of her fingers and angled it to her right so that the bouquet nearly hit Riley in the face. Riley stuck her hands up to protect herself and ended up with the bouquet in her grasp. The sea of single women parted to see who the 'lucky' recipient was. Most clapped but some of the female relatives were very sore losers.

"Well, that's certainly a waste," cousin Jessica said and tsked, sourly.

"Not if her big girlfriend there catches the garter," Jessica's sister, Candace said. Both Jessica and Candace were two of Meredith's three daughters. They left the dance floor, disappointed.

"I'm going to kill you," Riley mumbled to Kya without moving her lips.

"Cheer up, Riley. Tradition says that you will be the next to get married," Kya said.

"I don't want to get married," Riley protested. She looked up at Kya, whose eyes seemed to be exploring her soul. "Um...not right away, anyway..."

"And now, will all the single men come to the dance floor for the garter toss?" the disc jockey requested.

"So...is my big girlfriend going to go out there and catch the garter?" Riley asked.

Kya winked at her and moved to the floor. "I'll do my best." As Todd removed the garter from Danielle's thigh to the hoots and hollers of everyone in the room, Kya embedded herself in the middle of the group of men. When the men counted backward from three and Todd tossed the garter over his head behind him at zero, Kya reached down and grabbed Brent by the waist. With a great thrust, she lifted him above the crowd and he caught the garter. When she set him down, they high-fived each other. Kya looked over at Riley, who grinned at her approvingly.

"Little Brent seems to have more of his father in him than he thinks," Kya said. She sat in the passenger seat of Riley's car as Riley drove them back to Kya's apartment.

"Ya think? Just because he tried to push the garter up to my waist?" Riley said and smirked. "Despite that, it was very sweet of you to let Brent catch the garter."

"Ten years from now he'll be showing that wedding CD to all his buddies, trust me. His posse will take one look at you and his street cred will go through the roof."

Riley steered the car into Kya's driveway and put it into park, letting the vehicle idle. "Do you still want me to come in?" Her expression was hopeful.

"Absolutely. Did I do anything in the past few hours to make you think I'd changed my mind?"

"No. I just wanted to be sure. Wanted to give you a chance to back out in case you had."

Kya observed Riley's sudden reticence. "I've been looking forward to this - to you - all day. Have you changed your mind?"

"No. God, no."

"Then shut off the car and come inside." Kya smiled and lightly rubbed her hand over Riley's thigh.

"I noticed you didn't drink much all day," Kya said, as she put her shoes away in the closet.

"Just two glasses of champagne. I wanted to stay sober this time," Riley said. Her smile was shy. "You know...still hoping there would be a 'this time'."

Kya approached her and stood close. She placed the palm of her hand against the soft, fair-skinned, face of her date. "I think we both knew where we'd end up tonight."

"Well, I wasn't so sure you'd survive the afternoon and, if you did, you'd still want to be connected to anyone in my family."

"Your family is a piece of cake compared to mine," Kya said. She leaned over and kissed Riley's forehead, then her cheek, then her lips. It was a gentle gesture but the minimal contact electrified them both. "Would you like a glass of wine?"

"Um...no," Riley said, quietly. She reached up and put her hand on the back of Kya's neck, coaxing her back. They kissed again, more assertively, more hungry this time.

"I see," Kya whispered, "you just want to get right to it."

"I don't want to waste another minute," Riley told her, boldly.

"Mmmm...a woman after my own heart." Kya fastened her lips to Riley's and maneuvered her backward into the bedroom.

"Good God, Kya," Riley panted as Kya pinned her naked body to the bed and sensually ravished every inch of it. Every nerve in Riley's body was on passion overload and her skin was on fire. No one had ever made her feel like this during sex and she was grateful she was able to appreciate every second of it this time. Her nipples felt raw, swollen and were aching for more relief. Riley arched into Kya's lips that were now devoting time to the vicinity of her navel. She had already climaxed once through Kya's expert touch and anticipated another powerful orgasm as Kya slowly moved to the area that needed the most urgent attention. Kya did amazing things with her tongue, flicking and suckling Riley into the zenith of pleasure.

After Riley's release, Kya penetrated her, filling her with such desire, she thought her blood would ignite in her veins. How could something be too much and not enough at the same time?

They moved in tandem to a rhythm that intensified the friction and made the sex more gratifying. When Riley came again, their cadence continued and without stopping to rest, Kya sat up and

rested her knees on each side of Riley's hips. She took Riley's hand, guided it between her legs and held onto Riley's wrist while she practically impaled herself on three of Riley's fingers. Riley had never seen anything so hot in her entire life. She watched, mesmerized, as Kya took her pleasure, riding Riley's hand with such abandon, Riley nearly climaxed with her when Kya finally released.

Temporarily incapacitated from the orgasm, Kya exhaustedly collapsed on top of Riley. Breathless, both women took a moment to regenerate. They knew the night was just beginning and they wanted to conserve as much energy as possible.

"Kya, Jesus..." Riley gasped. Her body trembled from sexual excitement. "I didn't think it was possible to be this aroused. Everything about you is just so...beguiling. The way you look, the way you speak, the way you touch me...no one has ever affected me the way you do."

Kya lifted her head and looked at Riley. They were both bathed in a light sheen of perspiration. Kya smiled, seductively. "You like what we do?"

"I don't ever want it to stop," she honestly admitted.

"Me, either." Kya propped herself up on her elbow, resting her head on her hand. Her free hand wandered between Riley's breasts and drew circles on her torso. "I want you, Riley. I want you in my life and I want you in my bed as often as possible."

Riley couldn't look away from the blue eyes that held her captive. "I want that, too, and that scares me a little."

"It scares me a lot." Kya pushed damp bangs off Riley's forehead.

"I mean, we don't really know each other."

"Yet it feels like we do, like we have for a very long time. You're familiar and I don't know why. It's like...instinctively I know what you like, what you want and what you need."

"True, that. I've never been with anyone who fits me so well this soon," Riley admitted.

"But don't you feel it, too? Like we know each other? Like we've been through this before?"

"I'm not sure...I agree there is a natural intimacy between us, as though we've always known our way around each other's bodies. I find that odd since I've never been with a woman before you."

"And hopefully you never want to be with another woman after me." Kya grinned again.

Riley matched her smile. "I think you've spoiled me."

"Oh, baby, you ain't seen nothin' yet. There is so much else I need to show you." Kya mounted Riley again.

"Oooooo. Well," she slapped Kya's behind, "let's get to it."

"Your command is my wish." Kya placed her thigh at Riley's center and kissed her passionately, both women heating up immediately. "Now, where were we?"

"Oh, God..." Riley breathed out as they began to concurrently rock, "we were in the middle of getting reacquainted..."

The End.

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