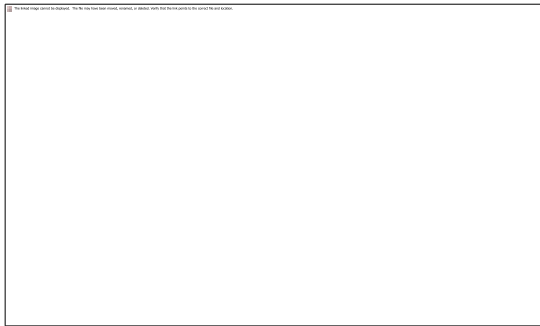
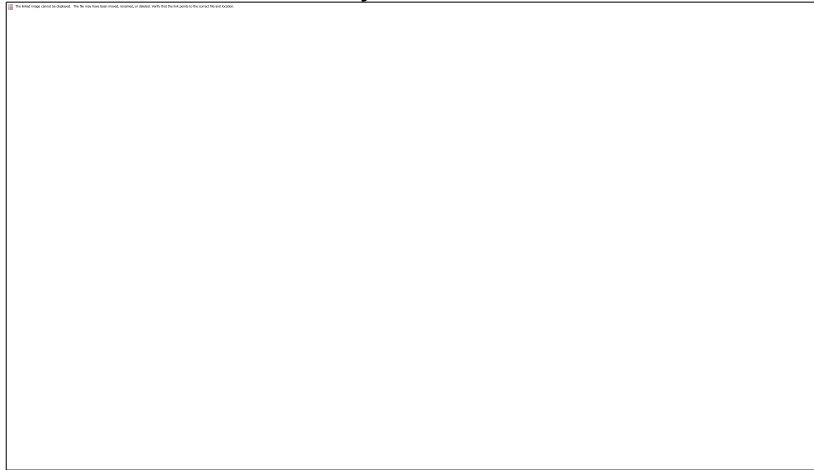


# ~ Capon's Savage ~

by Larisa



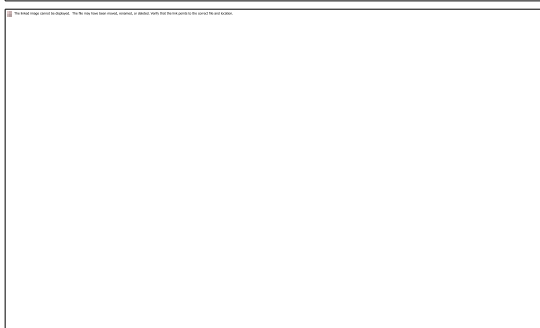
**Disclaimer:** Yep, I know who ya think they are but they're all mine.

**Violence:** A little, an attempted rape scene nothing graphic.

**Sex:** What do ya think? Have I ever not wrote a story without a sex scene? Yeah but I had fun teasing everyone!

**The rest:** Not old enough Yada yada yada go away!

Thanks to Lesia, Ri and poor Webwarrior who has to try and make sense of this story.



**Capon's Savage**

**By Larisa**

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Dash Monroe parked her dusty 4x4 Toyota truck along the asphalt path that led down to the Capon Bridge. It was the annual Gore Bridge Bungee Jump and she was here to catch all the insane jumpers on film. She had her choice of assignments this time, it was either attend the annual peach harvest in Georgia or come to the Gore Bridge. It was an easy choice; she lived in

Washington DC so the drive would be scenic and not take her days to get there. When the photo shoot was finished, she would get back on Rt. 50 and head home for the rest of the day. Being a sort of photo/reporter for one of the prestigious travel magazines, she was always on the road finding new places for people to visit. The only time it really bothered her was when she was gone for weeks at a time. She had only been back three days from a trip to the West Coast where she took pictures of Seattle, Washington and Boulder, Colorado. Nothing like coming back to a small efficiency apartment, and finding it not so efficient with keeping itself clean. Her long time boyfriend had promised that he would stop by, water her plants and make sure that a light was on at night. He did that and then some, he had accomplished in less than a week what she had been trying to do for three years; kill her plants. They were literally floating in small frozen ponds. He had watered them until the water overflowed onto the window's ledge and froze there. The air conditioning was on full blast and reminded her of the time she had been to Alaska to take pictures of the whales. He surprised her every time he did something, she couldn't figure out how a bull in the stock exchange could be so dense at times. After four years you would think she would be used to him but that was a mystery of man that woman would never figure out.

So now, on the West Virginia side, which was named the Capon Bridge, she took the long walk to the center where it became the Gore Bridge of Virginia. As she walked, she looked down and felt dizzy. She had never been very fond of heights, standing on a footstool to get into the kitchen cabinets made her knees shake. Up ahead of her she saw a large group of cheering people of all ages gathered around the four-foot high steel railing. Taking her camera from its bag, she zoomed in on the group and switched from head shoots to the entire group. Off to the side she saw a man dressed in the brown shades of a park ranger. Looping the shoulder strap around her neck, she approached him with a smile on her pink lips.

"Hi I'm Dash Monroe from the Washington Traveler, can I ask you some questions about what goes on here today?"

The park Ranger gave her a small smirk and held out his hand. "Besides a bunch of crazies jumping of a bridge with a rubber band?"

"Well yeah, I mean there's got to be something else that goes on around here."

"Come over here and I'll point something's out for you, now if you look clear across to the north side there, you'll not see a damn thing but there's a place over there called Fort Edwards. *From this fort on April 18, 1756, a group of soldiers of Col. Washington's Virginia Regiment went in pursuit of a few Indians and some of them stumbled into an ambush of over 100 French and Indian raiders. The ambush killed seventeen men and sent chills through the Burgesses in Williamsburg. This battle near Fort Edwards was the largest of the French and Indian War to have occurred in present West Virginia.*

He finished his history lesson and took a deep breath. "Sometimes I feel like one of those narrators on the Discovery Channel." He smiled at her and then leaned back against the railing and noticed her shiver. "You alright, you look a little pale."

"It's nothing, I just don't like heights." She took a quick glance over and stepped back a few feet.

"It's really beautiful here, so from what I've read, this bridge has been here for 100 years. It's funny because I expected a rickety old thing that wasn't safe to walk on."

"Ohh it's safe alright, unless you're crazy and jump off it. That's a long fall let alone to be yanked back up." He pointed to where two men had crawled over the railing and were standing on the edge. They gave out a yell and fell backwards; Dash felt her heart freeze in her chest and was waiting to keel over. With shaky hands, she raised her camera and took pictures of the people leaning over the railing. Getting up her nerve, she went closer and shot pictures of the men doing aerial acrobatics on the end of the rubber strap.

"If you'll excuse me I have to get back over there and make sure no one goes over without a rubber band."

"Thanks for your help; may I talk to you later?"

"Sure I'll be here until dusk." He walked back over to the crowd and stood guard near the railing. Changing lenses, she shot pictures of the river below and the lush foliage overhanging to dip into the water. Slowly, she brought the camera up the bank and stopped when she caught the flash of movement below. Zooming in, she saw something out in the water swimming towards the other side. Looking back to the Park Ranger, she jogged over to him.

"What kind of animals are down near the river?"

"Ohh I think there's beaver down there, muskrat, deer, raccoon, squirrel. Just the normal things that you find in the woods."

"What would be big enough for me to see swim across the river?"

He scratched his head and blinked his dark brown eyes a few times. "From up here, nothing unless Loch Ness is down there, why?"

"Because I just saw something swimming across the river, and I was just curious."

"Where did you see this?" He asked and started walking towards where she had been. When they got there, she pointed to the north shore.

"Down there, I saw it out in the middle and it was going to the other side."

"Ohh I know what you saw, that's just the Capon Savage. You're lucky, not many people see the Savage at all."

"Capon Savage, what is it, I've never heard of it before?"

"Don't worry, not many people know about our little beastie of the river. In fact no one has actually been close enough to know what it is." He removed his hat and wiped the sweat from his brow. "It has to be three years ago, a couple of rowdy guys thought it would be fun to go down

there and poach deer in the off season. You see, once you get away from the river, there's open fields surrounded by trees and small streams that feed into the river. Its prime ground for deer, they get nice and big down there. So these guys went down there one night and found out that the deer are vicious." He grinned at her shocked look.

"The deer are vicious, how is that?"

"When those boys got back to town, they looked like a whole herd of buffalo ran over them and came back for seconds. They said that they had sighted in on a small herd of deer and the next thing they were being attacked by a huge buck."

Her green eyes glowed with laughter, the sides of her nose crinkled up as she chuckled at the image. "Kind of like that video of the man getting humped by a deer while his wife video taped it?"

"That's what two of them said, the third guy told a different story after a bottle of Tequila. He said that some huge creature came out of the trees, it was over six foot tall and had hair all over its body. What ever it was, it beat the shit out of all three of them and threw them back in their boat."

"So that thing that beat them up is the Capon Savage?" She looked back down to the river and an idea came to her. "How do I get down there?"

"Ohh you don't want to go down there, it's steep and dangerous." He knew damn well how to get down there but he didn't want anyone bothering the savage. The tales that were past around, kept people from getting into trouble. It was like an animal sanctuary down there because of the savage, numerous endangered species were making a come back because of it. "We've had people go down there in boats and never be seen again, that water looks calm from up here but it runs rapid and has sink holes beneath the surface."

"Is there anything written about this Capon Savage?"

"Nope, just tales told around town. If you want, there's a bed and breakfast in town owned by Old Hazel, I'm sure she has a room where you can stay. If you talk to her, she'll tell you all she knows about the savage."

"Thanks I appreciate at it." She shook his hand and headed back to her truck. Running her hands through her short blondish hair, she looked at the time on the dash and sighed. "What the Hell do I have to go home to, freeze dried plants and nothing else." She had yet to hear from her boyfriend John since she got back, it was always this way. He came around for one thing, sex. After seven minutes of pure Hell for her, he was in the shower and out the door. Pulling up onto the road, she headed towards Hampshire County to find Old Hazel and more tales of the Capon Savage. She would never write about the savage for publication but for her own curiosity.

The bed and breakfast was a small two-story house on the edge of the small town; she pulled into a spot along the street, got out and went up to the door. Before she could knock, a woman pulled

the door open in, she looked to be in her 70's or older.

"Can I help you miss?" She looked through thick glasses that made her pale blue eyes seem fuzzy.

"I spoke to a Park Ranger that said you might have a room for me."

She grinned so wide that her dentures almost fell out. "Was he a handsome devil with brown eyes and dimples?"

Dash chuckled and nodded her head. "That would be him; he said your names Hazel."

"I just bet he did, he told you I was Old Hazel. Damn kid; just wait until he comes for supper." She held the door open for Dash and motioned for her to come in.

"You know him well?"

"All his trouble making life, Tommie's my grandson or was. I'm gonna plant my shoe in his ass."

Dash looked down at Hazel's shoes and couldn't help but laugh, she had never seen a woman Hazel's age wear Nike cross trainers. What struck her even more was that Hazel wore an old housedress, T-shirt over it and red striped tube socks.

"He told you to ask me about the savage to huh?" She turned and looked over her shoulder at Dash.

"Yeah he did, by the way my names Dash Monroe." She held out her hand and was surprised by the strength of Hazel's grip.

"Old Hazel Edwards, know it all, done it all and I live to tell it all." She took Dash upstairs to a corner room that looked out over a large garden. The room was medium in size with a double bed covered with a handmade quilt, oak nightstand and dresser and a small color TV sitting on a stand across the room. "There's a small bathroom with a shower through the door there, clean towels and anything else you'll need."

"How much do I owe you for the night?" She reached for her wallet and felt a warm hand stop her.

"If Tommie sent you then you owe me nothing, payment is you listening to an old woman go on for hours about nothing." She smiled and left Dash to settle in.

When Dash went back downstairs, she walked into a bright and cheery kitchen and smelled cinnamon and coffee. It had been a long time since she had eaten a decent meal and was looking forward to the apple dumpling she saw on the table.

"Come on in and help me eat this stuff." Hazel waved to a chair and poured coffee into a large

coffee mug with the words Boss in huge red letters.

"Is Tommie the only grandchild you have?"

"Ohh nooo, I have a total of eleven grandkids. Tommie's the only one who stayed around here; the others sought fortunes and fame."

"Any famous grandkids, you know like actors or anyone I may have heard of?"

Hazel grinned at her and snorted. "I've got a granddaughter that's quite famous at the truck stop in Winchester."

"Ohh...OOHH I didn't mean that kind of famous." She blushed and tried to cover it with her coffee cup.

"I have one who used to be an author but she stopped writing and disappeared, haven't heard from her in ten or more years. Last I heard she was in Greece or something."

"Sorry I didn't mean to bring up bad memories."

"Ohh you didn't, she's where she wants to be. You know one of those that seek out the truth of ones self. Always was an odd ball if ya ask me, too quiet, always reading about myths and legends. Ain't anything she doesn't know about the ancients, I thought she would go into archeology or something?"

"Tommie mentioned something about Fort Edwards, what can you tell me about it?"

"Well, if ya didn't catch on to my last name I'm one of the descendants of Joseph Edwards.

*Sometime around 1727-1742 he came from Pennsylvania through the Shenandoah Valley into the mountains to the west and settled along the Cacapon River. In the late 1740s, George Washington came into the area surveying for Lord Fairfax and laid out several parcels for Joe's family. Later, during the early years of the French and Indian War, Joe's property became the site of one of the many forts guarding the Virginia Frontier from the French and their Indian allies. Col. George Washington's Virginia regiment manned the fort at Edwards's.*

*From this fort on April 18, 1756, a group of soldiers of Col. Washington's Virginia Regiment went in pursuit of a few Indians and some of them stumbled into an ambush of over 100 French and Indian raiders. The ambush killed seventeen men and sent chills through the Burgesses in Williamsburg. This battle near Fort Edwards was the largest of the French and Indian War to have occurred in present West Virginia.*

"Ya know that the fort is still down there, just the foundation is left but they've found bits and pieces of artifacts."

"So how does the Capon Savage fit into all of this? Tommie said that what ever it is, it attacks

people who go down there. Have you ever seen the Savage?"

"I really don't know how long it's been down there, but I know some boys learned the hard way about poaching. Every once in a while someone will see it out in the river swimming from one side to the other or going off into the brush. I hear it's big and hairy like Big Foot, might very well be a big foot. Had one of the nearby farmers milk cow come up missing, couple goats and sheep and a half wolf pup that some drifter said was stole out of his truck when it was parked on the bridge. As for me seeing it?" She pulled off her glasses and handed them to Dash. "Take a look through those and tell me what ya see."

Dash tried but her eyes crossed and became blurry. "I gotcha." She handed them back and rubbed her eyes. "I saw the savage today swimming, I couldn't really see it very well through my camera but I know it was going across to the other side. What's over on that side of the river?"

"Just some open fields, streams, probably fruit trees." She took a sip of her coffee and studied Dash. "What do you do for a living?"

"I'm a photo journalist for the Washington Traveler; this is the first time I've been down here."

"Got a husband or boyfriend waiting for you?" She winked at her and saw a light blush cover her face.

"I have a boyfriend in Washington; at least I think I do?" She scratched her jaw and shrugged her shoulders. "I haven't heard from him since he froze my house plants; he's a broker in a firm and gets lost among all the NASDAQ and the DOW Jones ticker tape."

"Ohh the green thumb kind that can kill grass just by stepping on it, my late husband was like that, he could kill fake plants."

They heard the front door open and close with a loud click and then footsteps coming towards the kitchen. "Tommie get in here and help us eat these dumplings!" Dash wondered how she knew it was him since he hadn't come into sight yet. "He tries to tip toe through the house, sounds like he's tap dancing." He stepped into the kitchen, gave his grandma a kiss on her cheek and dropped into a chair. "Any bounce back up and hit the bridge?"

"Nope, but had a couple drunkards thinking they could do it with regular rope."

Dash covered her mouth with her hand to stifle a laugh. "Sorry that's not funny."

"Yeah it is, they tied the rope around the bumper of their truck but before they could do anything, one of them decided they needed more beer. Last I saw them; they were running behind the truck towards Virginia." He took a bite of his dumpling and moaned. "Grandma if I eat all of this I won't have room for supper."

"Bullshit Tommie, you eat like a hog. One of these days I'm just going to put you out back with a slop troth."

"Gee thanks grandma, now Dash thinks I'm a pig."

"She might put me back there with you, I'm known for being barred from all you can eat buffets."

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Before supper, Dash went for a walk along the deserted sidewalks and found a small bar on a corner. Going in, she let her eyes adjust to the dimness and saw that just a few old men sitting around the TV hanging from the ceiling. Going up to the bar, she sat down on a stool and waved to the half-asleep bartender.

"Can I have a coke please?"

"Sure thing little lady." He filled a large glass with some ice and placed it in front of her along with a 16oz bottle of Coke. "Anything else I can get you?"

"I have a question; do you know anything about the Capon Savage?"

"The one ya wanna talk to is Old Hazel or that old geezer over there." He pointed to an old man with white fringe around his head.

"Thanks." She took her glass over to the table and asked if she could join the old man, he looked up at her with rheumy blue eyes and nodded.

She sat down and held out her hand to him. "My names Dash, I was talking to Hazel today and she said you might be able to tell me about the Capon Savage."

"The river beastie, damn thing stole one of my cows one night right outta the field. Don't know why, thing was half-dead from a bad infection in its leg. Guess it didn't care if it was hungry."

"You think it stole your cow for food?"

"Sure, what else would it want with it. Too old to have anymore calves, I kept her around to nurse orphan calves."

"No one saw anything, like a neighbor or a cow being led away and how did the savage get it across the river?"

"Not a peep outta anyone and ya can get down to where everyone sees the savage by cutting across my cow pasture. There's an old tree logging road that's all grown over, been 50 60 years since it's been used." A huge grin covered her face, she knew there had to be a way of getting down there and now she had her answer.

"Thank you for talking to me, can I buy you a drink as a way of thanks?"



"I never turn down a free drink little lady, sure I'll take another milk." She nodded her head and gave him a smile.

On her way out of the bar, she looked to the direction she had come into town, she would go out the next day and scout around for the old man's farm and see if she could find this road he spoke of.

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It was eight o'clock when Dash's cell phone rang and woke her from a deep sleep, she searched the nightstand and flipped open to see John's number across the small screen. With a hoarse voice, she answered.

"John it's early."

*"I know sweetness but I miss you and I want to know if I can come over for an hour."*

She covered her eyes and held back a sigh. "I'm not at home John; I'm on assignment down near the Capon Bridge." She knew she would hate herself for what she was about to do. "Why don't you take a day off and drive down here, it's beautiful."

*"I can't do that sweetness, I have an important brokerage meeting today, how about this weekend, will you still be there or back up here. I really hate to drive all the way down there, I just had my BMW detailed and those roads are terrible."*

She hated how she always played second fiddle to his job, car, friends and anything else that just happened to pop up. The time was coming fast for her to tell him to take a flying leap off a bridge. "It's only two hour's tops, I'm on vacation and I won't be back for two weeks."

*"Why didn't you call and tell me you were on vacation, we could have made plans or something."*

"It was a spontaneous decision; we never did anything on my vacations before so I didn't think about it. Will you come down this weekend?"

*"I'll check and see if anything big is going on; if not then I'll be down. Where are you staying?"*

"There's a bed and breakfast outside of town called Hazels. That's where I'll be."

*"I have to go sweetness, I'll call you later."*

"OK, bye." She closed her phone and dropped it on the bed. "I'll see or I'll call. Bullshit John, you've been saying that for years and I hate being called sweetness!" She rolled over and was about to go back to sleep when it hit her that she would have to call her boss and tell him she was taking a much needed vacation. She promised to have her pictures and a brief article sent to him so that it could be put in the next publication of the magazine. After the call, she decided to just

get up and do some exploring. After eating too much food and still drooling over the fresh churned butter that Hazel had, she went out the door and headed to the small store she had seen the day before. Buying bottles of water and snack food, she packed her backpack and started walking towards the bridge and hopefully the old man's farm. An hour later and exhausted, she sat down on a large rock and rested. She had walked through every field and still not found any sign of a road. She was about to give up and head back when she saw a deer off in the distance walk out from between two trees that were twisted from six foot off the ground to their very tops. She pulled her camera out and took a couple of pictures of the strange tree. The more she looked at it the more she felt something inside her twitch.

"You're just tired Dash, no way can a tree make you feel strange." She got up to get a closer inspection and felt the feeling getting stronger. "You will not freak out and run across the field screaming like a loon." She took a deep breath, looked up at the tangled branches and felt the hair on the back of her neck stand on end. "Dash you're losing your mind!" She reached out, laid a hand on the rough bark of one of the trees and swore that it felt warm beneath her hand. "You're a fruit loop Dash." Looking around her to see if anyone saw her talking to herself, she noticed a thin trail through the brush. Walking forward, she found that it went deeper into the trees. An hour later, she had the feeling that she had been walking in circles when she heard the river off to her right. Following the sound, she came across a stream and knew that it wasn't the river she had heard.

"Just great Dash dummy, you're probably lost out in the middle of the woods and the savage will get you and have you for a snack. What's even better is you didn't tell anyone where you were going." She smacked her forehead and dropped down to sit in the soft grass. Leaning back in the grass, she looked up at the blue sky and saw a bluebird in the branches above her. Pulling her camera out, she took a few pictures of the bird and then scanned the trees above her looking for more wild life. That's when she heard the cow off in the distance, and then rifle shots. She got up, took off running towards the noise and came upon four men shooting at a crippled cow. Not thinking, she started yelling at them.

"WHAT THE FUCK ARE YOU DOING?" She froze when the rifles swung in her direction. "Ohh shit Dash you've done it now!" She said to herself before she took off running the way she had come. Glancing back over her shoulder, she saw the men giving chase. Gripping her camera in one hand, she used the other to push back branches and guard her face from their whip like lashings. Shots came from behind her hitting the trees to either side; she ducked, slipped and fell. Getting back on her feet, she took off again at an angle. She felt a burning in her left leg and went down to the ground. Reaching back, her hand came away bloody. Seeing a large long (log) ahead of her, she crawled over it and hid.

"She's here somewhere find her!" One of the men yelled and started beating the thick brush back with the butt of his rifle. The other three split up in different directions, when she heard one of them getting closer, she squeezed under the log but not soon enough.

"I got the bitch! She's over here!" He grabbed her by her leg and pulled her out of her hiding spot. "This is much more fun than poaching or shooting cows." He grabbed her by the back of her shirt and dragged her to her feet.

"Just let me go and you won't get in trouble."

"Like we'll believe that!" Another man said when he stepped in front of her; he pulled back with his fist and punched her in the jaw. Her head rolled to the side and she spit out blood.

"What a man you are, you like beating up woman?" When he came closer, she brought up her foot and kicked him in the groin. "Feel good asshole?" She felt a punch to her lower back and gasped from the pain.

"Bitch you'll pay for that!" The three men took turns punching and kicking her until she was dropped to the ground unconscious. "Cut her clothes off and let's have some fun!" One man pulled a long knife from his belt and started slitting her pant leg open. "When I get done I'm first 'cuz I found her." He ripped her pants off of her and started to unbuckle his belt when a dark shadow came over him. "What are you...?" A large filthy hand grabbed his throat and lifted him up off the ground. His body was thrown into the two of the other men while the fur-covered beast pummeled the fourth. In minutes, all four men were lying in a heap on the ground. Using their belts and strips of their clothes, they were bound to a tree and left. Dirt covered muscular arms lifted Dash up from the ground and carried her off through the trees.

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A large gray timber wolf crossbred sat near his mistress's feet and watched her pen a short note. He tilted his head at the sound of her deep rough voice and barked once. Tucking the note in a leather bag on his collar, she told him to go to Tommie. He turned and bolted off through the trees and was out of sight in seconds.

Dash lay on a handmade table in the center of the log cabins large kitchen, her clothes torn and bloody. Long gashes peppered her body from the men and the trees that she had run through. Her one eye was completely swollen closed and her jaw was a deep purple. A large hand tilted her face to the side and pried open her mouth. A molar was pulled out by large fingers and tossed into a trashcan near the table. Deft hands striped her of her clothes and threw those out as well.

"Sure are a mess, lucky I heard them." She whispered to Dash. Pulling a large first aid kit from a shelf, she then got a small tub of warm water and washed the dirt and blood from Dash's body before she sutured the gashes and bound her bruised ribs. When she was done, she carefully carried Dash to her bed and laid her down. Covering her with a sheet, she sat in a chair next to the bed and opened the book she had been reading.

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Hazel heard the barking at the back door to the kitchen, she opened it and the wolf trotted in and sat at her feet. "What's the matter Jed?" The wolf raised a paw, shook it at her and barked again. "OK, let me see what ya got for me." She opened the leather bag, took out the note and read it.

4 poachers ¼ mile from Dan's pasture, tied to tree. They beat a small blonde, she's with me. Need

more medicine and bandages.

S.

"Ohh what have you gotten yourself into Dash?" Hazel patted Jed on his head, gave him a treat and told him to wait. Penning her own note, she wrote that she would have Tommie stop by with more stuff for her. And to take care of Dash. Putting the note in the leather bag, she sent Jed back to his mistress. Once he was gone, she went to the phone and called Tommie at his office.

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"What did you say grandma?" Tommie listened closely and knew he had heard her right the first time. "OK, I'll head out there right now with provisions and the sheriff." He paused before he spoke his next words. "Grandma should I bring Dash back with me?"

*"Nope, you leave her where she's at. It might be too risky to move her if she's in bad condition."*

"OK, I'll let you know all the details when I get back, bye grandma." He hung up the phone and ran from his office, down the street to the Pharmacy and through the doors." Ten minutes later, he came out with his arms full of bags. Turning towards his office, he ran to his truck and was tearing down the road seconds later.

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"From what grandma told me they should be around here." Tommie held out his arms and turned in a circle.

"You get lost in your own bedroom so that means they could be anywhere." The sheriff smacked Tommie in his shoulder.

"I learned everything I know from you Uncle Paul, now where the Hell did she put them?"

Paul turned when he heard a moan and looked up into a tree. "I swear I'll kick her ass the next time I see her." He pointed to the four poachers hanging from a tree branch. "I wish I knew how she did things like that."

Tommie helped his uncle get the men down and take them to the blazer parked at the edge of the tree line. When Paul was gone, he took off through the trees to deliver the stuff he had. When he broke through the trees below the log cabin, he saw Jed standing guard at the door.

"Hey big guy, did you see grandma today?" Jed barked and wagged his tail at him. "OK, give me a minute." He pulled a large rawhide chew from his pocket and gave it to the begging wolf. "Happy now, now where's your partner at?"

"In here Tommie." A deep voice called out to him.

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"Ohh my God, she looks bad sis." Tommie looked at the badly beaten face of Dash and grimaced. "They would have killed her if you hadn't stopped them." He pressed a hand to Dash's face and felt how warm she was.

"Yeah she's got a slight fever, that's what this is for." She held up a bottle of milky white fluid and a hypodermic needle. "On the table is the bullet I took out of her thigh, Uncle Paul will need it to put those assholes away."

Tommie's brown eyes grew wide at the mention of Dash being shot. "They shot her too, Jesus Christ!" He ran a hand across his jaw and looked over to Dash.

"Tell Uncle Paul to add attempted rape to the charges too, they were tearing her clothes off when I got there." Tommie looked to his sister and gulped at the iciness of her blue eyes. Watching her flip her long dark hair over one shoulder, she pulled the sheet back from Dash's hip and injected her with the penicillin. "I know you're wondering and the answers no, she can't be moved. She has broken ribs, a dislocated shoulder and three broken fingers besides everything else that is obvious." She stood up and towered over her younger brother by a good foot. "Was she staying at grandmas?"

"Yeah, her names Dash Monroe, she's a photo journalist from Washington."

"And you know this how?"

"I met her yesterday at the idiot jumping." He grinned and looked into his sisters ice blue eyes that were so much like their grandmas. "She saw you yesterday swimming in the river; I think she was out here looking for the Capon Savage."

"And I know just how she found me too; Dan must have been running off at the mouth about his cow."

"And her being a reporter type, she followed his yapping mouth. Wait a minute here, how did she find the road? Only a few of us know about it."

Blue eyes drifted down to Dash and a small smile lifted on corner of her mouth. "Some people can't see the forest for the trees."

Tommie's dark brows drew down over his nose. "Huh, what's a quote have to do about her finding you?"

"My trees Tommie, the ones that stand tall and strong through out time."

"What ever you say sis, you're the oracle of strange and mysterious." He shook his head at her and grinned. "Do you want me to bring you anything else?"

"Yeah let me get my list." She went over to her desk and came back with a page from her notebook. Tell grandma to give you the money from my account."

"OK, I'll pick the stuff up and bring it by tomorrow afternoon. If you need anything before then send Jed the messenger mutt."

Picking her book back up, she sat back down in the chair and began reading again. "What are you going to do now Savage?" She said to herself and glanced over to a still unconscious Dash.

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The next morning, Hazel packed the waterproof canvas bags that Tommie had brought back with him, stuffing what little clothes Dash had brought with her. The other two bags she put the normal stuff she sent to her eccentric granddaughter. All the newest books from her favorite authors, packages of crackers & Cheese, cans of sardines, oysters, and other staples that she couldn't get where she was. As a treat, she put in a plastic wrapped bundle of blueberry muffins with chocolate chips in them.

"Damn kid and her sweet tooth." She placed a package of Hershey bars in the bag and closed it up. "I know you'll take good care of Dash." She placed the bags near the kitchen door and waited for Tommie to come down from his room.

"Grandma should I take Dash's cell phone with me in case Sis needs to call for medical help?" He sat down at the table and looked up to his grandma with a worried expression on his face.

"How bad is the little one?"

"Grandma, they shot her in her leg and beat her to within an inch of her life. She's all broken up and I can only hope Sis knows what she's doing."

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Dash moaned and thrashed in the bed, sweat drenched her hair and ran down her face. Savage picked her up and carried her from the log cabin and into the woods to a clear running creek. Walking out into the water until it came up to her waist, she went in further until only their heads were above (add it). She waited until Dash stopped thrashing and she fell into a deeper sleep, running a hand through the water, she cupped it and poured it over Dash's head until her hair was soaking and cleaner.

"Never thought I'd be a nurse maid." She pushed the wet hair from a bruised face and studied it with scrutiny. The face below the bruises was delicate with finely arched brows, small lines at the corner of Dash's eyes and lips told of her laughter. "You wanted the Capon Savage but I know you didn't want to find me this way." Savage walked from the creek and back up to her cabin. Once she had settled Dash in her bed, she went out to check on her garden and river traps. Off in the distance, she heard her cow making noise and then the old cow came limping towards

the garden.

"Don't you dare come in here!" Savage pointed a finger at her. "Your big clumsy feet step on everything." She pulled a tomato off a plant and tossed it to the cow. "That's all you get, you have plenty of grass and apples to eat." Putting a couple butternut squash in a hand woven basket with other vegetables, she went to the small cooking fire she had near the front of the cabin. Digging into the hot coals, she wrapped the butternut squash in wet leaves and then buried them. Taking a thin steel rod from over the fire, she pushed the bell peppers on it and set it high above the flames. Later, they would be cleaned of the blackness, dried and sliced for cooking in the future. Everything she ate came from nature; she trapped rabbits and only killed what she would need. If she killed a deer, it was one that was old and would die during the winter. Remembering her river traps, she went down to where she had the ropes tied to a stake in the ground. Pulling her traps out of the river, she found a couple dozen crawdads and an eel. "Crawdads stew or eel steaks, well big boy looks like you get to live another day." She released the eel back into the river and took the crawdads up to the fire.

"Hey sis what's for supper, I'm starved!" Tommie dropped the heavy bags near a tree stump and sat down next to his sister. "Grandma tried to give me a hernia with your bags; I think she put half the house in them." He pulled Dash's phone from his pocket, handed it to her and saw the look in her eyes. "I know what you're gonna say but give me a chance here. That's Dash's phone, she might need it when she gets better. She has a boyfriend that will be worried about her."

She turned the tiny Nokia cell phone over in her large hand and looked at her brother. "Where's he at and what if this thing rings?"

"Washington DC, grandma told me he's a broker or something." He winked at her and grinned. "You know the kind that's too busy to pay attention to what he's got."

"What are you getting at Tommie?" She turned the peppers and then stirred the stew that was hanging over the fire.

"Ohh just that it's been quite a while since she's seen him, so he might not call. By the time he does, we may have two Capon Savages to scare people away."

Savage snorted and threw a crawdad shell at him. "I doubt that, the minute she takes one look at me, she'll jump in the river and swim away."

He took in his sister's dark tanned muscular body, her chiseled features and pale blue eyes and snorted. "She's a writer and a photographer, one look at you and she'll think she's in front of one of your 'Greek Goddesses.'" He ducked the large paw that came near his head. "How's she doing today, any change?"

"Nope, she had a fever earlier so I took her in the creek. I hope her fever breaks soon, she still hasn't woke up and I think that's part of the reason."

"Well, now that you have a phone, if she gets worse you can just call me and I'll take her to the

hospital."

"You know I hate phones and all the other shit people depend on." She sighed and dropped her dark head. "I'll use it only if it's a dire emergency, but that's it." She pulled the pot off the hanger and set it on a rock to cool. "Go get us some bowls and I'll get the squash ready."

His brown eyes lit up at the mention of squash. "Buried butternut squash with home made butter?"

"What else, now get moving before I feed yours to Jed."

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Tommie stopped to look down at a sleeping Dash, she still looked bad but some of the swelling in her face had gone down. He trailed a finger down her bruised cheek and spoke to her in a low whisper. "I wouldn't ignore you for a second; you belong on a pedestal and to be worshiped." He shook his head at his rambling thoughts and went outside carrying the large wooden bowls that Savage had carved herself.

"She looks a little better and she's sleeping deeper than when I saw her yesterday." He said and handed the bowls to Savage. "Grandma packed her clothes in your bags and I know for a fact that she put your weakness in there to (too)." He grinned when Savage's eyes widened and she started searching through the bags. She gave out a loud bark when she found the candy bars.

He grabbed his chest and fell over on the ground. "I hate when you do that."

"Too bad, I'm not changing what I do." She ripped the bag open with her teeth, un-wrapped a Hershey bar and barked again. A bark answered her and then Jed came running up to her, he jumped and spun in circles until she gave him some chocolate.

"What's wrong with calling him and chocolates bad for dogs."

"That would really screw up the Capon Savage mystery and he's a wolf not a dog." She stuck her tongue out at him and finished sharing her candy with Jed.

Tommie wandered back to his truck holding his stuffed stomach, his sister maybe from another century but she could cook up a storm over an open fire. There was six years difference in age between them and for his entire life, she had always been different. When they were younger, he remembered them camping in their grandmother's backyard and how she would point out the constellations. Then tell him the myths behind their names. When other girls her age were playing games together, Savage would be reading or walking along the riverbank. She played around the old Fort and brought home old buttons, buckles and other things from the battle of Capon more than 250 years in the past. They were still in her old bedroom at Grandma's and still protected behind glass in the small showcase she had made years before. Occasionally he would go into the room, look at all her small treasures and remember their childhood.



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Savage cradled Dash in her one arm and slipped broth between her lips with a small spoon, she had been giving her broth every half hour to keep her from dehydrating. She stopped when Dash moved her head away and moaned. Her fever was still a problem and a slight infection had started around the entrance wound. Savage had probed the area when she removed the bullet but found no debris inside the wound. Easing out from under Dash, she un-wrapped the bandage from around her thigh and saw the red angry flesh at the exit site.

"Damn, I must have missed something." She ran her hand down over her eyes and stopped to cover her mouth. Thinking of what she would have to do, she shook her head and then went to get her first aid kit.

Dash was back on the makeshift surgery/kitchen table; Savage changed the blade in her scalpel, and then cut into the exit wound. Applying pressure to the surrounding area, she watched as puss and other fluids poured out of the incision. Using surgical sponges, she cleaned the area with betadine and then whistled for Jed.

"Come here boy Dash needs your medical expertise, now be easy on her." She went over to the sink and washed her hands, but watched over her shoulder as Jed licked Dash's hand and then the wound on her leg. All animals had a natural bacterium in their saliva that helped heal wounds, she knew that a doctor would have her put away for what she was letting Jed do but she knew that Jed would never tell anyone and neither would she. Taking a rawhide chew and dried herbs from the cabinet, she handed the rawhide to him and then prepared the herbal paste that she would use once she sutured the wound closed.

"Hope you don't sue me for malpractice, 'cuz I don't have insurance." She re-bandaged Dash's thigh and carefully carried her back to her bed. Pulling the thick fur blankets up to her shoulders, she brushed the back of her fingers across her warm cheek. "Maybe I should have had Tommie take you to the hospital." She sat on the edge of the bed and brushed her fingers through blondish unruly hair. "If you're not better in the morning I'll call him." She took her book from the nightstand and went outside to sit near the fire and read.

Hours later with the sun already set, she closed her book and listened to the night sounds coming from all around her. Tilting her head back, she looked up to the clear sky and studied the stars. "You've not changed in centuries." She said in a soft voice and continued to watch the stars.

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Dash could feel the mans body behind her holding her tightly while blows rained down upon her, she heard the crunch of her ribs when the butt of a rifle struck her. She tried to scream and fight back but felt like she was being suffocated. Their taunting voices drove into her ears and echoed in her mind, she took a deep breath and screamed out. Warm hands grabbed her shoulders; she fought against them and cried out when pain shot through her ribcage and chest. A whimper came from her and then sobs when she felt herself being held tightly and a soft voice whispering in her ear.

"I won't hurt you, go to sleep Dash." Savage had heard her cries and rushed back into the dark log cabin to find her thrashing in her sleep. Being as gentle as she could, she tried to hold her down until she became too much. Wrapping her arms around her, she held her close until she quieted. "You're safe here; no one will hurt you anymore."

Dash opened her eyes to mere slits but could only see darkness, moving into the warmth around her made her feel safer. She heard a deep voice speak softly to her and then picked up the scent of a soft musk mixed with an herbal scent and wood smoke. It struck a chord deep inside of her and made her very soul tingle. So familiar but strange at the same time, her hand moved to tangle in long silky hair before she fell into a deep healing sleep.

Savage took a fur blanket from the chair and went outside to lay by the fire, when Jed trotted up to her; she rubbed his ears and sent him in to stay with Dash. She rolled onto her side and watched the flames flicker until she fell asleep to the sounds of crickets and the crackling embers.

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It was still dusk outside when Dash woke with the need of a bathroom. Opening her eyes, she looked around and was lost as to where she was. She slowly sat up and felt her ribs scream at her and join the throbbing in her leg, shoulder and fingers. A low moan came from between her dry lips when she swung her legs over the edge of the bed. A low woofing noise alerted her, she looked down to see white eyes looking up at her, and then a large furry head was lying on her leg. The first thought that ran through her head was that the animal was going to tear her into ribbons until a pink tongue licked at her fingers. Jed barked softly once more before he went out the door. Dash stood up and felt a sharp pain radiate through her leg, she reached out and grabbed onto the back of the chair to steady her self before she tried to walk across the dark room. When a deep voice came from behind her, she almost fell to the floor when she turned too fast.

"Let me help you, you shouldn't be up walking around you know." Savage wrapped an arm around Dash's waist to support her. "Where are you going?"

Dash looked up and felt all the air in her lungs disappear. Ice blue eyes glowed in the dim light; she felt her blood run cold and felt herself start to slip downward.

"I won't hurt you, where were you headed, the bathroom maybe?" She watched a tousled blonde head nod at her. "OK, I'll help you there. Jed get the light for me." Jed trotted across the large room and went through a door at the side, seconds later a dim light showed from the doorway. Helping Dash across the room, Savage knew that the small blonde was in extreme pain just from breathing. With gentle hands, she helped her through the door and let her hold onto the vanity.

"Will you be alright now?" She asked and felt a heat work its way up her face.

"Yeah, I'll be alright." Dash answered with a rough voice. "Could you..." She pointed to the door

and was about to finish her sentence when Savage jumped with a start.

"Sure, sorry. Give a yell when you're done and I'll help you back to bed." She closed the door softly and stood outside it with a loss of what to do. "Jed watch her and let me know when she's done." She scratched the top of his head and went back outside to start coffee. The only time she ever used the stove in the cabin was during the winter and it was too cold outside or snowing. She had a collection of small propane tanks in a small shed attached to the cabin that the stove ran off. She preferred to save them for wintertime, just like the batteries that could operate electricity for the cabin. They were charged by the solar panels on the roof and were good for a very long time but she chose to use oil lamps and candles. Most people who knew how she lived thought she was crazy, others said she was eccentric. She didn't care either way, she was happy with the way she lived and wouldn't go back to the so-called civilized world for anything.

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Dash looked around the large bathroom and wondered where she was and who the strange woman was that had helped her. What struck her as strange were the modern bathroom fixtures in the rough-hewn bathroom. The walls on one side were logs and the other sides were rough-cut timbers. Flushing the toilet, she stood up and felt the room start to spin. A low moan rumbled in her chest and then barking came from the other side of the door.

Jed was jumping up and down and spinning in circles when Savage came back into the cabin. She patted his head and then knocked on the door. "You OK in there?" She opened the door when she heard Dash moan. Reaching out, she caught her before she crumpled to the floor.

"You should have called me for help." She lifted her easily into her arms and carried her back to the bed. "I made some coffee; I'll be back in a minute." Covering her back up with the furs, she went out the door. Dash could see more of her surroundings with the sun now up. She felt like she was in Grizzly Adams cabin. Everything around her looked handmade and from another time, with the exception of the hardback book on the nightstand. She read the cover and tried to grin but the pain in her face stopped her. Lifting the copy of *John Sanford's Mortal Prey* up, she saw that her last three fingers were splinted and taped together.

"It's not like his other Prey books, I can't get into it." Savage said with a low voice and handed Dash a coffee cup. "Be careful, your lips split and you're missing a molar on the top left side."

Slowly Dash raised the cup to her lips and took a small sip; she flinched when the hot liquid hit the hole where her tooth used to be.

"Where am I?" She asked after she drank more of the strong brew.

"My cabin, don't worry you're safe here."

"But where, the last I remember I was being attacked..." She stopped and took a better look at her arms and saw the scratches and bruises.

"Right now those guys are getting acquainted to some big bikers in prison."

"I don't understand why I am not in a hospital?"

Savage moved closer to her and sat down in the chair next to the bed, it was the first time that Dash could actually see her without her being blurry. What had her attention was that the strange woman was only dressed in a deerskin breechcloth. No shirt or shoes, just very long dark wavy hair hanging down across her shoulders and chest and dust up to her hairy shins.

"You're naked." Burst from Dash's lips before she could stop herself.

"I am not, at least completely. Anyway, I didn't want to take a chance on waiting for help, so I brought you here."

"How long have I been here and who are you?" She sighed and touched the swollen area above her eye. "Sorry if I'm being a rude, it's not everyday I get shot, beat up and wake up in a log cabin with a wolf and stranger looking at me."

"I understand. It's going on three days now; Tommie and Hazel know you're here." She leaned back in her chair and grinned at Dash. "He told me you were looking for the Capon Savage, what would you do if you found it?"

"I don't know." She leaned back in the soft pillows and closed her eyes. "At first it was exciting, the mystery of it and now all I want is to be able to move and not hurt."

"What if the Capon Savage walked in here right now?"

"I would be its next victim. Is that what got those guys who attacked me, the river beastie ate them?"

"I got a hold of Tommie and he and the sheriff came and got them. Are you hungry, I've been giving you broth but that doesn't really fill you up?"

"I am but with a sore jaw and missing a molar. Do you have a mirror, I want to see what I look like?"

"Sure, I have one, it's just a little one though." She went into a trunk and came back with a small shaving mirror. "I'll warn ya, they did a job on you, I had to suture some places that were pretty deep."

Dash held up the mirror and let out a deep whistling breath, moving the mirror she saw the nasty bruising and the sutures above her eye. "Looks like I'll have some nice scars as a reminder."

"Don't let it bother you, if people judge you by your looks then they're not worth your time. Scars show you've survived, centuries ago if a warrior was scared it was a sign of bravery."

"You're right, they don't bother me but others see it as an imperfection, like I go around saying I'm perfect to begin with."

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Dash felt like a stuffed pig after eating butternut squash covered in homemade butter, a tender meat she had no idea what it was and blueberry muffins. What made her feel like that she had not a worry in the world was the sweet brew Savage had given her. When she finished it, she found out it was Honey mead.

"I still don't know your name, what do I call you?"

Savage didn't want her to know who she really was, so she used her late mothers name Victoria or Tori as her grandma used.

"It's Tori, get some sleep and if you need anything just tell Jed and he'll come get me."

Dash looked down into the white eyes of the wolf and scratched his ears. "A strange name for a wolf, why Jed?"

"I named him after Jedidiah Smith, the mountain man who discovered the south pass." Savage went over to the canvas bags and pulled out all the stuff that Grandma had packed. Finding Dash's clothes, she put them in a small pile and then added a Hershey bar and some other junk food for her. "Old Hazel sent your stuff with Tommie; he brought your phone with him to."

"I had a backpack with me and my camera, I think I dropped it when I took off running...those men...they were shooting at a cow."

Savage saw the tears trailing down Dash's face, she didn't know if it was because of losing her personal items or the memories of the attack.

"Can you check on the cow and see if she's alright?"

Savage had her answer; she was so used to seeing people more concerned with themselves. Not how they would destroy nature to build their multi-million dollar houses, and that a family of fox would be pushed out of their den and hunting grounds.

"I'll check on her and I'll look for your stuff while I'm out there." She knelt down and spoke into Jed's ear, heard his tail thump on the floor and a whine come from his throat.

"What did you tell him?"

"If he did good I'd bring him a treat." She went out the door unaware of a pair of blurry green eyes watching her with amazement.

After pulling on a pair of shorts and a huge T-shirt that had to be Tori's she decided to move

around a little. "Your friend there is really strange." Dash dropped her good arm over the bed and rubbed Jed's ears. "So what do you two do around here for fun?" She looked around her and noticed that there was no TV, stereo, or any other kind of item that would be from this century. Seeing a hand carved cane sitting next to the nightstand, she took it in her hand and ran her fingers over the detailed dragons head. The craftsmanship was excellent, every little detail down to the claws on the feet gripping the sides of the cane were perfect. "Let's see if I can move around without killing myself." She slowly swung her legs from the bed and used the cane to steady herself. Sweat stood out on her forehead and upper lip from her struggles with pain. After a few minutes, she was able to take slow steps across the room. She stopped in front of a wall that was covered in shelves, the number of books was astonishing to her. What every topic you could think of was somewhere on the shelves, from ancient civilizations to John Patterson and Fitzgerald. "She sure does read a lot, I wonder if she knew Hazel's granddaughter?" She slowly made her way around the large log cabin and was in awe of all the handmade furniture down to the wooden butter churn. She looked down to see Jed beside her. "Why does she live like this boy?" Seeing a large window over the kitchen sink, she limped over and looked out to see a huge garden in its final stages of harvest. The sound of clattering drew her attention to the back kitchen door where a dog door was swinging. She looked around but didn't see anything until she saw a pantry door swing open. "Does Tory have ghosts in this place or what?" She fell back against the counter when a large raccoon closed the door, carried an apple over to a water bowl with Jed's name on it and started washing the apple. "Damn it's like spending a day with Grizzly Adams."

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Savage stopped to give her cow Belle some apples and then to re-trace the path Dash had used to get to where she was attacked. She found her backpack behind the log and further up through the trees, she found her Nikon camera. The sound of a tractor took her out of the tree line and into Dan's pasture. Shading her eyes, she saw him dragging a wagon behind with hay on it. He came out once a week and dropped hay off for his cows and the deer. Even though the fields were thick with grass, he made sure that everything had another source of food. During the winter, he dropped salt/mineral blocks in the field for the critters as he called them. When Belle had become too old to be a productive animal, he had asked her if she wanted her for fresh milk because he didn't have the heart to butcher her. The same went for the other livestock that roamed in the fields around her cabin. They were past their prime and the farmers knew that Savage would be glad for the company and the animals would live well for the rest of their lives. Slinging the backpack over her shoulder, she headed back down towards her cabin. Along the way, she picked the last of the blackberries and raided the honeycomb near an old hollowed out tree. Carrying her prizes, she stepped from the trees to see Dash sitting in a chair near the small ring.

"I can build a fire if you want one." She said as she handed Dash her backpack and camera. "I usually make one about now so that it's ready to cook supper over."

Dash ran her hand over her camera and smiled up at Savage. "You found everything, I can't believe it. Thank you." She looked at the cheesecloth bags Savage had in her hands. "What's that something those guys dropped?"

"Nope, I took them with me." She scared the Hell out of Dash when she barked and then grinned down at her. "Sorry, it's habit." Jed came running up and jumped at the bags in her hand. "Hey little man you know what you have to do for this." He jumped and did a back flip and sat at her feet. She pulled a piece of the honeycomb from the bag and gave it to him.

"Can he cook and clean as well?" Dash watched him trot off towards a shady area to eat his treat.

"If I want him to, he'll even wash my clothes." She pulled a piece of the comb off and handed it to Dash. "It's nice and sweet, the bees have an entire clover field to collect from."

"How long have you had Jed?"

"Since he was a pup, he followed me home one day and kept me."

She smiled up at Savage and chuckled. "And the raccoon lets you stay in his cabin?"

Dark brows drew downward over pale blue eyes, a corner of her mouth lifted to resemble a small grin. "So Scoops found my apple stash did she, I'll have to hide them better." She sat down and started adding small twigs to the fire ring along with dried leaves and moss. "It's a game we play, I hide the apples and she comes in and finds them. It took Jed a while to learn to share his water dish though." Taking a leather pouch off a rock, she pulled out a striker and flint and started a small blaze in the twigs. She felt eyes watching her and smirked.

"Ever heard of a lighter or matches?" Dash asked after she licked her fingers clean.

"If you haven't noticed, I'm not a big fan of modern technology."

"Matches aren't exactly modern; they've been around for centuries."

"Guess it's just the Joe Camel thing that gets to me." She said and put the flint and striker bag in the leather pouch.

"Tori, Joe Camel has been over with for years, just how long have you been here?" She waved her good arm around her.

Savage didn't pay any attention until Dash prodded her with the cane. "Huh...ohh ten, eleven years, I've lost count."

"So long that you don't recognize your name as well."

Savage gave her a shrug of her shoulders and got up from the fire. "I'm going to catch supper, any preference on what type of fish?"

"As long as it's cooked I'll eat it, so nope doesn't matter." She tried to smile but stopped with the first twinge of pain. "I was going to change the bandage on my leg but I didn't know..."

"I'll take care of it once I set my traps, be back in a minute." Savage took off at a jog down towards the river and left Dash to wonder what she meant by trapping fish.

"You are a strange one Tori, living where ever here is all alone with only animals for company." Something was eating at her but she just couldn't bring it forward. The memory of the twisted tree nagged at her for some reason. She leaned back in the chair and watched nature move all around her, the sounds were something that she had never paid attention to before, the soft click or a squirrel shelling an acorn, a woodpecker searching for bugs. The soft hum of bees and the sound of heavy footsteps coming up behind her, she raised the cane in her hand and was ready to bust who ever it was in the head.

"I see you're awake." She turned and saw Tommie standing off to her side with his hands in the air.

"Yep, and was I surprised." She pointed to the stump Savage had used. "Have a seat, Tori's trapping fish or something."

Tommie faltered at the sound of his mother's name; he wondered what his sister was up to. "Yep, Tori's a different species. I tell her she was born a couple hundred years too late."

"More like centuries Tommie." She dropped three huge catfish at his feet and handed him a long knife. "Your turn to clean the catch, I did it last time."

"Hey that's not fair; I'm an honored guest Toooooori!"

"Shut up Eugene or I'll tell grandma you stole her blackberry pie."

His brown eyes grew wide at her; he looked at his shirtfront and didn't see any evidence of his thievery. "But how did you know?"

"It's your blue lips and chin, you eat like a pig."

"I do not eat like a pig." He picked up the fish and called Jed. "Come on boy us men have to stick together. You remember how to clean these things?" He wiggled the fish in front of the wolf.

"Where's he at! I'm gonna kick his ass!" Hazel yelled from where she was standing near the trees by the cabin. "I know he stole my pie, damn good for nothing kid." She walked forward and placed a hand on Dash's shoulder. "How do you feel, Tommie told me what happened?"

"Fine Hazel, Tori took good care of me." At the mention of her late daughter's name, Hazel gave Savage a raised eyebrow. "Yep, that's my Victoria for ya."

Green eyes swung around to pin Savage where she stood. "Wait a minute here, is Hazel your grandmother?"



"Yep, and Tommie's my little brother."

"Hazel, I thought you said that Tommie was the only grandchild that stayed around here?"

"Ohh Tori doesn't count, now would you claim a kid that ran around naked and talks to animals?" She grinned down at Dash and cast Savage a cross-eyed look.

"Hey Sav... Tori I finished the... ohhh am I in deep shit!" Tommie looked for a place to hide when Hazel raised a finger at him and started to move quicker than any other woman of her age.

"You little boy, are going to get your ass kicked!" She reached out, grabbed him by his ear and dragged him behind her. "You can go out and pick me more blackberries before the birds get them."

With the fish cooked until it was a crispy, sweet potatoes whipped with honey and fresh butter, cob of corn cooked in the embers and tall glasses of fresh milk that came from Belle. The four of them sat around the fire enjoying the feeling of the soft breeze and family. It had been many years since Dash had sat down for a meal with people that showed how much they cared for each other. She usually ate her meals alone or with John when he decided to show up. His idea of diner was a fast take-out order and sex afterwards. He had his moments when he showed her how much he loved her but they were far and few between. She had feelings for him but it was more for a close friend, than husband material. She often asked herself if she dated only him because he was safe and wasn't asking for a more permanent commitment.

"Ohh my Gods I almost forgot!" She raised a hand to her mouth. "What day is it?"

Hazel looked to her watch and answered. "It's Thursday why what's the matter Dash?"

"John's supposed to come down this weekend." She looked to Savage. "Tori will I be able to go back to Hazel's by Saturday"

"Sure, I can't see why not." She looked to Tommie and raised an eyebrow. "Can you take her up on Saturday morning?" She felt her heart sink; she had come to like having Dash there even though she had slept almost two of the three days. Then again, she knew that Dash wouldn't be there for ever, she had a life in Washington DC to get back to and a boyfriend. Then again, she had her hopes of Dash staying with her forever. Deep inside she felt a connection to the small blonde, it was something she saw the second she looked into her green eyes.

"Well trouble it's time for you to carry your decrepit old grandmother to her car."

"Right grandma, you're far from decrepit." He gave her a wiggle of his dark brows. "I saw you chasing old Dan across the pasture this afternoon."

"I need to get exercise some how and so does he." She got up from her chair, gave Dash a soft hug and then squeezed the stuffing out of Savage. She placed her lips next to her granddaughter's ear and whispered. "You take care of her Savage, she's special." She pulled back and kissed

Savage on her cheek. "Behave yourself and put some damn clothes on or a least some shoes. Come on Jed led us outta here, Tommie gets lost in the bathroom."

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Savage cleaned up the remains from their supper by dumping the scraps in a compost pile behind the garden, the dishes were taken into the cabin and placed in the sink and Dash was carried against her will into the cabin. "I could have walked you know."

"Yeah but I have to do a good deed at least once a day to keep from being beaten by grandma." She went across the large room, got a clean breechcloth from a trunk and headed towards the door.

"Where are you going?" Dash asked when she saw Savage take a small leather bag from near the door.

"To the stream, it's that time of the week when I take a bath." She smiled at the look on Dash's face.

"But you have a shower in the bathroom." She pointed across the room and added. "Does it work?"

"Yeah, you can use it if you want, there's towels in the cabinet in there."

"OK, but that doesn't explain you going to the stream."

"What can I say, I'm nature girl. It's actually the little fishes swimming around my body that I like." She went out the door leaving Dash to figure out what she had meant about fish. Taking her time, she made it to the bathroom and flipped on the light. "I wonder how she has electricity without any telephone poles or anything. One of the mysteries of Tori Edwards." When she took the bandage off her leg, it was the first time she had seen the damage done by the bullet. Neat sutures crossed her thigh and she felt the same at the back. It was still a little red and tender to the touch but it wasn't as stiff as before. She felt like the un-wrapping of King Tut once she had all the rib bindings and other bandages off. She tried her best to wash her hair and body with her one hand, her shoulder was sore and stiff yet, not to mention her splinted fingers. Wrapping a towel around her, she stepped out into the room just as Savage came through the door. Her breath caught in her chest and she felt a heat rush through her body. Savage had her hair slicked back from her face, her high cheekbones stood out and sloped down to her strong chin. What made Dash's heart pound uncontrollably were her ice blue eyes that flashed in the dim room. Clutching the towel to her chest, she worked her mouth a few times before words came out.

"I didn't see you, Gods I think you just took a few years off this lifetime." She hobbled over to the bed and sat down.

"Sorry about that, I'm just so used to being here all alone. Let me get the first aid kit and I'll take care of your leg and the other wounds."

Dash watched how Savage moved soundlessly across the room; she was like a large panther. Her muscles bunching and releasing with each movement, she would love to get some pictures of her. Especially her face, she had the most beautiful eyes surrounded by black lashes and perfect brows, that twitched as if they had a life of their own. Savage came back into the room with the first aid kit and an oil lamp. She set the lamp on the nightstand and turned it up so that it glowed brightly.

"You have electricity in the bathroom, why the oil lamp?"

Savage grinned at her. "I'm energy conscious. Lay back and raise you leg up a bit."

"How do you have electricity without power lines?"

"I have solar panels that keep two dozen special batteries charged. They can hold a charge for years, and the water is heated the same way. I have a storage tank in the shed out back that feeds in to the pipes."

"So you're like a survivalist, living off the land, using the technology when needed but basically without all the distracting things like TV."

"Ya have me all figured out, I'm a hermit." She ran her fingers across the flesh around the exit wound and saw the muscles flex in Dash's thigh. "Does it still hurt bad?"

Dash had to replay what she had just said before she could answer; the touch of her warm fingers did something to her that caused her blood to surge southward. "Uhhmm...not as bad, what is that stuff in the little jar?"

"Herbs, they're good for healing and getting rid of infections." There was no way she would tell her that Jed had been licking her leg. She knew that would be enough to send her screaming out into the night.

"Got anything in there that will grow me a new tooth?" She played with the huge hole in her gum line and moaned from the sharp pain. "Can't believe they knocked a tooth out."

"If it'll make you feel better, a couple of them will be eating with straws."

"So you're telling me that you beat the shit out of four men?"

"Yep, they should have known better than to come on my property and poach, let alone try and..."

"What Tori, you're not telling me everything."

Savage finished taping the clean bandage in place, sat back on her haunches and looked into the most expressive green eyes she had ever seen. "They were going to rape you." Dash sunk back

into the pillows and closed her eyes tightly, she hadn't even thought of that happening to her. "Dash, they didn't even touch you, I stopped them before they could..."

"You saved more than my life then; I don't know how I'll ever be able to repay you."

"Will you take a picture of Jed for me, I don't own a camera and I..."

"Tori," She cupped the side of Savage's face and lifted her eyes to hers. "The picture is just the beginning." Dash leaned forward and placed a gentle kiss on her forehead. "Thank you for everything."

Savage didn't know what to do; she wasn't expecting Dash to kiss her. Only grandma and Tommie did that and it didn't make her skin tingle afterward. *"Damn Savage, you're 32 years old and acting like a schoolgirl."*

"I'll leave the others un-bandaged so that the air can get to them. Do you want a shirt to sleep in, I think I have one in my trunk."

"No I'll be fine." She had no idea why she had said that, she didn't even sleep naked when she was at home.

"OK, I'll be outside if you need anything." She picked up the fur blanket and went towards the door.

Dash leaned up in the bed and stopped her with a look. "You're going to sleep outside?"

"Yep, do it every night until it gets too cold. Night Dash."

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Savage rolled herself in the fur blanket and watched the flames grow lower until only embers were left. The hoot of an owl in a near by tree joined in with the symphony of other night sounds. If she listened hard enough, she could hear Dash move around in her bed and the soft whimpers coming from Jed as he chased rabbits in his dreams. In just a day and a night, it would be only her and Jed in the cabin. She pictured Dash laughing while they ate around the fire, the way the sides of her nose crinkled and the fine lines deepened at the corners of her eyes. The deepness of her laugh and playful side that came out when she teased Tommie. She hoped that John knew what a special woman Dash was, she knew and she would miss her when she left. Tears formed in her eyes to trail down her cheek and into her blanket.

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Dash rolled to her side and pulled Savage's pillow to her chest, she could smell the light musk and the shampoo Savage used in the pillow and furs. It was a calming scent that made her feel safe. Her body replayed the feel of Savage's hands tending to her injuries. The way Tori looked when she smiled and it reached her pale eyes. Each smile made her heart pound in her chest. In

a day it would all be a memory that she would pull out, savor and remember how she had felt being with the tall woman. Tears flowed down her cheeks from the sadness she felt in her heart, though it was only less than a week. She felt that she belonged here more than anywhere else in the world. She fell asleep with the image of Savage with her hair slicked back from her face and water still tracing its way down her muscular shoulders.

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[Continued In Part 2](#)

[The Athenaeum's Scroll Archive](#)

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## ~ Capon's Savage ~

by Larisa

**Disclaimer:** Yep, I know who ya think they are but they're all mine.

**Violence:** A little, an attempted rape scene nothing graphic.

**Sex:** What do ya think? Have I ever not wrote a story without a sex scene? Yeah but I had fun teasing everyone!

**The rest:** Not old enough Yada yada yada go away!

Thanks to Lesia, Ri and poor Webwarrior who has to try and make sense of this story.

**Capon's Savage**

**By Larisa**

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### **Part 2**

Early the next morning, Savage was out in her garden picking the last of the peppers, tomatoes, squash and cucumbers. Belle stood at the corner of the garden chewing on the cornstalks that were piled there while Scoops tried to steal tomatoes from the basket behind Savage.

"Scoops you're gonna get it; I'll make a nice hat out of you if you don't stop." She reached back, grabbed Scoops tail, and gave it a little yank. "Go in the cabin and get an apple, you don't eat tomatoes." Scoops gave up on the tomatoes, crawled up Savage's back, and lay over her shoulder. Dash raised her camera and shoot frame after frame of Savage with her animals. Out of the corner of her eye, she caught sight of Jed playing with a red fox pup. They took turns pulling on each other's tails and rolling on the ground. Sharp yipping noises came from them both as they chased each other across the garden towards Savage. The fox shot under her outstretched arms while Jed jumped over both her and Scoops. Having had enough fun, Scoops climbed down

and waddled towards her, she went into the kitchen and started searching the pantry for the hidden apples. Dash followed her every movement until she found the apples hidden inside a basket near the compact washer and dryer. She took pictures of Scoop hanging out of the basket and then washing her apple in Jed's water dish.

Dash went back to the door but only Belle was in the garden, she listened and heard two different barks coming from where she thought the river was. Hobbling in that direction, she came upon Savage playing tug of war with Jed. A piece of leather stretched between them that she realized was Savage's breechcloth. Her hip length hair swung around her body with her efforts to get her breechcloth, giving up, she let go and laughed when Jed rolled backwards into the grass. He got up and shook the leather around before trotting towards the river with it. Savage ran after him, dove into the water, and started to swim to the center with Jed right behind her. The entire game was caught forever on film; Dash changed out the rolls and went closer to the river. Her breath caught in her chest when Savage came up out of the water, the sun hitting the droplets made her tanned skin glow like fire. Dash could barely hold her camera steady to shot her pictures, her entire body trembled from the sight before her. Then she was gone. Dash searched the waters surface for Savage and only seen Jed. Far off to the left side, she saw her re-surface near a log sticking up at an angle from the water. She pulled herself upward and lay back to let the sun warm her body.

Dash switched lenses and zoomed in on Savage, her mouth went dry and her heart picked up. It was like looking at a Greek Goddess, the way her hair trailed down her side to float upon the water. The sun caressing her body with its fingertips. When she turned her head, Dash swore she was looking right at her. Every nerve ending in her body came alive when those pale eyes looked into her soul by way of the camera lens. Jed shaking the water from his fur broke her from the stare; she looked down at his white eyes and grinned. "I have no idea why I feel this way but you are one lucky wolf, you get to be with her forever." She hobbled back towards the cabin on weak legs and her heart tapping a staccato against her ribs.

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The late afternoon was spent sitting on the riverbank fishing for catfish, Dash gave Savage the evil eye when she held out a fat night crawler and told her she had to bait her hook.

"Uuhh ahhh, nope can't do it." She shook her head and leaned back as far as she could away from the worm.

"Dash it's only a worm, it won't bite you."

She shuddered and shook her head. "It's slimy and I'll get worm guts all over my fingers."

"Girls." Savage mumbled and then jumped when a cane found her ass.

Savage thought the sky was falling when Dash got her first bite; she pulled so hard on the fishing pole that the rig came flying back at them. Savage hit the ground and Jed ran back to the cabin. Dash looked around her searching for her fish and became confused when she saw Savage

hugging the ground.

"What are you doing down there?"

"Oohh I just thought it would feel good to bury my tits in the dirt." She got up, brushed her breasts off and gave Dash a raised eyebrow. Green eyes were locked on her breasts and not wavering at all. "Hello, my tits to Dash." She waved her hand in front of Dash and snorted when green eyes blinked a few times before they moved up to her eyes.

Dash felt her face catch fire, she couldn't believe she had been staring at Savage's breasts and got caught at that. Then again she had never done it before so how could she know how not to get caught. "Sorry I was..."

Savage let her off the so-called hook and retrieved the fishing line from the tree branch. After baiting the hook, she threw it back out into the river and kept an eye on Dash. She didn't know how many more times her breasts could be smashed into the dirt. Twenty minutes later, Savage's eyes shot open when Dash yelled at her.

"I got a bite I got a bite!"

"Just don't yank on it yet." She slipped behind her, wrapped her arms around her and placed her hands over the top of Dash's. "Now when the fish hit's again, I'll show you what to do." They waited patiently and then the bobber went under and Savage gave the rod a sharp tug and felt the fish take off. "OK, now keep tension on the line and reel him in."

When Dash finally got the fish up to the bank, Savage fell backwards on to the ground laughing hysterically. The bluegill was three inches long; the night crawler it had gone after weighed more than it did. Dash pulled on the line until the tiny fish was at her bare feet. "Tori what do I do now?"

"Wait till...it grows...up!" She said between spurts of laughter.

"But Tori..." She looked closely at the tiny thing flopping around on the ground. She used a fingertip and touched its side; it jumped off the hook and all the way to the waters edge with Dash trying to grab it. Savage rolled on to her side and wrapped her arms around her stomach, tears flowed down her cheeks and she started snorting with each breath.

"Hey what are you laughing at?" Dash planted her hands on her hips and stared down at Savage. She advanced on Tori and dropped down to straddle Savage's hips, jabbing her in her ribs made Savage laugh all the harder. "It's not funny!" She jabbed her ribs again, lost her balance and landed on top of Savage. She looked up from where her face was between firm breasts and turned a bright red. At a loss as to what to do, she was saved when Jed came running and jumped on both of them. "EEWW wolf slobber!" Dash yelled and rolled off Savage and wiped her face and the back of her neck. She looked over at Savage and gave her a dirty look. "I can't believe you laughed at my fish, it was huge!" She held her arms out shoulder's width and smirked. "Well it will be in another ten or twenty years." She got to her feet and offered a hand to Savage.

"Come on I'm hungry and since I suck at fishing and you didn't help much, I'm going to beg Scoops for food."

The rest of the day they played like two year olds, after they ate, they went to sit by the river and watch the bats swoop down for the water bugs floating on the water. The croaking of bullfrogs and a splash of water were the only sounds besides the beating of two hearts. Dash looked to her left and saw the peaceful look on Savage's face. Her classic profile stood out against the flames of the small fire. Her heart fluttered in her chest when pale blue eyes connected with hers.

"I'm going to miss this." She felt tears fill her eyes and her throat closed on her.

Savage saw her friend start to fall apart; she moved closer to her and pulled her into her arms. Running her fingers through her silky hair, she murmured close to her ear. "You can come back, I'll always be here." They sat by the river until Dash fell asleep in Savage's arms. Being as gentle as she could, she lifted Dash and carried her back to the cabin. Her heart had been breaking all day, but at that moment with Dash's face pressed against her neck and her hand curled against her chest shattered whatever was left. She knew that once Dash went back to Washington, she would never be the same. She chose her life of solitary existence and it never bothered her until Dash appeared. She laid her down in the bed, kissed her forehead and covered her up. Sitting in the chair, she braced her elbows on her knees, rested her chin on her clasped hands and watched Dash sleep.

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Dash woke to Jed licking her fingers and whimpering; she scratched his head and opened her eyes to see Savage sound asleep in the chair. Rolling to her side, she memorized her features and the way the corners of her mouth twitched. She continued to watch until blue eyes fluttered opened.

"Morning Dash." She stretched and yawned before stiffly getting out of the chair. Dash watched her as she headed to the bathroom and sighed. This would be the hardest thing she ever did in her life, leaving Savage's haven.

After packing her clothes in her backpack, Dash went in search of Savage and found her sitting at the rivers bank. Her eyes were trained on a family of beavers collecting brush for their den; each time one of them swam out Savage would watch it.

"You know that they build their dens in such an intricate way that it looks like each branch is woven so that it looks almost like a basket. I've never seen a den torn down by the river or time." She looked to her side when Dash sat down. "It's kind of like how we weave our lives; each memory is woven into the fabric that's our life. They stay with us throughout our years, keeping us company when we become lonely." She took Dash's hand, brought it up to her lips and kissed her knuckles. "I will always remember this time." She turned when she heard Tommie yell their names, wiping a tear from Dash's face; she stood up and pulled her to her feet. "Guess it's that time." All Dash could do was nod her head and wipe away her tears.



Tommie watched as they walked hand in hand towards him, he had never seen his sister looking so lost. Not even when their parents died had she looked like she did now, his heart went out to her.

He cleared his throat and spoke softly. "I have my truck up in the pasture, so when you're ready Dash."

Dash let go of Savage's hand and limped into the cabin for her backpack, once through the door, she stopped, sat down on the bed and took once last glance around her.

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"You alright Savage?" Tommie whispered to her and touched her forearm.

"Yeah, I'm alright. Will ya tell grandma I need more books to read?"

"Sure, I tell her, can't believe you read those six I brought already."

"I haven't but with Dash gone I'll have nothing to do but read." They saw a tearful Dash limp from the cabin and give them a watery smile. When she spoke, it was rough and uncontrolled.

"I'm all set Tommie." She stopped in front of Savage and then moved closer to hug her. "Thank you for everything."

"My Pleasure Dash, you take care of yourself and see a doctor when you get back to Washington." She pulled away from her, squeezed Tommie's shoulder and walked towards where Jed was sitting by the cabin. "Go on boy lead them out, you know how Tommie is." She rubbed his head and watched him trot off. She waved to her brother and Dash before she went into her cabin. Tommie took Dash's backpack and held out his hand to her.

"It's not too far to my truck; we should be back at grandma's in about fifteen minutes."

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Savage sat down on her bed and looked around, her cabin felt empty to her. "You're insane Savage, you've lived alone most of your life." She looked to the wall near the nightstand and saw the dragonhead cane leaning there. Taking it in her large hand, she ran her fingers over the head and swore she could still feel the warmth of Dash's hand. Gripping it in her hand, she left her cabin at a full sprint towards the path that would take her up to the pasture.

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Tommie had just opened the passenger side door for Dash when he heard Jed bark and run off towards the trees. He squinted and then saw his sister running towards them. "Hey Dash I'm going to put your backpack in the back." He nodded his head to where Savage stood at the edge of the tree line a few yards away. "You know she never comes up this far." Green eyes looked to

him and then to Savage, it took her two seconds to start limping towards Savage. They meet halfway and just stood there staring at each other in an awkward moment.

"I carved this for you." Savage held out the cane to her and then pulled her into a tight hug; she buried her face against Dash's neck and felt tears fill her eyes. Dash held onto her neck and fought not to break down. When she pulled back, she laced her fingers in dark hair and pulled Savage closer to her. "I'll come back and see you, I promise." She pulled Savage down and placed a soft kiss on her lips then walked to Tommie's truck sobbing softly. When she got into the truck, Savage was gone but the twisted trees waved to her as the truck pulled away.

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Savage dropped to her knees just inside the trees and sobbed into Jed's thick fur. She sat there until she had no more tears to cry. Without looking back, she went back down the incline to sit beside the riverbank and stare out across the river.

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A tear stained Dash got out of Tommie's truck and was enveloped in grandma's arms, her sobs tore at both grandma's and Tommie's heart. While Tommie retrieved her backpack, grandma took her into the house. Taking the sobbing Dash into the living room, she sat them down on the couch and let Dash cry into her shoulder. Long minutes went by until Dash had calmed down enough to let go of grandma, she wiped her eyes and nose on the offered Kleenex and sniffled.

"You know you can come back any time you want, Tori hasn't left her little world in the last fifteen years."

"She never leaves, not even to come up here?"

"Nope, she says her life is down there. Your boyfriend called about an hour ago, he said he was about an hour away and would be here soon." She didn't get the response she thought she would with the news. Dash just shrugged her shoulders and nodded. "I put some tea on, you want some?"

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John pulled his BMW 600SL into a parking spot and looked around the small town with its ancient homes. Brushing invisible lint from the pleats in his trousers, he fixed his tie and walked up towards the front door of Hazel's bed & breakfast. He reached for the bell on the door, thought better of it and used the tip of his LeBlanc pen. He waited and primped his hair and buffed his spotless nails until Hazel opened the door to him.

"Can I help you?" She so wanted to wipe the flour from her hands on him for some strange reason. Made her wonder where Tommie and Savage got some of their hygiene habits.

"My name is John W. Hartwin; I am looking for my girlfriend Dash Monroe."

"Ohh, come on in she's in the kitchen." She held the door open for him and sneezed the second he went past her. "Sorry hay fever season." She used her apron and wiped her runny eyes and nose. "This way." She held out a hand and pointed to the kitchen door. "She's having..." She sneezed every time she got close to him. By the time she made it into the kitchen, her eyes were watering and her nose was sore. "Weirdest thing Dash..." John walked around her and sent her into a sneezing fit. She gave up and left the kitchen.

With one look at Dash, he grimaced and planted a plastic smile on his face. "Dash you look so different." He took in the whole picture and sat down as far away as possible. "Did you have a car accident, I told you to get rid of that truck and buy a German made car. He leaned across and saw the sutures above her eyebrow. "That's going to be a terrible scar; you need to see a plastic surgeon." Dash just sat there with her mouth hanging open in total shock. "I can not believe the doctor sutured your face with black thread." He placed his hands on the table, saw the dusting of flour covering the surface and then placed them in his lap.

She ran a hand down her face and hoped that when she uncovered her eyes he would be gone. Grandma walked into the kitchen, crossed behind John and started sneezing again. "For the love of Gods!" She left the room again and decided to sit on the couch.

"John, I was attacked by four crazy asshole men while taking pictures, they tried to rape and kill me and all you care about is the color of the sutures?"

"That's what happens when you come to a place like this." He held his hands out. "These people are uncivilized, not like our friends in Washington DC. They have morals and are upstanding citizens who work."

"And just what are you insinuating?" She stood up from her chair and paced. "The person who saved my life may not have a job, live in a cabin and not have a penny to her name but she took care of me. Which is more than you can say!" She pointed a finger at him and saw that he wasn't paying any attention to what she was saying but was looking at her injured thigh.

"As soon as we get back, I'm taking you to my plastic surgeon. He's the best doctor around and is very discreet about his patients."

"Will you just shut the Hell up and listen to me? You walked in here, took one look at my busted up face and the first word out of your mouth has to do with a status symbol car. Did you even give me a hug or a handshake? NO!"

He sat there with eyes wide and unable to say a word. "I didn't want to touch you and cause you pain, plus I just bought this silk tie and you have flour all over that ugly T-shirt." He scrunched up his nose when he saw that it was three sizes too large for her small frame.

"I like this shirt!" She tugged on the front of it. "It's Tori's and it hasn't been washed in two days and I may never wash it because it smells like her!" She stepped closer to him and grabbed his silk tie so hard that she knew it would have permanent wrinkles. "And further more, she doesn't

shave her legs, wear clothes, lives with animals, bathes in a creek and smells a Hell of a lot better than that fucking bug spray cologne you wear!" She wiped at her watering eyes and nose. "That shit may cost two hundred dollars an ounce but OFF Bug spray is only two bucks and kills bugs just the same!" She grabbed her cane, jabbed him in the chest leaving behind a round dirty spot. "I'm leaving and I don't want to see you anywhere near my apartment EVER!"

"But Dash I moved all of your clothes to my apartment!" He went after her and gave grandma a look of disdain when she wiped her nose on her apron. "I had Goodwill take all of your furniture."

She turned on him with fire dancing in her green eyes. "You did WHAT? What in the Hell were you thinking! I would never live with a shallow mother fucker like you!" She went up the stairs and slammed the door to her room. John followed behind taking in the worn boards of the steps and the old style door handles. He stopped outside of the door and knocked.

"Dash does this mean we're breaking up, I all ready told everyone we know that we are getting married." The door was flung open to reveal Satan's spawn, Dash's hair stood out at all angles from her angry finger's pulling on it, she swung her backpack over her shoulder and raised the cane at chest level.

"Move before I beat you to death you shallow, self serving, egotistical, chauvinistic, PRICK!" She jabbed at him with her cane until he backed up and away from her.

"Does this mean that we won't be having sex?"

Dash let out a roar that had grandma covering her ears; she swung her cane, smacked him in his shins and limped down the stairs. Seeing grandma trying not to laugh, she went over to her and gave her a hug.

"Send a message to Tori that I'll have her pictures in a few days. I'll send them here so you can give them to her." She kissed grandma's cheek and limped out the door. She stopped and gave grandma a small smile. "Thank you for everything."

John faltered for a few seconds on the stairs; he heard the front door close and then just sniffing. He walked down the stairs and looked around the room to see grandma wiping her eyes.

"Where did Dash go?" He asked while still looking around the room.

"Get a clue bug boy, she left you."

"She left, how could she just leave without us discussing our future." He took a seat across from grandma and straightened the pleats in his trousers before crossing his knees.

Grandma thought he looked like a flaming drag queen but didn't mention it; she just sat there and observed his hideous primping habits. "Wanna buy a clue bug boy; you have no future with Dash because you're a shallow asshole who isn't worried about how she feels but what the exterior

Dash looks like to your money hungry friends."

He just stared unblinkingly at her with a plastic look on his face. "We have been dating for four years, I had our wedding and everything planned out, including the weekend honeymoon in New Jersey."

"I got the impression that she had no idea what's so ever that you two were engaged let alone getting married."

"I even talked to her boss about her quitting at the end of the next week." He fixed his gelled, earthquake; typhoon and volcanic eruption- couldn't-move-a-strand hair and gave grandma a raised perfectly plucked eyebrow

Grandma gave him the famous Edwards look. "How big of you."

"I'm the man and I make all the decisions, Dash would have no need to work. Her job would be to stay home and entertain my work associates. I was just promoted to a full partnership in my brokerage firm, I am an important person."

"Good, that means you can impress the plastic people you know with the new Barbi doll you'll find at the preppy bar you go to. 'Cuz bug boy, Dash is too good for you and I'm glad she found that out before it was too late." Grandma waved a hand at him. "Go on now; I heard on the TV that the DOW is dropping thousands of points a minute." She laughed at the pale shade that washed over his face; he jumped from the chair and ran out the door. "And don't come back now ya stupid asshole! Us uncivilized, jobless and un-moral heathens like being this way, it's my right!" She grabbed her favorite straw hat with the foam deer antlers sticking up from the top and went to visit Tommie at his office.

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When she retold the conversations she had overheard, Tommie was rolling on the floor with tears in his eyes. He knew that Dash had some fire in her but never thought she would do something like that. When he gained some composure, he looked into his grandma's pale blue eyes.

"Do I have a chance with her?"

"Gods Tommie, if I could get away with tossing you over the bridge I would." She tossed paper clips at him and then started shooting rubber bands until he hid under his desk. You big idiot, you seen how she was when she left Savage, do you think that happens everyday?"

"I just thought it was that woman thing, ya know...like what they have in movies."

"Tommie stick to *Rambo* and *Blade*, did you ever pay attention to what Savage talked about. The mystics, the soul mate theory she believes in, reincarnation. Ever read any of her books she wrote about the ancient female Amazon warriors of Greece?"

"Hell I thought it was all fantasy stuff, mushy girlie dreams." He shrugged his shoulders at her. "She may be my sister but I still think she's weird."

"Thomas Eugene Edwards, when we get home I want you to go in her old room and take a good look around you and then you will read her last book or I'll chase you all over this town with my car."

He slouched down behind his desk; with a sheepish look, he nodded his head. "Yes ma'am, I'll do that. What's for supper?"

She threw her hands in the air and left his office mumbling about if she hadn't delivered him herself she would swear he was switched at birth.

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Dash drove straight her office building, took the elevator up to the third floor and limped to her office. The second she walked in, she saw the boxes sitting in a corner with all her personal things packed in them. Dropping her backpack on her now clear desk, she went towards her boss' office. The second she walked in, he jumped up from behind his desk.

"Dash I thought you quit?" His eyes widened at her battered face. "What happened to you?"

"I did what? When did I do this?" She leaned against the front of his desk and tapped her cane on the floor. "This is what happens when you take on four poachers. Think I can be a Playboy pin-up?"

"Uuhhmm...are you OK?"

"I am now, thanks."

"I'm sorry Dash." The look on his face was sincere and caring. "John came and saw me on Thursday and said that you were quitting after your vacation. I had your stuff packed for you to pick up. Was I wrong in doing that?"

"I'd say! I can't believe he did that, I swear I'm going to tear him apart!" She limped back and forth in front of him. "I'm not quitting but I won't be back until after my vacation. But I will develop the pictures from the shoot and my article for the layout." She stopped at the doorway and turned. "And if that asshole comes by here, tell him I died."

She checked the light outside of the darkroom door before she entered. One of the other journalists was looking at some negatives when she walked in. She nodded at him and then got the items she needed to develop her shots. As she worked, the other Journalist sat quietly and watched her. She was well known for her un-orthodox way of printing pictures, she always trashed more than half of her shots. She never looked at her negatives, she remembered what shot she needed and threw the rest out. So when she started to examine each and every shot, he became engrossed. When the first picture hit the rinse pan, he pulled it out, his jaw dropped and

all his breath came out in a whoosh.

"Oohh my Gods, who is this woman?" He held the print up to the light and had it snatched from his fingers.

"MINE!" She took the picture and gazed at the shot she had taken of Savage laying on the log and felt her heart pick up as it did when she shot the picture. She placed it closer to her and gave him a glare to singe the hair off his body. "Touch another one and I'll beat you to death." She raised her cane and waved it front of him. "Back off!" He raised his hands above his head and sat back down in his seat. When she was finished, she took all her shots and went to the supply room. She searched through the room and found a leather binder, taking it to her office she sat down to work.

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Savage wandered around her cabin, running her fingers across the kitchen table and touching the coffee cup that was still sitting where Dash had left it before she left. It was hard for her to accept that it had been almost two days since Dash had left her little haven. She wanted to send Jed with a note to her grandma to see if Dash was still there or if she had gone back to Washington. She had actually sat down and written the note only to throw it away. She thought that if she knew the truth, the pain she felt in her chest would get worse. She ran a fingertip across the cups edge and then brought that fingertip to her lips. She could still feel the press of their lips and the feelings that erupted in her body. They were feelings that she had wrote down at times when she imagined what it would be like to have the other half of her soul standing by her side. Now, she may never feel it again. She went to her bed, lay down and pulled the pillow that Dash had slept on to her face. She could still smell her soft scent mixed with her own. Tears filled her eyes and slid down her cheeks, she had never cried as a child but was sure making up for it now. Jed came in and jumped up on the bed to snuggle against her side, she knew he felt the loss as she did.

When the night came, she could see the full moon through the window by the bed. She crawled over Jed and slowly walked outside and went down to the rivers bank. Looking towards the bridge, she could just barely make out the dim lights of the houses above. Dropping to her haunches, she threw her head back and howled into the night. She was answered first by Jed and then other dogs in the area, soon the entire population heard the symphony of pain from Savage.

She woke up the next morning curled in a fetal position and cold; she had lay down and cried herself to sleep. Now with her body stiff, dirty, hair tangled, she still felt the hollowness in her soul. She barked deeply for Jed and saw him come trotting from the cabin with a clean breechcloth in his mouth. He shook it and then ran towards the stream with Savage following behind.

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Dash worked through out the night getting her layout finished and then working on the photo album. She was tired and sore when she got up from her chair, she tried to stretch but her injuries

cried out against it. Putting the album in her backpack, she swung it over her shoulder and left the building. Limping the two blocks to her truck, she cursed when she found a parking ticket under the wiper. After the day before she didn't think anything else could go wrong but it had. Driving the six blocks to her apartment, she had to search for a place to park; her temper was ready to flair and burn Washington to a crisp.

All she wanted was to take a hot shower and sleep; she opened the door to her apartment and let out a howl that brought her neighbors into the hallway.

"Sorry but someone seems to have taken all my furniture." She waved to her neighbors and closed her door. She walked through her now empty apartment and dropped her backpack on a wooden crate she had used for her CD's. She checked her phone and found it disconnected along with her electricity.

"You mother fucking asshole John." She went into her bathroom and the only thing left were the hooks on the shower rod. Trying the water, she had cold but no hot water. "Can't be any different from the river or stream." Shedding her clothes, she stepped under the cold spray and cursed in languages she didn't know she knew. It was the shortest shower of her life, within three minutes her teeth were chattering and she had a very high respect for Tori. "My God how can she do it every day?" She used her clothes to dry off and pulled a clean T-shirt and shorts on. No sooner had she walked from the bathroom than John walked through the door.

"Didn't I tell you to stay away from me?" She grabbed her cane and pointed it at him.

"Wait Dash, can we at least speak like civilized people?"

"You have exactly ten minutes starting right now." She looked down at her watch and noted the time.

"Why can't we be together, everything was fine until you went to West Virginia?"

"Let me tell you a little story." She limped across the room to her backpack, pulled out the photo album and sat down on the crate. "Come here and I will also show you what I experienced." She opened the album to show the Capon Bridge. "This is Capon West Virginia, but of course you were there for a very brief time. When I got there last week, I thought an easy shot take a few pictures, write up a little history and be done with it. While I was standing on that bridge, I saw something swimming down in the water that I later found out is a myth for the area. They call it the Capon Savage; it's a protector of the riverbanks and everything in the woods. No one has ever seen this thing except for some poachers that came back in very bad shape after their encounter." She flipped the page to show shots of the lush foliage along the riverbank and of Jed playing with the fox. I found out from a park ranger that Hazel was a kind of authority on the Savage. When I drove into that small town, everything was so serene. The people were friendly and Hazel turned out to be quite a lady. She has eleven grandchildren and the park ranger is her grandson Tommie, they live a simple life with none of the worries of trying to keep up with the Joneses. Even with being direct descendents of Joseph Edwards one of the first landowners and who Fort Edwards was named after back in the 1700's. They are just everyday people who show



how much they care for each other by way of simple gestures." She turned the page to show Scoops stealing apples from the basket. "I found out where I needed to go to investigate the Capon Savage, so early one morning I started walking. I found these two huge trees that are completely twisted together at the top." She ran her fingertip across the picture of the trees and looked up into John's eyes.

"Those trees are not twisted at the top, they're just regular trees." He said after looking at the picture.

Dash ignored him and went on with her story. "I can't even fathom the chances that two trees hundreds of years old would still be standing let alone intertwined with each other. Behind these trees, I found a path and heard rifle shots. I followed the noise and surprised four poachers shooting at some deer and an old crippled cow."

She turned the page and showed him a picture of Belle standing in the garden at Savages. "In a way this cow opened my eyes, if not for her I would never have experienced complete unselfishness." She turned the page to show a profile shot of Savage, the look on her face was peaceful as she looked off into the distance. "I would never have met Tori; she saved my life that day and more." She ran her fingertip across Tori's cheek and swore that she felt the softness of her skin come through the picture. "She took in a total stranger who was trespassing on her land. She tended my injuries, gave me her bed, fed me and showed me that it's not the material things in life that matter but what we give each other of ourselves." Turning the page to show Tori with Scoops lying over her shoulder, she looked up at John. "She lives alone in a log cabin, no electricity, no outside influences, she grows what she eats and kills only what she needs to survive. All our meals were cooked over an open fire, at night; we sat there and listened to nature sing." She turned to a shot of Tori sitting with Jed at her side near the riverbank. "She taught me how to fish John, what have you ever taught me? When's the last time we just sat and talked until the sunrise?"

"I can change Dash; I'll do anything if you stay with me."

"Really, would you give up your life here in the city, your fancy clothes, car, friends or modern technology to live in a log cabin? You see this cane?" She held it up and ran her fingers across the dragons head. "She carved this for me because she knew that I would need it to get around. All you wanted to do was send me to a plastic surgeon; she didn't cringe at my battered face. She doesn't care that my face will scar or I may limp for the rest of my life. To her, it's what's on the inside that counts not the packaging." She turned the pages until she came to the one of Savage lying on the log, she traced her body with a fingertip and felt her heart speed up and tears form in her eyes. "She's a beautiful woman both inside and out, her soul is so pure that it makes me hurt."

"Dash I can be what ever you want, just tell me what to do."

"OK, here's a test for you." She got up, walked over to one of her plants and held out to him. "Stick your hands in the dirt John."

"What, you want me to put my hands in the dirt?" He shook his head and backed away from her.

"What will it prove Dash besides that I'd have filth under my nails."

"That's it John, boy you're smart." She dug her hand into the pot and held the dirt in her hands. "This dirt is your losing straw; you with your manicured fingernails would never dirty your hands for anything. Tori works the earth to survive, you survive to work. If not for people like her, you would starve to death. You look down on people who don't dress in the finest of clothes, drive expensive cars or actually work for a living." She went back over to the album and showed him a picture of Savage standing by her cabin with her body covered in dirt streaked by running sweat. "She works hard every day but her pride comes from within, you're proud of having the fanciest car at the firm."

John stepped closer to her and looked deeply into her misty green eyes; he had never seen her cry or the look of love in its purest form shining from within. He swallowed hard and looked away before he spoke.

"You're in love with her." He turned to face her and dropped his eyes to see her tracing the picture with her fingertips. "I can't believe I've spent four years dating you and you turn out to be a lesbian."

"Love shows no gender, it shows no boundaries, you will never know love because you can't give it."

"I can give love, I loved you."

"Bullshit John, you loved the idea of saying I was yours in front of your groupies." She closed the album and held it to her chest. "Now you can go brag to them and tell them that you dumped me because I'm permanently scared." She pointed to the door with her cane.

"You will never work in DC again Dash, I'm an important person and I'll see to it."

"I don't really give a flying fuck, do what ever you want. One more thing John, what's my full name?"

"Your language is intolerable, you belong with those savages, and it's Dash Monroe."

"Wrong!" She slammed the door behind him and locked it. "Maybe my language is John but that's none of your damn business anymore as if it ever was." She went to the window of her living room, opened it and climbed out onto the small balcony. She sat and listened to the sound of traffic, the horns blaring, sirens wailing and the constant hum of the city. What she wanted was to breathe fresh air, hear the crickets chirp and look into a pair of pale blue eyes.

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Late that night grandma heard a low noise come down the hallway from her bedroom, she picked up the bullbat she kept on her nightstand and crept towards the noise. Stopping outside Savage's old bedroom, she placed her ear to the door and heard sobbing. She opened the door and found

Savage curled up on her bed hugging one of the T-shirts Dash left behind. It had been many years since her granddaughter had cried and just as many since she had been in her old home. Savage and Tommie had come to live with her after their parents were killed in a plane crash, it was hard for to think that it had been almost 25 years since her daughter had died. Easing down on the edge of the bed, she ran her fingers across wet cheeks and whispered to Savage.

"You miss her don't you?" Savage nodded her head and then moved so that her head was resting in her grandma's lap, her soft sobs continued for long minutes. "She'll be back, you just wait and see."

"When grandma, when will she back."

"Now Savage, you're the oracle of the family. You tell me when she'll be back. I will tell you this, she broke up with that asshole boyfriend." She chuckled at the way Dash had torn him into pieces before she left.

"She did?" Savage wiped her face and looked into eyes so much like her own. "But she came up here just to see him?"

"Ohh I wish you'd been here, he's a dandy! A typhoon couldn't move his hair and the prissy ass way he sat!" Grandma rolled her eyes. "That asshole moved her out of her apartment while she was here, he gave all her furniture to Goodwill and made wedding plans."

"They were getting married and she dumped him?"

"HE was getting married, Dash had no idea that she was supposed to be the bride."

"Doesn't really matter either way, she's not like me." More tears filled her eyes.

"Did you fall down and hit your head or something, you're the one who wrote all those books about love knows no gender."

"I believe that but does Dash?"

"That's just something that you'll have to wait and find out. Now get some sleep and stop worrying for nothing." She placed a kiss on Savage's temple and left her to ponder over what she had said."

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Dash felt worse now than after she had been beat up, she had slept on the hard floor with her backpack as a pillow. That act of stupidity had her bent over at the waist, a stiff neck and her ribs aching. "I should have just gone and gotten a room instead of sleeping on the floor." She groaned and rolled her eyes when she realized that she was talking to her dead plant. "I bet Tori doesn't talk to plants." Just the mention of her name made her insides feel warm and fuzzy. "What are you doing right now Tori, feeding Jed, swimming in the stream or sitting there by the

riverbank?" She picked up her backpack and other things that she had found left behind and went out of her apartment. Fifteen minutes later, she was in her truck and searching through the clutter inside. She opened the passenger door and a hardback book fell at her feet, she picked it up and saw the last name on the binding. 'Edwards.' Turning it over she saw the rest of the name, S. Edwards. "Ohh grandma you put this in here, you sneaky old woman." She opened the book and saw the dedication page held only a few words. "For my heart and soul, where ever you are." Closing the book, she got in her truck, drove to the post office, mailed the album to grandma and then went to the nearest motel. Without even bringing her stuff into the room, she dropped down on the bed and started reading. When she reached the second chapter, she faltered, went to the last page she had read and reread the last paragraph again.

"You wrote about two women being lover's?" A huge grin came over face. "You've got some balls lady." She continued to read until she came to the last paragraph and felt her heart slam in her chest.

"Through the centuries of time they will stand proud, branches twisted to be as one." She closed the book and held it to her chest. "Ohh my Gods, Tori wrote this." The most obvious things started to click in her head, things that had been right in front of her and she hadn't seen them until now. "Son of a bitch!" She looked at her watch and saw that she had spent two days of uninterrupted reading. Limping from the room, she went out to her truck and headed to the Interstate.

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Grandma picked up the express mail package and saw the return address with Dash's name. Pulling the box open, she pulled out the leather bound photo album and looked at the gold lettering at the bottom. 'Dasha Gabriella Monroe' flipping open the album, she looked at the beautiful 8x10 color pictures of Savage's haven. The ones that interested her the most were the ones of her granddaughter. She knew her granddaughter was a striking woman but the way Dash had captured her very soul amazed her. She had to laugh at the picture of Savage laying across the log, if she knew that Dash had been close by with her camera, she would have thrown a fit. "After all this you still don't have a clue as to who Savage is. Poor Dash, you're as dense as Tommie." She took the album and went up to Savage's bedroom, she was still asleep, which was unusual for her.

"Savage it's eight o'clock are you gonna come out of hibernation?" Grandma pulled the long hair from where it covered her granddaughters face. "My Gods, I just noticed you have clothes on!" She pulled on the back pocket of the faded Levis Savage wore.

"I didn't want to scare anyone." She grumbled into her pillow.

"Well, if these pictures get out, you'll have to scare off every man within 200 miles." She laid the album next to Savage's face. "Just came a few minutes ago, Dash sent them." That brought her out of bed in a split second.

"Dash sent them, I thought it would take more than a couple days." She ran her fingers across the

leather and then saw Dash's name at the bottom. "Her names Greek, it fits her." Tears came to her eyes when she saw the pictures of Jed and the other animals, then a light blush covered her face when she saw the ones of herself. "I didn't even know she was taking pictures of me."

"I'd say she is a very good photographer, she captures what most people never see." Grandma squeezed a muscular shoulder. "Come on I'll feed you before you run out of here."

"I'm gonna take a quick shower first, then I'll be down."

Grandma shook her head and left Savage looking at the pictures, she wondered about Savage taking a shower, she expected her to go out in the backyard and use the garden hose. "Strange damn kid." She said to herself before going into the kitchen.

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If Dash had a gun, there would have been cars all over I-395-495 and 95, she wondered where people got their driver's licenses. If there was a driver on the road going 20mph, she got stuck behind them. What she wanted was a cattle pusher on the front of her truck so she could shove them out of her way. She drove down the grassy median, around the slow ass person in front of her, across four lanes of traffic and up the RT. 50 exit. Halfway up the ramp, she hit a traffic jam.

"GODDAMNSTUPIDASSFUCKINGVIRGINIADRIVERS!" She took her truck up the edge of the ramp and got stuck right behind a huge accident. Opening the door, she stood on the running board and tried to see why no one was moving. Not being able to see, she got out and stood on the hood of her truck. What made her almost fall off was seeing John crying and using his silk tie to try and fix the smashed front in of his BMW. "See that asshole, all that money and it's nothing but a big clump of smashed nothing." She got back in her truck, put it into four wheel drive and took the grassy slope up and around John and his BMW. The whole time laying on her horn and laughing.

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Hazel sat in her kitchen drinking coffee and doing the crossword puzzle from the TV Guide, Savage had left to go home fifteen minutes earlier after trying to eat her out of house and home. Her granddaughter looked haggard and ready to drop, she knew that she had not been sleeping much and eating less. She sure hoped that Dash would show up soon before Savage got some wild idea and started walking to Washington. At the sound of the car pulling up in front of her house, she went out the kitchen door and saw a ragged looking Dash limping towards her.

"Dash you look worse than...Tori!" She chuckled at the way Dash's hair was sticking up all over her head, the wrinkled familiar T-shirt and the bare dirty feet. "My Gods child where have you been?"

"In Washington." She held up the book she had read. "Did Tori write this book?"

"That one, nope." She grinned at her. "Look at the name on the cover real close, that's an S if I'm seeing it right."

Dash looked at the cover and stared at the name S. Edwards. Her brow wrinkled and she shook her head slowly. "I was so sure Tori had written it, the last paragraph mentioned the twisted trees near the path to her cabin." She smacked her head moaned from the pain and swore under her breath. "I am so stupid and blind, is she still down at her cabin?"

"Should be by now, she left about twenty minutes ago."

"Tori was up here, but you said she never leaves her haven."

"This is the first time in fifteen years; I found her in her room early this morning crying."

"She was crying, why?"

"Come with me Dasha and I'll show you her room, I know you'll find it very interesting."

Dash gave her a raised eyebrow at the mention of her full first name, then she remembered the photo album with her name embossed on the bottom.

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Dash walked into the bedroom that used to be Savage's and let out a whistle, the walls were covered with maps of old Greece, Britannia and what is now Russia. Along with old lithographs of Fort Edwards and the surrounding area. Shelves covered with every book imaginable, ancient myths, Greek history, the Spanish American war, civil war and one entire shelf full of books by S. Edwards.

"Is that a complete collection of Edwards's books she has?"

"Yep, let me show you something." She held out an old family picture to Dash. "This was taken many years ago, so you have to use your imagination."

Seeing her friend's familiar features, she ran a finger over her face. "Tori looks like she's about ten years old." She looked up at Hazel with a puzzled expression on her face.

"Nope, Savage was ten." She pointed to the young Savage in the picture. "Victoria was her mother."

"I am so stupid!" She ran from the bedroom.

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Savage striped out of her clothes, tossed them on her bed and put a breechcloth on, Jed watched her with interest, he grabbed her Levis and ran out the door with them.

"Jed you rotten brat!" She ran after him and saw that he was heading for the path; he picked up speed, dropped her Levis and started howling. Savage stopped and knelt beside him and scanned the area for poachers. What she saw took her breath away, Dash half running half stumbling towards her. She jumped up, ran towards her, and caught her in her arms before she fell. Sinking to her knees, she pressed her face into Dash's heaving stomach and sobbed. Dash tangled her fingers in the long wild hair and pushed Savage back from her and sank to her knees. She looked into pale blue eyes with misty green and smiled.

"I've caught the Capon Savage." She brought their lips together in a soft lingering kiss, pulled back and brought their foreheads together.

"You came back."

"I had to, I left something here." She pulled back and gazed deeply into her eyes. "I left my heart with you, I love you Savage."

A loud creaking sound came from behind Savage; she looked over her shoulder and saw the two huge trees behind her swaying. She scooped Dash up into her arms and carried her down to her cabin. Easing her down on to the bed, Savage laid down beside her and cupped Dash's face between her large hands. "I love you Dasha, I don't know how to...I've never..."

She pulled Savage down to her and captured her lips in a tender kiss. She waited for Savage to open her eyes or breath. "Savage?"

"Dash are my ears supposed to be ringing?" She peeked from between slit eyes.

Dash cupped the side of her face and ran her thumb over a moist bottom lip. "You've never even kissed anyone have you?"

"Just you that way, I've never even dated." A light blush crept up her neck with her admission.

"Come here." Slowly she teased Savage's lips with her tongue, then pulled her bottom lip between hers and sucked gently. A deep moan came from Savage; she released her lip and slowly slipped her tongue between her lips. She moaned and pulled Savage closer when their tongues dueled for the first time. She wrapped her hands in the long silky hair, moved her one leg over Savages hip and flipped her onto her back. They continued to kiss until they were both breathless. Dash gazed down at the chiseled features and couldn't believe that she would be her first. Tracing Savage's dark brows with a fingertip, she let them glide down her cheek to stop at her chin. She traced a small scar below her bottom lip before brushing her lips across it.

Her voice was deep and smoky when she spoke. "You're beautiful Savage."

"I'm average," She kissed Dash softly and added. "You're the one that's beautiful."

Dash brought her head down to kiss Savage's strong chin and trailed her lips and tongue down

her neck to stop at the hollowed area. Flicking her tongue, she tasted the saltiness of her skin and a faint flavor of vanilla. Coming up onto her knees, she straddled Savage's hips and let her fingers barely touch her skin. Circling her breasts but never touching her hardened nipples made Savage arch her back and moan deeply. Dash loved the feel of her muscles rippling beneath her soft skin and the way goose flesh rose behind. Bringing her hands back up to strong shoulders, she looked deeply into darkened blue eyes and read the passion behind them. Dropping her head, she kissed the soft flesh above each breast before taking parted lips captive for a kiss that had stars shooting off behind her eyes. She found out that Savage was a fast learner and she didn't know if she herself could handle what was to come.

Savage had never in her life had her body react the way it was doing with just one touch from Dash. Her insides quivered and jumped, a fire burned in her veins to where she thought she would combust. The way Dash moved against her hips made her nerve endings arc off of each other. She gasped and arched her back when warm moist lips pulled on her nipple and sucked gently. Deft fingers worked at the belt of her breechcloth, she lifted her hips and felt the soft leather being pulled from under her. Reaching out, she ran her hands up under Dash's T-shirt and felt hot damp skin beneath her hands. Pushing the shirt upward, she pulled it over Dash's head and threw it to the floor. She rolled them over and ran her hands down her lover's body until they came to the waistband of her cut-off shorts. Unfastening them, she slipped them off Dash's hips and threw them to join the rest of their clothes. She braced herself on her hands, hovered over Dash, and captured her lips for a long deep erotic kiss. She let out a gasp when her nipples brushed against Dash's and felt her stomach tighten. Going on instinct alone, she kissed her way down Dash's neck and stopped at the junction between neck and shoulder to nip and suck the warm flesh. She felt Dash arch against her and press her hips into her. Small strong fingers threaded through her hair and held her tighter. She released the soft flesh and saw a deep purple mark blossoming; the wicked grin that came to her lips went un-noticed. She growled when a hand found its way to one of her nipples and rolled it between small fingers. Her hips pressed downward causing her to moan deeply and continued to press herself into Dash.

"Move your thigh between mine." Dash wrapped her leg over Savage's hip and pulled her into her; slowly she moved against her lover's thigh and felt their wetness coat each other's warm skin. Wrapping one arm around Savages muscular back, she placed the other at the back of her head and brought her down for a deep kiss. As they moved against each other, Dash felt herself getting closer to the place she had never been before. Their kiss ended and Savage buried her face against her neck and pushed harder against her thigh. Deep moans vibrated against her neck, muscles tightened and started to shake, as Savage got closer to her release. "Come with me Savage." She muttered and arched her back and thrust her swollen clit against a hard thigh. She felt her muscles clench, her center twitch and let out a loud cry when she climaxed. A deep howl was yelled into her neck and she felt Savage thrust against her and shudder. Their bodies continued to move against each other as ripples ran through their bodies. Dash moved her hand between them and ran her fingers thru her lover's wetness; she moaned and rolled Savage part way onto her side. Looking into tear-filled eyes, she kissed her gently on her lips, then the tears from her cheeks. "I love you Savage Edwards." They traded kisses while Dash slipped her fingers between wet swollen folds. Teasing her lover's center, she slipped her middle finger in up to its first digit and pulled out to repeat it until she felt Savage relax. "Baby I won't go any further if you don't want me to."



"I want you to, I know it'll hurt but I trust you." She brought their lips together and explored with an intensity that had Dash seeing stars. She thrust her hips when she felt Savage enter her and press the heel of her hand against her twitching clit.

"Gods...Savage...more." She pulled on her lover's hand and had her insert two fingers inside of her. Thrusting her hips against her lover's hand, she slipped her finger deeper inside of Savage and felt the muscles tighten around her finger. She was getting close and didn't know how much longer she could hold on.

Savage felt her lover's juices flow over her fingers, her muscles clench around her fingers each time she thrust against her. It was making her own center twitch and her wetness flow from her; she gritted her teeth and thrust hard against Dash's hand. A searing pain shot through her body and then faded. Rolling her hips, she thrust faster until she felt a volcanic eruption take her body. She screamed out and heard Dash do the same, they thrust against each other again, all sound became distorted, and images flashed behind their closed eyes. They wrapped themselves around each other and lay gasping for air and still feeling their bodies ripple and tingle with aftershocks. Dash could not explain what had happened to them. What ever it was, it felt right. She heard Savage mumble against her breast and looked down into pale blue eyes so full of love that her heart hurt.

"I love you Brie, I knew one day that you would come back to me."

Dash gave her a puzzled look and was about to ask her what she had meant when a soft snore came from between parted lips. She wiped the tears from her lover's face, closed her eyes to exhaustion, and joined her in peaceful sleep.

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Images haunted Dash in her sleep, they flicked by so fast that she wasn't able to see them clearly but could feel the emotions coming from them. Different times, places, names but always the same overwhelming love. Just before she woke up, she saw a familiar form come before her, the sight of pale blue eyes smiling down at her and the caress of a calloused hand against her cheek. A deep sultry voice came to her ears and called her Brie. She opened her eyes and looked into the peaceful face of her lover. Brushing back the long silky hair from her face, she leaned forward and placed a gentle kiss upon her lips. Tracing the fine thin lines of scars, she found on her lover's face, she ran her finger down to trace one on her upper chest that was shaped like a crescent moon. Pressing her lips to it, she then heard a soft sigh and fingers brush through her hair.

"Morning Dash." Savage mumbled and pulled her lover close to her body. "Gods I'm sore all over." She moaned and tried to stretch.

"Savage, you called me Brie last night, and then I had the weirdest dreams." She looked up into her lover's sleepy eyes. "I saw you in my dream but it wasn't you, does that make sense?"

"More than you know, I can't explain it verbally, I can only put it into words."

"That's another thing Savage Edwards," She crawled on top of her and went nose to nose. "Why didn't you tell me who you really were, here I was living with a famous author and the river beastie and I didn't even know it?"

"I'm... 'cuz I'm stupid sometimes." She grinned and then kissed Dash softly before getting out of bed. "I'm hungry, grandma sent me back with a care package." She picked the bag up off the table and moaned. "I think she sent me back with the rocks from her garden." She searched through the bag and came out with a box of cinnamon pop tarts.

"Pop tarts? You mean you're not gonna go out and steal a squirrels nuts and make me chew on pine cones?"

Savage grinned at her. "That's what were having for lunch." She shocked the Hell out of Dash by pulling a seldom-used toaster from a cabinet.

"Damn I wanted to see you heat those up over the fire." She crawled out of bed, stepped up behind Savage and wrapped her arms around her waist. Pressing her face into her back, she closed her eyes and sighed. "You know I've never had this before."

"What Pop tarts?"

"No, what we had last night and waking up in my lover's arms."

Savage turned in her arms and cupped her face, she really didn't want to bring up Dash's ex-boyfriend but she needed to understand. "What about what's his name, you were with him four years."

"Seven minutes of him grunting and then running to the door doesn't count. I was like a damn hood ornament to him, nothing more." She laid her head against her lover's chest and told her about her relationship with John. "I loved him but not like your supposed to, I think it lasted so long because I hardly seen him and when I did it was for an hour or two at most. Pretty pitiful huh?"

"It just wasn't meant to be." She hugged Dash closer and kissed the crown of her head.

"You know I read one of your books and I wanted to strangle you afterwards."

"My evil grandma strikes again?" She chuckled and released Dash so she could get their pop tarts. "Ya know she sent other books, she knew you would be back."

"She did huh?" A small smile came to her face. "Why did you quit writing?"

"Ohh I just got tired, I had my first book published when I was fifteen and after so many years of doing nothing but writing, I got burned out."

Dash choked on her pop tart, she cleared her throat and gave Savage an astonished look. "Fifteen! You had your first one published at fifteen?"

"Yep, grandma sent it off to some publisher in New York. I didn't make much money at first but then after I had others published, my bank account grew. I live off the royalty checks."

"Are you rich?" Dash didn't know anything about what an author made off their books.

She shrugged her shoulders. "I don't know grandma manages my money for me. When I need something, she takes the money out of my account."

Dash pressed their bodies together and kissed her lover's chest right over her heart. "You're a dream come true."

"So are you Dash." She hugged her close and buried her face against her warm neck, she picked up the scent of their bodies mingled together on Dash's skin. It was calming and erotic all at the same time. Pressing her lips to the warmth, she kissed her way down to an erect nipple and teased it with her tongue. A soft moan came from Dash and she wrapped her arms around her lover's neck and pulled her closer.

"Keep that up and Jed will think we forgot about him."

"He doesn't care..." She nursed gently and kissed her way over to Dash's neglected breast. "He's with his girlfriend." She scooped Dash up and carried her back to their bed. What she then did, had Dash arching her back on the bed and gripping the furs in clenched hands. Green eyes popped open when Dash felt a warm tongue exploring her folds, she looked down the length of her body to see her lover's dark head between her thighs and her long hair draping over them. Bracing her heels in the mattress, she moved her hips in short thrusts and gasped when her center was penetrated by Savage's tongue.

"Where did you...learn that?" She forced out from between panting breaths. Her answer was mumbled against her nether lips sending a vibration through her body that took her over the edge with a scream. She collapsed in the bed and lay there gasping for breath and wondering. She moaned when her lips were captured and she tasted her essence on her lover's lips and tongue. Savage pulled back a bit and looked into a flushed face, tracing a bottom lip, she asked.

"Was it OK? I don't really know what made me do that."

"More than OK, you can do that anytime you want."

Dash made sure that Savage wouldn't be able to walk for a week, she was laying between her thighs with her head resting on her lower stomach after an earth shaking climax for both of them when Savage begged her to stop.

"Can't no more..." She groaned and rolled over and moved down the bed to pin Dash down with

her body.

Dash brushed sweat soaked hair back from her lover's face and placed kisses across her brow. "For two people who don't know what they're doing, I'd say were doing pretty good."

"Little voices telling me what to do."

"Same little voices that wrote the sex scenes in your book?"

Blue eyes closed and Savage dropped her head down to bury against a strong shoulder. "I uuhmm was using my imagination and what I remembered from my dreams. I'm a huge pervert in my dream world." She grinned and nipped at warm flesh. "Picture yourself making love to someone and then watching yourself do it, it's like a porno flick."

"Ooohh can I share your dreams?" She had no idea why she said that but for some reason Savage brought out her perversions.

"You already do...I mean you were there kinda...last night...speech impediment!" She garbled a few words, grunted and pointed to a book sitting on her nightstand. Dash reached over the top of Savage's shoulder and picked up the leather bound book, she opened it to see bold scripture covering the pages.

"Savage...I can't read Greek." She turned a page and saw that it was written in the same strong penmanship but in English. "This is your diary."

"Yeah, I write stuff down all the time. Life long habits are hard to break." She snuggled into Dash's body and closed her eyes. "That's where my books came from, my dreams." Her deep even breathing told Dash that she had fallen asleep. Dash started reading and didn't stop for two hours, what she had read explained a lot of why Savage lived the way she did. Dash saw it as pieces of other lifetimes all mingled together, what hit her hard was the descriptions of the other woman that Savage often saw in her dreams. The resemblance between her and the other woman were uncanny. Not to mention, Savage was describing the dreams she herself had through out her life. She wished she had her own diary so that she could compare them. She had never planed on going back to Washington to retrieve her belongings from John, but reading Savage's diary changed her mind. Laying the book on the bed, she closed her eyes and drifted off to sleep.

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Tommie tip-toed into the kitchen, reached out to grab a cookie and felt a foot connect with his ass. "Get out of those cookies, those are for Savage and Dash." He spun around and grinned.

"Dash is back, where is she?"

"Where do you think she's at you little dummy, she's with Savage." Grandma handed him a container with his name on it. "These are yours leave theirs alone. Did you know Savage was here last night?"

"She was here in this house?" He dropped into a chair and shook his head. "It's been years since she was home, why was she here?"

"When something's bothering you, where do you come?"

"Ohhh, I got it. Is she OK?"

"Well considering that a little blonde tornado blew out of here and was headed that way, I'd say she's more than OK." She placed a glass of milk in front of him and pointed a finger. "Hands off Dash, she's not for you."

"Ain't fair, the best looking woman around here and she wants my sister. Then again maybe their just friends." He shrugged his shoulders and ate his cookies before going back to work.

Grandma rubbed her face and mumbled. "Still say I must have screwed up his delivery, wonder if it's to late to drop him on his head?"

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Dash groaned when the hot water beat on her aching shoulders, dropping her head down, she let the water hit at the back of her neck. She had woken up lying on top of an exhausted Savage and decided to take a shower and then make supper while she slept. She was starving and knew that Savage had to be to, they had only eaten a Pop Tart all day. She started shampooing her hair, when the shower door opened and a warm body pressed into her back.

"Why didn't you wake me up?"

"You looked so peaceful and I wanted to surprise you with supper." Dash rinsed the soap from her hair and turned in her lover's arms. She placed a kiss on her chest and turned her so that she was under the showerhead. Running her fingers through waist length hair until it was completely wet, she poured shampoo in her hand and washed Savage's hair. Low moans came from Savage when Dash's fingers massaged her scalp. "Now I know why you go in the creek, it's got to be hard to wash you hair in the shower."

"I've never had it cut so I'm used to it." She tilted her head back and let the soap rinse from her hair. Taking the loofa sponge, Dash soaped Savage's body, washed every single area and paid attention to some too much. She found herself pressed up against the shower wall and her lips captured in a deep kiss. They straddled each other's thighs and moved slowly against each other, soft kisses and caresses turned into clinging and loud yells when they went over the edge together. Dash hug onto Savage for dear life, she couldn't keep her knees from buckling under her.

"I can't walk." She whimpered and then yelped when Savage moved and cold water hit her chest. Savage turned the water off and then lifted Dash so that she could wrap her legs around her waist. Capturing her lips in an exploring kiss, she walked out of the bathroom and blindly made

her way to where she hoped the bed was. Feeling it against her knees, she eased Dash down without breaking their kiss.

Tommie stood in the doorway with his mouth hanging on his chest and no air in his lungs. He watched them lie down on the bed and caress each other. He had no idea of what to do, he closed his eyes and turned to go out the door and fell right on his face. He yelped and yelled out when something smacked him on top of his head and then hissed.

Savage jumped off Dash, fell on the floor and felt Dash fall over the top of her. They were all at eye level with each other. Ice blue and dark green connected with shocked brown.

"Hi Sis just thought I'd drop by, fall on my face in your doorway, get beat up by a Bobcat and see how ya were doing. So how you guys doing?" He tried to grin at them, except it was hard with his foot being attacked by sharp claws and teeth. "Sis could you get your cat to let me go?"

"Why I think you kinda deserve to be chewed on, you pervert."

"Can I help it if you were sucking face when I walked in?"

"Guys I don't want to break up the sibling thing here but what does Jed have in his mouth?"

Jed stood in the doorway with a chewed up work boot in his mouth.

"Ohh that used to belong to one of those poachers, he likes to take a little something each time he catches one." She pointed to the bobcat. "Jed take your baby outside with you." He dropped the boot, picked up the bobcat and carried it outside with him.

"Uhhmm... grandma sent me with another care package and some more books." He climbed to his feet and tried not to look at a naked Dash. Savage stepped in front of her lover to block her brother's stare.

"Tommie go out and start a fire for me."

"Uhhmm OK." He rubbed his face and stumbled from the cabin.

Dash wrapped her arms around her lover and buried her face in her wet hair. "Savage tell me he knew about your sexual preference."

"Ohh he knows about me, it's you that floored him."

"Ohh, well I guess it's a little too late to tell him huh?"

Savage turned in her arms. "You can say that." And kissed her tenderly. "When the kiss broke, she hugged her close and whispered in her ear. "I love you Dash."

"I love you to." She kissed her lover and smacked her on her ass. "Come on I'm hungry."

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Tommie fell off the stump he was sitting on and Savage's mouth dropped open when Dash came out of the cabin wearing a breechcloth and nothing else. Savage reached over and smacked her brother. "Keep your eyeballs away from you know where or I'll poke them out."

"Better get use to it Tommie; I'm now the other river beastie." Dash down next to Savage and squeezed her thigh. "Right baby?"

"Yep, we're gonna terrorize poachers by chasing each other through the trees."

"Or we can just make out under those two huge trees that are joined at the top?"

Tommie gave her a raised eyebrow and snickered. "Ohh great, another nut case, I keep telling Savage there are no trees up there that are twisted at the top."

"Yes there are Tommie, that's how I found the trail that comes down here." Dash said and stuck her tongue out at him.

"Uhhmm Dash, there's no trail either." He shrugged his shoulders and looked to Savage. "After all these years, the only way I can find the right spot is from my tire marks and this big ugly rock at the edge of the trees. You know how everyone keeps saying I get lost?" He saw Dash nod her head. "It's because I get lost coming in here and Sis sends Jed out to find me." At the mention of his name, Jed came trotting up with the bobcat in his mouth. "Sis he does know that he's a male wolf and not a female bobcat doesn't he?"

"What can I say, he's lovable." Savage wrapped an arm around Dash and hugged her; I'll explain later about the trees and trail. Right now I hear some steaks calling our names."

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Dash came back to the cabin from retrieving stuff from her truck; she carried a gym bag with a few articles of clothing and her tennis shoes. Every thing else she owned was at John's apartment. She didn't know how she was going to bring up the subject of having to go back to Washington to savage. "Don't be a chicken shit Dash, just tell her."

"Tell me what?" Savage stood behind her with a worried expression on her face.

"I said that out loud huh?" She ran her fingers through her messy hair and let out a long breath. "I need to go back to Washington to tie up some loose ends." She stepped close to Savage and placed her hands on her hips. "There's some personal items that John took from my apartment that I want back and I need to turn in my resignation at work."

The last part brought a small smile to Savage's face then disappeared. "You're quitting your job, why?"

"Because I don't need to work, I've lived on very little money all these years and I have a healthy savings account to show for it." She laid her head against her lover's chest and spoke softly. "I don't need money, just you. I want to stay here with you, not travel all over the world." Tilting her head up, she caught pale blue eyes looking off into the distance. "I want you to teach me everything you know." Sparks fired behind blue eyes and then dropped downward to stare into soft emerald green eyes. "Will you come with me to Washington and help me get my stuff?"

"Where you go I go." Savage whispered before kissing her with a tenderness that made Dash's heart pound.

"Is tomorrow too soon? I really want to get everything taken care of and go on with the rest of my life with the Capon Savage."

"I'll warn you now, it's been a long time since I was in a car and I've never been outside of Hampshire County."

"You've never been away from here? Not even to see other counties?"

"Nope, never felt the need and I was afraid to leave in case..." She stopped and looked up at the rough-hewn timbers of the cabins ceiling.

"In case what, tell me Savage." Dash cupped her cheek and pulled her head down so she could read what was going on behind her eyes.

"It's a very strange story and you might...no I know you'll think I'm insane." She took Dash's hand in hers and led her over to their bed. Taking a deep breath before she started, she placed a kiss across small knuckles and offered dash a small smile. "I don't have the normal type of dreams that everyone else has, they're more like flashes from past lives." She looked to their joined hands and continued. "Since I was little, I would see myself in these dreams as an adult, they were in different times, places but always with the same people. As I grew older, I was part of what was going on around me; I could communicate with the people around me. I could feel the clothes I was wearing, hear the sounds, smell the wood smoke in the air and the undying love I had for my companion and vice versa. I fought different enemies, could feel pain both emotional and physical, hear the clashing of swords or the crack of a rifle. What lingers in my heart is the loss of my eternal soul mate." She gazed into misty green eyes and saw the pain Dash had for her. "I remember us planting two oak trees side by side near where our cabin was. They represented the two of us. Death took her from me before those trees could mature, I was left empty inside. On my final breath I cursed the Gods for their unfairness." She felt the tears slid down her cheeks and the soft squeeze of the small hands held in hers. "A voice came to my ears in a dream telling me that when the two trees became one, we would be together again. Besides myself, only she would see the trees."

"Then what Tommie said is true, there are no trees."

"No, those two trees were cut down when this area grew, the cabin was never occupied because



it was said to be haunted. It was torn down at the same time to make more farming land."

Dash leaned into her lover's side and tried to picture everything in her mind. Closing her eyes, she left her mind go and saw flashes of the past come to her. "The cabin was in Dan's pasture, the two oak trees were off to the left of the cabin in a clearing. Clover and wild flowers filled that small area then dropped off to where a small stream flowed down into the river." She opened her eyes and saw the tears flowing steadily down her lover's cheeks. "We have to go to Washington tonight, my diary is the key." She pulled Savage to her feet and hugged her tightly. "I'm home."

"Yes you are I would have waited another century for you."

Savage was going to change into real clothes when Dash laid a hand on her arm. "This is what we are and if the rest of the world can't accept it then the Hell with them." She took leather shirts from the trunk and handed one to Savage. "But neither one of us is going to flash the city of Washington; jail and a breechcloth don't mix to well."

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On the ride up to Washington, Dash kept glancing over to her lover; Savage was a little green around the gills and was sweating even though the air vents were blowing on her. Dash ran her hand up and down her forearm to try to get her to relax her grip on the seats edge. Usually if a passenger acted that way it was because of her driving, not this time, Savage was suffering from carsickness.

"We're almost there, another five minutes until we get to Johns."

Savage glanced sideways and swallowed deeply. "Good because my stomach feels like it's going to jump out the window." Dash gave her a reassuring smile and took her hand in hers.

"Hope not, I'm a sympathetic cookie tosser."

Hitting her turn signal to make a right turn, she pulled her truck up into the underground parking lot of the high-rise apartment building. Finding a spot close to where John's assigned spots were, she parked and turned her truck off. Before she could pull the keys from the ignition, Savage was out of the truck, leaning against the door and shacking. *"Maybe this wasn't a good idea?"* She said to herself as she made her way to her lover's side. Wrapping her arms around Savage, she pulled her into a tight hug and pulled her head down to her neck. "I'm sorry Baby, you should have told me."

"I thought it was something that I would have grown out of, who ever heard of a person thirty some years old getting car sick?"

"It's not as uncommon as you think and what do you mean thirty something?"

"Uuhhmm...I don't know how old I really am?" Her voice raised an octave with the last word. "I'm not even sure what day of the week it is most of the time." She raised her face and grinned.

"Not really important when you've been waiting centuries."

"Guess not, come on lets go get my stuff so we can lose track of time together."

They took the elevator to the penthouse floor, Dash should have known what it would do to Savage, but it was fun to watch her eyes grow wide when their stomachs dropped. When the doors opened, she took her lover's hand and led her down to the end of the hallway to John's door.

"Come on caveman, time to scare the bastard." She hit the button for the door chimes and groaned at the sound of tinkling music that played. "Fucking Tinker Bell asshole." She chuckled when Savage nudged her shoulder and pushed the button down continuously until they heard John yell from the other side. He flung the door open to meet narrowed green eyes.

"Dash you came back!" He stepped forward and was about to give her a hug when she pointed a finger at him.

"Back off asshole, I came for my stuff not you." She gave him the once over and busted out laughing. "Pretty pajamas!" He wore a pair of baby blue silk pajamas with pink horizontal stripes running through them. To make it worse, he had black satin eye blinds hanging down over his eyebrows.

"You should talk; you look like something from the Smithsonian history department. What are you supposed to be little running dyke?"

Before he could say another word, Savage stepped around the door jam, grabbed him by his throat, lifted him off the floor and pushed his squirming body against the wall.

"Didn't your mother ever tell you that if you can't speak kindly to others than keep your mouth shut?" He struggled for something to say.

"Baby put the asshole down; we don't want him pissing all over your feet." She pointed to the huge wet spot at the front of his PJ's. "What a man."

"Is he a bed wetter too?" Savage asked her after dropping John to the floor.

"Glad I never had the chance to find out." She kicked him in his foot and waited for him to catch his breath. "Where's all my stuff at?"

"Spare room...boxes...bags...I threw out a lot of stuff." He jumped and grabbed his groin when Savage bared her teeth and barked at him. He looked down at the puddle forming around him.

"Get you stuff and get out!" He climbed to his feet and ran to his bathroom.

"What a loser." Savage shook her head then followed Dash.

Dash was ready to go and rip John into tiny little pieces; he had thrown out most of her Levis, T-shirts, sweatshirts and anything that didn't have a designer tag on it. Taking what she wanted of

her clothes and all her personal papers, books, photo albums and her winter coat, she left the rest in a pile in the middle of the floor.

"Fucking asshole I hope he has a miserable life." She picked up a garbage bag and slung it over her shoulder while Savage picked up two boxes. "Let's go home, I hate being in the same state with that slug." When they reached the front door, they turned to see John in the living room. He shivered at the deep growl coming from Savage, ran into the bathroom and locked the door.

"Should have brought some road kill to stuff under his bed." Dash saw the raised eyebrow of her lover. "What? I think he deserves it and worse. Serve him right for throwing out my Elmer Fud socks."

"You can have mine." She gently kissed her lover's lips and ran her fingertips across her cheek. "I have Bugs Bunny slippers you can wear."

Dash was shocked, her Savage with novelty items amongst deer skin breechcloths.

"Those will look cute with what I'm going to be wearing for the rest of my life."

"Even better, Jed chasing you. He loves those slippers."

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Their last stop was to turn in her resignation, collect her equipment and personal items from her office. The looks they got when they walked into the building were priceless. Dash didn't think that anyone would be there that late at night but remembered that they were doing the final proofs before printing. Taking Savage's hand, she led her down the hall to her small office. Her stuff was still packed in the boxes and in the corner.

"Some of this stuff I don't need so I'll just leave it here for whoever." She opened a box and quickly looked through it and set it to the side, the next one, she opened it and a light blush covered her face. Savage raised an eyebrow and looked at her.

"What's wrong?"

"I can't believe I left this in my office, worse yet, someone else packed this stuff." She opened the box and tilted it towards her lover. "One reason to quit my job." Savage looked into the box and started laughing; wiping the tears from her eyes she sobered from the look Dash gave her.

"Uuhmm sorry, I never pictured you for the type to play with toys."

"I'm not...don't...I...it's new never been used." She rushed out.

Savage stepped up to her and kissed her lips. "Not for long it's not." That made Dash's face turn a deeper red. "Any other little toys in these boxes?" Savage wiggled her brows at her and grinned.

"Uuhhmm...well...I stayed at a hotel during a safe sex convention and I sorta became friends with one of the sellers." She ran a hand down her face and groaned. "Got a shovel so I can dig a bigger hole for myself?"

"Are you telling me that the seller left the Hotel the new employee of the month in sales?" She laughed when Dash blushed and nodded her head. She groaned when her boss stepped into her small office and gasped.

"Dash ohh my Gods!" He gave her the once over and grabbed at his chest. "I never thought you were into leather." He then noticed Savage standing to the side, his eyes widened, mouth dropped open and he waved a hand at Dash.

"Get a hold of yourself old man." She rolled her eyes when he fell to his knees in front of her lover. She stepped in front of him and tapped him on his forehead. "Forget it she's unavailable."

"Damn! Just my luck." He got to his feet and held out his hand. "I'm Bob, Dash's boss and you're the Goddess from her pictures." Dash swung her head and gave him a narrowed look.

"Excuse me but what do you know about my pictures of Savage?"

His face paled and all words fell from his mouth in a garbled heap, all Dash understood was wallpaper.

"Wallpaper?" Her eyebrow rose and she looked to the computer on her desk. Hitting the on switch, she waited for it to boot up. As she stood there, she caught Bob ringing his hands nervously. "Ohh my Gods!" She watched as the picture of Savage lying on the log came up on her screen. "I will kill someone before I leave!" Savage stepped behind her, placed her hands on her shoulders and massaged the tight muscles. She leaned forward and whispered in her lover's ear.

"Let them have their little fantasies, you've got the real Savage."

"I know but all these morons will be drooling..." She moaned when Savage breathed into her ear when she spoke.

"You get to drool over me for the rest of our lives, just rub it in before we leave if you want."

"OK." She caressed the large hand on her shoulder and gave Bob an evil grin. "Bob I quit."

"What, but you said you weren't quitting that John was wrong."

"He was wrong; he had no business telling you anything. This is coming from me, I quit, resign, retire, whatever. I'm running away with Savage."

He knew what she said was true by the possessive way they held onto each other. Nodding his head, he smiled at her and held out his hand.

"Good luck Dash, live and enjoy. You deserve it." He waved to them as he left her office.

"Come on let's just take the rest of the boxes and I'll sort through them later. I have plans and no one is going to screw them up." She got a dolly from the supply room, they loaded all the boxes on it then went to the elevator. As they waited for the doors to open, she saw the other Journalist that had been in the darkroom when she was developing her pictures. She watched his eyes pop wide when he saw Savage, before he could approach them. She pulled Savage down for a hungry kiss and didn't release her until she heard a loud thud. "Think I rubbed it in enough?" Savage was trying to catch her breath and was lost as to what Dash was saying.

"Huh?"

Dash turned her head to show her the man lying sprawled out in the hallway. "Did I rub it in enough?"

"I'd say so." She gave her a quick kiss and pushed the dolly into the elevator. "Come on little Savage, we have something to finish."

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The noise that came from their motel room drove out the residents on either side from their rooms. The room was a disaster area, boxes lay on their sides spewing their contents, leather garments lay around the room and two bodies tangled together with the sheets lay on the floor next to the bed. Exhausted and sated, Savage lay on her back with Dash draped across her, their loud snores kept the hum of the vibrator that was still in Dash's hand company.

The ringing of the telephone went un-noticed by the pounding on the door didn't. Savage eased out from under her lover and yanked the door open with a deep growl of

"WHAT?" She snarled at the motel manager who was standing with his hand raised to pound on the door.

"I've had complaints from other rooms that you have an animal in your room, pets are not allowed." His eyes widened and he took a step back when she bared her teeth and barked at him.

"Solve your animal problem?" She asked with a deep growling voice.

"Uhhmm yeah it does." He stood there in shock after the door was slammed in his face. "Werewolves in my motel, what's next?" He slowly made his way back to the office.

Savage picked Dash up and placed her in the bed then crawled in next to her, she spooned against her back and fell asleep with her face buried against the back of her neck.

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The ride back to Hampshire County was different than the trip to Washington, Savage played major channel surfer with the radio. After having her hand slapped a few times, she settled on a country station and annoyed the Hell out of Dash by singing along with an exaggerated twang.

Dash glanced sideways at her bouncing lover. "Can I ask you a question?"

"Depends on what you're asking if I answer."

"OK, is the reason you don't ride in cars because you keep getting thrown out at a high rate of speed?"

Her eyes grew huge and her mouth dropped open. "Did grandma tell you that? I can't believe she told you. My ass was sore for a week after rolling into that ditch."

"She threw you out of the car?"

"Yep, she didn't like me making fun of that guy from CCR. He says burning funny." She shrugged her shoulders and mimicked her most hated word repeatedly. That was until she noticed that Dash had took their speed up to 80mph and started to laugh like a lunatic.

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Dash pulled into a spot in front of grandma's and looked over at Savage. "It's time to break the news to grandma." She got out of her truck and waited for her lover. They looked towards the front door when grandma stepped out and grabbed her chest.

"Ohh Gods my little baby was in a moving vehicle!" She came towards them and looked Savage over. "No bruises so that means Dash didn't throw you out."

She made Savage jump by grabbing her ass. "I was close that's for sure, damn word is stuck in my head now."

"So where did you guys go, do anything naughty?" Grandma wiggled her gray brows.

Savage grinned like a little kid. "We went to Washington, made John piss himself, Bob worshipped me by dropping to his knees, cleared the motel out, scared the manager and almost got thrown out of the truck." She turned to Dash and winked. "Did I miss anything?"

"Nope that just about covers it." She shook her head and took Savage by her hand. "Won't ever be able to go back to that motel." She mumbled under her breath.

"And what went on in the motel?" Grandma asked as she went back to the house.

"Place was attacked by werewolves." Savage mumbled.

Grandma stopped turned and raised a finger at her granddaughter. "You and your howling, I

knew you it would get in trouble one day. Now come on you two I made double chocolate fudge cake."

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Savage was licking her plate and getting stares from Dash. " Grandma do you believe in Alien abductions?" Dash pointed to Savage. "If not, there's your proof."

"I've noticed something different about her, especially her being somewhat clothed except that it doesn't cover the bite marks on her back. Would there have been an animal attack in that motel room?" Dash blushed and hid her face behind her coffee cup. "Uhh huh, just what I thought." She bent over and kissed the top of Savage's head. "About damn time, but then I know all about you two from Tommie the village slut puppy."

"That blabber mouth!" Savage pulled the cake pan over to her and took another piece. "He's a pervert, stood there and watched."

"And I thought it was bad when he lost his virginity at fifteen, those were details I didn't want to hear." She shivered and rubbed her arms. "It's worse when his sisters a 35 year-old virgin."

Dash snickered and yelped when Savage kicked her under the table. "Well it solves one problem, now we know how really old you are."

Grandma ignored the heated look her granddaughter gave her. "So Dash are you here to stay?"

"Most defiantly, think this area can handle two Capon Savages?"

"Just keep on howling and you won't ever have to worry about anyone ending up in the haven."

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The sound of tapping brought Dash from a deep sleep, she searched the bed but found only a cold spot next to her where Savage had been. Opening one eye, she searched the room until she saw the glow of an oil lamp coming from the kitchen along with the tapping noise. Crawling from bed, she stumbled towards the kitchen and saw her lover typing away on an old Selectric typewriter. Resting her chin on a broad shoulder, she watched long fingers type at a hundred miles an hour.

"What are you writing baby?" She grumbled close to Savage's ear.

"My muse is back." She turned her head and kissed Dash's cheek. "I had to get this written before I lost the details."

"Is it the continuation of the eternal love affair my little Warrior Bard?"

"Yep and hopefully my re-entry into the literary world." She stopped typing and pulled Dash

onto her lap. "You've always been my muse."

"Do we get to be on the covers?"

"Maybe under the covers." She brought their lips together in a soft kiss.

"I like that idea better." She wrapped her arms around her lover's neck and was carried back to their bed. While they lay snuggled against each other, Dash ran her fingers across the warm skin of her lover's stomach and sighed. "Savage, tomorrow can you help me with something that's been terrorizing me for years?"

"Anything you want it's yours."

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They stood upon the Capon Bridge, Savage was leaning on the railing looking down to the water while Dash stood in the center of the bridge and tried to peer over the railing.

"How far down is it to the water?"

"Don't really know, I guess around a hundred feet or so." She turned and motioned for Dash to come closer. "Come here baby I won't let you fall, I promise." With hesitant steps, Dash walked into her lover's open arms. "Are you sure about this?"

"Not really but I have to get over it, if I do then maybe that dream will go away."

"The one with the big hole of fire?"

"Yep, takes years of my life span every time I go through it. Not to mention I can't handle standing on a footstool."

Savage released Dash from her hold, stepped over the railing and stood on the other side. Taking Dash's hand, she pulled her closer and kissed her tenderly. "Close your eyes and I'll help you over."

"Savage what happens if..." She was silenced with a finger.

"Nothing will happen, do you trust me?"

"With my life." Dash closed her eyes and felt herself lifted over the railing, then strong arms wrapping her in a tight hug. "Kiss me Dash." When their lips came together in a deep kiss, Savage stepped backwards off the bridge and they plunged downward until they hit the water below. Still kissing, she kicked them to the surface. When they came apart, Dash looked around them and saw nothing but water.

"We jumped?"



"Yep."

"Uuhhmm...something just swam up under my breechcloth."

Savage gave her an evil grin. "Don't worry, it's just the little fishes."

"Another Savage mystery solved."

The new novel that Savage wrote in record time shot to the number one spot on the best sellers list. She swore it was the picture that Dash had taken of the Capon Savage standing in the shadow of the trees at the river's edge that caught a reader's attention and imagination. Dash knew better than that, it was the way her lover could weave a tale of the heart and make you feel it deep in your soul that sold her books. Dash made more progress with herself by delving deeper into her lover's dreams of the past, in return, she pulled a kicking and screaming Savage into the future. That was until she discovered the games on the Dash's laptop.

The End

Capon's Savage

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