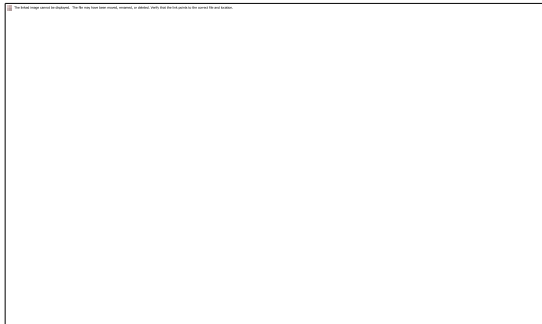
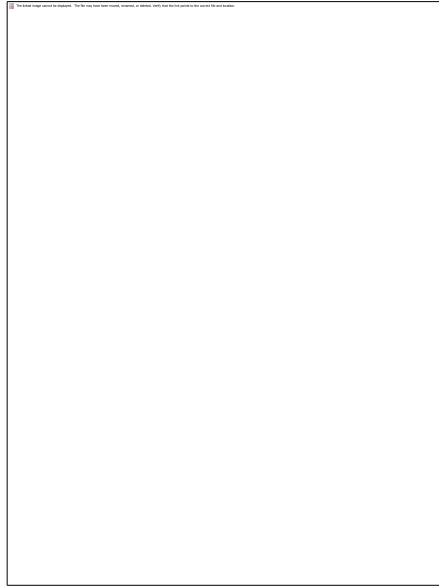


~ Class Separation ~

by Larisa



Disclaimer: Yada yada yada, ya'll know this stuff.
Sex: Duh!

Bad language, violence and all the other stuff that I
can't remember right now, if ya ain't old enough, go
the Hell away I hate kids!

Class Separation
Larisa

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June 1982 Shenandoah Junction WV, the night was humid with the scent of rain hanging on the air. It was the night of the reception for the graduating class from the nearby High School, cars raced up and down the road, kids screamed and yelled to each other. They were all heading to the Cliff Side Hotel a few miles away in Charlestown for their reception, a night where they would have freedom for the first time in their young lives. The outdoor swimming pool at the Hotel was crowded with the teenagers, beer and liquor flowed through their veins. It may have been illegal but no one could control what slipped into a can of pop or what he or she had hidden in the rooms. The hotel lobby was filled with the kids making adults hide in the bar area or stay in their rooms, it was one time out of the year when no one was safe. Yells reverberated off the walls in

the hallways, kids ran up and down them as if they were still in kindergarten instead of young adults.

Even the parking lot was an unsafe place if you were coming in, trucks and cars had shaving cream on them and anything else that could destroy a cars paint job or piss the owner off. The far corner was where all the popular kids had grouped together to celebrate their newfound freedom. It was no different from any weekend party or parking lot after a football or basketball game. As in any school, there were the types. Jocks, cheerleaders, geeks, brains and then the rich kids, which were gathered here. They passed expensive bottles of liquor around, smoked foreign cigarettes and bragged about their cars and their hood ornament girlfriends. The most popular were the home coming King Davis Ferguson and Queen Finnegan Draper, Davis was your all-American boy, tall muscular with blonde wavy hair and blue eyes. Finnegan could be his sister, except with her sea green eyes, short stature and long straight blonde hair. When she laughed, it went straight to her eyes and made them sparkle. She took the bottle of offered wine and took a long drink, coughing, she handed it back and wiped her mouth.

"Davis, that stuff is horrible!"

"For a hundred bucks a bottle it better not be, you're just used to that cheap shit." The smile disappeared from her face, she hated when he brought up the fact that she came from a blue-collar family and didn't have what the others did. She had the clothes that they did but hers came from her cousins or the second hand store in a nearby town. Her beauty is what made her popular and the most sought after girl, not all the kids she hung out with were like Davis. He acted arrogant around their friends but was a different person while they were alone, that's where she wished they were at that moment, alone. When with friends, he would do stupid things to make him look bigger than life and that's what she was afraid would happen that night.

"Hurry up Timmy, we have to get back in there and get those tables cleared off for ma." Eighteen year-old Merci Macgregor was six feet tall and too thin for her height, she walked with stooped shoulders and very rarely made eye contact with any one except her much smaller brother Timmy, their mother and a few others. Even though they were twins, Timmy had never really grown like his sister. He was only five feet three inches tall and was a few pounds shy of a hundred pounds. His physical size was never a concern, because his heart was of a giant. Like their mother, he was always quick to smile or laugh. Merci was the opposite, brooding and antisocial. Because of her height, she was an outcast. While in school, the other kids teased her to the point where, she would hide in the back of the classroom to avoid the others. Each day they picked on her for something different, if not her ill-fitting clothes, then for where she lived. Their ma worked two jobs to put food on the table and pay bills, both Timmy and Merci helped with the money they made bussing tables. But it never seemed to be enough, the house they lived in belonged to the River Quarry company that had gone out of business years before. The row of shacks as that is what they looked like, were falling down and should have been condemned years ago. Were the homes of a dozen families that at one time had worked the quarry until it closed. The kids that lived there were not accepted in the nearby schools, strictly, because of where they lived. They were called tunnel rats and other names that were good descriptions of

what grew on the tunnel walls. Timmy laughed when the kids called him names, Merci stewed until her temper exploded in volcanic proportions. The quarry walls took quite a few beatings from her and the sledgehammer she kept down in the pit.

"Hey Uncle Greg would you grab the door for us?" She asked the cook and gave him a small smile and a nod of her dark head.

"Sure thing Merc, I'll block it so you and Timmy can get back in." The tall thickly built man held the door for them and slide a broom handle in the crack to keep the door from locking behind them. He could never figure out why the management insisted on having the damn thing locked. They all made hourly trips to the dumpster and if you forgot to block the door, then you either walked all the way around or pounded on it until some one opened it for you. He watched the twins carry the garbage bags towards the dumpster and then went back over to where he was supervising a new cook.

Davis squinted into the night and saw movement by the dumpsters; he grinned, reached into his designer jeans and pulled out a twenty-dollar bill. "Finnegan, would you go to the gift shop and get me a couple of packs of gum and get some change for the Coke machine." He gave her a dazzling smile that showed what years of braces and tooth whitener's could do if you had the money.

"Is that all you want," She stuck the money in the pocket of her Jordache jeans and climbed down off the hood of his 440 GTO. "No Marlboro's or anything like that?" She rolled her eyes when he gave her a shooing motion and headed into the Hotel lobby.

"Hey guys, looks like we have two tunnel rats over by the dumpsters. I never told them they could be here, so what do you say we go give them the bad news?" He pulled a baseball bat from the backseat, tossed it to one of his friends and smacked the wine bottle on the curb breaking it off at the bottom. "Time to have some fun and put them back in their place, in the tunnels." They jogged over to the dumpsters; one pulled the broom from the door so that it closed. The other two along with Davis closely circled Timmy and Merc by the dumpster keeping them from escaping. "Look what we have here, it's the clone kids." He laughed and waved the bottle around in front of Merc. "I don't remember giving the two of you permission to be here?"

"Go fuck yourself Davis," Merc growled. "Better yet, go fuck your friends and leave us alone." She pushed Timmy behind her hoping to shield him from the jocks. "Get out of our way Davis; we're not bothering any of you."

"You bother me simply because you live!" He yelled and lashed out with the bottle towards her, when she yelled and fell backwards into her brother, he lashed out again. "Just don't stand there get them!" He yelled at his friends and swung the bottle at her face. There was nothing Merc could do; her vision was blurry from blood running into her eyes. She tried to cover Timmy as best she could but knew that he was being hurt, she yelled when something cracked against her ribs and fell to the ground. She tried to get back up when Timmy screamed her name and fell again when a burning sensation seared her from shoulder to hip. She heard feet running away

and lifted her head to see Timmy curled in a fetal position; she crawled over to him and touched his shoulder.

"Timmy, can you hear me?" She choked and felt blood flow from her mouth.

"Get ma, Merc, get ma." Was all that he said before he fell silent, she crawled to the kitchen door and tried to push it open. She used her palm and pounded on the door until her hand hurt, her pounding went unanswered. She pulled herself up, used the toe of her shoe, and kicked until the door swung inward. She looked up and fell into Greg's arms.

"Timmy..." Was all that she said before passing out.

"Ohh shit..." Greg said and carried her into the kitchen. "Call an ambulance and go get Marina, NOW!" He yelled to one of the cooks and placed Merc on one of the preparation tables. "Who would do something like this?" He pulled the towel from his pocket, brushed her long dark hair back from her bloody face and saw the gash that ran from the corner of her dark left eyebrow across her high cheekbone to her chin. He pressed the towel to her face to staunch the blood and then looked to see the front of his white shirt covered in her blood. "Ohh God, I hope they hurry." He mumbled to himself.

Finnegan came out of the front doors of the hotel and saw Davis pulling up towards her, she didn't question this but just climbed in and held on as he tore from the parking lot. Before they hit the exit, an ambulance pulled in and went to the back where they had been. "I wonder what happened that they're here," She looked over the seat and saw that it had stopped by the kitchen door. "Maybe we should stay and see if it's anyone we know?"

"Ohh who cares, probably some idiot drank too much and passed out in the dinning area." He floored the gas pedal, peeled rubber around the corner and tore off towards Maryland.

"Why are we going to Maryland, my parent's think I'm at the Hotel?"

"Grow up Finnegan, you're eighteen, they can't tell you what to do anymore." He pushed the pedal to the floor and watched the speedometer hit red; he wanted to be as far away as possible from the hotel. He knew that the police would show up and start asking questions, they would come up empty because no one would say a word about what they had done. Finnegan knew better than to question him further, he would loose his temper and then she would end up walking home after he threw her from his car.

Marina sat between her children's hospital beds and waited for them to wake up, she had left in the ambulance and spent the last seven hours pacing the floor and worrying. She had spoken to numerous police officers, detectives and had not heard anything since then. She looked towards the door when she heard a throat being cleared and nodded her head at Greg. He had driven

behind the ambulance and been her only support through the ordeal of both Timmy and Merci going through surgery.

"How are they?" He asked and came to stand beside his sister.

"Still nothing," She looked up with tear-filled blue eyes and tried not to sob. "Why would someone do this to my babies?"

"I don't know Marina," He crouched down beside her chair and took her hands in his. "I was right there in the kitchen but I didn't hear anything until Merc kicked the door. If I had known..." He dropped his head and felt his tears drip from his jaw. "I would have done something," He lifted his head to look at his only niece and barely recognized her beneath all the bandages. "I put the broom in the door like we always do, someone pulled it out."

"Greg, I'm not blaming you for this. I know that you always prop the door with the broomstick, we have to wait for one of them to wake up before we know who did this." He nodded his head but it still didn't take away his guilt, Timmy and Merc were like his own children. He had helped raise them when their father had left and would do what ever he could for them and his sister.

"How bad is Timmy, the doctor had to rush off before he could tell me?"

"Both of his legs were badly broken, he has pins, screws and metal plates holding the bones together and his shattered elbow is a hit and miss." She wiped her eyes and looked over to her sleeping son. "He may not be able to walk...the bones..." She broke down and fell in to her brother's arms.

"I'll kill who ever did this to them, I swear to God I will."

"Ma...where's Timmy?" Merc's raspy voice came to them and then a low moan when she tried to turn her head. Marina and Greg looked over to her and tried to smile but failed.

"He's right here Merc, he's OK." She opened the eye that wasn't bandaged and tried to see beside her.

"Its blurry ma, I can't see." She blinked a few times and tried to focus her pale blue eye.

"That's just some stuff they put in your eye, it'll go away." She laid a hand on her daughters forearm and looked at her swollen features. "Who did this Merci?"

"Davis Ferguson and his friends." With the last word drifting from her swollen lips, she fell back to sleep.

August 2003 State Police Barracks Kearneysville WV, the day was humid with the temperatures

in the high 90's. State Troopers crawled from their cruisers and winced with the oven like temperatures, their dark green shirts became drenched long before they could get into the air-conditioned barracks. One person was thankful that they didn't have to go outside and suffer like the lower ranks and that was First Sergeant Macgregor. She sat back at her desk and put her feet in the center of her blotter, she had been watching the clock for it to hit three o'clock so she could go home for the day. She looked across the squad room and groaned when her Major came towards her office. He only came around when he needed her to send out one of her troopers or have her do something herself. She didn't mind doing extra, but the next two days she had off and planed on spending them with her ma and brother.

"First Sergeant Macgregor," She knew she was in trouble when he used her rank and last name. "I have a problem," He dropped down into the chair across from her desk and held her pale blue eyes. "We have a woman over at the hospital that needs guarded, I've called the police station and they don't have anyone. I've tried to pull one of our troopers to do it and we're short handed..."

"What exactly do you want me to do if we don't have anyone to guard this woman, which brings about the question as to why we're guarding her in the first place?"

"It's simple, I need a female trooper to guard her and the crime fell in our jurisdiction." She narrowed her eyes at him and dropped her feet to the floor.

"What about hospital security, I know they've got a female over there?"

"A rent a cop won't due, she's a witness to a murder and I'm not about to put her life in the hands of someone who can't even carry a weapon. It's just for tonight until Trooper Savoy can take over in the morning."

"Where's Savoy that she can't go in now?"

"She's on her way to Morgantown with a prisoner, by the time she gets back..."

"It'll be too late," She ran her hands down her face and nodded her head. "For tonight only, I'm spending the weekend with my ma and Timmy."

"Thanks Merc, I really appreciate this. We really need her testifying in court to put this guy away, that is if we can catch him."

"Who exactly are we trying to catch and why is she in the hospital?"

"Breton Mallory, he shot and killed the shop teacher over at the High School. Our witness heard the shot and walked in on the crime; he beat her with a .357 and left her lying unconscious on the floor."

"And how do we know that Mallory is the one who did it?"

"He was stupid enough to leave his .357 behind, we ran the fingerprints." She stood up from her desk, grabbed her Smokey hat and pulled it low over her eyes.

"And?"

"We can't find him; we checked his house and any where else he's known to hang out. There's an APB out on him and his car but you know how that goes."

"Yeah, they say we need more troopers and then they cut the budget so we can't hire anymore. What are the chances that he'll show up at the hospital and what rooms this woman in?"

"That's hard to say, I just want to be safe then have two corpses on our hands. She's in the ICU right now; you'll have to check once you get over there." She nodded her head and walked towards her office door.

"You know you owe me right, you piss ma off and she'll come hunting?" He ducked his head and grinned.

"I know all about ma's temper, remember, she tanned my ass plenty of times when we were younger." She gave her cousin a crooked grin and headed for the barracks door. The second she walked out the door, her breath stopped. It was like when you open an oven door and the heat pours out at you, she wiped sweat from her face and jogged over to her cruiser. The sooner she had the AC on the better; she started her car and flipped the AC on high. What came out was air hot enough to make pop corn; she hit the window buttons and swore. "Damn heat, I feel like I'm in the steam room at the gym."

A nurse stood at the side of the woman's bed, checked her vitals, and then turned when the doctor came in. She handed him the chart and stepped out of his way. "She's stable and she came around for a few minutes and then went back to sleep."

"Good, any news on relatives or next of kin?"

"Nothing yet, the Major from the State Troopers called. He has someone coming over to stand guard at her door," She took the chart from the doctor's hand and placed it back on the foot of the bed.

"Why does she have to be guarded, I thought this was a simple assault case?"

"From what I heard in the cafeteria, the guy who did it is a cop killer." He stopped inside the door and looked back to his patient. "The guy has a thing for male cops; he likes to shoot them on sight."

"And this guy is running around loose!" He flinched and looked down to make sure that his outburst hadn't disturbed the patient. "Why don't they put this guy away?" The tall doctor ran a

hand through his grey hair and shrugged his shoulders with his hands out to the sides in a questioning manner=\.

"From what I hear, they can never catch him. I feel sorry for the trooper who has to stand guard; he's a huge target for this maniac along with the rest of us." She saw him shiver and felt bad with having to tell him the information but knew that he needed to know.

"Just what are we supposed to do, paint targets on our backs?" He said to her patient and left the room.

Merc climbed out of her cruiser, adjusted her Sam Brown belt and Smokey hat. Looking out over the parking lot, she checked to make sure that the blue Plymouth Skylark that Mallory drove wasn't there. That was the last thing she needed was a shoot out at the hospital. Grabbing her baton and dropping in into its holder over her left hip, she closed the door and headed up to the ER doors. She held back a grin when people stopped what they were doing to stare at her, she knew it was mostly the uniform that brought the looks but she didn't care. She walked up to the information desk and waited for one or the elderly women to come towards her. "I'm here to see a patient that was brought in this morning; I wasn't given her name or anything. She was involved in the shooting over at the school..."

"Ohh you mean the History teacher let me check for you." She went over to the computer and started typing a couple hundred words a minute. "Nice lady she is, my grand kids had her last year for American History. I don't know why anyone one would want to her that little thing?" She wrote down the information on a piece of paper and handed it to Merc. "That's her room number and her doctor; they just moved her an hour ago."

"Thank you ma'am, have a nice day." She read the room number and headed over to the elevator, sticking the paper in her shirt pocket; she hit the button and grinned when the doors opened. Inside were a couple of punks that plastered themselves up against the wall and slid past her, she loved when that happened. When the door opened on the second floor, she stepped out and looked at the signs before heading down the hall to the room she needed. Stopping outside of the closed door, she dropped her head down to peer through the window and then pushed the door open. Once in the room, she looked down at the bandage-covered face and felt her blood run cold. It took her back when she and Timmy had spent weeks in the hospital and then the years of surgeries and physical therapy for her smaller brother. She didn't know the full medical history here but seeing that the brunt of the injuries were of the face and head were enough. She closed the door and grabbed the medical chart from where it hung; she flipped it open and scanned for the woman's name. Her hands started to shake, heart slammed in her chest and then her teeth clenched at the name in front of her. "Son of a fucking bitch." She mumbled and walked from the room to stand in the hallway. "I'll kill that son of a bitch; Junior knew who she was that's why he didn't tell me." She crossed her arms over her chest and stared to the other wall.

"Aunt Marina, it's Junior, I wanted to warn you that Merc's gonna be pissed off when she comes to see you." He played with a pen on his desk and listened to his aunt laugh hysterically. "Did you hear about the woman who was attacked at the High school, well...Merc's on guard duty outside her room."

"And she's gonna be pissed off about that?"

"No, I didn't tell her who it was because I knew she would have said no and then beat the shit outta me. It's Finnegan Draper..."

"You had better call all your troopers in to protect you; she's going to rip you apart. How could you do that Junior?"

"I had no choice; I couldn't send a male trooper over because if the man who did it shows up he'll shot him on the spot."

"Why didn't you tell me it was that damn Mallory and when the Hell are you guys gonna blow his ass away?"

"Aunt M, you know we can't do that. We'd be no better than him and the fact that we can never find him."

"Bullshit Junior G, the guy is armed and dangerous, just shoot the fucker!"

"Right now I'm more worried about what Merc's gonna do, she may shoot Finnegan."

"Don't worry about that brooding kid of mine; she'll control her itchy trigger finger. I'll have a talk with her when I see her tomorrow, now get back to work or what ever it was you were doing." She hung up the phone and left Junior sitting at his desk with a worried expression.

"I hope she doesn't shoot her, that's all I need on top of everything else."

A nurse came down the hallway and stopped outside Finnegan's door; she looked up into the shadow of the Smokey hat and felt shivers run down her spine. The first thing that went through her mind was the word intimidating; she pointed at the door and said in a small voice. "I need to check on Miss Draper." Merc nodded her head and stepped out of the way. "Thank you officer, I'll just be a minute."

"No problem, take your time." The nurse stopped and looked up at her.

"I...never mind." She shook her head and went into the room; she had never seen a woman so tall before. Going over to Finnegan's bed, she checked her IV and then the chart to see when the bed had been changed the last time. "Figures, I come on duty and get stuck changing a bed already. She looked down at all the IV lines running and then the left leg in a splint, she knew

that there was no way that she could roll the small woman onto her side and get the bed changed as they normally did. Going to the door, she cleared her throat. "Could you help me for a minute, I need to change her bed and I can't..."

"It's OK, I saw her splint and the IV's earlier. What do you want me to do?"

"If you could hold her while I strip and remake that bed that would save me time of having to go get help." Merc followed her into the room and stopped behind her, she waited until she had the IV monitor unplugged from the wall and had moved to the other side of the bed. "Ready when you are, if you could just pick her up and take a step back." Merc stepped forward and carefully lifted Finnegan from the bed; she cradled her in her arms taking care not pull on the IV's. She stepped back and looked down into the bruised and swollen portion of face that she could see. "I really appreciate this," The nurse said and hurried to pull the old sheets off and then get clean ones from the small closet. "I'll be just another minute with this." She quickly made the bed and then stepped out of Merc's way. "OK, you can put her in bed and I'll hook everything back up."

"I can do that, you look like you're in a rush."

"We're short handed tonight, so I have another nurse's patients on top of mine." She laid a hand on Merc's upper arm and gave her a smile. "Thank you again, I'll be by later." Merc laid Finnegan down and then plugged the IV monitor back into the wall; she pulled the sheet and thin blanket up after placing the pillow back beneath her knee. When she looked down at her, all she could think about how the woman had acted years ago. She dropped down into the chair beside the bed and watched her sleep.

August 1982

Merc walked with her mother into the police station, she looked up from her slouched over position into the desk sergeants dark eyes and back to the floor. "I'm Marina Macgregor; I'm here to see Detective Rawlings."

"Down the hallway, first door on the left." He mumbled and went back to filling papers.

"Nice guy, no wonder he's stuck on a desk." Marina mumbled on their way down the hallway. "Now remember to tell him as much as you can, I know you've been through this thousands of times..."

"And no ones done a damn thing about it, why do we bother ma. I mean it's been how long and they still haven't done anything?"

"I know Merc but maybe this guy will he didn't sound like the kind to let a bunch of rich people walk all over him or buy him off."

"And I'm competing in the Miss West Virginia contest." She looked down into her mother's pale

blue eyes and held them. "Ma, they don't give a shit we night as well face it now then drag this out for months or years." She followed her ma into the office and rolled her eyes as soon as she saw the detective, he weighed in at over three hundred pounds and couldn't chase down a rolling donut. "Fucking...waste of ti...ooowwww."

"Stop it Merci or I'll kick your ass and wash your mouth out when we get home." They stepped up to his desk and waited for him to put down the foot long Subway sandwich. "We're the Macgregor's; you left a message for us to come in?"

"Yeah, my Captain is closing your case. He said we don't have enough to go on."

"What the fuck buddy!" Merc leaned down over his desk and growled. "Both me and my brother gave you people names and you say you don't have enough?" She snapped her fingers in front of his face and threw her hand in the air. "See that ma, another one bought and paid for, let's get out of here." She walked from the office and went out the front door.

"I'm sorry; it's just that it's taken a lot out of her. She's angry over all of this and no one gives a damn because we're poor, I know and so do you that if it had been the other way around and my kids had sliced Ferguson up and shattered his arm and legs, they'd both be in jail right now." She turned, stopped in the doorway and turned back to him. "Who knew that we had our very own Kennedy family right here in Jefferson County." She found Merc sitting on the steps watching ants run in a line across the sidewalk, she sat down beside her and draped an arm over her thin shoulders. "I'm sorry Merc; I should have listened to ya. Damn cock suckers will get there's one day, it all comes full circle. Each one of them that was involved or knows what happened and is hiding the truth will pay somehow during their lifetime."

"I just wish they would pay sooner, it's not fair ma." She wiped at her eyes and leaned into her ma's side. "It's just not fair."

"I know baby, maybe the rich assholes will get caught embezzling money or cheating on their taxes." She kissed her daughters temple and brushed her dark hair back from her face. "Let's stop and get a pizza, I know Timmy's starving to death." They stood up and started down the sidewalk; Merc froze and looked at a trooper getting out of his car in front of the courthouse.

"That's what I want to be Ma, when I turn 21, I wanna be a State Trooper." She watched as he walked with a pride that none of the other police agencies seemed to have, the way his Smokey hat dropped low over his eyes and the way his uniform was pressed and stood out.

"Good, then you can fix my speeding tickets."

"And give hundreds of tickets to that lying bitch Finnegan Draper."

Present time.

Merc pulled her hat off, ran her finger's through her hair and placed her hat back on. She looked over and kept her eyes on Finnegan's face as she slept. "Why did you lie for him all those years ago, you kept him from paying for what he did?" She was about to say more when Finnegan moaned and tried to roll over in the bed, she reached out a long fingered calloused hand and placed it on her arm. "Relax, you're safe, no ones gonna hurt you." Finnegan took a deep breath and lay still. "Here I am protecting the one person who could have changed so many things if she hadn't lied. She sat back in her chair and then looked up when the door opened; she shook her head and grinned when her ma walked in carrying a bag from Wendy's and a chocolate frosty.

"I knew you'd be hungry by now and that there's no way in Hell that you would eat what they have here." She handed her the bag and frosty before taking a seat in the other chair.

"I guess Junior G called you and told you where I was?"

"Of course he did, he didn't want on my shit list. You doing OK with this?"

"Yeah, it's just part of my job. You know, protecting the innocent and upholding the law." She gave her ma a grin and pulled one of three triple hamburgers from the bag. "What's Timmy doing?"

"His usual, he's got computer parts all over his room and those damn spaceman goggles on. He said he's making a system that will crack every code known to alien life forms."

"I just bet the FBI will love that, did he break that other code for them?"

"In record time, he scares me when he does that. I'm just glad he's doing it legally and leaves other peoples bank accounts alone."

"I just wish he'd tell me when he's moving my money around, I'm lucky I don't have any bills that I have to write checks out for."

"What did he do this time?"

"Ohh he took five hundred bucks out of my checking account and bought stocks in some PC company, a week later, he had tripled the amount of money when he sold them."

"Probably the company that he buys all that stuff from, you probably got what he spent there in the last week." She looked over to Finnegan and sighed, she reminded her of Merc when she was in the hospital. "She looks so small and uncomfortable, why would Mallory shoot the shop teacher and then pistol whip her?"

"No idea ma," She pulled out another hamburger and finished off her fries. "I don't know who the investigating trooper is or why Mallory went after the teacher. I know Finnegan busted in on him, I'm just surprised that he didn't shoot her as well."

"So how long are you supposed to stay here, do you want me to get you anything?"

"Until Savoy comes over in the morning, she's up in Morgantown with a prisoner."

"That's not right, you're pulling over 24 hours and then Savoy will come in and do the same thing. What the Hell is wrong with this picture?"

"Men suck?" Her ma chuckled and nodded her head.

"Besides that, even hair ball Timmy sucks. His damn room looks like a bomb went off in it; maybe you can drag him over here and plop him down in front of the door with his PC parts. If anyone tried to get past him, they'd die of old age before they got past the land mines of pieces and parts." Merc raised a dark eyebrow at her ma and finished chewing.

"He still hasn't gotten his hair cut? You want me to bring over my clippers and shave his head?"

"I wish you would, he looks like Ozzy Osborne. Hair all hanging down over his eyes and sticking up in the back from where his goggle strap rubs, it looks like a damn brillo pad back there."

"I'll bring them over tomorrow, knowing him; he won't even notice I'm shaving his head if he's playing with one of his servers." She looked over to Finnegan when she heard a whimper and saw her hand search the bed beside her, she reached out and squeezed her hand and then went back to eating. Ma watched amazed that Merc would do something like that to the one person who could have changed things so long ago; she hoped that maybe there was a chance for her daughter to get rid of all her anger and move on.

"I'm gonna head home and kick your brother and make him start a load of laundry since I can't get to the damn washer because of his mess."

"OK and thanks for supper ma, I'll see you two in the afternoon. After I get some sleep and work out." Her ma gave her a quick hug and kissed her cheek before leaving the room.

"I know its hard sitting here with her but I know you won't let anything happen to her." Merc looked over to the small fragile looking woman and nodded her head.

"Nope, I'll do my job no matter who it is." After her ma left, she sat for a few minutes just watching Finnegan sleep and then got up to take her spot outside the door.

Finnegan opened her one eye as much as she could and looked around at her strange surroundings, she tried to lift her left leg and found it heavy and awkward. She tried to sit up and felt like a sledgehammer had smacked right between the eyes, moaning, she settled her head back into the pillow. A few seconds later when the pain was back to a low throb, she ran her right hand across her bandaged face and panicked. She didn't know what had happened to her and couldn't remember anything past opening the door to the workshop at the high school. Then

it hit her, she remembered running to the shop after hearing what sounded like a gunshot and then immense pain when something had hit her in her face. Reaching down on the arm rails of the bed, she found a few buttons and pressed all of them until she heard a strange voice answer her. "Where am I...I mean I know I'm...?"

"I'll be right there to explain everything to you." The voice said and then clicked off the intercom. Finnegan lay quiet for a few minutes and then started pounding on the button and was ready to scream when the door opened. She turned her head and saw the huge trooper holding the door open for the nurse.

"Why is there a trooper outside my door?"

"For your protection, the man who attacked you is still out there and they want to make sure that you're safe. Now what can I do for you?" The nurse asked and started checking her vitals and fixing the bed so, that Finnegan was sitting up a little.

"Why is my face all bandaged...how bad is it?"

"From what your doctor has in your chart, your left cheekbone is broken, a severe concussion, cuts and lacerations to the face and scalp and two molars were knocked out on the left side." She knew she had said too much when Finnegan became silent and covered her face with her hands. "It's not as bad as you think and the scars can be fixed by a plastic surgeon and they are no where as bad as the trooper's out in the hallway." Finnegan waved a hand and mumbled from under her hand.

"I just want to sleep now, thank you." She waited until she heard the door close before removing her hand, she didn't know who the nurse was but she didn't hold back anything. Nothing like being told that your face looks like a chainsaw fell on it but don't worry about it. Not that she really cared about her looks right now, she was happy to be alive.

"How long have you been a nurse?" Merc asked when she came out into the hallway.

"Going on six years why?"

"Because you suck at it," She removed her Smokey hat and peered down into the nurses now terrified eyes. "You never tell a patient that something can be fixed when you haven't the slightest idea how bad the injury is. You see my face, I was told the same thing that you just told Finnegan and guess what, they couldn't do a damn thing about it." She would have said more but the nurse dropped her head and went back down the hallway to check on another patient.

What made Merc blink and shake her head was that she had sort of stuck up for Finnegan, at first she had hoped that her face was as bad or worse than her own is and then changed her mind. She didn't want anyone to have to live with what she did while growing up and even now at times. Even the guys she worked with still looked at her when they thought she wasn't paying attention.

She took a step back towards the door and listened for any noises coming from within. She expected to hear a whimper come from Finnegan but heard nothing at all, she placed a hand on the door handle and cracked it open a little. What she saw was something from her past; her ma had sat and stared back at her the same way that Finnegan was now staring at the wall. A corner of her lip lifted in a grin when she had snapped out of her trance to see her ma right across from her. She could still hear her saying that she was getting ready to get a spray bottle to keep her eyes from drying out. When Finnegan started to turn her head, she closed the door softly, looked at her watch and groaned. "It's gonna be a long ass night standing here." She turned and opened the door softly, snuck in and grabbed one of the chairs.

"You don't have to be quiet, I'm not asleep."

"Sorry ma'am, I didn't want to disturb you." She went back out into the hallway, placed the chair in front of the door and sat down. Finnegan watched and tried to get a better look at the trooper, she was confused. The trooper's voice did not match the body, it was a deep rich voice but very female. Finnegan wasn't expecting that at all. "Excuse me!" She yelled she wanted to see if it was in fact a female and not a big man with a weird voice. Kind of like how Mike Tyson was, huge man with a wimp voice. "Excuse me Trooper!" She heard the door open but couldn't tell because the Smokey hat obscured her already limitless sight. "Could you get me some water; I don't want that nurse coming back in here."

"Sure, I'll be back in a minute."

"Wait...what's your name?"

"First Sergeant Macgregor." She let the door close and wondered if Finnegan would remember who she was; it had been years since she had seen the other woman. Strange since they lived in the same area but as in the past, they traveled in different circles.

"Macgregor, why does that name sound so familiar?" Finnegan asked herself and raised the bed so that she was sitting up higher. "It's probably like everyone else in this area, all related by marriage or come from a huge family." She ran her fingers over the bandages and wished that she could see how bad she looked, then again, it might be best not knowing. When the door opened, she looked over and watched Trooper Macgregor sit the pitcher on the rolling table and then hand her a glass with a straw in it. "Thanks, the service in this place sucks."

"As well as the help, and just wait until they bring you green jello for every meal." Finnegan drank half the water and set the cup back on the tray, she turned her head and tried to see the troopers face.

"Just what I need, a jello diet, can I ask you a question?" Merc hated questions; she was used to being the one asking them not answering.

"Sure, I'll answer if I can."

"Do you ever take your hat off; I thought that it was standard procedure when you're inside or something like that?"

"I usually do but I really don't have any place to put it here." She turned to leave and heard Finnegan call out her name.

"Thanks for getting me the water; will you be here all night?"

"No problem and I'll be here until Trooper Savoy gets here in the morning. If you need anything just yell for me." She went out the door and took her seat for the long wait ahead of her.

"Defiantly a woman, huge, but a woman." She closed her eyes and drifted off to sleep.

Merc unlocked the door to her trailer, dropped her Sam Browne belt on the kitchen table and walked on weary legs to her bedroom in the back. Shedding out of her uniform, she dropped back on her bed and rubbed her hands across her face. Her eyes burned and felt like she had handfuls of sand in them, it had been years since she had pulled a double shift and it had never been one where she couldn't move around. She dropped her arms out to the side, and let her entire body relax. Minutes later, she was sound asleep and never heard the phone ringing.

Junior sighed and hung up the phone, he knew that his cousin had to be home by now. She maybe in the shower or sleeping, he knew that she was not going to like what he was going to tell her. It was times like this that he hated being a boss. He leaned back in his chair and waved to one of the troopers that had just come in the barracks. "Come on in here a minute, I need you to go over and wake up Merc." The trooper's eyes grew twice in size as he shook his head.

"I can't do that sir, she'll kill me!" He backed towards the desks shaking his head. "You can fire me if you want sir, but I can always get another job but if she kills me..."

"I swear you troopers are all a bunch of pussies when it comes to Merc, she's not that bad." He grabbed his Smokey hat and dropped it on his head. "I'll go wake her up and you can watch the phones for the rest of your shift."

"Fine with me, I'd rather do that and I hate answering the phone. But it's safer then facing a maniac like a Merc when she's tired."

Merc rolled over and pulled her pillow over her head but it did nothing to drown out the chainsaw like sound right outside her bedroom window. Cussing up a storm, she flung her pillow across the room and got up. Forgoing shoes, she slammed out of her trailer in her sports bra and

black boxers with red spiders all over them. "What the fuck Hank, you want ta die before supper?!" She yelled at her neighbor and yanked the extension cord from his electric hedge trimmers. "What the fuck are you doing ta my tree!" She grabbed the trimmers from Hank's hands and threw it on the roof of his trailer.

"What did you do that for, those are brand new!" He yelled back and pointed a finger at her. "You better get those back or I'll..." Merc grabbed him by his throat and lifted him four feet off the ground.

"Listen you freak of nature, I catch you cutting down my lilac tree... with me home at that. I could arrest your ass for destruction of private property and indecent exposure!"

"Ohh God damn Merc, don't kill him." Junior said from where he was halfway out of his car. "You have enough bodies in your crawspace and you're not burying any more bodies in my back yard!" He looked at the man and shook his head. "Ohh the Hell with it, snap his damn neck." He had heard Merc complaining for years about the asshole that lived in the trailer next to hers but thought she was exaggerating, now that he saw with his own eyes he believed everything. The man's fly was open with everything hanging out in plain view. "Merc, either kill the fucker or drop him." He flinched when he heard what sounded like a piece of meat hitting the floor and watched as Hank was dropped to the ground. "I sure hope you didn't break his jaw."

"Would serve him right if I did," She pointed to what was left of her lilac tree. "Look what the sick fuck did just so that he can look in my bedroom window!" Junior walked up, examined the tree and then Hank.

"Well Merc, I think a night in jail would serve him right." He looked into furious blue eyes and felt his blood run cold. "Uuhhmm...I hate to do this but I'll need you to guard Miss Draper until we catch Mallory." He covered his ears when she let out a yell that rivaled a lion.

"If you haven't noticed, I just so happen to be a first sergeant!" She planted her hands on her hips and looked down at him. "Put Savoy on the case..."

"I can't do that and you know it, if I take her off the patrol list, I loose a whole section not being covered."

"Do you know who Draper is?" She yelled back at him.

"Of course I do but there's nothing I can do about it," He held up a hand to stop another outburst. "Merc, it's in the past let it go." She flung her hands in the air and then pointed to her scared face.

"How can I let it go...every time I look in the mirror I'm reminded of what role she played in my life?"

"Merc, she's not the one who did it and it wasn't her parents that paid off everyone to save that asshole Davis."

"I know that...but she knew and she..." She grabbed an unconscious Hank by his leg, dragged him towards Junior's car and threw him in the back seat. "The Hell with it, I'll never let it go and throw this asshole in a cell." She walked towards her trailer and stopped. "In uniform or civies?"

"Your choice Merc, we're putting her in that old farmhouse out on Job Corps road as soon as she's released from the hospital."

"What about her job?"

"Nope, can't take the chance on Mallory walking in the school and shooting everyone there." He got in his car and rolled the window down. "Thanks Merc, I know I owe you big time for this."

"You'll owe me for the rest of your life," She mumbled on her way back into her trailer. "Grabbing a bottle of water off the kitchen counter, she walked back to the bathroom and started the shower. Before doing anything else, she made sure that the shade on the window down and that no one could see in. It wasn't that she was modest or anything, she just didn't like people spying on her. Now with Hank gone for the rest of the night, she could sit with the curtains open and let some sun in. After taking a quick shower, she pulled on a t-shirt, baggy shorts and her old basketball shoes. Going to the hall closet, she pulled down a black plastic box and tucked it under her arm. "Time to clip and dip Timmy." She snickered and went out the door to her cruiser.

She pulled into her ma's driveway and climbed out of her cruiser, looking through the front window, she saw the curtain's part and then the front door opened to reveal her ma. "Hey ma supper almost ready?" She grinned when her ma threw her dishtowel at her. "Guess I'm right on time then, is Timmy down in his dungeon?"

"Where else would he be, I think if he actually came out in the sunlight he might burst into flames like a vampire." Merc leaned down and kissed her ma's cheek before ushering her back in the house.

"You could always haul his servers and stuff out into the back yard when he's sleeping; I know he'd go out there then."

"Are you kidding, he's got that damn robot thingy that does everything but go to the bathroom for him."

"I'm not going to have to fight that thing again am I?"

"Do like I do, take the water soaker down there and threaten to give it a bath." Merc grabbed the water soaker squirt gun near the basement door and went down the steps. The second she got to the bottom, she gagged.

"God damn Timmy this place reeks worse then some sewer!" She went over to one of the small windows, opened it and then stuck a small double bladed window fan in it. "When's the last time

you took a shower or changed clothes?"

"Can't remember," He looked up and shook the hair from his blue eyes. "When's the last time you checked to see if you've grown chest hair?"

"About the same time and I told you before that I don't take steroids, it's in the genes. Maybe if you didn't sit around all day and actually ate something different than pop tarts you wouldn't be such a little dweeb." She placed the black plastic box on top of a cluttered table and waved a hand at him and then the bathroom. "Now go take a shower, I'm not getting near you or killing my clippers on your greasy head."

"But the grunge look is in...isn't it?" He looked down at his dirty Levis and filthy shirt and back up at his sister. "What year is it?" Merc chuckled and shrugged her shoulders.

"You're asking the one person that doesn't know what day of the week it is, now get in there I'm hungry and supper's almost ready." She tossed Timmy his metal forearm crutches and watched him hobble towards his bathroom; her brother was a total tech head and lived like a pig. After moving a filing cabinet to find a wall socket, she plugged her clippers in and waited for her brother to get out of the shower. While waiting, she looked at the two huge servers he had built along the one wall. He was hooked into the FBI, CIA and any government agency that you could think of. He did free lance work for them in the computer crimes department and helped with cracking codes for some of the more secret departments. She looked to the bathroom door when she heard the tips of his forearm crutches squeaking on the floor. "Ma won't recognize you," She pointed to his computer chair and waved the clippers at him. "Plus she'll be able to see your eyes when I'm done." She flipped them on and grinned evilly when she shaved a strip right down the center of his head.

"You just enjoy the Hell out of doing this don't you?"

"Sure do, this is the highlight of my life." After Timmy's head was shaved, they went upstairs for supper. Ma took one look at her children and shook her head the size difference was astounding. Timmy was still small and wiry but Merc was well over 220lb and more muscular than any men she knew. Her arms were close to being 21 inches in diameter and bigger than her brothers thighs. Her trooper uniforms had to be made special because they never fit her right, if it wasn't for seeing them both born from her body, she would swear that Merc belonged to some other woman.

"Now I roasted three chickens and made five pounds of mashed potatoes, if that doesn't fill you up Merc, go across the road and chew on one of those cows in the field."

"That's ok ma, I ate before I got home so I'm not that hungry." She still managed to eat a whole chicken and part of another and had three helpings of potatoes before she stopped. "Junior hauled Hank off to jail right before I came over, that dumb bastard was cutting down my lilac bush!" She went on to tell her ma and brother about Hank and what she and Savoy would have to do until they either caught Mallory or deemed it safe for Finnegan not be under police protection.

Timmy leaned back in his chair and rubbed his stomach. "So any idea why the nut job shot the shop teacher?"

"Nope, then again I haven't been back to the barracks yet. Do you know him or anything about him?"

"Nope, but I can run him through the data base and see if anything pops up. Ya know military back ground, police record or I can run him through the IRS files?"

"OK, do your stuff and let me know if anything interesting pops up. I think that maybe he ran into Mallory somewhere and pissed him off."

"What I wanna know is why no one's caught Mallory yet, why can't ya just shoot the bastard on sight. I mean, ya know he's armed and dangerous and has killed how many people, the more he does the more powerful he is?"

"Believe me Timmy, if I set eyes on that bastard, I'll blow him away in a heartbeat. The problem is that he's like the invisible man or something and then we have all his relatives keeping him safe when he does surface. We're not quite sure what he looks like either, the picture we have is like fifteen years old."

"And he can change his looks by just growing a beard or mustache," Ma threw in and then started clearing the table. "Just look in the mirror Timmy and you'll not recognize yourself after just having your head shaved." Merc spent her two days off with her family; they went to the movies, out to eat and then went to Harpers Ferry to go in the small shops so ma could get some scented handmade candles and fresh herbs. Her first day back to work, she stopped by the barracks to check on any new developments on the Mallory case and headed over to relieve a female Sheriff that was guarding Finnegan. She didn't know how Junior had pulled that one off but was thankful, she knew that Savoy was probably near exhaustion from working so many hours a day. She went into Junior's office and dropped down in a chair across from his desk, looking at the top, she saw his notepad with little cars drawn all over it. He did the same thing when they were in school, although he's older than her and Timmy, they ate lunch at the same time and his notebooks were filled with pictures of cars. She reached across and grabbed his pad to add her own special touches to his sketches, she had just finished when her cousin came in.

"Alright what did you do to my cars?" He asked and pulled the notepad from her hands. "Playboy bunny ears?"

"Of course," She grinned up at him. "I thought that if ya had a hot car you'd have all kinds of women flocking to ya and I found out that a State Trooper car isn't hot." She shrugged her shoulders. "So if you put ears on 'em maybe you'll get some bimbos to think you're Hugh Heffner."

"We just have to face it Merc, we're dorks and no woman wants either one of us."

Blue eyes rolled and then a snort came from her. "Junior, you're a married man so at least one

woman wants you."

"She don't count and all she wants is the paycheck and for me to cut the grass and not blow the clippings on the driveway." He handed her a folder from his in-box and leaned back in his chair. "My boss wants you to come over and move that huge ass rock in our front yard, she wants it down near the mailbox so that the assholes hit that instead of the umpteenth 4x4 I've had to replace."

"Does Jenny want to see if I can get a hernia, that damn thing must weigh over three hundred pounds or more and how am I supposed to move it?"

"Like you haven't picked up more than that at the gym," He rolled his eyes and gave her a raised dark eyebrow. "Get Savoy to help you, between you two muscle heads it should be a three minute job." Merc looked through the folder in her hands and then up to Junior.

"What's the connection between Finnegan and this shop teacher, were they a couple?"

"No idea, no ones been over to talk to her yet. You're on your way over there why don't you question her?" She ran her fingers through her short spiked hair on the top and sides then flipped her below the shoulder length hair back over her shoulders.

"What about the investigating trooper, what's he been doing?"

"Hoping that Mallory gets caught so that he doesn't have to take the chance and go over to the hospital and be a walking target if he's over there."

"All you men are a bunch of chicken shits, I wear the same uniform as everyone else in this place and yet I've gone over there and stood guard duty along with Savoy. He could shot us the same as he does you guys and now he's changed his MO and shot a school teacher and almost killed another one." She saw her cousins face pale and knew she had hit on something. "Ohh now I get it, not only are Savoy and myself on guard duty but you want us to take over the investigation because of the dickless wonders in the barracks."

"I was going to ask you about that...the other troopers are scared shitless. I've already suspended two of them for a week without pay for refusing to go over to Mallory's shack and see if he was there. The Sheriffs Department is helping as much as they can with widening their patrols but I'm not about to loose this collar because I have wimp ass troopers." Merc sat and held him in a glare; she hated the fact that so many men were afraid of this guy and wouldn't hold up to protecting the innocent people. If she got shot, then she got shot, it was part of the job and everyone knew it.

"I'm pulling Savoy off patrol completely to work with me and when we get Mallory; she gets promoted to Sergeant and takes over. I'll arrange with her which shift she wants on guard duty and the other time she can spend sleeping and working on the case."

"Alright I'll do it; I should have promoted her instead of Benson." He looked down at his desktop

and spoke in a low voice. "He's one of them that I suspended and I'll admit that I should have listened to you when you said he sucked and didn't deserve to be promoted above Savoy."

"About damn time you admitted that, now Uncle Greg and ma will lay off you." She closed the folder and left his office with a grim look on her face. No matter that, she was a senior trooper and her cousin was her boss, she still got screwed around because of being a female. Now were her and Savoy's chance to prove finally that they were just as good or better in this case than the others. She stopped off in her office, grabbed her briefcase and headed back out the door to go over to relieve Savoy. Tossing her briefcase and folder on the front seat of her cruiser, she then opened the trunk and pulled out her bulletproof vest. Grabbing an extra Kevlar shield, she forced it down inside the front pocket on the front of the vest.

Taking off her uniform shirt, she pulled the vest on, adjusted the straps and put her shirt back on before getting in her car. She seldom wore her vest but when she did, she always made sure that there were two plates in the chest. The one time she did catch a bullet in the chest, she was sore and bruised for a week. She never wanted to feel that way again and liked the added protection of the extra plate. A few minutes later, she parked at the hospital and went inside. She looked around for anyone who seemed to be out of place and saw no one. Instead of taking the elevator, she took the stairs and stepped through the door a few minutes later. It wasn't strictly for exercise purposes, she just wanted to make sure there were no lurkers.

She stood at the end of the hallway and saw Savoy instead of a sheriff; it was funny in a way. The trooper stood around five foot seven but in her mind, she was twelve feet tall. She wore her Smokey hat like the rest of them but it was her stoic bearing that brought a grin to Merc's lips. She imagined that she herself looked pretty much the same while guarding Finnegan's room, she walked towards her and shook her head when Savoy turned slowly in her direction. "Stand down bulldog, I brought you some coffee and I was expecting to see a sheriff here and not you." She handed over the large cup of Sheetz coffee and a bag of cookies. "She making any noise in there?"

"She called me about five hours ago, one of her kids got sick and she had to go pick him up at school. You mean besides yelling at the TV and scaring the Hell outta me a half dozen times?" Merc chuckled and then jumped when a loud bang came from inside the room. "See what I mean, she's a damn good shot with her shoes. I'm surprised the TV hasn't blown up yet from all the hits it's gotten."

"What's wrong doesn't she like the stations or something?"

"Ohh you'll just have to go in there and see for yourself." She slapped hands with Merc and walked down the hallway drinking her coffee. Merc opened the door and peeked in; she had to grin when she saw Finnegan's bed covered in things that she could throw at the TV. Opening it all the way, she walked in, dropped her briefcase in the chair, and handed Finnegan one of the bags she had in her hand.

"I thought you might be getting tired of the slop they feed you in here, so what's with trying to take the TV out?" She looked over to see one green eye watching her.

"Out of the four channels the damn thing gets, three of them are in Spanish. Don't know about you but I don't understand the language, I'm not learning it to be able to watch TV in my own country and the shit shouldn't be on my TV!" Merc could tell that the hospital stay was getting to the smaller woman but she did have to agree with her on the TV channels, what also pissed her off were the pay phones and ATM machines that came up in foreign languages. She had no problem with people from other countries being there but it wasn't right that the companies wait on them hand and foot because they refuse to learn English. She couldn't count how many illegal aliens she had arrested that spoke no English what's so ever and how many times they had to bring in an interpreter to translate. INS were happy as pigs in slop when they hauled away a van full of the aliens to ship them back to Mexico or where ever they were from. They all blamed the racetrack and the stable owners; they hired the illegal aliens to work the stables for half the wages they would pay someone in the area. Those people were soon learning the errors of their ways when they were fined for harboring.

"I'll see what I can do about having the TV changed for ya, they can't expect you to be here and watch that shit when the people in the waiting room get the regular channels. Unless they hope it'll make the patients get better sooner and free up a bed."

"If that's the case, I would have left yesterday!" She grabbed a shoe and was ready to throw it when Merc pulled it from her hand."

"I'll take your mind off the TV for a while; I have some questions about what happened the other day." She pulled a notepad from her briefcase and sat down, pulling a pen from her pocket, she looked up to Finnegan. "What kind of relationship did you have with the shop teacher Mr. Leanard?" She waited for Finnegan to finish chewing and then flinched at the deep growl that came from the smaller woman. "Is the sandwich OK, I have Tuna on whole wheat?"

"No it's the question, why does everyone think that I was screwing the shop teacher? We were just friends, he was building some bookshelves for my house, and that's all. I was on my way to his shop when I heard the gunshot, I went through the door and that's all I remember."

"So there was no other kind of relationship with him," She wrote that down and then looked back up. "Do you know if he had a girlfriend or any reason of why Mallory would target him?"

"Ohh please, I worked with the guy and every once in a while we had lunch together. That's just about it; we didn't go out or anything away from school. Why don't you tell me about this Mallory guy, maybe he had something against shop teachers?"

"No it's cops he hates, especially male cops." She looked up and knew that she would get no more from Finnegan; they would have to go through Leanard's personal papers, phone records and contact any family that he had. She would call Timmy, see if he found out anything about the man, and have him run a check on Finnegan as well. People never told the police everything they knew, what they didn't understand is it only took one tiny thing to solve a crime. She placed her notepad back in her briefcase and went back out in the hallway to stand her post.

A week later Merc and Savoy walked into the hospital, went to the elevator and went up to the floor where Finnegan was waiting to be discharged. Finnegan had no idea that she was going into police protection or that Savoy had gone to her house to collect things that she would need for her stay at the farmhouse. Thinking it best to not draw attention, Merc and Savoy had changed out of their uniforms and were in workout clothes. Savoy looked up at her boss and shook her head.

"You know you could just wear a sign on your chest that said cop."

"Hey it's the only t-shirt I had in my locker," She looked down at the words State Trooper in silver across her chest and then to the picture of Scooby Doo on Savoy's. "You should have retard across your back, only you would wear a shirt with a cartoon character on the front."

"Yeah well, I stole it out of your locker so who's the tard?" She pushed open Finnegan's door and walked in leaving Merc standing outside with a scowl on her face. "Miss Draper, we're here to take you into police protection."

Finnegan looked up from the newspaper she was reading and shook her head. "Ohh I don't think so, I'm going home and there's no one going with me." Savoy shook her head and handed a paper from the major to her.

"No ma'am, that's an order from our major and signed by a judge, we can't take a chance on Mallory finding you and..."

"Finishing the job he started, I don't think I'm a concern to him. He killed my friend, why don't you people try and figure out why he did it and catch the bastard?" She threw down the newspaper and stood up from the chair she had been sitting in. "Now if you'll excuse me, I have to find a doctor so I can go home." She opened the door and found Merc standing there with her arms crossed over her chest, she looked up into the face shaded by a baseball hat and groaned. "You people can't do this, I have rights!"

"We can read them to you if that's the route you want to go or you can come quietly and be safe from Mallory?" Merc growled and stepped aside when a doctor came up behind her. "Your choice Miss Draper, the farmhouse or a jail cell?" Finnegan turned her head so that she could see better and walked right up to Merc.

"First Sergeant Macgregor, I am not going to the farmhouse...what ever that is so you can read me my rights and haul me to jail." She took the papers from her doctor, dismissed him with a shooing motion and stuck the papers in her pocket. "Are you going to cuff me and march me out to your cruiser or what?" Merc rolled her eyes and waved to Savoy.

"Come on Savoy; let's get this arrogant little twit out of here before I drop her in a bio hazard can somewhere."

"I am not arrogant; I just don't feel that I'm in any danger from whomever it was that attacked me!" She yelled and grabbed her head in pain. "Now unless you two are arresting me, I'm going home!" She tried to push past Merc and found herself picked up, pressed against a wide muscular chest and carried towards the elevator. "Put me down you over grown muscle head!"

"Nope, can't do that Finnegan. My major will have my ass if I don't do my job, Savoy, get the elevator for me."

"Merc, should you really be carrying her out of here like that?" Savoy gazed up into twinkling blue eyes and then into murderous green. "I mean it's not exactly professional..."

"Damn right it's not and I can file police brutality charges against her!" Finnegan slapped at Merc's hands and found it useless; she then froze when the name Merc ran through her mind. *"I should know her shouldn't I, maybe not?"* She asked herself and shrugged it off for the moment.

"You can try but everyone knows that you don't leave a hospital without using a wheelchair, you don't have one and this is the next best way. On the other hand, I can put you down and you can run home and take the chance of Mallory being there."

"Why don't you people go out and get this Mallory guy and leave me alone?" Merc put her down once they were inside the elevator and stepped back. "I was just in the wrong place at the wrong time, now either take me home or to lock-up." Savoy looked to Merc and shrugged her shoulders; she knew that it was useless to argue with Finnegan and it was worse to argue with her superior. Merc nodded her head and waited for the other two women to go out into the hallway.

"We'll take you home but you stay under our protection and you can't go to work." Merc waved a hand when she saw Savoy's mouth start to move. "I'll call junior and tell him about the change, he won't like it but there's no sense in arguing over it anymore." She led the way out to the parking lot and kept an eye out for Mallory or his car, she hoped that Finnegan was right and that he wouldn't come after her. With Finnegan riding shotgun and Savoy in the backseat, Merc drove out towards the high school and then turned down one of the back roads that led to Finnegan's house. She hadn't been there before but she just knew that it would be a huge house with lots of acreage and wouldn't be surprised if a butler answered the door.

Finnegan touched Merc's forearm to get her attention. "Slow down Macgregor, it's the next driveway on your left." Merc slowed down and pulled up the gravel driveway, she blinked her eyes a few times thinking that her sight was going. At the end of the driveway was a very small house that looked like it had only two rooms at the most. She looked over to Finnegan and pointed to the small house.

"You live here, I was expecting something...I don't know...bigger."

"Why would you think that, I'm a history teacher and the pay sucks. You make more than I do in a year and you get a car to go with it, the school system won't even supply aspirins for all the

headaches I get during the day." She opened the door when the cruiser stopped and then opened the back one so that Savoy could get out. "One word about how I live and I'll drop kick you in your shins, you got me Macgregor?" She stomped off towards her front door and looked back at them. "I can't get in because I don't have my keys; all my stuff is at school."

"Actually, I have your keys and a bag of your clothes in the trunk." Savoy said and flinched from the glare Finnegan threw her way. "Remember, we were supposed to take you to the safe house and..." She held out the keys to Finnegan and looked up at a smirking Merc. "Ohh shut-up Merc; this is your fault so just can it." They walked into the small house and looked around at all the books piled up five foot high against one wall and then to the old but well taken care of couch and wooden coffee table that had more books piled on it. The floors were hardwood and shone from wax around the braided rugs scattered around. Merc looked at the small wood burning stove and wished that she had one of those in her trailer.

"I'm going to make a pot of coffee, if you want some you'll have to come in the kitchen to get it." Finnegan gave them one last look and went through the door at the back of the living room and into the kitchen. Merc shrugged her shoulders and followed with Savoy behind her. They looked around at the homey kitchen and sat down at the old table to wait for the coffee to brew. Merc noticed how much trouble Finnegan was having with determining distances, she got up and took the coffee pot from her hand.

"I'll do this, you get the stuff ready and I'll pour the water."

"And how would you know what it's like to not be able to see out of one eye?"

"Believe me I know all about it, where's the coffee grounds?"

"Just what I need a know it all, it's in the refrigerator." She sat down at the table and watched Merc prepare the coffee and then place three coffee cups on the table. She looked over to Savoy and saw how pale her face was and wondered why. "Are you OK Trooper Savoy, you look a little pale."

"Yeah I'm fine, just a little tired is all." She rubbed her face and looked up at her boss. "I'll take the next shift if you let me get some sleep; I'll call the barracks and have someone come pick me up."

"Sure if that's what you want, it doesn't matter to me either way."

She looked to Finnegan and pointed to her phone. "Can I use your phone?"

"Sure, would you do me a favor and get my car from the school parking lot. It's a 1988 blue Chevy Cavalier, I left it in the parking lot near where the buses park."

"Sure, I'll have the trooper who comes for me take me over there and I'll drive it over in the morning." She took the keys Finnegan held out to her and then made her call; Merc poured the coffee and placed sugar and milk on the table. She sat down and kept her eyes on her cup not

knowing what to do.

"You guys can sit here or in the living room, I have some papers I need to grade and then call one of the teachers so that they can be picked up, put in my grade book and returned to the kids." She left the kitchen and went over to an old battered desk in the living room, flipping a light on that hung from the corner of the desk, she moved it so that she could see better. She never noticed Merc step into the room and stand at the doorway watching her.

"One of the guys will be out here in a half hour or so," Savoy looked up into Merc's pale blue eyes. "You won't beat the Hell outta her or anything will you?"

"Nope, she's safe as long as she doesn't get snippy with me again. I may just box her ears for her and tie her to her bed."

Savoy raised an eyebrow and grinned at her. "How come I get the distinct impression that you'd enjoy the Hell outta doing that?"

"Because I would, just ask Timmy the next time you see him. I can tie some wicked knots that no one can get untied, Ma always kept a pocket knife on her for just those types of occasions." She walked towards the front door and looked back over her shoulder at Finnegan. "Come on I'll wait with ya outside, I have to get my bag and Finnegan's from the cruiser."

"So what are ya gonna do for the rest of the day?"

"I have my briefcase and my laptop, Timmy's doing some spook work for me so hopefully he'll have some information that we can use for this case." Savoy stopped beside the cruiser and looked out towards the road before turning back to Merc.

"She doesn't know who you are does she?"

"Nope and I don't know if that's good or bad," She grabbed the bags from the cruiser and set them on the roof. "I mean how could someone forget something like that, she was dragged into the police station a couple of times for questioning. They had her in the courthouse during the useless trial and then she just disappeared after it all went out the window."

"What about the asshole, what ever happened to him?"

"Ohh he went to college and made it big as some smartass mouthy lawyer. What better occupation for a lying bastard with more money then he knows what to do with, now he has more money to buy off some more people when he gets into trouble." She chuckled and looked to Savoy. "Timmy keeps reporting him to the IRS, he flags his SSN and bank accounts hoping that one day they'll audit his ass and he'll end up in jail."

"Timmy may end up in jail if he gets caught; then again, he's the best hacker that I know of."

"There's your ride, I'll see you sometime tomorrow." She grabbed the bags and went back in the

house to see Finnegan rubbing her one eye and temple.

"Hey Macgregor can we go to the grocery store, I don't have any food here except two eggs and a bottle of water?"

"Sure, I can take you to the store if that's what you want. And if you don't mind, I'll stop and pick up my supper before we head back." Finnegan stepped up to her and tilted her head so that she could see.

"What you don't trust my cooking?"

"I trust your cooking it's just that the amount of food I can eat will put you in the poor house."

"I seriously doubt that," She grabbed an envelope from her desk drawer and walked towards the door. "Come on Macgregor, I'm starving and that's not a good thing when you go to a grocery store."

After arguing over which store to go to, they pulled into the Wal-Mart parking lot. Finnegan pulled herself out of the cruiser and cast a one eyed glare at Merc; she hated Wal-Mart because it was always so crowded and they were remodeling the store. She limped towards where the carts were and tried to out distance Merc. That was an impossible feat considering Merc's legs were three times as long as hers. She looked over her shoulder and growled when she saw that she was right behind her with her own cart. "Are you going to follow me all through the store?"

"Nope, I have a feeling that we don't eat the same kinds of foods, so I'll meet you at the pop machines when you're done."

"No body guard hovering or anything?"

"Mallory isn't about to come in a store when his face is plastered all over the doors." She pointed her finger over her shoulder to the posters on the front doors.

"Ya never know I've seen some really stupid people in my life." She put her injured leg on the bottom of the cart and pushed with the other, in a few minutes she was out of Merc's sight or so she thought. Merc pushed her cart towards the fresh fruit and vegetable section; she grabbed a bag of apples and a bunch of bananas before heading to where the green beans and other vegetables were. Grabbing what she needed, she went back to the dairy department and put two gallons of milk in her cart. Her next stop was where they roasted chicken; she looked at the breast strips and BBQ chunks before grabbing three lemon-roasted chickens.

"Put those back Merc or I'll kick your ass and why aren't you doing your body guard thing?" Her ma asked from behind the counter.

"But I'm hungry and she's around here somewhere." She put the chickens back and grinned when she watched her ma pull three off the spits and place them in plastic containers.

"You brought her grocery shopping?"

"Yep, she said she needed food so after we fought all the way from her house, she finally agreed to get what she needed here." She took the bag of seasoned potato wedges and placed everything in her cart. "Ya know ma, she has no idea who I am?"

"What do ya mean she doesn't know...oohh you mean from years ago? I wonder why that is, have you asked her?"

"I'm not asking her that," She looked around and then leaned in closer to the counter. "Have Timmy run a check on her, when we were in school, she hung out and acted like the rich assholes. Now she lives in that tiny little house off Rt. 234; ya know the old Hanson place."

"She's a teacher and they make dirt for a salary, maybe she doesn't want her family's money?" Ma looked to her side and tapped Merc on her hand. "Is that her right there...she looks different." Merc turned her head slowly and nodded.

"Yep, that's the thorn in my side. Ya know most people are scared shitless of cops, she uses my last name and goes toe to toe with me." She shut her mouth when she felt a green eye boring into her back. "Is she looking at me?" Her ma grinned and went over to help Finnegan.

Once they had checked out and started loading all the groceries in the car, Finnegan looked at the three bags with the roasted chickens in them. "Did you buy enough chicken Macgregor; I think I saw a few more on the spits?"

"That's enough for one meal and maybe a snack later, I got tater wedges to go with, so that should fill me up for a while." She looked over to Finnegan, shot her a quick grin and then got behind the wheel.

"One meal...that would feed me for a couple weeks, there's no way you can eat all of that."

"Have you taken a look at how big I am, that's just what I have for one meal."

"I can't see a damn thing except a big blur at best, that concussion has my eyesight fucked and I have no peripheral vision on the left side. And as far as big goes, everyone is big to me, now let's get going before my frozen stuff thaws."

Finnegan sat there with her chin resting in her hand watching Merc finish off her second chicken and the last of a gallon of milk. She could only eat one breast a few of the wedges and one glass of milk. "Tell me something Macgregor; where in the Hell did you put all that food?"

"Tell me something and I might, why do you keep calling me by my last name?"

"Because, everyone else calls you either by your rank or your first name that's why, I think I'll

just call ya Mac from now on. So why so much food at one time?"

"I burn a lot off at the gym so I need this much to keep my size, do you have to get therapy for your leg?"

"Supposed to but I can't afford it and my insurance won't cover it, I hate to see the hospital bill after being in there a week and the surgery they did." She got up from the table and headed to the bathroom off the living room, Merc started cleaning off the table and putting the dirty dishes in the sink when she jumped from Finnegan's yell.

"SON OF A BITCH!" Merc went running into the bathroom and stopped when she saw Finnegan hunched over the sink counter.

"Are you OK?"

"Damn assholes...I just ripped my eyebrow off trying to take that damn tape off my face." She lifted her head with a hand over her eyebrow and growled at Merc. "Why do they do that, it's not bad enough that you can't get the damn sticky stuff off but then you rip your facial hair off as well!"

"They don't care, it's not their bodies. Try soaking a washrag in hot water and then holding it against the tape. It comes off easier and won't leave those red streaks across your face." She turned to leave and then stopped.

"Mac, do me a favor and take the rest of this off for me. If you yank it quick it may not hurt as much."

"Ohhh no, come with me, there's no way I'm ripping that tape off your face. My eardrums couldn't take you yelling again." She pushed a mumbling Finnegan down on the couch and went into the kitchen to get a towel and ice cubes, when she came back; she saw the narrowed eye glaring at her. "That's a good look for you ya know, I bet it's a big hit with the kids you teach." She sat down beside her and held out the ice cubes. "Put that on the tape for a few minutes and then I'll take it off."

"Yeah the look does work and why am using ice when you said to use a hot washrag before?"

"Either or but the ice numbs the skin so it doesn't hurt," She pushed her hand down and grabbed the edge of a piece of tape. "Take a deep breath and then let it out." The second Finnegan released the breath; Merc ripped the tape off and flinched when she was smacked in her shoulder.

"That hurt...you said it wouldn't hurt you lying sack of shit!"

"I never said it wouldn't hurt and should we have taken the bandage off already?"

"I want a shower and walking around with half my face bandaged just ain't doing it for me." She

smacked Merc again and then got up to get some clothes before heading into the bathroom. Merc went back into the kitchen and started to fill the sink with water to wash the dishes; she stopped and dropped her head down to watch the bubbles float around on the water. "Why am I being nice to her and why doesn't she remember anything?" She grabbed at her pocket and pulled out her pager, looking at the screen, she saw a message from Timmy. "You work fast little man." She finished with the dishes and then went to boot up her laptop to see what he had sent to her, she looked up when she felt eyes watching her. "Feel better now?"

"Yeah, sponge baths do nothing for me." She used the towel to dry her short blondish hair and then dropped it over her shoulders. "I think I used ten gallons of water to wash that stuff out of my eye, it's still blurry but better than running into walls." She sat down on the couch and tried to look up under Merc's hat. "Hey Mac, you know that you'll go bald if you wear a hat all the time."

"Nah, I use Rogaine." She pulled up the file that Timmy sent her, saved it as a text file and then closed the program. "Then again, if I went bald, I'd save on shampoo." She closed her laptop and rubbed her face. "Do you have a spare pillow I can use?"

"I guess I can give you a pillow, although if I don't and you get a stiff neck maybe you'll go home and leave me in peace."

"Not a chance, I've slept in my cruiser, my desk chair and on the floor before. So a stiff neck isn't gonna make me go away."

"Damn, just my luck," She turned and looked into the darkness that was Merc's face. "I really hate hats and why won't you look at me, is my face that messed up?"

"Not at all, I just didn't want you to feel uncomfortable."

"There not the first scars I've had on my face and if it wasn't for the steel plate in my head I'm sure I'd be pushing up daisies right now." She got up with some difficulty and went into her bedroom to get Merc a pillow and a sheet to put over the couch when she returned Merc was watching her.

"You have a steel plate in your head?"

"Yeah, I'll tell ya about it sometime." She handed her the pillow and sheet and then went towards her bedroom. "Night Mac and don't wake me up until about noon, it's been years since I've been able to sleep in."

Merc opened her laptop and went to the file that Timmy had sent her; she started reading the one on Mallory first and saw nothing that she didn't know already. Until she came to the bottom of the page and saw that a deposit of ten thousand dollars was put into a savings account. "Now where would someone on welfare get that kind of money?" She hooked her cell phone back up to her modem and checked to see if Timmy had sent anything else in the last hour or so. She wasn't surprised to see a history on Davis in front of her, what brought a grin to her face was the listings of withdrawals from his accounts to questionable accounts in different states.

Disconnecting her cell phone, she lay back on the couch and rested her laptop on her stomach. Going back to what Timmy had found on Finnegan, she scanned it at first and then stopped halfway down. It was during 1983 that piqued her; Finnegan was rushed to the hospital after being attacked in Virginia Beach during spring break. She sustained head injuries, cuts and lacerations to 30% of her torso and face, her left leg was broken in two places, and four ribs were broke. She remained in a coma for six months from the head injuries and had three operations to relieve inter cranial pressure. A five-inch wide steel plate is above the left ear and stops a few centimeters from the center of her cranium; partial deafness in the left ear is untreatable. "Son of a bitch," Merc whispered and continued to read down the page, when she was finished, she placed the laptop on the table and swung her legs over the couch. "She was attacked and no one knows a damn thing about it, no witnesses and Finnegan couldn't remember anything prior to being attacked."

As she thought, she pulled her hat and t-shirt off and then her shoes and shorts. Stretching out on the couch again, she placed her laptop on her stomach, closed the program and opened up FreeCell. She always thought better when she was playing the card game, her ma asked her how she could think to play the game and how to solve a case. She told her that she just let her mind wander and solutions came on their own, a few minutes later, her hand fell to the side of the couch and her screensaver of Yosemite Sam popped on.

Finnegan crawled from her bed and held her head with both hands; she had waked from the sharp pains of a headache. She tried using the pressure points that she had learned years ago but when that didn't help she knew it was time for pain killers. She seldom used them but was glad that she kept them around; she went into the bathroom and came back out after taking two tablets. She stopped behind the couch and looked over at Merc; a small grin came to her face when she saw the screen saver playing across the screen. She went around to the front, took the laptop and shut it down; it was then that she noticed that Merc didn't have her hat on. She stepped closer, looked down at the sharp features of her bodyguard, and felt her insides jitter; her eyes traced the scar that ran from a dark eyebrow, across a high cheekbone and all the way to her chin. She didn't know why she hadn't noticed the scar before, it wasn't like it wasn't noticeable. It was a quarter inch wide at the most and stood out white against her tanned skin.

As she looked closer, she saw other smaller scars on her neck and chest. Her breath caught in her chest when she took in the body lying before her, never had she seen a woman built like Merc. The muscle mass that covered her was what you would see in Muscle and Fitness Magazine or watching Body Building competitions on the Sports Channel. She let her eyes trail down to thickly muscled thighs and back up to see a hint of a white scar over a hip. She wondered what had happened to Merc that she had so many scars; something pulled at her and told her she should know but nothing would come forward. Sighing, she went back to her bedroom and to her closet. She searched until she found a cardboard box, pulling it down; she placed it on her bed and opened it. Inside were papers from when she was in High School and a couple yearbooks. Grabbing the one from her senior year, she flipped to the back and found two names under Macgregor.

She went to the page and saw two faces that looked similar. "Merci and Timothy Macgregor, she's a twin." She read what they did while in school and saw nothing like what other kids had done, neither one of them had been in any clubs or been involved in sports. She looked at Merc's picture and if not for the name, she would never have known that they were the same person. She stared at the bluest eyes she had ever seen in her life and knew what Merc hid under the brim of her hat. "You have such beautiful eyes and you hide them, or do you just hide them from me?" She wondered if Merc kept her hat on all the time or if she took it off at the office. "There's something about you Merci Macgregor but what is it?" She looked at the clock on her nightstand and then grabbed her phone, her parents had moved to Arizona after her dad retired and with the time difference, they should still be awake.

"Mom I need some info here, I got beat up at school and I'm under police protection. Did I ever know a Merci Macgregor when I was in school?"

"I've been trying to call you all week and you're just now telling me you got beat up!"

"They just discharged me this morning and I've been busy trying to get stuff in order..."

"How bad were you hurt and should I come out there to take care of you?"

"I'm alright, got my face mangled again but nothing serious. Now about Macgregor, I have this feeling that I should know her?"

"Fin, that was a long time ago and what happened to her and her brother had nothing to do with you."

"Mom, I think it has a lot to do with me...it's a feeling I have that I did something wrong."

"Fin why is this so important to you, there was nothing you could do then so what relevance does it have now?"

"For one, I want to know what happened and how I was involved and two, she's putting her life on the line to protect me from some asshole that shot the shop teacher and pistol whipped me."

"I can't help you Fin, I don't want you to relive all that pain." Without saying another word, she hung up.

"Damn you! Why do you have to protect me from my past, I'm not a little kid!" She threw the phone on the floor and got up to pace. "There's got to be a way to find out what happened back then?" Ideas flew through her head, she stopped and looked at her laptop and then went over to where it sat on her dresser. Pulling the phone cord out of the bag, she hooked it up to her phone and started to do a search through the local newspapers archive. She typed in Merc's name and was astounded at the amount of files listed. She pulled up the first one and felt her heart slam in her chest, it listed just a brief description of what had happened and where. She grabbed her yearbook and checked the section where all the pictures and other pertinent information about their graduation. Reading back and forth between the two articles, she knew that she had to have

been at the hotel during the attack on Merc and Timmy. She pulled up another article and saw a picture of the back of the hotel near the kitchen with yellow police tape blocking it off. No memories came of that area, she flipped a few pages in her yearbook and searched the pictures until she came across one with her in it, she was standing with a bunch of other kids that she couldn't remember. "What part did I play in all of this?" She yawned and decided to download the articles and then read them in the morning; if she didn't find anything there then she would have Savoy take her to the library. Once she knew what happened, she would ask Merc.

Finnegan wandered out into the kitchen and dropped down into a chair and watched Merc cooking breakfast, a slight grin came to her face when she realized that Merc didn't have her hat on and that her short hair on top of her head was formed into what reminded her of a roosters comb. Resting her cheek in the palm of her hand, she watched the thick muscles of her arms flex when she flipped the omelets over in the frying pan. She had no idea if Merc knew she was there so she took this chance to examine the tall trooper's body, when she shifted from foot to foot, the muscles in her legs and ass flexed. Finnegan found herself wondering what those muscles would feel like beneath her hands, she looked up when Merc cleared her throat and blushed.

"If you're thinking of a way to run off and ditch me, forget it, I can chase you down easily." She pulled down two plates, filled them with food and slid one plate in front of Finnegan along with a fresh cup of coffee.

"Nope, I was just thinking how funny you look with that ridge down the center of your head." She picked up her fork and dug into her food. "I was expecting to see that damn hat on your head."

"I happen to like my hat, I can stare at people and they not know it." She sat down across from Finnegan and gave her a crooked grin. "Saying about my head and yours looks a lot worse than mine and where's your leg brace?"

"Threw it in my closet, I don't need the damn thing, it makes my toes go numb." She looked up from her plate and blinked her eyes a few times. "What's my face look like?"

"You want the truth or sugar coating like a nurse?"

"The truth, sugar coating doesn't help me one bit, I don't care about the scaring it's my eyebrow I ripped off yesterday." She tried to wiggle them and groaned. "Is it noticeable?" Merc chuckled and nodded her head.

"Ohh yeah, you look weird with one and a half eyebrows. When Savoy gets here I can run your school work over to the school, I have to go talk to the principal about the shop teacher."

"What's Savoy's first name; I'd rather call her that then Savoy?"

"Trooper."

"Mac, that doesn't help one bit. What's her first name?"

"Trooper Tracey or just plain T. you need me to bring you anything from the school while I'm there?" She put her dish in the sink and started water to wash them.

"You can grab my back pack from my room if it's still in there or maybe the principal has it." She leaned back in her chair and wondered why Merc wasn't still eating. "Was last night's slaughtering of two chickens a fluke?"

"Nope, I don't eat that much in the mornings. I go to the gym and if I eat heavy before I go then I get sick." She held out her hand for Finnegan's plate and pointed to her coffee cup. "You want more or should I turn the pot off."

"Ohh I'll drink it until you need a fork to get it out, you know you didn't have to make breakfast."

"I like to cook; you can sorta say it's a family thing. My uncle is the head cook over at Cliffside and ma is the cook over at Wal-Mart." Finnegan looked up from her coffee and raised what little bit of eyebrow she had.

"Your ma works in the deli department?"

"Yep, she sliced your lunchmeat yesterday." She wiped her hands on a towel and filled her coffee cup up. "I put my cell phone and pager number near the phone, if any man comes up to your door that you don't know you call or page me."

"What about Savoy, she's here to protect me or don't you think she can do it?"

"Ohh she can protect you but it's better if she has backup and that's me."

"Tell me why I haven't seen any male troopers; are they afraid of harassment charges or something?"

"Nope, they're afraid of getting shot. Like I said before, Mallory likes to shoot male cops. I may look like one but I think I'm safe." Finnegan looked at her chest and shook her head.

"You may have muscles like Arnold Schwarzenegger but he doesn't have tits." She gave Merc a grin and got up from the table. "I have some tests to write up; I'll be at my desk if you need anything." Merc looked down at her chest and had to agree, Arnold didn't have tits.

Savoy gave Finnegan a strange look when she asked to go to the public library; she had no idea why anyone would want to go there. The place never got any new books in and was so small that it could fit in the barracks locker room. "Why do ya want ta go there, the place sucks?"

"I need to do some research on something for...school: I need to look in the newspaper archives."

"Are all school teachers like you...weird?" Finnegan chuckled and shrugged her shoulders.

"I try to teach the kids what's going on today instead of the stuff that doesn't interest them, I do teach them our history but that doesn't really help them with what's going on in the Middle East." She grabbed a notepad and pen from her desk and headed to the front door. "What gym do you go to; I need to use a treadmill or maybe a stationary bike to strengthen my knee?"

"Gold's gym in town, I can take you as a guest if you want. That way you don't have to join and put out all that money for a membership."

"Can we go after I get my research done?"

"Sure if you want, just ignore the asshole men in there. They think that any woman that comes in wants to jump in the sac with 'em."

"Then I get to give them a rude awakening, I'm not there to pick up a man." It took them a good twenty minutes to get to the library in town, there were road crews tearing up the sidewalks and parking was limited. Finding a spot a few blocks away, Savoy checked their surroundings before she allowed Finnegan to get out. If anything happened to her, she knew that her ass would be worthless for the rest of her life. On the way to the building, Savoy walked on the street side and kept Finnegan close to her side by holding onto her elbow, she knew it looked strange but didn't give a damn. If anyone decided to drive by and shot at them, then Savoy would be a human shield. Her heart rate went back to normal once they were inside and in the back where the archives were located. She decided to look at some books while Finnegan did her research and found herself in the art section. She pulled down a big book and started flipping through the pages; a grin came to her face when she looked down at the photograph of a naked woman. She took the book over to a table and sat down to drool.

Finnegan started her search for the dates she had gotten the night before and when all she found were the same articles, she went into the local court hearings. The first thing that came up was the review on the case of Macgregor vs. Ferguson. Assault and battery, attempted murder and fleeing the scene, she rubbed her eyes and leaned back in the chair to read. When finished, she pulled up the next one and read down to the witnesses testifying for the defendant, she was surprised to see her name there as well as other people's names. When she got to the last of it, she looked around the room for Savoy, she knew that she should be asking Merc the questions she had, but wanted to know more of what happened before she did that. She got up and went to sit across from the grinning trooper.

"If you drool on the pages, they may make you pay for the book." Savoy looked up and slammed the book closed.

"Hope not, I have a feeling that this thing costs more then I make in a week." She brushed the

cover off and slid it to the center of the table. "Are you done with your research?"

"Sort of, I want to ask you some questions. First, I need to tell you why I'm asking them. When I was in my first year of college, I was attacked and ended up in a coma; I lost a lot of my memories from before the attack. I don't remember a lot of stuff that I should and that has always bothered me, I don't remember Merc or her brother from when we were in school and all I know is what I read last night and just now. Do you know what happened and why I was called as a witness in the trial and why it was dismissed?" Savoy felt her face go pale and knew she was in deep shit; she didn't want to be in this position and knew if she said anything Merc would kill her.

"Finnegan, I don't know all that happened. I was just a kid back then, the person you should ask is Merc or...maybe Timmy." She pulled her cell phone off her belt and dialed Marina's house, she was thankful when she answered and not Timmy. After a few minutes, she looked up at Finnegan and nodded her head. "Ma said to come on over and she'll talk to you."

"She's not going to shoot me or anything is she?"

"Ma's nothing like that and Timmy will fry your brains with tech head stuff, he works freelance for the Government." She got up from the table and waited for Finnegan to join her. "If Merc shows up, this was all your idea and you held me at gun point." A half hour later they were pulling into Marina's driveway, Finnegan looked at the small ranch and saw Marina open the front door. She looked different from when she had seen her at Wal-Mart and was a little afraid of the small woman. As she got out of the car and walked with Savoy up to the door, she noticed that both mother and daughter had the same color eyes.

"You're lucky; Merc had just left before you called." She held out her hand to Finnegan. "I'm Marina but you can call me Ma and if we're lucky, Timmy will come up from the basement. He and his sister have a weakness when it comes to blondes with green eyes."

"Timmy has a weakness period when it comes to the opposite sex," Savoy mumbled and walked into the house behind Finnegan and Ma. "He really needs to get out of the basement more than to just eat." Ma looked over her shoulder at Finnegan.

"My son is a basement dweller; he works and lives in my basement. Merc comes over and practically drags him upstairs."

"They're twins aren't they; I looked their pictures up in my yearbook last night?" Ma nodded her head and then smiled.

"If you saw them side by side now, you would never know. Timmy's a dweeb and if a strong wind blows we have to chase after him." She led them into her kitchen and pointed to the chairs. "Have a seat and I'll get us some iced tea," She watched where Finnegan sat and grinned, she picked Merc's normal chair which would be at her right when she sat down. "So how can I help you Finnegan?"

She told her about her attack and comatose state while going to college and how she couldn't remember certain things. And that she had read about what happened to Merc and Timmy and what the court reviews had said about her testifying but wanted to know more. "I called my mom last night and she down right refused to tell me anything, I need to know, will you tell me?" Ma ran over everything that happened from the time that her kids were attacked up to the case being dismissed.

"So I testified that I didn't see anything and didn't know anything," Finnegan ran her hands down her face and flinched when she hit the spot where they had wired her cheek bone back together. "Was I lying or did I really not know anything?"

"From what I saw, you knew a little but not everything. I could tell by your eyes, they changed colors when certain questions were asked."

"Really, I didn't know they changed like that." She dropped her head to look into her glass. "I wish I could remember things from back then, I had to learn a lot of stuff all over again once I got out of the hospital and I still suffer from bad headaches." She ran her fingers over the area where the steel plate was. "I guess I'm lucky that I'm not a vegetable, I was told that who ever attacked me used a baseball bat on me."

"They never caught who did it?" Ma asked and got up from the table to go to the basement door.

"No, someone found me lying in a parking lot and called an ambulance. There was no case because there were no witnesses and I couldn't remember anything." Tracy shook her head and played with her glass, she knew all too well how cases like that went, they didn't. After so long they were just closed as unsolvable and placed in the dead case files.

"Timmy will you bring up the court transcripts?"

"Ahhh ma, I'm right in the middle of something!" He yelled back.

"Your virtual woman can wait; I have real ones up here that wanna read the transcripts!"

"One of them wouldn't happen to be my betrothed Trooper T would it?"

"Go to Hell you dorkwad, I'm not your anything!" Tracy yelled back and watched Finnegan grin. "He's demented as Hell and plays with robots for entertainment." Finnegan turned her head when she heard a clumping coming up the steps and then the top of a head with black peach fuzz covering it, ma pulled the folder from between her son's teeth and wiped the slobber on his shirt. "When Merc shaved you head, she should have shave that scruffy goatee off."

"Hey it took me ten years to grow this, I can't help it Merc has a five o'clock shadow by noon." He dropped into the chair at the head of the table and looked at Finnegan. "You look different...your hairs shorter." Finnegan ran her fingers through her hair and smiled at him.

"Yeah, I guess I did have it long years ago. At least that's what all the old pictures of me show."

"You lost that much of your memory?" He held up a hand when he saw her mouth drop open. "I work for the Government, I can access all kinds of files so I know what happened to you and I'm sorry."

"Why are you sorry, I mean you don't have a reason to be?"

"I'm basically a cripple, my legs don't work quite right and I hate to see anyone beaten and have to go through what me and Merc did. We're stronger for it and have become what we are because of it but it wasn't what either of us wanted out of life. I know you have suffered from not being able to remember things and what you went through to get to where you are. I'm sorry because it shouldn't have happened to any of us and because you lost a lot of happy memories because of it." Finnegan nodded her head and gave him a small smile, he was like Merc in some ways but different all the same. Merc was stoic where Timmy was an intellectual person that seemed to see deeply into a persons feelings.

"Thank you and I agree with you, sometimes fate just picks on certain people." She took the transcripts that ma held out to her and opened the folder. "These are the complete transcripts of the entire trial?"

"Yep, I hacked into the courthouse records years ago and downloaded everything. That's every word that was said including the judge yelling at Ferguson's lawyer for brow beating me."

"Can I take this with me to read and then Tracy can bring it back over?"

"You can have it, that's a copy." He looked to his ma and saw her nod her head. "What's not in there is this," He pulled folded papers from his back pocket and handed them to her. "Those are statements from people that Ferguson's parents bought off so that he could get out of what he did," He saw her face pale. "Your names not in there but everyone who was there that night and saw what he and his friends did are."

"How did you get this and if you had it then why didn't the judge do something?"

"Merc got those after Ferguson left for college, by then nothing could be done because the case was dismissed and no one would reopen it."

"Do you have any idea where he is now?" She saw a wide smile come across his face and his eyes crinkle at the edges.

"Ohh yeah, I know where he's at and I do my best to be a giant thorn in his side. Just the other day I cancelled all his credit cards and had his Mercedes repossessed, bet he was pissed when he came out and found his car gone."

"You're an evil little man Timmy," Tracy chuckled and looked to ma. "Remember when he had the Ferguson's house condemned by the health department for roaches and rats."

"Or when the old mans blood tests came back saying that he had bubonic plaque and they quarantined them for a month at the hospital." Finnegan knew her jaw was on the table, she hoped that she never pissed Timmy off, who knows what he would do to her.

"Does Merc hate me for what ever I did back then?" She watched Tracy drop her head and ma take a deep breath.

"I'll put it this way, my daughter can hold a grudge past her dying breath but I think if she gets to know you, then she'll come to see that you had no idea what happened."

"Uuhhhh, I sent Merc a copy of your accident report last night. She wanted to know why you didn't know who she was and that pissed her off. She wanted to know how you couldn't remember after being in the courthouse and testifying."

"I didn't know who she was until last night; I looked in my yearbook and called my ma who was useless."

"Come on Merc, I know you can press more than this."

"Fuck you Jason, I'm warming up." She growled as she pushed the bar up from her chest and let it drop into the holders. "What's wrong with you not being able to lift as much as me?" She sat up from the bench and smacked him in his stomach.

"I ahhh...Hell I don't know." He took her place on the bench and looked to the sides to see how many plates she was adding. "What are you doing?"

"Making a man outta ya, I know you can press this much." She leaned down and looked into his warm brown eyes. "If you haven't noticed, you've had an audience for the last half hour."

"Who...please tell me it's a woman this time." His eyes went wide when she raised an eyebrow. "That's right you weren't here, damn Tom hit on me! I almost dropped a dumb bell on my head, he...grabbed my ass!" He said in a whisper.

"Well I can tell you that this one is not a guy, she's blonde and has green eyes." She looked out of the corner of her eye to see Finnegan on the stationary bike next to Tracy. "I happen to know that she's a teacher at the high school."

"Ohh great and here I am the dumbass jock that slid through school by the skin of my teeth." He took a deep breath, lowered the bar to his chest and exhaled as he pushed it up. It clattered in the holders and shook the rack. "That hurt like a bitch, think my pecs are gonna fall off." He took a quick glance over at Finnegan and looked back at Merc. "Who the Hell beat her up, her face looks like it's a rainbow."

"She was in the wrong place at the wrong time; she looks a Hell of a lot better now than a week

ago." She placed two more 25lb. plates on the bar and then lay down on the bench. "Ya know she's single and if you don't act like a huge dorkwad she might go out with you. But the catch is either me or Tracy has to go along."

"You're kidding right," He saw her shake her head and groaned. "That's sick Merc, how can I score with one of you two around?"

"Sorry Jas, she's under our protection." She pushed up on the bar, slowly lowered it to her chest, and then pushed it back up.

"Tracy how much is she pressing over there?" Tracy squinted and counted the plates on the bar.

"Ohh around 310lbs, I've seen her press more than that before."

Finnegan's eyebrows rose up into her damp bangs; she looked to Tracy and back to Merc. "That's like picking up the back end of a car!"

"You should see her do squats; I think her best so far is 610."

"Why would she want to be able to lift that much?"

"To show up the guys, they hate it when she out lifts them. It's a big change from being six feet tall and a hundred pounds soaking wet to how she looks now." She grinned when Finnegan's mouth dropped open; she had been watching her watch Merc since they came in and wondered what team she played on.

"So should I go over and talk to her?" Jason asked and looked over his shoulder at Finnegan.

"Why not, the worst that can happen is you trip and fall on your face before you get over there and make an ass of yourself?"

"Thanks for the ego boost, I told you I tripped over the end of the mat." He shoved her in the shoulder when she shook her head. "You're an ass ya know that?"

"One of the biggest, go talk to her already." She stood up from the bench, stretched her arms up over her head and heard her back pop. She went over to one of the machines, hooked a rope to the pulley cable and dropped the pin down to the bottom of the stack. She took a step back, placed her right foot behind a step and pulled the rope down towards the floor. She took a quick glance to the side and saw Jason approaching Finnegan, she shook her head when she saw him spread his lats out and walk like an ape. "You're an ass Jason, that's not going to impress her."

Finnegan watched Merc work out at the other machine and felt her blood pressure rise when the muscles in Merc's arms and shoulders flexed. She had never seen anything like it before; she continued to watch and leaned to the side when someone got in her line of vision. "Hi I'm Jason; I'm a friend of Merc and Tracy." He put out his hand and looked to Tracy when Finnegan ignored him and leaned to the side. He looked to Tracy and then to what had Finnegan's attention. "Looks like I'm wasting my time here, hey Trace wanna grab a beer some night maybe shoot some pool?"

"Sure if you're buying but you're still not getting my cookies, you have way too many parts to even get near them."

"I had a better chance with Tom, this just ain't right." He dropped down onto one of the bikes and watched Merc. "What's she got that I don't?"

"A great ass and one Hell of a set of pecs."

Finnegan looked to Tracy and blinked her eyes. "Uhh huh." Then went back to watching Merc.

Merc bent over and rested her hands on her knees, she looked to the side and saw a pair of green eyes watching her, she smiled and then went over to the squat rack to finish up with her workout. The entire time, she knew that Finnegan was watching her, it didn't break her concentration, she was used to people watching her work out. What never happened was someone forgetting what they were doing to watch her, she heard Finnegan yelp and cuss at Tracy when she laughed at her. She looked over and saw Finnegan rubbing her shin with one hand and smacking Tracy with the other. "Come on Fin, I'm not that interesting that you let the bike pedal beat you up." She said to herself and then grunted when she stood up with the weight balanced across her shoulders. "I could see if I was good looking but I'm no where near that," She dropped back down and then grunted again as she stood back up. "I'm not even at the bottom of the looks scale, now you're way up there."

"You know it's a sign of insanity to talk to yourself?"

"And you're the expert on that aren't ya Jas, I saw you talking to yourself over there by Finnegan."

"And that's your fault, you sent me over to ask a dyke out."

"I did no such thing," She draped her towel around her neck and used one end to wipe the sweat from her face. "I didn't tell you to talk to Tracy; I said to talk to Finnegan."

"And she was more interested in watching your ass and pecs bounce all over the place."

"That's news to me, are you sure?" She looked from beneath her towel to see green eyes

watching her.

"If you flex your muscles, she'll fall right off that bike she's on. Are you that dumb Merc, she's been watching you the whole time not me."

"Guess I am I thought she was interested in the shop teacher." She mumbled and then slapped Jason on his shoulder. "Time for me to head home and get something done before work, see ya later." She walked up to Tracy and Finnegan and gave them both a raised eyebrow and crooked grin. "Don't over due it guys, I'm not carrying either one of you around because your legs hurt." She winked at Tracy and walked away.

"After the workout she just did she's worried about us?" Finnegan groaned and stopped peddling.

"She doesn't get sore: she never stops moving long enough for her body to feel anything."

"God, she's like the Terminator."

It was eight o'clock at night when Merc walked up to Finnegan's door and knocked, she turned and looked out towards the road to make sure that no one was around. She had worked at the barracks for a few hours before coming over to relieve Tracy and still hadn't a clue as to where Mallory was hiding. He may very well be in another state and not a threat to Finnegan but she wasn't taking a chance, she would have Timmy keep an eye on the savings account for any withdrawals. They could catch him that way by having a trace to an ATM. She turned when the door opened and Finnegan stood before her in a half t-shirt and faded blue boxers. "Hey Mac, you're here early."

"I got bored at the barracks so I figured I'd come over and relieve Tracy for the rest of the night."

"You'll have to wake her up; she fell asleep on the couch after supper." She locked the door behind Merc and walked towards where she was working on some schoolwork. She had been surprised to find her backpack and other materials in Tracy's car when they came out of the gym earlier that day. She had all the tests made up and others graded for the next week, she wondered who was taking over her class and when she would be able to go back to work. "Thanks for getting my stuff from school, any idea when I can go back to work?"

"No problem and as far as you and work goes," She shrugged her shoulders. "That decision will come from higher up than me; we still don't know where Mallory is or why he killed the shop teacher." She sat down at the chair next to Finnegan's desk and looked at the thick history book. "We tried contacting next of kin and didn't find any except for a sister in Utah; did he ever tell you about a girlfriend or anything of his personal life that might connect Mallory to him?"

"Mac, John wouldn't have a girlfriend, he was gay and didn't date at all. His job was everything to him and the kids he taught; the most he did as far as going out was to Burger King for lunch."

"Was his preference known by the staff or kids?"

"Not that I'm aware, I think I'm the only one he told. To see him, you would have never known he was gay. You remind me of him a little." She said and then blushed. "Not that you remind me of a man or anything, it's how you carry yourself." Merc nodded her head.

"His funeral is tomorrow, I can take you if you want to go?" Finnegan looked to her desktop and nodded her head.

"I'd like that, I was his only friend at school and since he only has a sister..."

"I'm sure people will show up to pay their respects." She looked over to Tracy and threw a pencil at her. "We'll be there so don't worry about anything and no Smokey's so we won't stick out like a thumb." Finnegan gave her a rakish grin and wiggled her brows.

"Don't know about that, I kinda like the trooper look."

Finnegan rolled over in bed and caught a shadow outside her window; she went up on one elbow and rubbed her eyes before looking again. What she saw made her blood run cold, she fell from her bed and half crawled and stumbled to the living room. She crawled over the back of the couch to land on top of Merc. "Mac wake up! There's someone at my window!" She shook her shoulder and felt herself rolled over and covered by Merc's larger body.

"Get on the floor and stay there, don't move no matter what." She said in a hoarse whisper. "I'll be right back, don't move." She slipped to the floor, crawled to where her gun belt was and pulled her Glock from its holster. With one last look to where Finnegan was laying on the floor by the couch, she made for the front door at a crouch. Unlocking the door, she slipped out and went towards the side of the house. Moving low, she stopped at the corner and peeked around. Running back to the front of the small house, she saw taillights in the distance and heard tires peeling. Cussing under her breath, she went back into the house and turned the living room light on. Grabbing her phone, she called the barracks and told them to get someone out to Finnegan's to look for Mallory's car. After hanging up, she dropped down onto the couch next to her and ran a hand through her hair. "Did you get a good look at who ever was in your window?"

"Ohh yeah, that's a face I will never forget." She shivered and rubbed her arms of goose flesh. "Do you think it was him?" She looked to Merc with terrified eyes and grabbed her forearm. "He came to kill me didn't he?" Merc pulled her into her body and held her tight.

"I won't let him get to you and neither will Tracy, we can't stay here. If my cruiser in the driveway didn't scare him then nothing will."

"You want me to go to that farmhouse...I don't wanna be in some safe house, everyone knows they're not safe!"

"No one knows that it belongs to the state, you'll be safe there."

"The Hell I will," She pulled out of Merc's arms, got up and paced the floor in front of her.

"Everyone knows about that farmhouse on Job Corps road, that's where the kids go to party!"

"Ohh shit, so that's why the place is always messed up, we thought it was vandals." She dropped her head into her hands and tried to think of where they could go that no one would find them. She picked up her phone and called her cousins house, she had an idea but would need his help.

"Mac, what am I gonna do?" She dropped back down onto the couch and held onto her friends arm.

"Gimme a minute, I've an idea but I have to ask my Major first." She waited for Junior to answer the phone, after a few minutes she hung up and pulled Finnegan back into her arms. "Tomorrow morning you pack up what you'll need, after the funeral we're going to stop by my place and then go up to my cousin's chalet."

"Hold on there Mac, you expect me to stay in a chalet with you?"

"What's the difference, I stay here with you at night and Tracy's here during the day?"

"Yeah but this is my house, I call the shots here." Merc chuckled, she never thought of Finnegan as being a control freak.

"If that's all it is, then you can call the shots up at the chalet. I can't let you stay here, the farmhouse is a big no now and my trailer sucks." Finnegan leaned back and looked at Merc with a cocked eyebrow.

"You live in a trailer as in trailer park and lunatics for neighbors?"

"I was there first, the lunatics moved in afterwards. Ya think they would learn to stay away from me after being arrested a couple of times." She stood up and went into Finnegan's bedroom; she dropped the shades on the windows and looked around. A grin came to her face when she saw that the bed sheets were a pale blue with white fluffy clouds on them and the comforter at the foot of the bed matched. Other than that, the only thing in there was a blonde dresser and a nightstand with an alarm clock and lamp. "Alright Fin, you can come back and go to sleep." She yelled out and walked back into the living room. "He won't be back tonight and I pulled your shades down."

"Ohh noooo, I am not sleeping in there. You sleep in there and I'll sleep out here on the couch."

"Fin..."

"Mac, I always get my way. If you want the couch you'll have to move my cold stiff body to get it!"

"It's two o'clock in the morning and I'm too tired to fight you for the couch. If you hear any tiny little sound you come wake me up." She went back in to Finnegan's bedroom and crawled into her bed, she rolled onto her side and pulled the pillow long ways under her head and slipped her arm under it. Taking a deep breath, she inhaled Finnegan's soft scent and drifted off to sleep.

Finnegan lay down on the couch, crossed her arms over her chest and lay looking up at the ceiling. It was as if her hearing became super sensitive, she swore she could hear the crickets outside walking across blades of grass. She flinched when a low squeak came from her old house and jumped when the water heater came on; she pulled Merc's pillow over her face and tried to ignore everything. "Son of a bitch!" She got off the couch and went into her bedroom; she looked down at a sleeping Merc and crawled onto the bed to lie beside her. "Afraid of my own shadow and now I'm in bed with Merc; if she rolls over on me I'm dead." She fought with her pillow until she had it the way she liked, took a deep calming breath and drifted off to sleep to the sound of Merc's deep breathing.

Merc raised her head a little and looked down into the face pressed into her shoulder; she brushed tousled blonde hair back and let her eyes play over the slack features. Small white scars marred the smooth skin around her right eye and cheek, Finnegan groaned and rolled off Merc. She used one hand and moved the thick muscular arm to her liking before settling down. Merc grinned and brushed her hair back from the bruised cheek and over her ear. She then saw the ugly pink scare above her ear where they had cut her open to place the steel plate. Upon more observation, she found other scars at the hairline near her temple and in front of her ear. "What are you doing Mac, looking for bugs?"

"Nope, but I did find some grey hairs."

"I don't have grey hair, they're...highlights." She rolled over, looked into pale blue eyes, and groaned. "You know, sleeping on your arm is like sleeping on a rock."

"Sure they are they look pretty grey ta me and you looked pretty comfortable sleeping on my arm, chest, shoulder etc. When did you sneak in here anyway?"

"I didn't sneak; my senses went on hyper drive and every little noise had me jumping. I figured that if something was gonna get me, then it could get you first and I'd have a chance to run like Hell." Merc smiled and shook her head.

"Ohh I see, throw the big person ta the monster." She rolled from the bed, stretched her arms over her head and groaned from her stiff muscles. "What's for breakfast or do we get dressed and go out to eat?"

"That all depends on what time the funeral is and the fact that all you have here is your green

trooper uniform and what you're wearing now?" She took in the tight t-shirt and form fitting boxers. "If you go like that, they'll have to dig more graves."

"Whys that?" She asked from the doorway.

"Two words, men and heart attacks," She got out of bed and went to her closet. "Basic black or grey?"

"Grey, black is my color. We'll go out to eat after I call Tracy and stop by my trailer. I'll have her come pick us up and arrange for someone to get my cruiser."

"And how are we getting to the cabin, we're not gonna be stranded out there are we?"

"No, we'll have transportation, just not a cruiser. I don't wanna draw attention to us being out there."

They pulled up in front of Merc's trailer; Finnegan looked at it and then looked to her friends. "It doesn't really look like a trailer, at least not like the other ones that are here."

"That's because I remodeled it a few years ago, I yanked out all the old windows, the door and put the rough-saw siding up." She got out of the cruiser and waited for Finnegan and Tracy up on her deck. "I did all the brick work this past spring under the careful observation of the smuck next door." She spun her head and pointed at the pervert. "You better go hide before I haul your ass back to jail!" She opened her door and went in, flipping the ceiling fan on, she headed to her bedroom to get clothes packed. Finnegan walked in and looked around, she wasn't expecting the living room walls to be covered in a light pine or for the furniture to all be handmade. She looked to the kitchen and smiled at the ceramic canisters, they were black and white cows.

"You did all this by yourself?"

"Nope, I helped her on our days off. I supervised and drank beer while she cut the boards." Tracy said and pulled open the refrigerator. "When's ma gonna buy something edible?"

"When you get off your lazy ass and go with her that's when." Merc dropped her duffle bag and suit bag on the table and pulled the can of Coke from Tracy's hand. "Do you have all that you need for up there?"

"Yep, including a couple pounds of chocolate covered pretzels; can't leave home without 'em." She pulled two more Cokes out and handed one to Finnegan. "Ya know Fin, where we're going it's in the boondocks." Finnegan looked to Merc with a raised eyebrow.

"You're taking me to bum fuck Egypt and what exactly am I supposed to do out there?"

"Fish, read, relax, catch some sun."

"Get bitten by giant bugs that steal small children for snacks, shoot a bazooka at the huge spiders that weave a web over your car during the night. Ya know the usual stuff that ya do out in the country." Tracy said with a wide grin on her face.

"Mac, I hate spiders!" Finnegan stepped up to her and poked her in the chest. "I really hate spiders!"

"Thanks Tracy, you just had to mention bugs." She threw a finger out at the friend and growled. "You get bug duty the first night and that tiny bed in the bedroom."

Tracy groaned, grabbed Merc's bags and headed towards the door. "Fine with me," she grinned and looked over her shoulder. "That means Fin gets the pullout bed and you get the floor!"

"Don't think so." Merc mumbled loud enough for Finnegan to hear.

"Pretty sure of yourself aren't you." Fin said and followed Tracy.

"Yep, ain't anyone big enough to make me sleep on the floor." She went out the door and locked up her trailer before going down to Tracy's cruiser.

"OK guys, where are you going to change clothes?" Finnegan asked and looked at her two friends still dressed in their workout clothes. Merc looked to Tracy and grinned evilly.

"In the parking lot."

After stopping off at the barracks to check in for any new information on the case, Merc and Tracy took Finnegan to the locker room so that they could change into clothes that were more appropriate. Finnegan couldn't help but watch Merc change into her black suit, she felt her blood rush southward when Merc's t-shirt hit the floor and her back muscles rippled with each movement. What caught her attention was the white scar that started at her right shoulder and ended over her left hip, she remembered from reading the report that Timmy had given her, that the scars were from when she was attacked. She still couldn't remember anything from that night but she was having very strange dreams of herself when she was younger. She wondered if reading the report and the other stuff had triggered them. She almost fell from the bench she was sitting on when Merc slipped out of her shorts and boxers to stand before her completely naked. Her breath caught and her jaw dropped open.

"Well that's a very becoming look, but the drool will kill the professional look ya got going on there."

"Huh..." Green eyes widened when Merc stepped closer.

"Will you hand me my bag?"

"Why?" Merc planted her hands on her hips and tilted her head to the side.

"OK I can go like this but I don't think anyone would appreciate it."

Tracy rolled her eyes at Finnegan and grabbed Merc's bag for her. "Not to mention the ER staff would kill you for filling up their beds with troopers and the people from the funeral. Geez ya act like you've never seen a naked woman before."

"Ahhh...seeing myself doesn't count." Two sets of eyes zeroed in on her and then rolled.

They arrived at the funeral home and walked into the chapel where the shop teacher was for viewing. Finnegan was between her two friends with Merc taking up the rear, she looked back to see the stoic expression back on the tall troopers face and had to smile. She knew that Tracy looked the same way even though she couldn't see her face, it was the other people jumping out of her way that told her. She stopped and held out a hand to the principal and then one of the other teachers.

"Miss Draper, I didn't know if you would be here today." The principal said in a whisper. "I'm glad that you could come, Edward will be missed. When will you be back to school, the kids miss you?"

"Yes sir he will, not only by us but all the kids as well. I'm not sure about when, the police want to make sure that there's no longer a threat to my life." She looked up to Merc when she felt her arm taken and nodded her head to the principal. "It looks like they are ready to begin the service." She let Merc lead her to a pew that was empty and sat down beside Tracy; she looked to the side to see Merc checking out the crowd of people and felt a little afraid. "Do you think he'll come here?"

"No, too many people here. He can't take the chance of having a cop spot him." They sat through the service and then followed the group of cars to the cemetery a few miles away. They had picked up Tracy's car at the barracks so they would blend in and realized that a modified metallic blue GTO didn't fit in at all.

"Anyone touches my car and I'll kill 'em." She growled when they got out after parking near the rear of the lot. "When are you gonna buy a car Merc, we always take mine?"

"When pigs fly and people learn how to open their doors and not beat the hell outta the car next to them." Finnegan grabbed Merc's hand and stopped her.

"All you drive is your cruiser?"

"No, I have other transportation. That's what we'll take to the chalet." They stopped towards the

back of the crowd surrounding the grave; Finnegan caught eyes with the principal and gave a slight nod to her head before moving her attention back to the minister at the grave. The principal watched the three women for a few minutes before looking around at all his teachers and students who had come to pay their respects and then walked a short distance away to a shady spot beneath a tree.

"Why the Hell did ya put my money in a savings account, I can't take it out without the cops knowing about it!?"

"Where was I supposed to put it, in your filthy mattress? And how would the cops know if you took it out?"

"Because you stupid ass, they're cops at the bank everyday just waitin fer me ta show up!"

"You finish the job and I'll give you the other half in person and then wire what's in your account anywhere you want it. Now kill that damn bitch Draper!"

"How am I supposed ta do that, she's under police guard 24 hours a day?"

"You figure it out; you are the one who kills cops for fun!" The phone went dead in Mallory's hand; he slammed it back down on the hook and looked across the street to the funeral procession.

"I only kill certain cops you ass wipe mother fucker, never killed no women before either." He jogged to a car that he had stolen from the Martinsburg mall and jumped behind the wheel. "I may be a killer but I don't kill women, you can keep your damn money I'm outta this shit! Don't know why ya wanted that teacher killed or Draper." He peeled away from the curb and headed to the nearest ATM machine, he figured that he could take out enough money to get him away from West Virginia and then have one of his brothers get the rest for him once he was safe.

Merc took Finnegan's hand and leaned down close to her ear. "Let's get out of here, I have an uneasy feeling." She whispered and then clicked her tongue at Tracy; she slowly stepped back and then turned while still holding onto Finnegan's hand. On the way back to Tracy's car, she kept looking both ways and kept Finnegan close to her side. Once to the GTO, she pushed Finnegan in first and then climbed in beside her while Tracy jogged around and got behind the wheel. "Take us to ma's house and then take about an hour before you head towards the chalet."

Tracy nodded her head and fired up her car, she took off out of the parking lot slowly so that it seemed as if they were in no hurry. "He was there wasn't he?" She asked Merc and kept an eye on the parked cars.

"I'm not sure but I had that gut feeling I get when something's not right. Once we're up there, I

want a patrol on her house and no contact with the barracks."

"Hold on here a minute," Finnegan threw her hand up in front of Merc and turned in the seat to look at her. "What are you doing here with my life, no contact with the barracks?"

"Nope, the only one I want to know where we are is Junior. I can keep in contact with Timmy and ma by the Internet."

"Ohh well that's secure..."

"With her and Timmy it is, he's the best there is when it comes to encrypting programs and sneaking through back doors."

"Just great, I'm teamed with Trooper T, Yosemite Sam and a tech head." She turned and sunk down into the seat but made sure she elbowed Merc in her ribs.

Finnegan came out of the bathroom at ma's house and looked around the living room, when she went in; everyone was there, now she was alone. "Just great, they left me." She walked through the house and then heard a loud rumbling and ma yelling at Merc to knock it off. She headed to the back door and stopped once she was out on the back porch; she looked towards the garage and moaned. "She's insane, there's no way in Hell I'm getting on that!" She said to herself on her way down the steps.

"Why does that thing have to be so loud?" Ma yelled and slapped Merc in her shoulder. "Turn that damn thing off before I go deaf!"

"Come on ma, ya know she pulled the baffles out because it's a cycle dyke thing ta do." Timmy ducked the hand that came towards his head and stepped behind Tracy. "Ain't that right my queen?"

"You wanna be a queen; I can do that in one quick move?" She flipped open a straight razor and wiggled it in front of him. "Better yet, let me get rid of that nasty goatee."

"Ohh please, get rough with me. Ma still has the paddle she used on us when we were kids."

"Maybe she should still be using it on you?" She said and slapped his hand off her ass.

"Nah, Merc uses it on her dates, she picks up those S&M women in DC." Merc gave him a sneer and a growl.

"Do not, that's your thing." She looked over her mother's shoulder and saw murderous green eyes watching her. "Ohh shit, dykes outta the closet now, thanks Timmy." She got off her motorcycle and approached Finnegan slowly. "Are you ready to go, Tracy's gonna take our bags with her?"

"Why didn't you tell me?"

"I didn't think me being gay mattered." She backed up when Finnegan started jabbing her in her stomach.

"We'll talk about that later, I meant the motorcycle. I don't like them and they're dangerous!"

"Have you ever been on one?" She flinched when Finnegan hit a tender area. "Oww that hurt!"

"Good and no, I've seen enough crashes on those police chase things on TV. I don't wanna be a road pizza!" Merc continued to back up until she had no place to go and was up against the garage.

"I've never wrecked...ooowwww...I'm a good driver! Fin that hurts!" She tried to fend off the fingers that kept jabbing her.

"I thought you were the Terminator, ya know indestructible and everything, no pain because of the suit of armor you wear?"

"It's at the cleaners...ma help me!" She squirmed and got away from Fin to hide behind her ma.

"Why should I help you, I've been complaining for years about you and motorcycles?"

"But I'm a careful driver and I've never wrecked or hit anything." She whined and gave everyone a puppy dog look, Timmy and Tracy rolled their eyes and walked away leaving the others to stare at Merc. "Ohh come on Fin, give me a chance here." Finnegan planted her hands on her hips and raised her half-missing eyebrow. "Ohh please don't give me that look, it's just too weird."

"If we wreck and become road pizzas, I will haunt your ghost for all eternity!" Merc let out a deep breath and thanked the Gods that she had won the small battle.

"OK it's a deal, if we don't wreck, I'm gonna pester you every waking second of the day with I told you so's."

Merc tried to pull her head down to bury it in her shoulders, even with the loud mufflers, she could still hear Finnegan screaming at her and her head was hurting from the hand pounding on top of her helmet. "DAMN YOU MAC SLOW DOWN!"

"I'm going a whole 30mph here Fin!" She yelled back, stopped at the red light and turned her head. "Stop hitting me and hold on with both arms." Finnegan leaned forward so that their shields touched.

"Then I can't pound on your head!"

"That's the point you little twerp!" She turned her head back, waited for the pounding to start up, and sighed when Finnegan behaved herself, or so she thought. As soon as she got over 30mph, the pounding and screaming started up again.

"I'm NOT a twerp you overgrown muscle headed geek!" She quickly wrapped both arms around Merc when they got out of town and were on the open road. With sitting on the bitch pad, it brought her up higher behind Merc. She realized too late where her arms were, the weight of Merc's breasts rested on her forearms and brought a blush to her face. She knew if she moved her arms, she would give away her uneasiness so she left them where they were. She squeezed Merc tighter and pressed her chest against a wide back when they went into their first turn, when they came out of it, she released the breath she didn't know she was holding. As they eased out on the road, Finnegan relaxed against Merc and began to enjoy the wind that whipped against them. Her senses wheeled when she noticed how everything smelled so different, she could smell pine, floral scents and the fresh air. She never noticed that while driving her car or out walking around, and the freedom that she was feeling was unimaginable. She was seeing the draw that so many had to motorcycles and soon lost her fright.

When the bike slowed, she looked over Merc's shoulder to see a large wooden sign with the words 'Hidden River' scrawled across it in gold letters, she had heard about the place but never had a reason to check it out. She grunted when the road turned into nothing but scarce gravel and numerous pot holes, with each bump, her legs slid against Merc's and sent shock waves to southern areas. *"Ohh what the Hell Fin, that's twice today you've thought of her in a sexual way."* When Merc pulled up to a chalet, Fin blinked her eyes and then released her from the death grip. This was not what she was expecting at all and would make Merc and Tracy pay later. She held onto Merc's shoulders, swung her leg over the seat and then grabbed onto a thick forearm when her legs threatened to give out.

"You OK, it takes a while to get used to straddling something," She wiggled her brows suggestively. "With this much power to it." Finnegan pulled her helmet off and placed it on one of the mirrors, ran her finger's through her hair and turned to give Merc a narrowed look.

"Let's not get into straddling things, you scared the shit outta me a couple times." She pointed to the motorcycle and then to a grinning Merc. "You could have warned me about turns and that lousy excuse for a road."

"I forget that not everyone's been on a bike and I thought that they would have filled in the holes since I threatened their lives the last time I was here." She shrugged her shoulders and placed her helmet on the other mirror. She grinned evilly and lowered her head so that they were nose to nose. "Ready for this, I told ya so!" She straightened up and headed for the side of the chalet where a pair of steps led up to a solid wooden door.

"Hey wait, what kinda bike is this?" She yelled and jogged after Merc.

"It's a Honda Shadow 1100 ACE; I got it cheap at the police auction. I had a smaller bike but it just couldn't carry my weight." She shrugged her shoulders and opened the door.

"I've seen 400lb guys on bikes smaller than yours." She slapped Merc in her stomach and pushed passed her.

"OK so I looked like I was riding a mini bike and they don't count 'cuz they were probably five feet tall and about as round." The first place she stopped was the refrigerator; she searched around and pulled out a package of lunchmeat and a loaf of bread. "Hope Tracy gets here soon, I'm hungry." Finnegan turned from where she was standing in the living room and felt her jaw drop open.

"But you ate half a cow at ma's house, how can you be hungry?" She rolled her eyes when Merc flexed a bicep and kissed it.

"Gotta feed the python's baby." She made four sandwiches with everything she could find in the refrigerator and placed the plate on the table along with a can of Coke and a gallon of milk. "Come on Fin have a sandwich and I'll give ya the nickel tour when we're done."

"The way you wolf food down that should be three whole seconds," She sat down, took one of the sandwiches, and opened the Coke. "So how are you going to work out while we're up here?" Merc swallowed and pointed to the floor.

"Room down stairs, it's Junior's sons weight room. He's at college playing football for Morgantown, so it's all mine."

"So Junior is your cousin?" She looked up to catch blue eyes for a second and then went back to eating.

"Yep, he's five years older than me and Timmy. This was his house before he got married, we all use it though, that is while Glens at college." A few minutes later, Merc showed Finnegan the chalet. From the outside view, no one could tell that it had three floors. The upper floor was a loft that over hung the living room; it had its own bathroom and large bay window that looked out across the small lake in the backyard. The living room floor was hardwood with woven throw rugs in front of double sliding glass doors and couch. Finnegan ran her fingers across the pinewood intersected vertically by textured plaster; she looked to Merc and nodded her head to the walls.

"I like this, how do ya think it would look in my living room?" Merc tilted her head to the side and closed one eye.

"Maybe if it was done horizontally, it would make the place look larger. And maybe wood a lighter shade and varnished to a medium gloss?"

"You sound like a shop teacher," She took in the rest of the living room and smiled. "On the wall above the fireplace was a group picture of Merc's family including her cousins. "You're all tall

except your ma and Timmy," She looked to see Merc looking at the picture. "I'd hate to see you're family reunion or try to feed all of them."

"Yeah it looks like a gladiator invasion; you should see the football games we have." She took Finnegan's hand and led her out the sliding glass doors, down the deck stairs and out to the lake. "After the game, we come down here to swim and fish." She walked out onto the small dock and stopped at the edge. "Junior has the place stocked every couple years, there's huge bass in here and one giant sized catfish that no one has ever caught."

"Then how do you know it's in there?" Finnegan asked and leaned over to look down into the water. "It could have died or something."

"Nope, we hook it and it snaps our line every single time." She lifted a lid on a metal box, pulled out a loaf of stale bread and tossed some of it out to the mallards floating around on the lake. "There's a big snapping turtle in here to, I picked it up off the road years ago and released it here." Finnegan smiled and took some of the bread from Merc's hand.

"I thought I was the only one who saved turtles from being squished, I let 'em go in my backyard. It looks like a box turtle sanctuary at times, they all come out after I've cut the grass or it rains." She walked closer to the edge of the dock and pointed. "Hey Mac what's that down there?" She took a step back and waited for Merc to bend over, as soon as she was leaning forward, Finnegan gave her a shove and watched her go head first into the lake. She stepped back further, waited for her to surface and then gave her a huge smile. "Paybacks for scaring me." She saw blue eyes go pale and then even white teeth show from beneath a snarling lip, turning, she high tailed it to the chalet with a dripping Merc right on her heels. She took off towards the front, saw Tracy coming and knew she was safe. Or so she thought until she saw the grass coming up towards her and felt cold water soak into her back.

"You rotten little twerp, I can't believe you did that!" Merc said close to her ear and then shook her wet hair all over Finnegan. "I oughta carry you over there and toss you in!"

"You wouldn't..." She was cut off when Merc lifted her up and carried her struggling body down to the lake; she tried to hold on but realized that it was useless when Merc jumped out into the lake. They sputtered to the surface and splashed each other until they saw Tracy sitting on the dock watching.

"Just wait until something grabs one of ya, I ain't helping, I'm gonna sit here and laugh my ass off." Her eyes widened when Finnegan swam towards her, she got up and ran to the chalet.

"Chicken shit trooper," Finnegan mumbled and then pulled herself up on the dock, she looked to Merc and felt her face heat up. Right in front of her were hardened nipples straining against a threadbare t-shirt. She struggled and looked up into pale blue eyes with a dark brow arched over the left eye. "Uhhmm...guess we better go change..." She fell back on the dock when Merc pulled her shirt over her head and wrung it out. "Geez Mac, why not just strip and give all the neighbors heart attacks!"

"Would serve them right for peeping," She dropped her shirt on Finnegan's head and walked past her. "Come on Fin before I have to save you from a beaver or something." She got up, jogged after her friend, and stumbled from the sight of her broad back.

"I'm not helpless ya know, I even know how to shoot a gun." That made Merc stop and turn to face her.

"You can shoot a gun; I never expected that from someone with your background?"

"What's my background got to do with rabbit hunting and what exactly do you know about my background?"

"Just what I remember from school, you hung out with the 'in' crowd. They took me as the type to march against persons owning guns or hunting." She shrugged her shoulders and turned only to find her upper arm taken in strong fingers.

"Yeah well you don't know shit about me or my background!" Finnegan shoved her and then walked past her back up to the chalet. Merc dropped her head and clenched her fists in aggravation.

"Damn it all to Hell and back," She tilted her head back and looked to the sky. "Open mouth insert both feet and choke you dumbass tunnel rat."

Tracy looked up from where she was putting groceries away and saw Finnegan rush past her and up the stairs to the loft, next came Merc with a hound dog look. She grabbed a bottle of water and went into the basement without a word. "OK, what the fuck?" She said and went around the counter and looked up in the loft. "Fin what the fucks going on?"

"Go ask the know it all asshole First Sergeant!" She flung her wet clothes into the bathroom and then grabbed dry ones before disappearing through the door. "Damn people think they know everything!" She slammed the door cutting off any further questions. Turning on the shower, she waited for it to warm up. Looking in the mirror at her somewhat bruised face, she touched the cheek that was broken and was relieved not to feel any pain. Turning the left side of her face to the mirror, she looked at all the new scars she had and sighed. "You get uglier every time you look in the mirror, few more scars and you'll look like a road map for all of West Virginia."

Tracy went down the steps to the basement and stopped halfway down, she watched Merc pound the Hell out of the heavy bag hanging from the ceiling and decided to just take a seat and watch. It didn't have to be a big problem to send Merc off to pound the shit out of a heavy bag, her temper had grown with age and was a dangerous thing to bring to life. The jarring punches had the rafters shaking and dust raining down on their heads, Tracy flinched when Merc hit the bag and a seam ripped. She was thankful that she had never felt one of her friends punches like some

of the other troopers had. They learned quickly to never get in the boxing ring with Merc, even if it was just to spar. She was deadly and took no mercy on anyone brave enough to step in the ring. For over an hour, Tracy sat there watching until Merc sunk to the floor panting. "So what happened out there after I left?"

"Nothing that I haven't done a thousand times in my head," Merc continued to sit on her knees without looking up at her friend. "I opened my mouth about the 'in' crowd and pissed Fin off, maybe I should just go home and you can guard her."

"Ohh that would really help now wouldn't it?" She came down the stairs to sit cross-legged in front of her. "Go talk to her and straighten this out, running away is not gonna help any of us and just maybe you can let go of the past and help Fin remember hers."

"What am I supposed to tell her that she was an uppity bitch that looked at us lower class students like we were mold on rocks or that she stuck with the assholes and refused to let justice punish the guilty?" Tracy sighed heavily and thought for a second before speaking.

"Maybe she didn't really know anything of what happened or maybe that asshole and his friends threatened her if she told what she did know?"

"All she had to do was tell what she did know on the stand and once they were put away she would have been safe, we never had the satisfaction of seeing justice prevail. You have no idea how that feels, 20 years later and I still hate those people!"

"Well that puts you two in the same boat now doesn't it, she never saw justice for her attack all those years ago and now she's been attacked again. This time we'll get the guy and make sure that all those people he has hurt can have closure." She squeezed Merc's shoulder and went back upstairs to make herself a snack and check on Finnegan, she didn't know if her little talk helped, but she hoped it did something. She looked up towards the loft but didn't see Finnegan, her heart pounded at the thought of her taking off and disappearing. She was about to yell for Merc when she saw a blonde head clearing the deck rail, she walked through the sliding glass doors and watched as Finnegan sat down on the lakes bank. "That's all I would need." She mumbled and went back into the kitchen.

Merc fell onto her back, looked to the ceiling and covered her sweat soaked face with her bruised and swollen hands. She knew that what Tracy had said was right and that she should talk to Finnegan but at this moment, she hadn't the energy to fight with her. And fight is exactly what Finnegan would do if she went near her before she cooled off, she didn't know how but she knew that the small woman had a temper equal to her own. Rolling to her feet, she went to the door that would let her out into the back yard and stopped when she saw Finnegan sitting down by the lake. Turning around, she went up the steps and stopped in the kitchen to get a bottle of water. "How long has she been out there?"

"Not that long, she was walking out there when I came upstairs." Tracy handed her a turkey

sandwich and leaned back in her chair. "Are you gonna talk to her or let this stew until you both explode and blow this place off the map?"

"I'll wait a while, we both need to calm down first and I need to get my thoughts in order or I'll end up with my feet in my mouth." She left the kitchen to get clean clothes from her duffle bag and then went upstairs to use the shower; she looked down at her hands and groaned. She would be lucky to be able to move her fingers in the morning and knew it was her own damn fault. "You're an asshole Merc and you deserve the pain."

It was past dark when Finnegan walked back up to the chalet; she had sat and thought of what she had said to Merc and what she remembered from when she was in school. She had some memories but not a whole lot. They were like flashes more than anything and when she had returned home after her attack, she had seen the stuff in her bedroom. She knew by the clothes she had left there that she had worn what was in style at the time. Merc would only know by what she saw and assumed that she was upper class. She would have no idea about how Finnegan lived or that her dad was a blue-collar worker that only made a little over minimum wage. The more she thought about it the more she realized that she had lived a lie. She went up the steps and stopped in the living room before the pullout bed, there laid Merc in boxers and a half t-shirt. She looked up to the loft and could see Tracy's outline in bed by the soft glow of the bathroom light. Rubbing her hands over her face, she went over to the chair that sat diagonal to the pullout and sat down. For long moments, she watched Merc sleep and finally gave in. It was either sleep on the hard floor, the chair or swallow her pride and get into the large bed with Merc. Kicking off her shoes and shedding her Levis, she crawled in beside the tall woman and lay back to back with her. Looking out the window in front of her, she watched clouds pass over the moon and felt her eyes drifting closed.

Tracy came down the stairs and looked over the back of the couch; a small smile came to her face from what she saw. Merc had her head resting on Finnegan's stomach, her leg over a shin and one arm wrapped around Finnegan's waist. She knew that they hadn't talked because Merc had fallen asleep before she had gone up to bed and Finnegan hadn't come inside yet. She looked to the kitchen and then grabbed her car keys; she would run to the small store at the small shopping center down the road, pick up some pastries and maybe give them enough time to talk. She hoped they didn't take too long to iron out their assumptions so that they could relax while they were hiding. She also had to contact Timmy for information and knew he would ask how everything was going; there was no way that she was going to tell him that WWII was close to happening at the chalet.

At the sound of Tracy's car rumbling from the chalet, green eyes opened and blinked a few times. She tried to stretch and found her one arm pinned to the bed beneath a heavy weight, she looked down and dropped her head back into her pillow when she saw Merc's dark head on her stomach.

Wiggling her arm free, she shook the numbness from her hand and then ran it through the silky dark hair. "If you only knew the truth about me back then maybe things would be easier between us?"

"Then why don't you tell me?" Merc said in a hoarse voice and tilted her head from where it rested.

"Because I know you won't believe me, you already have this picture imbedded in your head as to how things were and they're not all true." She eased up against the back of the couch when Merc moved off her and looked to the side to look into bloodshot blue eyes. "My parents weren't and aren't rich, my dad worked for a heating and air conditioning company and mom stayed home." She turned to her side and played with the pillowcase. "What everyone saw and what I was are two different things...I'm poor white trash Merc." She wiped at her eyes and looked to the bed sheets. "All my clothes were hand me downs and the only reason those kids let me hang around was because of my looks and brains." She looked up with tear-filled eyes and felt her tears run down her cheeks. "I don't remember what happened that night but if I had known something I would have said so in the trial."

"How can you be so sure that you didn't know what happened?"

"Because I would never lie to protect people like the ones I hung around with. After I was attacked and scared, they wouldn't have anything to do with me." She wiped her face and gave Merc a small smile. "They said that I wasn't the same and that they didn't want to be seen with scar face." Merc groaned and closed her eyes; she knew all too well how it felt like to be called that. She reached out, pulled Finnegan into her body, and rested her face against her crown.

"I'm sorry Fin; they were cruel as kids and grew up to be cruel adults. Scars don't matter to me; it's what's inside a person." She pulled Finnegan closer to her and rubbed her back. "I still have people staring at me after all these years, I ignore it but at times it still bothers me. Did all of you end up at the same college, you know with the asshole?"

"No, not all of us ended up at Penn State. I went there because that's where my scholarship came from; the others went because that's where their boyfriends were going." Merc pulled back and wiped Finnegan's tears away with her fingertips.

"Wait a minute, you were attacked in Virginia and didn't graduate from Penn State, you graduated from Morgantown."

"After the attack, I went back to campus with the people I went down with. I went to the campus counselor shortly after and they got my scholarship transferred to Morgantown. I didn't feel safe anywhere at Penn State, especially when they couldn't catch who ever attacked me in Virginia."

"So you think it was someone you went down there with?" Fin nodded her head.

"From what I was told, I left the party at the hotel and went down to the parking lot to look for Davis, that's all anyone knew."

"And where was the asshole during your attack?" Merc had an idea but she was holding her tongue.

"He said that he was down the hall from where everyone else was and nowhere near the parking lot. Everyone at that hotel was from either here or Penn State, so you tell me."

"Do you really want me to tell you what I have thought since I read the report?"

"I know what you're thinking and it's the same as what I think, Davis is the one who attacked me. I couldn't prove it back then just like I can't prove it to this day."

"Someone has to know Fin, with that many people running in and out of hotel rooms; someone had to have seen something."

"Most likely but it doesn't matter anymore," She rolled from the bed and headed towards the bathroom. "Statute of limitations would only work if I was dead." Merc shivered with that thought, she was glad that Finnegan had survived her attack. She may have hated her when they were kids but that was then, now she was feeling something totally in the opposite direction. With the sound of the toilet flushing and the door opening, she looked over the back of the couch and watched Finnegan move around the kitchen. Her eyes zeroed in on the blue French cut bikini panties that showed off muscular legs and felt her mouth go dry. She fell back on the bed and closed her eyes when Finnegan came back over, she knew that if she saw her eyes she see her excitement. *"You can't go there Merc, she's under your protection and it's against the rules."*

"You want coffee and some breakfast?" Finnegan asked as she sat down on the edge of the bed. "I'll make western omelets, hash browns and I know that Tracy brought bagels."

"You'll cook for us?" She opened one eye and watched Finnegan nod her head. "Ya know how much we can eat right?"

"We have six dozen of eggs, how many should I use for you and Tracy?"

"Just six each for us, it has a lot of nasty stuff that ain't good for ya. Ya know cholesterol and all kinds of other fats and stuff." She rolled to her side and gave Finnegan raised eyebrows. "Can ya make the bacon crispy, I hate wiggly bacon."

"Ohh so ya like all the sodium right to the top?" She grinned and nodded her head. "I don't like raw bacon either." She ran her fingers through Merc's hair to brush it off her face, smiled and went back into the kitchen to make their breakfast. Merc was floored, she had no idea why Finnegan had touched her as she did but her face was still tingling where her fingers had briefly touched. She leaned up over the back of the couch again and watched her get the frying pans down from the cabinet and other stuff. When the door opened, she saw Tracy put a box on the table and knew she had run to the store for pastries. She rolled from the bed and gave her a bright smile when she held up a Bavarian crème filled donut.

"I got the last dozen of these, I almost had to shoot some old lady ta get 'em." Merc took a bite and then held it out for Finnegan; Tracy raised an eyebrow at her and then grinned. She had hoped that they had ironed everything out between them while she was gone. She then noticed that Finnegan was in her underwear and couldn't help but look at her legs, until Merc stepped in front of her and growled. "What, I didn't do anything?"

"You didn't huh," She leaned down and went nose to nose with her. "Come downstairs, I need a spotter for my bench presses."

"I'll yell when breakfast is done and be careful with your hands Mac, they look awful sore and stiff." She watched them go down the steps and couldn't help but shiver from the sight of Merc's ass flexing under her boxers. "Ohh will mom and dad go off the deep end with this, never thought of being with a woman before. That is until I saw Mac and all her muscles." She shook her head with the revelation and tried to concentrate on cooking and not the flexing pecs in the basement.

[Continued In Part 2](#)

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~ Class Separation ~

by Larisa
Part 2

"So you guys worked everything out?"

"Yeah, I learned some stuff that I had no idea about." Merc said as she lay back on the bench and placed her hands on the weight bar. "She's just like us Tracy; actually, she said she was poor white trash." She took a deep breath, pressed up on the bar and then lowered it down to her chest. Exhaling, she pushed it back up for a count of two and then back down.

"And all this time you thought she was a rich kid like the ones she hung out with." She watched the veins bulge on her friend's neck and put her hands out to steady the bar. "You looked all nice and comfy when I left this morning; I was hoping she didn't kill you for laying all over her." Merc dropped the bar in the holders and sat up.

"I'm surprised she didn't smack me one," she looked up at Tracy and dropped her head back down. "Do you think she's gay...I mean I know she watches me but that doesn't mean anything." Tracy gave her a wicked grin and dropped down on the end of the bench in front of her.

"Well, you could kiss her and if you survive afterward then she's gay. If not and you die then we'll all know to stay away from her."

"Gee thanks Tracy that really helps a lot, doesn't matter anyway, she's off limits."

"I don't see anyone here that's gonna nark on you and no one in the barracks would say anything either." Ten minutes later Finnegan called them upstairs for breakfast, Merc couldn't help but watch her as she set a plate heaping with food in front of her. She turned her head, looked right down the front of the button down shirt that she wore, and felt her face heat up. She knew that she hadn't had that shirt on before and wondered if she had put it on to distract her. She jumped in her seat when a foot kicked her shin and looked over at a grinning Tracy. "So Fin, what do ya wanna do today?"

"Ohh and what exactly is there to do here?" She asked and then sat down across from Merc to eat.

"Well, Merc can teach you how to fish if you don't know how. Or you can polish all that damn chrome on her bike, if you do that, she'll love you forever."

"Ohh well that sounds like fun," She looked up at Merc. "Who's the slave you usually have shinning all that chrome?"

"That would be me," Tracy grumbled. "She makes me do that when I screw up at work, it's a punishment worse than death."

Tracy lay on a blanket in just a bikini bottom back from the lakes edge trying to even out her suntan, Merc and Finnegan sat on the end of the dock with their feet in the water and fishing poles in their hands. So far, they had caught one bass a piece for lunch and an old bicycle tire. Merc kept taking quick glances until Finnegan caught her. "Why do you keep peeking at me?"

"Just curious...you have more piercings in one ear than the other, any reason for it?"

"That's called getting drunk and letting an idiot try and pierce your ears."

"Hey it could be worse; you could have ended up with a tattoo." She looked over and saw the blush running up Finnegan's neck. "Where is it and what is it?"

"I can't tell you and its Tinker Belle," She saw blue eyes twinkle and a wicked grin come over Merc's face. "Don't ask why it's Tinker Belle because I haven't the slightest idea and all I remember is this giant biker with more hair than a grizzly laughed the entire time he was doing it."

"Is it big and visible when you wear a bikini?"

"Its big enough and I'm not telling." Merc chuckled and wiggled her brows.

"Anything else pierced besides your ears?" Finnegan looked over and captured twinkling blue eyes.

"You tell me, you looked down my shirt this morning did you see any nipple rings?" She grinned when Merc's face turned bright red.

"Sorry about that, I don't usually do things like that..." She sighed and looked down into the water. "Sometimes I'm no better than a man..."

"Don't worry about it Mac, I took it as a compliment." She bumped shoulders with her and pointed out to the lake. "So where's all the fish?"

"Must be on strike or something, maybe if we change the bait we'll get something. Two little fish ain't enough food for the three of us."

"Nope, maybe we should go to Sea World and get one of their whales for you and Tracy." She started to reel her line in when the tip of Merc's rod bent down once, popped up and bent almost into a U. "On second thought, I think you may have one on there." She quickly reeled her line in and then grabbed the net sitting beside her, she grinned when Merc growled and fought with what ever was on her line. "Maybe I should get a harpoon out, that thing must be huge!"

"Must be the big daddy of the lake." Merc forced out between clenched teeth and then let out a breath when the fish stopped fighting. "What the Hell...Ohhh shit!" The drag squealed, the fishing rod bent sideways and then went back into a U shape. "Look at that will ya!" She yelled when a black body surfaced and then rolled, she was so sure that she had finally caught him when the line snapped and sent her rod and line back at her. She yelped, fell on to her back and grabbed at her forehead. "Son of a bitch! I want scuba gear and a spear gun, I want that damn fish over my fireplace mantel!"

Tracy leaned over her and snickered. "You don't have a fireplace Capt. Nemo; you don't even have a mantel."

"I'll build one after I get that fish!" Finnegan pulled her hand away and looked at the bright red line that bisected her forehead.

"That looks really nasty," She touched the area and chuckled when Merc slapped away her hand. "I'll go get ya some ice and your motorcycle helmet; you need all the protection you can get."

"So how are you gonna explain that mark to ma and Timmy?" She asked and dropped down to sit beside her.

"It'll be gone before I see them so I'm not worried about it."

"Wrong answer, they're coming across the yard right now."

"I don't think Timmy will even notice me, he's gonna be drooling on your tits instead." She gave her a huge toothy grin when she looked around and crossed her arms over her breasts.

"Dam it ta Hell!" She sighed when Merc pulled her t-shirt off and handed it to her. "I owe ya big time; I'll bring donuts every morning."

Finnegan came trotting back down to the dock and saw ma and Timmy standing down there laughing at Merc, she grinned and continued on her way. When she reached her, she stepped behind her and placed the ice bag on her forehead.

"If I hit myself in the head will you do that for me?" Timmy asked and stepped closer to her. "Ya know my sister whimpers when she's hurt and gets this stupid pout on her face."

"Do not, that's you who whimpers and pouts." She whimpered when Finnegan moved the ice bag lower and pulled her back into her legs.

"See, she just whimpered!" He jumped when ma smacked him on his ass and then grabbed his arm.

"Come on tiny Tim, we have all those groceries in the car." She waved at Tracy and headed up to the chalet. "We'll need your muscles; I got one of those huge lunch meat trays from work. Some office ordered it and then said they didn't want it."

Finnegan watched them go up and then moved from behind Merc, she lowered the ice and looked at the red welt between Merc's eyebrows. "How's it feel?"

"Stings like hell and I swear I can see the damn thing." She ran a finger across it and whimpered. "Good thing I don't have ta go into the barracks, Junior would broadcast it across the radio." She felt fingers thread through her hair and then her head was pulled forward, she sighed when warm lips kissed her forehead. "Why'd you do that?"

"That's what my mom did when ever I got hurt." She held out a hand and pulled Merc to her feet. "Let's go see what ma brought, I'm hungry." They grabbed up the fishing gear and the two fish before heading up to the chalet.

Merc walked out to the kitchen and looked out the small window that faced the lake, what she saw made her pulse race. Dressed in just shorts and a half t-shirt, Finnegan moved under the moonlight in slow precise movements. "You're drooling Merc, you wanna bib?" Tracy handed her a dishtowel and jumped back when a low rumbling growl came from her much bigger friend. "Ya ever seen moves like that before?"

"Just once in a movie, I think she's doing Tai Chi." She leaned closer to the window and sighed.

"Wish I could move like that," She backed away from the window when Finnegan dropped down onto the grass and leaned back to stare up at the full moon. "I'm way too bulky to do anything like that." She went towards the door and opened it quietly. "I'm gonna keep an eye on her, I think we're safe but I wanna be..." Tracy gave her a small grin and nodded her head. Merc walked softly so that she made no noise as she got within ten feet of Finnegan, she dropped down to her haunches and peered into the darkness around them.

"What are you looking for Mac?"

"Lightning bugs, crickets and anything that doesn't belong out here." She got up, went over beside her and sat down. "Where'd ya learn to do what you were doing?"

"I took a self defense class a few years ago and then my instructor got me into Tai Chi for a way of relaxing after putting up with kids all day." She turned her head and felt her heart seize in her chest, Merc's eyes shone silver in the moonlight and gave her an ethereal appearance. "What about you and lifting weights, what got you into that?"

"I got tired of being so tall and weighing a 100lb. soaking wet, plus it was hard trying to take down criminals without any muscle." She stood up and offered a hand to Finnegan. "Let's go in, I can hear the skeeters coming for our blood."

"So is there a TV in the chalet or do we sit and look at each other?"

"Ohh yeah, there's a wide screen TV in there. Could you imagine a college age guy without a huge ass TV to watch football on?"

"No, so where is it?"

"Behind that big poster of the Dallas Cowboys, Junior doesn't know about the TV so it gets hidden."

"I don't have to watch football do I?" Merc snorted and shook her head.

"Nope, I hate football. For one, they get paid too damn much and two, they make toooooo much money!" She held the door open for Finnegan and then went over to the refrigerator for a gallon of milk and the canister of muscle builder on the counter. Finnegan found where the poster swung on hinges and gasped at the size of the TV, it reminded her of the front window on her house.

"Damn, this must have cost him a mint and a half!"

"Nope," Tracy replied and handed her the remote control. "We got it from the police auction; it was ripped off and never claimed." She dropped down onto the couch and put her feet on the coffee table. "Next time they have an auction you'll have ta come with us, anything you can think of they have and cheap."

"DVD players, I don't have one and would love to be able to see movies on one?"

"Ohh sure, that and any other electronic thing ya can think of ain't that right Merc...Merc?" She looked over the back of the couch but didn't see her friend. "She must be down stairs pumping more iron." Finnegan looked towards the stairs and then handed Tracy the remote control, she listened first at the door and then went down. She watched from a few stairs up as Merc did tricep curls on the bench, she couldn't believe how the sight of her muscles flexing affected her. She waited until Merc was finished with the tricep curls she was doing and then moved right into dumbbell flies. She went down the steps and stood at the end of the bench watching, when Merc had the dumbbells held out to the side over the edge of the bench, she straddled the bench and sat down on her stomach. Blue eyes popped open and looked directly into mischievous green.

"Do you ever relax, you know sit down, watch TV maybe read a book besides Muscle and Fitness?" She ran her hands up Merc's ribcage and stopped below her breasts. "Listen to music or just vegetate for a while?"

Merc swallowed deeply and shook her head. "Ahhh no..." She jumped when the dumbbells fell from her hands and clattered on the concrete floor. "What are you...doing?"

"Distracting you from working out," She trailed her fingers up across Merc's chest to stop on top of her pecs. "Is it working?"

"Uhh huh...you're playing with fire Fin, you know that right?"

"Yep," She winked and pressed down into Merc. "I like fire, liquid heat, and anything else that makes your blood run like lava." She swung a leg over Merc and walked slowly to the stairs. "Don't stay down here too long." Merc dropped her head back on the bench and groaned, what Finnegan had just done to her had only happened in her fantasies.

"Uuhhmm OK, not long." She covered her eyes and moaned, her body was still tingling from where Finnegan had touched her and she could feel the wetness between her legs. "Just great, now what do I do?" She sat up and whimpered. "Lake, nice long swim in the cold lake." She got up, jogged up the stairs and went out the door. Finnegan and Tracy watched her go out the door and then looked to each other.

"What did you do to Merc?"

"Nothing much, just went down and asked her why she worked out so much." She shrugged her shoulders and gave her a crooked grin. "May have teased her a little bit while I was at it." She raised her half eyebrow and took a deep breath. "Is she seeing anyone, you know a girlfriend or significant other?" Tracy clasped a hand over her chest and fell back in the cushions.

"I can't believe this, I'm truly heartbroken." She sat up and grinned. "Nope, she hasn't seen anyone in a long time. Tell me you're not looking for just a trainer, that would really kill her if that's all you wanted?" Finnegan blinked a few times.

"A trainer, I'm sure I don't know what you mean by that?"

"You know, a trainer as in you've never been with a woman and you're curious and you just want to experience it?"

"No, I don't want a trainer. Why couldn't I just let her lead, you know be the submissive one?"

"Ohh so you're a bottom, that's good cuz Merc's a top." She laughed at the shocked expression on Finnegan's face. "Just kidding, just don't hurt her is all I ask."

"Don't worry, I'd never hurt her. I'm not an insensitive person and I know what it feels like to be hurt both emotionally and physically." She squeezed Tracy's leg and gave her a smile. "Don't worry; I don't think she's even interested in me that way. Remember, I'm sorta the enemy."

"I don't think you're the enemy any more and I think she's interested alright, why wouldn't she be and don't you dare say because you're scared. She sees deeper than that, I know because she's the only one that doesn't think I'm an asshole." She busted up laughing when Finnegan rolled her eyes and changed the TV channel.

Merc surfaced and shook the water from her hair; she tipped her head back and let out a deep shuddering breath before swimming back to the dock. Climbing up, she dropped down and fell onto her back gasping for air. Her swim had tired her out but it did nothing for her libido. She sat up, reached down between her legs, and moaned. "This just ain't right." She got up and wandered off towards the trees that circled the lake, she leaned up against a tree when she could no longer be seen beneath the moon. Sliding a hand down the front of her shorts, she gasped out from the contact. Slowly she stroked her self and moved her hips in tempo; her breathing became ragged with her on coming orgasm. She wrapped her free arm back around the tree and held on as her body shook with release. Minutes later, she withdrew her hand and sunk to the ground. She placed both hands out in front of her, dropped her head and took deep breaths to calm her self. She had always been able to get aroused and reach orgasm quickly and had heard nothing but complaints from her previous lovers. One had even spread it around that she had a problem with being premature and then forgot all about her lover. It wasn't true but it did put a damper on her love life thus making her shy away from any entanglements.

Tracy looked at her watch and got up from the couch; she looked down at Finnegan and grinned. She had fallen asleep clutching Merc's pillow to her chest and snoring softly. She turned the TV off and headed for the stairs, she would leave the moving of the small blonde to Merc whenever she came in. She had just hit the third step when a still soaking wet Merc came in through the sliding glass doors; she looked at her and clicked her tongue. "You are the weirdest person I know and you smell like swamp thing."

"Gee thanks Tracy, just for that I won't take a shower and sleep with you."

"Yeah and I'll scream for help and your girlfriend will come and save me." Merc narrowed her eyes and looked down to where Finnegan was sleeping.

"My girlfriend, you mean Fin, she's not my girlfriend."

"Says you but from what I see when she looks at you, you're handcuffed, booked and oohh sooo lost when it comes to women." She waved a hand at her. "Go take a shower, you have duckweed all over you and...tree moss." She shook her head and went up to bed.

"I wonder if she told her what she did to me?" She asked herself and then went to the bathroom off the kitchen for a shower. A few minutes later, she came out in only a towel and searched for clean clothes, she swore when she realized that they were all dirty. Standing beside the couch, she looked down and tried to figure out how to open the bed and not flip Finnegan on the floor. After a few minutes of using one hand to hold Finnegan against her chest, she had the bed pulled out. Laying Finnegan back down on the mattress, she crawled in beside her and curled around her. The soft snoring lulled her to sleep a few minutes later, she never knew of the small hands holding onto her forearms or a small body pressing back into her.

Finnegan woke to feel warm damp flesh beneath her cheek; she searched with her hand and found more warm damp flesh. She opened one eye, looked around her, and saw dark hair falling across a breast. She blinked and opened both eyes to see the same thing and felt at first panic and then curiosity. Going up on one hand, she looked down into Merc's calm face and then down across the expanse of her wide chest. A light blush covered her face when she saw that Merc was completely naked and that she had been lying on top of her. She jumped when Tracy's voice came to her over the back of the couch and then a snicker. "Nothing like waking up and finding out you're stuck to nekkid skin huh?" She threw her head back and laughed when Finnegan's face turned a deeper shade of red. "I'm going for donuts and bagels, anything else we need while I'm out, like a couple bags of ice?"

"Haa I don't think so." She grumbled and then rolled off Merc. "Maybe you could get some blueberry muffins?" She pulled a few bills from her wallet, placed it back down on the counter and held out the bills for Tracy.

"Keep your money; this is being paid for by the State of West by God." She gave her a wave and went out the door chuckling from Finnegan's embarrassment. After making a trip to the bathroom to care take of her needs, she gathered up everyone's dirty clothes and went down to the basement to where the laundry room was. With her first look, she knew that Merc's cousin wasn't one for doing laundry; the appliances looked brand new and hardly used. Starting a load of dark clothes, she went back up stairs to start a pot of coffee and tried to ignore the sight of a naked Merc stretched out across the bed. She failed in this area and was caught staring by a pair of pale blue eyes.

"Where's Tracy," she sat up and rubbed her face with her hands and then tried to get the tangles

from her hair. "We need more clothes."

"She went to get donuts and I started a load of laundry," she busied herself with unnecessary cleaning and looked back up when Merc stepped into the kitchen. "You're going to give me a heart attack walking around like that."

"Why I'm only naked and you've seen me before?" Finnegan looked up into twinkling eyes and groaned.

"Do you have any idea what's so ever the effect you have on people when you walk around naked?"

"Nope, Tracy's used to it." She reached up into the cabinet, pulled down three coffee cups and saw Finnegan's eyes shoot wide. "Now what?"

"It's just that I've never seen so many muscles before...on anyone." She reached out and hesitated before she let her fingers run across the muscles of Merc's ribcage. "Can I get this way?"

"Now why would you want muscles like mine, I think you look good just the way you are." She filled two of the cups, handed one to Finnegan and took hers into the bathroom with her. Finnegan spun away from the door when she saw that Merc did not intend to close the door. "Ohh come on Fin you can't be that up tight?"

"I'm not used to people walking around naked or not closing the bathroom door."

"Well, when I was growing up, we didn't have much choice with the bathroom. It didn't have a door on it and the most terrifying thing I ever saw was my skinny ass brother running around naked." She came out of the bathroom and grinned at the still red face of her smaller friend. "He's still a skinny ass little thing and is the only man I know that doesn't fall over when he sees a naked woman."

"But the way he acts around Tracy is..."

"Ohh he just does that because it's her, it's a game they play all the time." She sat down at the table and whistled at Finnegan. "Sit down already you make me nervous when you twitch around."

"You, I'm a nervous wreck cuz you're naked!" She closed her eyes, took a deep breath and sat down at the table across from her.

"Well you weren't nervous last night when you distracted my workout." She got up and headed for the stairs. "If it'll make you happy, I'll see if I can find some of my cousin's clothes." She came back down a few minutes later with an old pair of cutoff sweats and a football Jersey with Macgregor across the back. "This better?"

"Much, at least now I can look at you and not feel like my face is on fire." She looked at the jersey and raised an eyebrow. "How big is your cousin?"

"Ohh he's smaller than me all the way around, he's a running back so he doesn't need the bulky muscle." She pulled on the jersey where it was tight across her chest. "He's muscular but it's more ripped than mine, he gets ribbed all the time about me being bigger than him."

"Is he going to go pro when he's done with college?"

"All depends on if he gets drafted, if not then he'll have his degree in Psychology. Ya know something ta fall back on if the football doesn't give him a career." She turned her head when the phone rang and rolled her eyes, Junior and her ma were only two people that would call her this early. She reached across, grabbed the phone and growled into it.

"You crabby ass wench." Junior's voice came blasting into her ear.

"You fat bastard! Why are you calling me so damn early?"

"Because I wanted ta make your day as bad as mine that's why! My boss wants your ass over at the house to move that damn rock, those fucking brats took down our mailbox again last night." Merc chuckled and winked at Finnegan.

"So she's been bugging you every second since you got up huh?"

"Worse, she's sitting across from me right now giving me that evil eye thing she does. Please Merc, save my rotten ass and move that rock?"

"OK, we'll be over sometime this morning to move it. You want it in front of the post right?"

"Yep, that way they get hung up on it when they try to take out the post. Thanks Merc, I owe you guys." She agreed and hung up the phone.

"We have to go over to Junior's today and move this huge ass boulder, the kids keep taking out his mailbox." Finnegan nodded and refilled their coffee cups.

"How big is it and won't he get in trouble if someone gets hurt?"

"It's huge and he doesn't really care," She shrugged her shoulders. "Two or three times a month he has to replace the post and the mailbox." Tracy came in the door and handed Finnegan the bags she had in her hand and the box to Merc.

"Junior called me on the radio, he wants us to..."

"He just called here, so when do you wanna go over there?" Tracy shrugged her shoulders and dropped another bag on the table.

"When we're done with breakfast I guess." She pulled out two dozen of bacon, cheese and egg biscuits and then twice that amount in hash browns. "MacDonald's hates me now and only three people threatened my life at the bakery."

"Only three?" Finnegan said around a mouthful of blueberry muffin.

"Would have been more but I shoved my badge in this guys face and threatened to arrest him for being an obnoxious fat asshole that should go to weight watchers." She shrugged her shoulders, dropped into a chair and grabbed a biscuit and two hash browns. "He had one donut hanging outta his face, two strudels under his arm and wanted two dozen of 'our' Donuts." Finnegan choked on her coffee and covered her mouth.

"The nerve of him, surprised ya didn't shot his ass." Merc said and grinned when Tracy winked at her.

"Would have but the bullet would have bounced off his blubber, he had to weigh more than my car!"

"Do you two have a problem with overweight people or something?" Fin asked with narrowed eyes.

"Only those who are way overweight and do nothing about it but make it a life quest to get bigger and put their cars through extreme structural testing." Merc replied and grabbed another biscuit.

A set of eyes looked through the window of Finnegan's bedroom and then a gloved hand holding a rock smashed the glass above the locking latch. When no sound of alarm system split the air, the man unlocked the window and pushed up the sash. He had hoped that she wasn't home on one count and on the other wished that she was so that he could take care of her once and for all. He had tracked down Mallory and gone off the deep end when he turned him down flat on finishing the job he was hired to do. Now it was in his hands to take her out of the picture, the only problem was that he had never done anything like this before.

Once he was standing in her bedroom, he looked around and then went into the living room. He needed to find out where she was staying and if she was still under police protection. He had called the local police departments but was told that the information was not to be given out. His phone suffered for the answers he had gotten while searching for her and now he would have to buy a new one. He went into the kitchen and looked at the refrigerator, bulletin board and the papers lying on the kitchen table. Before he was done, every book was tossed across the room, the couch cushions were cut up and anything that wasn't nailed down was trashed. He hadn't come here to tear her home apart but his temper got the better of him. As a last act of frustration, he pissed on her couch and chair.

Merc dropped down into the grass and rubbed her biceps with aching fingers; she looked up to Tracy and shook her head. They had moved the boulder to where Junior wanted it and felt like they had carried Tracy's car instead. The hard part was getting it unstuck from where it had been buried in the yard. Instead of carrying it, they had rolled it across the yard and then picked it up to position it. Finnegan had sat with her chin resting on her chest while watching them, she dropped to the grass between them and handed them each a bottle of water. "Will you two need a chiropractor in the morning?"

"Tomorrow, I think I need one now." Tracy groaned and rubbed her lower back. "That son of a bitch needed one of those little bobcats, Junior is gonna owe us for the rest of our lives."

"Speaking of owing," Finnegan said and looked to Merc. "I'll buy lunch if we can run by my place so I can get some more clothes and a few books."

"Uhhmm...how about if we do this, Tracy can drop us off at the restaurant, we order take out and she runs over and gets what you need." She held up a hand when Finnegan started to disagree. "If your house is being watched, then Tracy will know and be able to take care of the problem."

"You're really stating to piss me off with all of this protection shit; I haven't gotten any threatening letters, calls or anything except that peeping tom."

"And that could be because no one knows where you are so they can't do it." Tracy replied and laid a hand on her shoulder. "Hopefully we'll have this all solved and Mallory in jail, then you can go back to work and a more normal life."

"And how are you guys gonna solve it if you're babysitting me?" She turned and gave Merc a look that singed her. "Answer that First Sergeant!" Merc sighed and nodded her head, she knew that Finnegan had no idea how things worked or that she had an unorthodox way of doing police work.

"We wire tapped all his relatives, his bank is being watched and an APB has been put out across the wires for all the States. If he shows up anywhere or tries to get to his money, we'll know about it."

"And I'll bring you Donuts when you two get locked up for illegal wire tapping."

"Timmy doesn't like donuts, he likes pop tarts." Tracy said with a grin. "He's doing the tapping with one of his computers; he's ghosting the phone company computers or something."

Tracy opened Finnegan's front door and stopped, what she saw made her blood boil. Grabbing her cell phone, she called the barracks and then Merc. She was glad that it wasn't her that would have to tell Finnegan about her house. She closed the door and then took a seat in front of it to

wait for Junior and the crime lab guys to get there. She knew that the chances of who ever had broken into the house leaving behind fingerprints were slim, but to be on the safe side, they would dust anyway.

Merc closed her cell phone and looked to where Finnegan was paying for the Chinese take out they had ordered. She would rather tell her that her house had burned to the ground than tell her that it had been violated. She dropped her head, tried to think of a way to tell her, and knew that no matter how she said it, Finnegan would blow a gasket. When she came back over to where she was sitting on a bench beside the door, she took her hand and pulled her down. "We have a problem; Tracy just called to tell me that someone broke into your house and tore the place up." She covered Finnegan's mouth with her hand when she saw fire erupt in her eyes. "Junior's on his way over there along with the crime lab, if it was Mallory, we'll have his finger prints all over the place and know that he's still in the area. On the other hand, it could be a random thing with kids burglarizing houses in the area. I'll need you to make a list of anything of value and then Junior will look for them."

"This is so fucked up, what did I do to deserve all of this shit that's been happening to me?" She said in a low growling voice and slapped a hand down on the bench. "I don't have anything that's worth stealing, my laptops at the chalet and my other PC is ten years old." Merc shook her head, some things just couldn't be explained and this was one of them.

"I don't know Fin but I promise that nothing will happen to you." She wrapped an arm around her shoulders and pulled her against her side.

Tracy stood back from where a lab tech was taking samples from Finnegan's chair, she felt repulsed and pissed off all at the same time. They hadn't found any fingerprints but who ever left his mark, had left behind vital information. The lab would be able to analyze the urine and get a blood typing from it, she would prefer fingerprints to this but it was evidence. She ran a hand through her hair and nodded to Junior who was standing at the front door; she walked over and stopped in front of him. "Did anyone see anything, a strange car coming down the driveway or someone on foot?"

"Nope nothing, the only one around is an old man across the road and he can't see that well."

"Just great, I wish she had an alarm system. If she did then maybe someone would have gotten here and caught the son of a bitch." She looked out towards the road and then back into the house. "You have the number to the place that put in your alarm system handy?" Junior nodded and pulled out his wallet, after looking through it he held out a business card.

"What are you planning Tracy?"

"I'm gonna use your family connection and get her house wired," She grinned and stuffed the

card in her pocket. "Then I'm gonna have Timmy make a withdrawal from that asshole Davis' account to pay for it." Junior covered his face and groaned.

"I did not just hear that, I don't know a damn thing do you hear me?"

"Sure do boss, how about a new car for your boss, maybe one of those Porsche 911's?"

"Get out of here Tracy before I have to arrest you for something."

"Give us a call if you find out anything from the lab, I gotta go pick up Merc and Fin at the restaurant." She was thankful that their order would take 45 minutes to complete, if she timed it right, she would be getting there just as they walked out the door.

"Where is she?" Finnegan asked while she shaded her eyes and looked down the street in the direction Tracy would be coming from. "I'm ready to say the Hell with her and start eating!" She sighed and pointed a finger at the speeding car. "She's dangerous; you should give her a speeding ticket!" Merc snorted and grabbed the bags from where they sat on a bench outside the front door of the restaurant.

"Like that would slow her down, we're lucky she doesn't have the top hat and siren going." She cringed at the squeal of tires and honking of horns, at that moment she wished she was invisible. Tracy stuck her hand out the window, flipped the other drivers off and yelled.

"I DON'T HAVE TURN SIGNALS! Fucking assholes drive like they're on the circuit and blow their horns at me?" She looked to a snarling Merc and grinned. "Hey boss been waiting long?"

"No but it's no wonder everyone hates cops, one of these days someone's gonna shot your ass for being nasty."

"They'll get you first 'cuz you're worse than me," She waved a hand at Finnegan. "She gave the District Attorney's mother a jaywalking ticket and showed up in court ta make sure she paid for it." Merc let Finnegan get in before her and then smiled.

"She deserved it the uppity old bitch, wish I could have nailed her on that shop lifting charge but baby boy paid that one off." Finnegan shook her head and then looked between her two friends.

"She's a shop lifter and her son got her out of the charges, what kind of local government do we have here?"

"Crooked as Hell," Merc grumbled. "We get the criminals off the street and the court lets 'em go." Her temper flared when she thought of what had happened so many years ago, she ground her teeth and snarled. "They should all be tossed behind bars and forgotten about." She was ready to go off on a tangent when she felt a warm hand squeeze hers, she turned and looked into soft green eyes and felt her anger fade.

"I'm sorry Mac; I know there's nothing I can do to change the past, all I can do is apologize, I wish I had known back then the truth as to what happened."

"I know and I wish I could let the past go, it's hard." She looked out the window at the passing scenery and felt Finnegan squeeze her hand again but not release it. Tracy kept quiet but kept glancing at her two pensive friends, she could only imagine the pain they felt with their past.

Junior read over the reports from the break in at Finnegan's house; so far, they had nothing on it as far as fingerprints. Numerous ones were found but they all belonged to the three women. He took off his reading glasses, ran a hand over his thinning hair on his pate and blinked his tired eyes. He knew that Merc knew that they wouldn't find anything, even at the entry area they found nothing. The ground outside the window was dry as a bone and left no footprints. As usual, they had no leads, witnesses or a chance in Hell unless someone bragged about breaking into her house. He turned his head and looked out through his door to the troopers who were working at their desks. He knew they did their best but it still pissed him off that they wouldn't face down Mallory. All it would take was one shot to drop the man; he wished that one of them would grow some balls and do it.

"State police can I help you?" Junior over heard one of them say.

"I'm trying to find an officer that helped me this morning," A feminine voice said over the phone. "She was tall with dark hair and a scar down the one side of her face; I called all the other police stations but they she was a state trooper."

"Yes ma'am that's First Sergeant Merci Macgregor, she's not here right now can I give her a message?"

"Just tell her thank you for changing my tire." The woman hung up before the trooper could ask for a name.

"Hey Major, when you see Merc, tell her that the woman she helped this morning said thank you." Junior looked at him as if he was insane.

"Say what, Merc changing a tire?"

"That's what the lady said; she didn't leave a name or anything."

"More like ripping one off without taking the lugs off first, I'll tell her next time I talk to her."

"Merci Macgregor..." The man said in a falsetto voice and cleared his throat before speaking

again. "She has to be in here, everyone's in the phone book." He flipped through all the M's until he found a listing for a M. Macgregor. "23 Lynn's Trailer Park, she lives in a trailer? White trash State Trooper, I wonder if Draper is with you at your trailer?" He grabbed his car keys and went out the door; he would track them down if it took him the rest of his life.

Merc came in from outside and looked around for Finnegan, she groaned when she heard cussing and the unmistakable sound of rattling chains and the smack of the heavy bag. She went down the steps and stopped midway down to see Finnegan lashing out with all her fury. What she didn't expect were the roundhouse kicks placed between the punching combinations. The force that Finnegan's foot and shin hit the bag was what made the chain's rattle and knock plaster down onto her head. The last kick she gave to the bag was a reverse spinning back kick that opened the seam that Merc had split even further. "You're a very dangerous woman." Merc said in a deep throaty voice and went the rest of the way down the stairs. "They don't teach that in self-defense classes." Finnegan braced her hands on her knees and lifted her head up to glare at Merc.

"No they don't, when you catch that asshole, I want locked in his cell with him for five minutes!"

"When I catch him, I'll let you beat the shit outta him before we haul him in and if we're lucky, we'll save the tax payers the money it would cost for a trial and his little retirement home." She watched furious green eyes change right before her; she knew that Finnegan wasn't a killer and that the mention of killing the perp would calm her. "Let me see your hands, you're as bad as me. I get so pissed that I forget to wrap them first." She pulled Finnegan to her feet and held both of her hands gently in her own; she looked down into tear-filled green eyes and pulled her into her body. "After I take care of your hands, we're going for a walk."

"I don't wanna go for a walk, I wanna punch things and scream and yell at the top of my lungs." She wrapped her arms around Merc and sobbed into her chest. "Why is he doing this, what did I do?" Merc rested her cheek on top of Finnegan's crown and whispered

"I don't know Fin but once we catch him we'll know." She held her until her crying stopped and then took her up stairs so she could clean up her scuffed and bruised knuckles. Tracy looked over the back of the couch, winked at Merc and went back to watching the Lifetime channel. She held back her snickers every time Finnegan hissed or growled at Merc. "Come on Merc that hurts like a bitch!" She tried to pull her hand away and bite Merc in her forearm.

"Ohh you bite to huh, ya know that's dirty fighting?"

"Ya and so what, you're torturing me with peroxide, what's next sandpaper to smooth off the roughness?"

"I was thinking alcohol or maybe some iodine." She finished cleaning her hands and then applied some Betadine Plus. She always kept some around because one of them was always being cut or scratched while there. "OK, we're all done except for our walk."

"I'm not walking anywhere, I'm gonna sit here and pout until my lip falls off." Merc narrowed her eyes and then raised her left eyebrow.

"Hey Tracy I need the secret weapon!" She yelled and then threw a hand up to catch the handcuffs that flew towards her. Before Finnegan could blink, she was handcuffed to Merc and dragged out the door.

"This ain't fair, you have those and you're bigger than me!"

"Life's a bitch sometimes and then ya get handcuffed ta one." She grinned and took them around the house towards the lake. "Could be worse, I wanted to go for a nice long run but I'll settle for a walk." She grinned at the expression on Fin's face and pulled her into her side. "Just relax, take deep breaths and listen to the crickets."

"Ohh yeah I can relax when I'm handcuffed to a muscle headed geek." She mumbled but did what Merc said and found that she was relaxing and her anger ebbed even more as they walked in the dusk.

"Ya know losing your temper at a crucial moment can get you hurt or killed, you have to put it aside and think three steps ahead."

"I don't know how to do that, I get mad and everything goes red." She looked up at Merc's profile and felt her heart jump in her chest; her pale blue eyes were glowing silver chips and looked primal. "How do I control it?"

"Push it back," She looked down into dark green eyes and grinned. "And growl, that scares the Hell outta most people and gives ya that split second ya need to take 'em down." She stopped them and turned to face Finnegan. "You do Tai Chi; go into that state of mind where you control your body."

"What do you know of Tai Chi?"

"I read ya know all kinds of stuff that people wouldn't think would interest me. Even memorized some stuff from reading it so many times."

"Yeah such as what?" She stepped closer so that she could see her better in the dark. Merc closed her eyes and tipped her head back.

"Uhhmm...There is no woman's sides can bide the beating of so strong a passion. As love doth give my heart; no woman's heart so big, to hold so much; they lack retention. Alas, their love may be called appetite. No motion of liver, but the palate, that suffer and surfeit, cloyment and revolt. But mine is all as hungry as the sea, and can digest as much: make no compare between that love of a woman can bear me and that I owe Olivia." Finnegan stood with her jaw hanging open, she would never take Merc as one to read Shakespeare let alone memorize full paragraphs.

"Did you memorize all of the Twelfth Night?"

"Yeah, kinda dumb huh?"

"Not at all, what others do you know?" Merc was glad that it was dark out or Finnegan would surely see the dark blush across her high cheekbones.

"King Lear, Much Ta Do About Nothing, Merry Wives of Windsor, Macbeth, Comedy of Errors, but my favorite is Mid Summers Night Dream. I like when the fairy queen gives her speech and then whisks her fairies away from Puck and the others."

"You amaze me, I never thought of you as being a romantic."

"Just living up to my Geeky image." Finnegan took her hand and pulled her along beside her to continue their walk; she was learning more about the tall trooper every minute she was in her company. They continued their walk in a comfortable silence until they found themselves back at the chalet. Finnegan didn't know when she had done it but Merc had unlocked the cuff from her wrist. She held her hand until they stopped outside the door; Merc opened it and let her go before her into the dimly lit chalet.

"About time you two got back, Junior called, he said something that confused the Hell outta me." Tracy got up from the couch and then leaned against the back of it. "When did you change some woman's tire?"

"I haven't changed any tires lately why?" Tracy repeated what Junior had told her and saw Merc's eyes change colors.

"This isn't good," She looked to a worried Finnegan and wrapped an arm around her. "They didn't tell this woman where I am did they?"

"Nope and Junior's gonna try and get the phone number and find out who it was." She saw the silvery glint come across Merc's eyes and held up a hand. "A patrol car is sitting near your ma's house and Junior's staying there tonight."

"This is my fault," Finnegan said in a low whisper. "If you didn't have to guard me none of this would be happening." She pulled away from Merc and went down to the basement. Merc rolled her eyes and went after her.

"Ohh Merc, this is different, the beast calming the beauty." She laughed and fell backwards over the couch to continue watching the History channel.

"Hold on there twerp, don't you dare lay one finger on that bag!" She jumped down the remaining steps and grunted. "Damn that hurts like a bitch!" She limped around the basement but kept an eye on a pissed off Finnegan. "Geez why does it hurt so bad when ya jump and your feet slap the ground." When Finnegan ignored her and pulled back a fist to slam the heavy bag, she

jumped in front of her and grunted when she struck her in the stomach. "That felt good," she rubbed her stomach and grabbed Finnegan's fist with her other hand. "Stop already, you hitting me or the bag ain't gonna do any good."

"And why won't it, I wanna hit something!"

"How about some cookie dough ice cream with whipped cream and walnuts, ya can hit that with me and Tracy?" She knew that it didn't reach Finnegan when her eyes stayed a fiery green. "Come on Fin, just because some nut job called the barracks and made up some phony story doesn't mean it's because I'm guarding you. If it is the case it still doesn't matter because this is my job," She pulled Finnegan into her arms and held her tight. "When I was sworn in as an officer of the law, I accepted everything that came with it and that includes taking a bullet to protect someone." She felt Finnegan struggle in her arms and then stop when she was able to look up at her face.

"I don't want you or Tracy to take a bullet for me; I want this asshole found without all of that!"

"It wouldn't be like I haven't been shot before, stings for a little while but gives me hours of party conversation." She released Fin and wiggled her brows. "Wanna see where I got shot, it's quite impressive?" Before Fin could say yes or no, Merc spun, dropped her shorts and pointed to a white scar on her left cheek. "See that, that's where I got shot?"

"Merc, that's a microscopic scar."

"It would be since Timmy shot me in the ass with his BB gun, ma tanned both our asses for that." She jumped when her ass was smacked.

"You're an asshole Merc!" She went towards the stairs and turned to see Merc looking over her shoulder and down at her ass, she groaned and jogged up the steps with the sight of Merc's muscular gluts firmly burned into her retinas.

Later that night with Tracy sleeping on the opposite end of the couch from Merc, Finnegan grabbed her car keys and snuck out. She didn't know where she was going to go but she just needed to go somewhere and think. She placed Tracy's car in neutral and let it coast backwards from the drive, when she was on the gravel road, she started it up and pulled slowly away.

Tracy twitched and then bolted upright from the couch when she heard the rumbling of her car, she looked around the chalet and then to where her keys had been. "Son of a BITCH!" She shook Merc until she growled and slapped at her hand. "Wake the fuck up Merc, Fin took my car!" She ran to the kitchen and called Timmy, when he answered she growled into the phone. "Low jack my car, Fin just took it!"

"*She stole your car and where were you and my muscle headed sister?*" He chuckled over the phone and then sobered when he realized how dangerous it could be for Finnegan to be out on

her own. *"Hold on a minute while I start the program."* Tracy looked to see Merc struggling into her Levis; she turned her attention back to Timmy when he said it was a go. *"Looks like she's on her way down Rt. 51 towards Rt. 11,"* He was watching the colored blip that was Tracy's car on the map on his monitor. *"She's booking ass Tracy and just made a left at the light and is headed down a back road. Take your cell phone and I'll call you if she changes directions."*

"Thanks Timmy I owe ya." She hung up and then slipped her boots on. "She's on the road that runs parallel to Rt. 11, the one where Piggy's is and the pizza shop." They ran out the door and down the steps to Merc's motorcycle, in minutes they were halfway down the road and coming up to a bad intersection. Merc slowed and watched the cars at both sides before speeding through, she didn't want to have her first accident in pursuit of her charge. She would catch Hell from not only her ma but from Junior as well, that is if she and Tracy survived.

Finnegan walked into Piggy's, stood inside the dark bar to let her eyes adjust to the darkness, the smell of alcohol, cigarette smoke, and burned food assaulted her sinuses. She looked up towards where a stage jutted out from the wall and watched as a stripper danced for a bunch of drunken rednecks. She had no idea why she had come here, there were better and safer places to go for a drink. The loud music pounded into her body and the yelling of the men made her cringe, she walked up to the bar and yelled over the noise to the bartender. "I wanna bottle of tequila!" The tattooed man grabbed a bottle from the shelf behind him, a shot glass and placed them in front of her without a thought. He grabbed a towel and went back to wiping down the counter and left Finnegan to her bottle. Filling the shot glass, she held her breath and slammed it, filling it again before she swallowed the first one; she swallowed, shivered from the taste and slammed the next. She had never thought of what would happen after she got drunk or if one of the men decided that she was on the menu. When the music changed, she looked over to see another stripper take the stage and then an announcement saying that she would be the last one until the midnight show. She glanced over when someone took the bar stool next to her and then went back to draining the bottle in front of her.

"Never seen no women in here before," A toothless rank redneck yelled in her ear. "Ya come ta play with us horn dogs after the show?"

"Go play with one of your buddies or your self, which ever you prefer." She slurred and slammed another shot.

"Ya must be one of those lesbians or somethin and I ain't stupid or drunk enough ta fight ya over whose more manly." He got up from his stool and stumbled back over to the table where his friends were.

"Good riddance, don't wanna fight no one anyways." She blinked her eyes and knew that she was well on her way to being shit faced. Turning towards the stage, she watched the stripper who was dancing in only her panties shake her tits all over the place. She shook her head and turned back to see her reflection in the mirror behind the bar. "Ain't Merc up there so ain't interested, damn woman can give a eunuch a hard on." She chuckled and slapped a hand down on the bar.

"Fucking unbelievable body, rippling muscles and that strip of baby fuzz on her stomach." She dropped her head on the bar and looked up when the bar tender approached. "Hey buddy do I look gay ta you?"

"No ma'am ya sure don't and I think you've had enough tequila."

"I don't, think I might be and nope I sure haven't, gotta dull my brain, think too much." She felt her head wobble and then a hand come down on her shoulder. "Take a hike asshole, I might be gay." She looked up into the mirror and watched her jaw drop open at the sight of furious blue eyes looking back at her. "Hey Mac, ya big muscle headed Goddess."

"You are in deep shit Fin," She dropped down onto the stool beside her and watched Tracy take the one on the other side. "What in the Hell did you think you were doing by sneaking out?"

"Ohh doin what I never did before...ya know what," she wobbled when she turned to look at Merc. "I'm drunk."

"Yeah I can tell," She rubbed her face and looked around at a grinning Tracy. "I think it's time ta get out of here." She rose from her stool and stopped when Finnegan's hand grabbed her wrist.

"Come on Mac, I wanna see...some more strippers...maybe you'd... get up there?" She wiggled her brows and saw a slight grin come to her friends face. "All them...rippling muscles and...flexing tits," She reached out and trailed her fingertips down across Merc's chest. "Gets me wet." Merc just about swallowed her tongue and Tracy choked and spit her water across the bar.

"Revelations brought on by Jose Cuervo," she handed her keys to Tracy, tossed some bills on the bar and scooped Finnegan up in her arms. "Let's go home Fin before the rednecks get restless and we end up in a bar room brawl."

"Ohh come on Mac, I wanna stay fer a lil while!" She wiggled free and staggered across the room. "Ya wants me, come and gets me." She staggered over to a table full of drunks and stopped with her hips leaning against it. Merc growled and walked over to her, as soon as she laid a hand on her shoulder, one of the men pushed her back.

"Hey hands off she's ours!" He pulled Finnegan onto his lap and wrapped an arm around her. "I'm taking blondie here home with me and we're gonna party." He grabbed her breasts with both hands and grinned. Merc grabbed Finnegan, handed her to Tracy and sucker punched the redneck.

"Parties over asshole!" In a split second, the bar erupted into a free for all. Merc tossed men over tables, Tracy punched and kicked and Finnegan clobbered others with a wooden tray she had taken from a waitress. She missed a man on her left side and grunted when he punched her in the side of the face, before she could retaliate, Merc put him down with a left hook. She narrowed her eyes at Fin and back kicked a man coming up behind her. In a matter of minutes, the bar was quiet and only they were standing besides the waitress and the bar tender. The furious man approached Merc and leveled a baseball bat at her.

"I'm callin the cops and you and your friends are gonna pay for all the damages!" Merc gave him an evil grin, pulled on a chain around her neck and dangled her badge in front of his beady eyes.

"Go ahead and call them and then I can get you closed down for serving liquor to a minor! My friend is 20 years old and you served her tequila!" She scooped Finnegan up, flipped her over her shoulder and stomped from the destroyed bar with a bruised, battered and limping Tracy following. When Finnegan was slumped in the front seat of Tracy's car, Merc searched her pockets until she found the keys.

"You're so...butch...I ain't 20 neither." She slurred and rolled her head towards Merc and wiped at the blood running down her chin. "Bleedin and lips fat...wanna do a...crevice check?"

"What I want to do to you would end up with me in a cell." She closed the door and waved at Tracy who was riding her bike back to the chalet. "Junior's gonna chew on my ass and ma's gonna kick what's left." She mumbled before she got into the car. Fin moved across the seat and leaned up against her side, she lurched against her when she pulled out on the road.

"Would ya paddle me," she asked and ran a hand up Merc's thigh. "With a wooden...spoon?" She leaned up to her ear, bit her earlobe and ran her tongue around the outer edge before she fell into Merc's lap passed out cold.

"You tease me and then pass out after getting me all excited, just my luck." She thought back over what Finnegan had said in the bar and grinned, she looked down at the blond head resting in her lap and wondered if it was all true. "I guess 'I might be gay' is better than nothin."

Finnegan ran her fingers across high cheekbones while keeping her eyes on the silvery ones before her, the press of silky naked flesh sent her blood roaring through her body. None of the men that she had been with could compare to the feeling of Merc's body pressing against her or the feelings her hands caused. Every fiber of her body cried out when Merc lowered down over her and brought their lips together for the first time. A low moan rumbled in her throat from the warm tongue that tangled with hers and then a strange but familiar voice assaulted her. "Hey Fin want some nice greasy eggs and burnt bacon?" Green eyes blinked open and then slammed shut when the light pierced her hung over brain.

"Turn the spot light off!"

"Ain't no spot light twerp," Tracy said and peeled an eyelid open. "Come on Fin, if ya eat then you'll feel better." Fin pulled her pillow over her head and whimpered.

"You just wanna see me hanging on the toilet tossing my cookies until I pass out." She lifted one side of the pillow and looked into twinkling eyes. "Where's Mac so I can slug her?"

"She went to the barracks for a while and then I think she was gonna run by home and then

check on her ma and brother." She smiled brightly and puffed out her chest. "You're lucky, I'm sympathetic ta hang over victims and Merc likes ta yell for torture." She walked over to the stereo and turned the volume up until the front of the speakers bounced. Finnegan clapped her hands over her ears and fell from the bed in pain.

"OK Junior what have we got on the lab reports from Fin's house?" Merc asked as she sat down with some difficulty in the chair across from his desk.

"What do ya think, I forced this through?" He asked without looking up from a file he was looking at. "I'll have you know that I may be the all powerful God of State Troopers but even I can't get the lab to work faster." He looked up and winced when he saw her face. "But if I sent them a picture of you as a threat of what I can do, I might get things faster," He leaned closer. "Who ran over your face?"

"A dozen or so drunken rednecks," she ran a finger across the bruise below her bottom lip and the split at the corner. "Fin escaped last night and we found her at Piggy's, I sucker punched a drunk and it turned into a..."

"Gigantic brawl with you and Tracy right in the middle." He dropped his head on his desk and groaned.

"Fin helped, she busted a few heads with a tray and that was after half a bottle of tequila. She was still sleeping when I left, hope she has a Hell of a headache. She kicked and moaned and groaned all night..." She saw Junior's expression change when he lifted his head and knew she had said too much. "What, I didn't do anything?"

"Ohh so sleeping with the woman you're supposed to protect isn't too much, what's wrong with you?"

"Hey it's your cabin...chalet...what ever and you know damn well there's only two beds. It's either sleep with Tracy or Fin, Tracy snores and runs in her sleep like a dog. So I took the lesser of two evils and that's Fin." An evil smirk came to his face; he now had something on Tracy to keep her in line.

"Runs like a dog, I'll have to remember that. And yes I have the report from where the perp pissed on Fin's couch and chair," He handed it to her and leaned back in his chair. "I stayed with Aunt Marina last night and I feel like I gained 20 pounds, I wish she would teach my boss how to cook like that." Merc looked down at his bulging gut and rolled her eyes.

"If ma taught her how to cook like her, you'd be dead from over eating." She stood up and waved the folder at him. "I'm gonna make copies of this and leave the originals with our PA." She waved again and went over to the room where their copy machine was.

"She's the main reason why I'm losing my hair!" He pulled on what little he had on top.

Tracy snickered and looked back down at her plate; trying to choke down aspirins with her coffee, Finnegan failed to take a drink every time she raised the cup to her lips. The face she made when the pills melted in her mouth had Tracy choking on her eggs and slapping herself on her chest. She cleared her throat, wiped tears from her eyes and handed her a bottle of spring water. "Try this, it'll help with your headache and rehydrate your body. Ya know that's the main cause of hang overs, the alcohol depletes all the electrolytes from ya and if ya drink a lot of water before ya pass out then ya won't feel so bad the next morning." Finnegan gave her a snarl and drank more of the water.

"Sounds like you've had a lot of experience."

"Not much, drinking's bad fer ya. Makes ya do stupid stuff and causes accidents." She finished her breakfast and handed Finnegan a plate with dry toast on it. "Go ahead and try an eat something, it'll help calm your stomach some."

"I was thinking of just using your gun and putting myself outta my own misery." She groaned and dropped her head down on crossed arms and tried to ignore the mariachi band in her head. "My face hurts like a bitch; did Mac smack me last night?"

"Merc would never hit you no matter what ya did ta her, she's never hit another woman in her entire life. That bruise on your jaw is from some redneck, he punched ya during the brawl." Finnegan lifted her head and looked at Tracy with wide eyes.

"What brawl... Ohhh I didn't cause a brawl last night did I?" Her memory of the night before was foggiest at best, she knew she had said or done something to Merc and assumed that's where the bruise had come from. Now she felt like a complete asshole for even thinking of Merc in that light.

"Well not exactly, you made Merc go over to a table of drunks to get you. One of them grabbed your tits so she knocked him out, after that it was a free for all." Finnegan got up from the table, pressed one hand to her aching head and went to the door. "Where ya going?"

"I'm gonna go drown myself in the lake."

"OK, I'll call ya when lunch is ready." Tracy snickered at her moan and started cleaning up the breakfast dishes. She went back over to the stereo and cranked up the volume before continuing with the clean up. She looked down at her bruised knuckles and sighed, after their fight the night before, she realized that even working out a few times a week didn't use the muscles she had during a fist fight.

"Where are they," The man asked himself and looked closer through the window at the back of Merc's trailer. "They have to be here, they're not at Drapers so this is the only other place." He used a screwdriver and tried to pry the window open, giving up; he used the handle and broke the glass. Unlocking the sash, he pushed it up and fell through the window into Merc's living room. He looked around and saw how basic she lived, looking through the books on her coffee table; he grunted and pushed them to the floor. "Damn woman reading magazines that are written for men, she must be one of those lesbians!" He had just finished ransacking her bedroom when he heard a rumbling coming closer to the trailer and then silence. He peeked out the window just in time to see Merc remove her helmet and head towards the door. He slid the bedroom window open and fell out onto the ground with a thump. Looking for a place to hide, he took off at a clumsy jog towards a thin strip of trees.

"God damn mother fucking son of a bitch!" Merc slammed a fist into her door and shook it a few times to get feeling back in her numb fingers. Grabbing her cell phone from her belt, she called Junior and the crime lab guys. When she was finished, she called her ma and told her to keep the doors locked and if anyone came near her driveway to shoot them. She then called Tracy to make sure that they were OK and to keep an eye out for anyone that didn't belong around there. "When we catch you, Fin will have to fight me to be able to beat the shit outta you!" She went back out the door and sat on her deck to await Junior.

Tracy hung up the phone and went over to the kitchen window to check on Finnegan, she felt better when she saw her sitting right below the window in a lawn chair with a blanket wrapped around her. She would wait until Merc got back and let her tell Finnegan about her trailer being broken into, she didn't worry about her own place because what ever he did to it would be an improvement. Going upstairs, she grabbed her shoulder holster and checked to make sure that her .9mm was loaded and that the compartments on the other strap had full clips in them. She didn't know if it would be necessary but it was always better to be prepared than not. Dropping down onto her bed, she pulled her laptop from its bag and booted it up, she had an idea and needed Timmy's help. Hooking her cell phone to phone line and the modem jack, she sent an e-mail to Timmy about searching hospital records for Mallory's blood type. They would compare those results to the ones they were expecting back from the urine specimen at Finnegan's. When Merc got back, she would tell her of her idea and what she had asked Timmy to do, she hoped it panned out and if not then nothing was lost.

Merc double-checked the perimeter sensors around her ma's yard and then set one off to make sure that it registered inside. She nodded, waved a hand at her ma and Timmy when she heard the alarm go off over the walkie-talkie she held in her hand. The alarm could not be heard outside so as to not send who ever had set off on the run; it did send a signal to the trooper's barracks to respond to a break in unless ma or Timmy called them. It was similar to the alarm systems other people had except this was Timmy's own design. It was one thing she was thankful for, she had her own Mr. Gizmo for a brother and he took special care in protecting their ma. She walked back up to the house and handed her brother the walkie-talkie. "So it's all set up to go off

the second anything above a German shepherd comes in the yard?" Timmy nodded his head and pointed to the motion detector lights.

"I've got those rigged so that we can hit them on from in here and as an added bonus, once the alarm goes off, if the fucker touches any of the doors or windows, his ass gets a nice 2500 jolt of juice." He saw the narrowed look come across his sister's face and knew what she was thinking. "It only works from outside so don't worry," He polished his nails on his shirt and gave her a bright smile. "I tested it out myself..."

"And had a headache fer a week!" Ma slapped him in his head and pulled Merc into a hug. "Don't worry about us, if anyone shows up, I'll send Timmy's robot out to maul them." Merc kissed her cheek and then gave her brother a hug.

"I don't care if a dog barks, you call me no matter what time it is and we'll be here." She wouldn't leave until they agreed, one thing they all were was stubborn and unless she had a pinky swear she would bug them until she got what she wanted. She jogged to her bike and revved the engine until her ma gave her a glare and pointed a finger at her. Pulling out into the road, she took off towards the chalet.

The day was cooler than normal; Finnegan wrapped the blanket tighter around her shoulders and stood on the dock looking out at the small white caps rolling across the water. Her headache was still present but it wasn't pounding like before, the fresh clean air had helped clear the fogginess and she was remembering bits and pieces from the night before. A small groan came from her lips when the memory of biting and licking Merc's ear came to her. She felt her blush run up her face and wondered how she would be able to face the tall woman. "Sometimes you can be such an idiot." She jumped and almost fell in the lake when a deep sultry voice rumbled in her ear.

"Why would ya say that Fin?" Merc pulled back and looked down into darkening eyes.

"Because I am," She felt her heart seize when silvery blue eyes captured hers, she felt her body lean forward and then Merc's body heat replace the fallen blanket. "I'm gonna do something really stupid right now." She whispered as she reached up to place a hand at the back of Merc's neck, pull her head down and bring their lips together. What started out as just a press of lips became more when Finnegan wrapped both arms around Merc's neck and ran her tongue across her warm moist lips. Fire erupted between them when Merc opened her lips and accepted the deep kiss, she moaned and pulled Finnegan into her body and took control. Hearts pounded erratically and pulses raced. Deep moans rumbled between them and then ragged breathing when they parted, Merc rested her forehead against Finnegan's until she felt blunt fingernails scratch the back of her neck. She opened her eyes to see fiery green looking up at her and knew she was lost; she lowered her head and felt her head spin from the kiss.

"Ohh for Gods sake, I can't believe it!" Tracy said from where she stood looking out the window.

"The twerp made the first move! Poor Merc, she's gonna die right on the spot!" She let out a yell and danced around the kitchen, she knew it was bound to happen. The sparks that flew between the two even when they were disagreeing couldn't be ignored for long. She stopped dancing long enough to grab the phone and dial. "Ma ya won't believe what Merc's doing!"

Merc moaned, broke the kiss and fell on her ass gasping. Her eyes rolled in her head and she fell back in the grass with a hand over her heart. "Damn woman but you can kiss." She gasped out and opened one eye to see Finnegan sinking to her knees and then straddling her hips. "Ohh please Fin...I have this..."

"If you say girlfriend I will pummel you to death right here." She growled and placed her hands on either side of Merc's head.

"No, it's...Ohhh Gods I have never..."

"If you tell me you're a virgin I'll pummel you." Merc rolled her eyes and snorted.

"Hardly...I get...aroused quick and..."

"So you're saying that just touching you gets you wet?" She said in a low voice right next to Merc's ear and then ran her tongue up the side of her neck, nipped her ear lobe and cupped her sex with one hand. She jumped when Merc bucked under her and grunted out against her neck, she raised her head and looked down to see her with a hand over her eyes. "Mac?" It hit her as to what had just happened; she raised an eyebrow and peeled Merc's fingers back from her face. "Don't worry about it Mac, it happens sometimes." She leaned down, brought their lips together in a soft kiss, and then lifted her head.

"Fin, it happens all the time, every single time." She tried to roll away from Finnegan and found it impossible when a smaller hand turned her face back and luminous green eyes stared down at her.

"It doesn't bother me Mac," she looked up when she heard a piercing whistle and saw Tracy waving and then giving her hand motions saying that she was going for a drive. "Let's go up to the chalet."

She whimpered and covered her face with her hands. "I can't go up there, Tracy will tease me!"

"She's leaving right now so let's go and we'll talk about this."

"What's ta talk about, I get wet at the drop of a hat and I'm always premature."

"You asked for it Mac." Finnegan pulled her shirt over her head and dropped it on Mac's face, she then got up and stood above her and waited for her to look. "I have never done this before Mac."

"I know and I don't know what you want with me, I suck in bed."

"I hope so; it'd be a lot different from what I've experienced in the past."

"What ya need a bad experience or something?" Finnegan blew out a breath and ground her teeth in frustration; she kicked Merc in her leg until she took her hands from her face.

"That's not what I meant you muscle head!"

"Mercy." She mumbled and took in the expanse of golden skin from waistband to firm breasts, licking her lips, she let her eyes travel up to see Finnegan looking down at her with hungry eyes.

"I have never said this to anyone before, I want you Merci Macgregor." She stepped over Merc, walked towards the chalet, and hoped that she followed. She let out a yell when Merc picked her up and ran towards the chalet.

Ma clapped a hand over her chest and looked to Timmy. "My innocent little baby girl having sex!" Timmy fell off the couch laughing and slapped Tracy's ankle.

"Innocent baby nothin!" He crawled back up on the couch and waved a hand at the family picture on the end table. "Who was it that got caught by store security having wild monkey sex in the back seat of your car behind Wal-Mart? And no less than with the Apple Blossom Queen of Winchester!" Ma chuckled and winked at him.

"You're just jealous cuz you were the one drooling all over the girl and your sis got her." Tracy leaned forward and looked at ma with wide eyes.

"Merc was with the AB Queen, she's married with like four kids! Y'all pulling my leg aren't ya?"

"Nope, Merc's not as innocent as she want's everyone ta believe," Ma said and started ticking off names with her fingers, and when she was done; Tracy's jaw was on the floor. "Merc was a big old muscle headed slut, I'm still tryin ta figure out why they avoided her like the plague after she slept with 'em?" Timmy busted out laughing and slapped his legs.

"Ma, Merc's got that premature ejaculation problem." He saw the startled look on both women's faces and grinned. "So ya guys didn't know that huh, Merc's more male then ya thought." He scratched his stubbled head and shrugged his shoulders. "That's why they all ran off and why she hasn't dated in so long, maybe Fin can help her?" Tracy leaned forward and looked into Timmy's blue eyes.

"And you know this how; I can't see Merc giving out that kinda personal info?"

"Hey I just ain't anybody ya know, it was my egg that split in two and made Merc. I know her

better than anyone does, we got that twin link and I know when she's havin problems. Plus I asked her after I heard all the rumors, just don't tell her that I told ya'll, she'll kill me."

"I can't believe we're discussing my daughter's sex life," Ma said and then got up from the couch. "You guys hungry, I've got some shrimp, chicken wings and potato wedges?"

Merc stood at the bathroom counter with her head lowered; she couldn't look at her self in the mirror. Her problem had always been a huge embarrassment for her; she didn't know how Finnegan could not be disgusted with her. All her other partners had shown her their disgust by storming from her bedroom or ordering her from theirs. She wondered if she could stay in the bathroom long enough that Finnegan would fall asleep and she wouldn't have to embarrass herself like she had done down by the lake. It wasn't that she didn't want to be with Finnegan, her feelings for the smaller woman had been growing day by day. Just looking at her brought her pulse rate up and made her mouth go dry. "You're falling for her and you damn well know it Merc, but she'll take off just like all the rest." She sighed and rested her head on the cold countertop.

Finnegan pounded on the bathroom door and yelled at Merc to stop hiding and get her ass out of the bathroom. She had an idea of what Merc was going through and might know the cause of it. It wasn't a physical problem; it was more of an emotional one. She recalled what she had learned while taking college courses on psychology. The Jung/Freud battles that happened in class all the time is what reminded her of what was going on with Merc. "It's something you have to face Merc." She whispered to herself and pounded on the door again. "Come on Merc, come out here and talk to me!"

"No, I can't talk about this!" Finnegan went to the silverware drawer and got out a butter knife, in two seconds, she had the bathroom door open and stood behind her tall friend. "Now get in the living room and sit your ass down, if you don't I'm gonna kick your ass all the way out there!"

With her head still down, she mumbled. "You ain't big enough to do that."

"Ohhh that did it Macgregor!" She grabbed Merc's ear and dragged her from the bathroom. "Don't ever cut on me about being little, I hate it and I will kick the shit outta anyone who says it! Now sit your ass down before I get really pissed!"

"I don't wanna talk about this..."

"To fucking bad Mac, I do and I don't give a damn what you think afterwards!" Finnegan stood across from where Merc sat slouching on the couch and felt her insides melt, her feelings ran deep for the tall trooper. She had never felt the connection that she did for Merc with anyone else, she knew it wasn't from spending almost 24 hours a day with her, it ran deeper and closer to the fact that they shared the same kind of history, they were survivors. "Your problem doesn't bother me, what bothers me is that you won't let me help you."

"You can't help me; it's just the way I am." She mumbled and slipped further into the couch

cushions.

"Bull shit Mac," She straddled her thighs and placed both hands on either side of Merc's head. "This isn't a physical problem, I know because I'm just the opposite." She waited for Merc to look up at her and gave her a small smile.

"Opposite of what...Ohhh, sorry."

"What's to be sorry about, sex sucks with men." She grinned at Merc's quiet chuckle and moved off her. "You probably never experienced it so take my word for it, it's the grossest thing anyone can do. Damn nasty ass thing flopping out at ya, what they want ya to do with it and having ta look at their hairy asses when they get up." She shivered and peeked over to see the horrified look on Merc's face. "I'd rather look at Timmy's skinny naked body running through the house."

"EEWWWW! If that's not something to make you run screaming into the night or becoming a nun, I don't know what is. At least Timmy isn't hairy and always sprinted so we couldn't really see anything, I think he was afraid that I'd laugh." She looked down at her hands and then back up to Finnegan. "We make some pair huh, now all we need is a nympho and we'll have hit some major problems in the sex department."

"Well, at least with what happens to you, you get some enjoyment out of it."

"Ohh yeah, a whole two seconds worth and then nothing. Except for seeing who ever I'm with haul ass afterwards." Finnegan moved closer to her and turned her head so that they were eye to eye.

"You were with a bunch of asses just like I was, you're not the type to just say 'that's it I'm done' and leave. All the men I was with in the past played the one-way street game."

"And how do you know I'm not the type ta do that, I might be?" Finnegan traced a fingertip down Merc's cheek to stop at her lips; she ran her fingertip back and forth until she closed her eyes.

"Because if you were, you wouldn't have followed me in here." She leaned into her body and rose just high enough to bring their lips together, kissing her gently, she mumbled in between each one. "Just relax...don't worry about anything...I'm not going to run out on you for any reason."

"But what about..."

"Ahhh ahhh, I said not to worry about anything. Just know that I want you and nothin you do will disappoint me."

"But Fin..." Finnegan cut her off when she pushed her sideways on the couch and pushed her t-shirt up above her breasts. "OK...Ohhh Mercy!" She gasped out when her nipples were rolled between small fingers. "Fin..."

"Just going with instincts Mac, just my instincts." She lay down across Merc's chest and captured her lips in a hungry kiss that left them both panting. When Merc started to tense up, Finnegan backed off and held her face between her hands. "Relax and help me pull the bed out."

"You really know how to ruin the mood don't you?" Merc grumbled and got up from the couch; she hip checked Finnegan and grinned when she pushed her over on the floor.

"You're too slow."

"That's not what I usually hear," She ducked the couch cushion that Finnegan swung at her and crawled to a safe area. "I must be getting old or something." Just then, the phone rang, they looked to each other and ran for it. Merc grabbed it, yelled "Go to HELL!" And let the receiver fall to dangle by the cord.

"Who was it?" Finnegan asked and went for the receiver.

"Don't know, don't care and no more interruptions." She picked Finnegan up, carried her across to the partially pulled out bed, she fell back with Finnegan on top and rolled them over forcing the foot of the bed to drop to the floor. "You're driving me nuts and if we don't do something soon I'll take matters into my own hand." Finnegan groaned and shivered with the picture that went through her head, wetness seeped from between her thighs to soak into her shorts. She pulled Merc down and took her lips in a deep consuming kiss and felt her t-shirt being pushed up over her breasts, she pulled back to let Merc remove her shirt and then watched Merc's come off. Her breath caught in her throat like it always did when seeing the muscular body; she put her hands out to caress the silky flesh and saw blue eyes turn silver. She placed her hands on the sides of Merc's face and shook her head.

"Slow down Mac, we have all night." She moaned when moist lips kissed the side of her neck and rough breathing warmed her skin, calloused hands trailed down from her shoulders to stop at her hands. Entwining their fingers, Merc brought their joined hands above Finnegan's head. She lifted her head and gazed down with eyes barring her soul.

"This is different for me because I have feelings for you, I didn't with the others." She saw Finnegan's eyes fill with tears; she leaned down and placed a soft kiss to her lips. "That's a good thing Fin." She kissed her again but with everything that she felt for her, their tongues twined and soft moans rumbled between them. Merc could feel her body reacting to Fin's soft moans, the texture of her skin pressed against her and the wetness coming through Finnegan's shorts that she felt on her thigh. She raised her head, looked into her green eyes and felt herself calm. She lowered her head and nuzzled firm breasts, lavishing each one with the same attention while sliding her shorts down over her hips and off.

Finnegan was feeling things that she had never felt before; her body was warm and tingling. Her center was throbbing and she could feel warm juices flowing from within, she was a little nervous that what had happened in the past with others, would happen again. The second they penetrated her, she felt pain and dried up. She held her breath and then let it out forcefully when

Merc licked the crease between her thigh and left outer lip. That was something that no one had ever done for her as well, no man had ever given her oral sex in any form. She clutched the covers in her hands and raised her hips when Merc's shoulders moved her thighs further apart; she gasped and thrust upward against her tongue. "Mac...Jesus...!" She thrust harder and then groaned when Merc stopped. "MAC!"

"Fin." She looked up, gave her a crooked grin and dragged the flat of her tongue from her center up to flick her engorged clit. She continued to lick and then sucked until Finnegan was thrashing against the mattress. When she felt her muscles tense, she slipped a finger inside of her and slowly moved it in and out amazed at the amount of wetness flowing from her lover to cover her hand.

Finnegan felt her lover's long finger slip inside of her; she went up on her elbows and thrust harder. Her head fell back when a tidal wave came from the tips of her toes and traveled through out her body, bright lights shot behind her closed eyelids, she yelled out Merc's name and collapsed against the mattress. Shock waves coursed through her body, and made her tremble uncontrollably; she felt warm moist skin press against her and opened her eyes to see feverish blue above her. "I'm not dead?"

"Far from it Fin," She leaned down and kissed her deeply; she heard Fin moan from the taste of herself on her lips and tongue and almost went over the edge. She had forgotten about her own needs and just concentrated on what she needed to share with her lover. Now she was losing ground fast and didn't know if she would be able to control her self. She whimpered and broke the kiss; Fin saw the strain on her face and rolled her to her side.

"I need you." She whispered and felt warm lips trail down across her chest. "I can't...hold on." She whimpered and gasped when Fin rolled her to her back, pulled her shorts off and dropped her face between her thighs; she grabbed the covers and gripped them in her fists. She yelled out Fin's name with her orgasm and yelped when sharp teeth bit down on her clit. She sat up and looked down into a grinning face. "HEY!" She fell back, moaned and thrust her hips when Fin flicked her clit with the tip of her tongue. She felt her body starting to move towards another orgasm and then stop, Fin slowly licked each outer lip and placed soft kisses afterward. Licking her lover's juices from the insides of her thighs, she then slipped a finger between her lips and into her center. Pulling it out, she watched her lover's stomach muscles clench and her hips rise. Leaning forward, she flicked the end of her clit and took up the tempo of her finger. With in a minute, Merc was straining. Her thighs trembled, fingers clenched the covers and then she went over the edge with a loud yell. Juices poured from her center to cover her lover's fingers and drip down into the covers. She laid gasping, hips thrusting with each spasm and reaching for Finnegan with one hand. "Come here." When she felt Finnegan lay across her heaving chest, she wrapped her arms around her and held her tight. "I've never felt anything like that before." She opened her eyes to see tears trailing down her lover's face, wiping each one with a fingertip; she placed a soft kiss to each cheek and then her lips. "Are you OK?" Fin gave her a small smile and nodded her head.

"Better than OK, I think I'm in love with you." Merc looked into her eyes and saw straight to Fin's soul, a small glimmer at first and then brighter as she watched. She felt drawn in and then

warmth surrounded her heart when she figured out that her feelings for Fin were the same, she rolled them to their sides and whispered in a choked voice.

"You have my heart Fin; I'm in love with you." She laid her head on her lover's shoulder; it was the first time she had ever felt complete with someone or satisfied both physically and emotionally. She ran her hands down Fin's body and felt her shiver, for the remainder of the day and night; they made love until they collapsed from exhaustion.

Tracy threw her hands in the air and looked over to ma and Timmy who were grinning like idiots. "It's still busy; she must have left it off the hook after telling me ta go ta Hell last night." She dropped down into a kitchen chair and picked up her coffee cup. "Wonder if it's safe ta go back, there's no way I wanna walk in on those two doing the nasty." Ma shivered with the picture that formed in her mind, it wasn't the sex part but that it was her baby. It didn't matter how old her kids were, they were still and would ever be her babies.

"Thanks Tracy, that's what I want running through my head while at work."

"Yeah thanks my queen gives me ideas for the PC game I'm designing." He got up and went down the basement steps in a hurry.

"Please tell me he's not making a porno PC game with his sister as the main character?"

"He better not be Merc will kill him for sure then." Tracy groaned when her cell phone vibrated on her hip, she answered it and rolled her eyes.

"OK Junior, I'll let her know and no I'm not there I'm a ma's mooching food." She hung up the phone and blew out an aggravated breath. "Junior's been tryin ta call us since last night; they found a car down in Kentucky that was reported stolen from Martinsburg. They've got a body in the trunk and no idea who it is."

"So does that mean ya have ta go to Kentucky?"

"Don't say that ma, that's a long ass drive and with my luck, it's in one of those places where they falsely arrest women and toss ya in one of those unknown jails."

Merc lay on her side next to her sleeping lover; she ran a fingertip over the Tinker Belle tattoo that was right above her soft strip of curls. A grin came to her face when she noticed that her wand was pointing downward and small sparkle like designs fell from the end. "Whatcha doin Mac, playing with my Tinker Belle?" Mac raised a dark eyebrow and gave her a crooked grin.

"I played with that earlier now I'm playing with your tattoo." She moved up to rest her head on Finnegan's shoulder and wrap an arm around her. "I'm hungry, we got any food left?"

"Don't know, I think we cleaned out the left overs last night." She rolled to her side and brought their lips together in a passionate kiss. "My body's never reacted like it did last night or this morning," She pushed her hips into Merc and grinned at her low moan. "Never had an orgasm until last night ya know," She ran a fingertip over her lover's chin and down to the hollow of her throat. "Thought the top of my head came off a few times."

"Well that makes two of us, never howled like that before either, I think I scared all the dogs in the area." She gave her a soft kiss and hugged her tightly to her body. "I love you Fin."

"Love you too now ya gotta feed me."

"Ohh for the love of... who knows what, stop with the mushy stuff already!" Tracy dropped four bags from Burger King on the kitchen table. "I brought food but before either one of you gets anything, I'm kicking Merc's ass!" She came into the living room with a bottle of water in her hand and poured it on Merc's head. "That's fer telling me ta go to Hell and then not hanging the phone back up and to get back at ya even more. I told ma and Timmy that you two were humping like rabid rabbits down by the lake!" She ran up the stairs and hid in her room until she heard Merc laughing, she peeked over the railing and down at her. "Ya ain't mad?"

"Nope, I can imagine the look on ma's face. She probably looked like she was about to keel over and told you that I'm her innocent baby girl." Fin tweaked a nipple.

"Innocent my ass, ain't an innocent bone in your body." She grabbed the sheet and wrapped it around her body. "I'm getting food; you want some ya gotta beg for it."

"Beg fer it huh?" She got up from the bed, stretched her arms up over her head and flexed her muscles. When green eyes widened, she knew she wouldn't have to beg for anything except maybe mercy later. "Save some for me twerp, Tracy you had better have brought enough to feed all of West by God Virginia."

"Ohh don't worry, I ate at mas, and she makes the best omelets!" She came down the steps rubbing her stomach and groaned at Merc flexing. "Will you stop already; I don't need to see your leopard spots bouncing all over your chest." Merc winked at her and grabbed her shirt from the floor.

"Ain't leopard spots, its flea and bat bites. Ya know we got vampire bats down by the lake?"

"Yeah and the smallest ones name is Finnegan Macgregor." Fin threw an empty water bottle at her and pointed a finger at Merc.

"Get in here before I eat all the food and leave you starving and when did I change my last name?" She looked to a smirking Tracy and raised an eyebrow.

"Hey your eyebrow grew back!" She remarked and hoped that Fin wouldn't notice that she changed the subject.

"When Tracy, last time I looked at my driver's license it said Draper?" Tracy ducked down behind the bar that separated the two rooms and whispered.

"Ma said you guys gotta get married or the Macgregor banshee will scream for all of eternity." Fin turned to her lover and wiggled a hand at her.

"Explain Mac or little Mac suffers." She grinned when Tracy howled and ran out the sliding glass doors.

"Ma and her banshees, we're Scottish not Irish. She steals from the Island when it suits her."

"Scottish huh, so do ya wear a kilt?" Merc shook her head and pointed a finger at her.

"There's no way in Hell anyone will ever see me in a kilt let alone anything without legs in it. Besides, my surname isn't one that ya mention in the highlands let alone Ireland. My family was banished hundreds of years ago and it wasn't until the late 1700's that we could go back to using the name Macgregor." She grabbed a bag off the table and ran for the bed; she stopped halfway and looked inside. "Hey this ain't fair!" She pulled out packets of condiments and growled when Fin waved a biscuit at her.

"You tell me the story and I'll share all this food."

"Damn ma and Tracy, alright." She sighed and dropped down onto the bed. "From what's been passed down through the family, In April 1603 James VI issued an edict proclaiming the name Macgregor, Ealtogidder abolished, meaning that those who bore the name must renounce it or suffer death. Macgregor along with 11 of his chieftains were hung at Edinburgh's Mercat Cross in January 1604. Clan Gregor was scattered, many taking other names, such as Murray or Grant. Rob Roy Macgregor, born in 1671, a younger son of Macgregor of Glengyle, had to take his mother's name of Campbell. The persecution of Clan Gregor ended when laws against them were repealed 1774."

"Hold on there Mac that tells me diddly. Why was your name outlawed there's got to be more?" She handed her a bag with biscuits in it and sat down beside her. "I can't see how someone can just say 'ya can't use your name no more!'"

"You're not gonna let this drop are ya?" She sighed when Fin grinned and shook her head. "Alright, off to ancient history for the history teacher. The Clan Gregor held lands in Glenstrae, Glenloch and Glenorchy. The first chief was Gregor of the golden bridles. Gregor's son, Iain Camm One-eye, succeeded as the second chief sometime before 1390. After that, Robert the Bruce granted the barony of Loch Awe, which included much of the Macgregor lands, to the Chief of the Campbell's. In common with many royal gifts of the time, it was left to the recipient to work out how he would take possession of it. The Campbell's terrorized the Macgregor's who were forced to move deeper into their lands until they were largely restricted to Glenstrae. Ian of

Glenstrae, the second of his house to be called the Black, died in 1519 with no direct heirs. The Campbell's supported the succession of Eian, can't remember who the Hell he was related to but he's there. And this is what pisses me off, even though they murdered us, we fought for the king during the civil war. But to get the clan pride back and our name they all had ta re-establish the chiefs. 826 Macgregor's signed a petition that declared General John Murray of Lanrick to be the proper and true chief. He was in fact a Macgregor being a descendant of Duncan Macgregor of Ardchoille. So after all that, we got to use our name again, and I'll never eat a can of Campbell's soup as long as I live." She took a deep breath and fell back on the bed. "So now ya know my geeky family history, what about yours?" Fin swallowed and looked down into twinkling blue eyes.

"You wanna know about my family of royal assholes?" She rolled her eyes when Merc gave her a wicked smirk. "Ohh it's far more interesting than yours, I'll tell ya that much. Ya know those gaudy ass velvet drapes that the southerners hung in their mansions back in the 1800's. Well, my family made those damn things; they got their name from that. Everyone called them Drapers because they made drapes."

"Yep you're right, yours sure is more interesting than mine. Easier ta explain anyways, now gimme some more food."

"I got a better idea," She tore a packet of maple syrup open with her teeth, squeezed it out on her lover's chest and then stuffed her half eaten biscuit in her mouth. "This is so much better than a bacon, egg and cheese biscuit." She leaned down and started to lick the syrup off just as Tracy came through the door.

"Aaahhh come on guys, this just ain't fair!" She covered her eyes and stumbled her way to the kitchen. "Damn Junior for not adding on ta this place and for putting a pullout bed in the living room!"

"You are so dead Tracy!" Merc yelled up stairs and threw a pillow from the couch up over the railing at her friend. "Why the Hell didn't you say that they found a body in Kentucky!?"

"Temporary amnesia from seeing Fin lick syrup off your tits, sue me, see if ya get anything!" Merc growled and pulled on her boots before going to the bathroom to check on Fin. "Open the door Fin I gotta piss!"

"What's wrong with the other bathroom?"

"You're not in it," She wiggled the doorknob and grinned when it opened. "Plus I might be tempted ta toss Tracy over the railing if I go up there." She reached over Fin's head, pulled down her toothbrush and covered it with the toothpaste Fin held out to her, dropped her pants and sat down on the toilet.

"What are we gonna do at the barracks, I know they have a body in Kentucky but what's that got

ta do with us?"

She mumbled with a mouthful of toothpaste. "They're gonna fax a picture of the stiff up to my office and then we have to identify the person, that is if we can." She saw Fin shiver and patted her on the ass. "You don't hafta look, I'll do it." She got up from the toilet, spit into the sink and brushed her teeth hard enough to bend the bristles on the toothbrush.

"Should I go and get you one of those wire scrub brushes?"

"Uuhhhh...nope," she rinsed her brush out, gave Fin a sloppy toothpaste kiss and left the bathroom trying to pull her pants up. "I'll use yours when mine gets too worn," she pinched Fin on her ass when she walked past her. "Are ya ready to go?"

"Do I have a choice in the matter?" She watched Merc struggle with her pants. "Ya might wanna get your pant's up before you fall down the steps." She went out the door and looked between Tracy's car and Merc's motorcycle; a wicked grin came to her face when she thought of what she could get away with while riding the bike. "Come on Mac, what's the matter is your old age slapping ya today?"

"My old age, we're the same age so if I'm old then so are you so there!" She caught her helmet that Fin threw to her and pulled it on; she waited for Fin to get her helmet on and then straddled the seat. "And no funny business while you're back there," She looked over her shoulder and narrowed an eye at the innocent expression Fin was trying to pull off. "Or we'll end up road pizza and then you'll haunt my ghost for all eternity."

Junior walked past Merc's office door, stopped and took two steps backwards to stop in front of her door. He knew that when he had passed it earlier that it was open, pushing it open, he gasped and clapped a hand over his mouth. "What the Hell are you two doing?" Merc looked over her lover's shoulder, down at the picture in her hand, and then up into her cousins wide eyes.

"Looking at mug shots and the picture of the stiff from Kentucky, what are you doing?" She grinned and wiggled an eyebrow.

"I...don't know," he looked at how Fin was sitting on Merc's lap and blinked his eyes. "Obviously missing something."

"I don't think you've missed anything," She looked down at his fly and shrugged her shoulders. "Flies closed, ya got jockey shorts on?" He blinked his eyes and nodded his head at her.

"What are you talking about?"

"I don't know...what are you talking about? Fin looked between the two and grinned at Merc, she knew what she was doing and was enjoying the Hell out of it.

"I wasn't talking about anything, what...God damn you Merc!" He rubbed his face and jabbed a finger at her. "You always do that to me, now why is our witness sitting on your lap...and where are your hands?"

"I'm protecting her ass and this is best way to do that and it's none of your business where my hands are, where have yours been today?" Junior wiggled a finger at the two of them and stuttered.

"You...you are...in deep shit Merc! Have you two...you know?"

"Identified the dead guy?" Fin said and handed him the picture. "That's Mallory but that's not the guy who was looking in my window," She took a picture from Merc's desk and handed it to him. "This is the peeping pervert!" Junior looked at the second picture, raised his eyebrows and looked to Merc.

"This is your freaky ass neighbor; I arrested him the last time I was over there."

"Yep, that would be the one and I want someone to go over there and arrest him again for...I don't give a damn what but I want his ass locked up for peeping at my..."

Fin slapped a hand over her lover's mouth and gave her a narrow eyed look. "Bare ass," she looked up to Junior with a bright smile on her face. "He was looking in the window at her bare ass." Junior shook his head and pointed a finger at Merc.

"That's not what the patrol car said, that you said about what happened that night...Ohh ta Hell with it! You two had better not be doing anything that's against the law...fuck..." He mumbled, threw his arms in the air, left her office and closed her door behind him. Fin turned so that she was looking into twinkling blue eyes and whispered in a deep voice.

"So is it illegal or just certain parts like us disturbing the peace with our yelling or the skinny dipping in the lake?"

"We haven't skinny dipped in the lake."

"Not yet we haven't, if it's illegal then Hell yeah we're gonna do it." She said and then pulled Merc in for a deep passionate kiss, wrapping her arms around her neck; she turned in the chair until she was facing her lover. In a split second, the chair went over backwards with a crash spilling them onto the floor. The office door flew open and in rushed Tracy.

"Guys you OK...Ohh what the Hell are you two doing down there?" She went around the desk and helped a laughing Fin from the floor. "I bust ass getting in here because I think you two are hurt and you're making out on the floor."

"We weren't doing that," Merc winked and gave Fin a crooked grin. "Yet that is, any news on my trailer..." She saw the confused look on her lover's face and decided the safest place for her was under her desk. "Oohh shit!" Fin grabbed Tracy by the front of her t-shirt and pulled her down to

eye level.

"What's with her trailer that neither one of you two told me about?"

"Uhhmm...boss you better tell her...she's getting violent!" She choked and tried to kick Merc under her desk. "Merc!"

"Mac, either get out from under there or I choke the shit outta Tracy, now what's this about your trailer?"

"Someone broke into and trashed my trailer but the only person who would do that is either the peeping pervert or Mallory. Either way we don't have to worry about them anymore," she got up from the floor and pulled Fin back into her chest. "Sorry I didn't tell you...I got preoccupied when I got home and well you know." She blushed and looked down at her feet. "Forgive me?" Tracy gasped and pried Fin's fingers from the collar of her shirt.

"Please forgive her and let me live...I might actually get laid now that I can go back to my apartment." She gave Merc a terrified look and broke for the office door. "Later Merc gotta date waiting for me...somewhere." Fin turned in her lovers arms and grabbed her chin between thumb and forefinger.

"We are going to have a long talk tonight after we get back to my house."

"But Fin you can't go home yet, the case isn't closed and Junior..."

"The Hell it isn't, Mallory's dead and the peeping pervert is harmless. That means the case is closed, I'm going home and then in to work in the morning." She let go of her lover, walked to the door and looked over her shoulder at her. "Are you coming with me or what?"

"Please Fin, just one more night at the chalet and let me get this all straightened out in the morning." Fin stopped with her hand on the door handle, she dropped her head and looked to the floor.

"One more night and then if you still haven't gotten it all straightened out then I'm still going home. I want to sleep in my own bed, preferably with you in it." She let out a yelp when Merc picked her up from behind and hugged her.

"Thank you and I promise to take care of all of this stuff in the morning," She nuzzled her ear and whispered. "Love you twerp but what's wrong with my bed in my trailer?"

"Ohh nothing at all, I just like things the way I like 'em." She moaned when Merc kissed the side of her neck. "Keep on doing that and I might just let ya have your way with me later."

Merc woke up lying on her stomach with a slight weight across her back, a low moan rumbled in

her pillow when soft lips kissed the center of her back. Lifting her head, she peeked over her shoulder to see messy blonde hair and then one green eye looking back at her. "Whatcha doin?"

"Nothin, just waiting for you to wake up." She ran her fingertip from the top of her lover's shoulder, down across her back to over her hip where the scar ended. "I'll treat you to breakfast if you drop me off at work."

"What time is it and what time do you have to be at work?" She asked, rolled over to her back and pulled Fin across her chest.

"We've got two hours before I have to be at work, I have to see the principal first so that they can arrange for me to take my class back over from the substitute teacher."

"Two hours huh...we're 20 minutes from the school...plenty of time for us to play," she rolled Fin over and hovered above her. "We can stop by MacDonald's on our way to school so you can get something to eat." Fin nipped at her chin and dragged her blunt nails down her back.

"Play huh, what if I wanna play rough this morning?" Merc let out a yell when Fin bit down on her shoulder and brought a thigh up against her center. "No mercy this morning Mac, I don't want you forgetting about me when I'm not around."

"No chance of that twerp, you're unforgettable."

"Ohhh nononooo!" Tracy yelled and slammed her hand down on her desk. "Someone had to have fucked up the lab results, there's no way this can be right!" She grabbed up the papers and caught Merc just as she was coming through the door to the barracks. "Merc you have to look at this, the lab results are either wrong or the info you got is." Merc took the lab results and a fax sheet from Tracy and waved a hand at her.

"Let's go in my office and look at this stuff, no sense in giving the testosterone crew anything to slap us with."

"Where's Fin, she at home or did you let her go in to work?" She watched a deep blush creep up Merc's face and knew that her friends had an interesting morning. "Ohh I get it now, you two were playing and she just made it in to work before second bell rang." She slapped Merc on her shoulder and poked her in the neck. "Nice sucker bite ya got there Merc, the little vampire getcha again?"

"Giant skeeters down by the lake, now what am I looking fer here?"

"Look at the blood typing that Timmy sent over and look at the results taken from Fin's house." She dropped down on the corner of Merc's desk and waited for her to read the papers.

"We have a huge ass problem...wait a minute, if we get my neighbors blood type maybe he'll

match what was found at Fin's house."

"That's a no go; I mean we don't need it. He was in lock up again the night that Fin's house was broke into." Merc nodded her head and read the reports over again.

"Guess that means that Fin is going to be pissed off not to mention that the case is not closed and Junior's gonna have a cow. Figures that Mallory was a secretor and who ever trashed Fin's isn't, would I be too far off to think that someone hired Mallory and he's the one who broke into our places?"

"Stranger things have happened; maybe he's the one who knocked off Mallory." She shrugged her shoulders and sighed. "I wanted ta be the one to shoot that fucker and someone else beat us to it."

"They had more fun; ME's report says that his body was crushed." She looked up at Tracy and grinned. "I think that who ever killed him ran him over a few times before sticking him in his trunk." Tracy shivered and wiped at her mouth.

"That's gross, wonder if it was like lifting up a garbage bag filled with water?" Merc gave her a funny look and cringed at the thought of what a crushed body would be like to lift and move around.

"I think you've managed to make me loose my appetite for the rest of the day, thanks buddy."

"Sure no problem and let me know what Fin does to ya when ya tell her the bad news, I'm going to run over to the hardware store for some new locks and stuff for her place. Super Geek is gonna help me run an alarm system for her so that she has some feeling of safety."

"Ohh and what am I chopped liver?"

"You're the bed warmer." She ran from her office before flying projectiles could connect with any part of her body.

Fin dropped her head and turned to face the black board, she wondered what happened to the intelligent class that she had before the attack. Her ninth graders were now stupid as dirt and had the attention span of slugs. When a tennis ball bounced off the board beside her head, she spun around and pointed a finger at the culprit. "YOU, OUT IN THE HALL NOW!"

"I didn't throw it and even if I did you can't prove it because you didn't see me and no ones gonna nark!" The fifteen-year-old boy yelled back at her, smirked and puffed out his chest when she said nothing.

"They don't need to because you ratted on yourself when you sat there for the last ten minutes bouncing it on your desk; now get out of my room before I throw you out!" She stalked towards

him and snarled when the other kids started to snicker at his awkward escape to the hallway. He spun around to face the glass in the door, pulled his dick out and waved it at Finnegan's back.

"Suck my dick bitch!" He let out a blood-curdling scream when he was jerked upside down by one ankle.

"How about if I slam you into the brick wall until there's nothing left for your asshole parents to identify?"

"You can't do that, I'll have you arrested and put in jail!" He screamed back and struggled in mid air. "Let me down you asshole!"

"Don't think so; let's see what Miss Draper has to say about your behavior and your classmates about your tiny ass dick." Merc opened the door to Finnegan's classroom and walked in holding the kid up by his ankle; she gave the class a growl to quiet them and went to the front of the room.

"Now you little asswipes listen up, I'm taking asshole here in for indecent exposure and for breathing. Anyone here want to join him?" She looked at the terrified kids from beneath the brim of her Smokey hat, she released the death grip she had on the kid's ankle and grinned when he hit the floor with a whimper. "Put your tiny ass dick away and get your ass right beside the door and don't you dare breathe!" She turned to a fuming Finnegan and lowered her head. "Miss Draper can I speak to you in the hallway?"

"Sure why not, it's not like my class will be disturbed or anything, brain suckers got them while I was gone!" She walked to the door and stopped to see Merc point a finger at every kid in the room.

"Not one peep, heavy breathe, snort or batting of an eyelash or I'll haul every single one of you in!" She pulled out her baton and spun it through her fingers for effect before following Finnegan out into the hallway. "Hate fucking kids, they should be beaten hourly until they're 50!"

Finnegan moved into her lover's personal space and grabbed her by the front of her Sam Brown belt. "What are you doing here besides scaring the shit outta all those little shitbags?"

"I'm here to give you the body guard treatment, Mallory wasn't the one who broke in your house." Fin narrowed her eyes and leaned in closer so that she could whisper.

"If it wasn't him then who was it?"

"We don't know but I'm not taking any chances where you're concerned, who ever it was is still out there..."

"Who cares, I have you to protect me and where did you get those boots?" She looked down at the black boots that came to Merc's knee and moaned. "I want you to wear those and nothing else tonight."

"Excuse me Miss Draper is there anything wrong?" Finnegan dropped her hand from Merc's belt buckle and spun to face the principal.

"No sir, First Sergeant Macgregor was just..."

"Seeing if everything is alright," Merc replied and tipped her hat. "If you need anything call the barracks and one of the troopers will help you." She tipped her hat and walked down the hallway to where she had parked the department's one and only Harley motorcycle. She placed her Smokey in the hard saddlebag and pulled her helmet on before hitting the start switch. A wide grin came to her face when she thought of what Finnegan had said to her. "Just the boots, could be an interesting night."

Finnegan opened the room to her classroom and pointed a finger at the kid that Merc had grabbed in the hallway. "I want him gone from my classroom, suspended...expelled I don't care. I'm not putting up with a spoiled rich brat throwing stuff at me the second I turn my back!"

"But Miss Draper, his parents are the presidents of both the cheerleading and football supporters groups..."

"Ohh so because they have money, I should let their asshole of a kid push me and others around? I don't think so and that goes for anyone else that thinks because they have money they should be able to get away with crimes. Now get him out of my room or I'll go to the board and tell them about the special treatment you want to bestow upon that brat."

"You know Miss Draper, when his parents find out about this; they will cause you all sorts of problems. They have pull and you could find yourself without a job." Finnegan crossed her arms over her chest and glared at the principal.

"Is that a threat Mr. Penten, because if it is I will have more to say on this?"

"Take it as you wish, you have to play by certain rules to get anywhere in this life is what I'm saying." He escorted the teenager from her classroom and took one last glance back at her before closing the door.

"Fucking little bastard, we'll see who gets where in this life." She mumbled to herself, stood beside the door and watched as the kids rushed passed her when the bell rang, she was thankful that this was the last class she had to teach that day and just had a study hall to watch over. "I can't wait to get home and fall on the couch with a certain muscle head." A wide evil grin came over her face when she thought of her lover in just motorcycle boots. "She may not survive the night." She gathered up her books and papers, stuffed them in her backpack and headed down the hall to the study hall room.

Merc pulled the Harley off the side of Rt. 9 to wait for traffic to pick up after the release of the High School kids; it never failed to fill a traffic ticket book if you knew where to sit. She pulled her radar gun from the hard saddlebags, plugged it into the auxiliary plug and took a stance beside the bike. She looked down at her watch and figured that she had maybe five or ten minutes before the first wave came through. Turning her radio up, she turned to face the traffic and adjusted her sunglasses. "Come on you little pricks, time to pay." She caught the sound of a revving engine coming around the curve in the road and a flash of chrome. In a flash, the car swerved from its lane and came directly at her. Dropping the radar gun, she put her foot up on the seat of the Harley and launched her self into the air. Her attempt was a split second too late, the cars windshield caught her one foot, spun her in mid air and sent her into the side of the car. She hit the ground and rolled into the ditch, the car, sped off without even slowing.

Fin looked down at the clock on her dashboard, slapped her steering wheel and cursed at the traffic. She wanted to get home before Merc and get supper started; she had plans for them and didn't want to waste a single second. "What the Hell is going on up there?" She yelled at the car in front of her and slapped her steering wheel again. "One of you asshole kids probably smacked into someone again, damn brats shouldn't be allowed to drive until your 30!" She watched as one of the other teachers walked past her car, she sighed and got out to follow. "What the Hell, I might as well see what's going on." She jogged to catch up and then saw an ambulance arriving up ahead. "Looks like someone's hurt."

"I got a call on my cell phone from another teacher, she said that a cop got hit up there and the person who did it never stopped." Fin stopped dead in her tracks and looked at all the flashing lights in front of them, she grabbed her cell phone, dialed Merc's number and got the message that the phone was not in service. Panic set in, she felt her heart race and knew deep down inside that it was Merc up ahead. She took off running along the edge of the road and ran right into an officer keeping gawkers from the scene. "I have to get through!"

"I can't let you through ma'am; you'll have to stay back." She struggled and tried to break away from him. "I told you ma'am, you can't go up there!"

"Just tell me that it wasn't a State Trooper that was hit!" She let out a whimper when she felt his hands loosen on her arms. "Please tell me it wasn't a female trooper!"

"I'm sorry ma'am..." He caught her when she started to wail and fell to her knees; he looked around and saw a trooper coming his way. "Do you know her?" He asked and felt relief when the female trooper nodded her head and knelt down in front of Fin.

"Come on Fin I'll take you up there," Tracy held a hand out to the cop. "She's family; just make sure that no one else comes through." She wrapped an arm around Fin and took her right to the ambulance. "I'm warning you now it's not pretty but you're the only one who can handle the situation." She let her go and cringed from the screaming coming from the back of the ambulance, she knew it wasn't Merc screaming so it had to be one of the paramedics.

"I'm not dead! Get the fuck off me and gimme back my shirt! Sick fucks wanna play with my tits!" She struggled against the straps around her body and had the stretcher bouncing in the back of the ambulance. "Don't you touch my gun!" She yelled and tried to bite the paramedic again.

"You bite me again and I will use the paddles on you!" He yelled back and then fell to the floor with a yelp.

"You do and you'll deal with me!" Fin yelled in his ear and slapped him on his head. "Now leave her alone or deal with me!" She turned to her lover and pointed a finger at her. "You are in deep shit and you will suffer at my hands when we get home, now behave yourself and do what they want!" She sat down on the small bench and dropped her head down on Merc's shoulder. "I lost twenty years off my life when I thought you were dead." She sniffed and then broke down sobbing against her lover's chest.

"I'm alright Fin only my hip hurts from landing on it but these assholes won't let me go." She looked down at her bare chest and growled. "Damn pervs tore my shirt off for some damn reason and I'm freezing here!" She glared at the paramedic and then dropped her head back against the stretcher when Fin covered her with a blanket. "Thanks baby, can we go home now?"

Merc groaned and tried to take over how fast her wheelchair moved, she found out quick that Fin could throw the brakes on quicker than she could spin the wheels. "Come on Fin, I don't need this wheelchair, I'm not hurt and I HATE THIS!" She jumped up and ran towards the ER doors leaving Fin to yell after her. She made it out the door and stopped at the sight of her ma leaning against her car with her arms crossed over her chest. "Hi ya Ma; I'm in deep shit ain't I?"

"Get your ass in the car before I kick it!" She opened the door and waited for Fin to slip in beside her daughter. "Always something with you, I swear you'll be the death of me!" She closed the door, went around to the driver's side and got in. She looked at her daughter's bruised face and sighed. "You can't fool me Merci, I know you hurt and don't you dare deny it." Merc sighed and dropped her head down; she looked sideways at her ma and gave her a weak grin.

"Yeah Ma, I hurt but its nothing a good soak and some pain killers won't take care of." She took her lover's hand in hers and brought it up to her lips. "Sorry you had to go through all of this, I wasn't expecting some nutcase to try and run me over. Who knew they would take such offense to a speed trap?" She knew she was in deep trouble because Fin was too quiet and her ma gave her a quick glance of stormy eyes. "Sooo...sure is hot today but I know the doghouse is gonna be worse."

"Don't you dare move Merci Macgregor or I'll tie you down and beat your ass!" Fin said and then held out aspirins and a glass of water. "Now take these and let me put something on all your bruises." She waved a tube of muscle rub at her and had her roll to her stomach after taking the

aspirins. "Leave it up to you to get in a motorcycle accident and not even be on one at the time," She leaned down close to her lover's ear and growled. "Never again, I never want to feel like that again."

"Fin I don't need that stuff rubbed all over me..." She moaned and whimpered when small hands massaged her lower back and then worked all the way up to the sore muscles of her neck.

"OK...so it does feel good and don't worry, Tracy's gonna get the asshole who did this. I got his license plate number from where I was laying in the ditch, not to mention he has part of the Harley attached to his front fender."

"Can you work with a shoe stuck up your ass?"

Merc spent the next couple of days laying around or trying to stretch out her sore muscles, not that it was her choice, Fin made sure she didn't go anywhere by hiring a body guard. Ma sat with a fly swatter in her hand and if Merc breathed too heavy, she swung it at her. "Can't I even go for a walk?"

"Nope because I know you'll run to the gym or go over to Tracy's and use her weights, so nope you're not going anywhere." She went back to reading her magazine and grinned behind it when Merc let out a sigh. "Ohh come on Merc, when Fin gets home maybe she'll be feeling generous and let you off the couch,"

"Yeah if she can't reach anything in the cabinets, otherwise I gotta sit here." She slouched down on the couch and looked at her bare feet. "Guess this is being grounded huh?"

"You're lucky, you could be grounded by six feet or so," She looked over her magazine. "When you get this asshole I want a piece of him, I'll make him wish that he was never born." She went back to reading and snickered when Merc kept making sighing noises and then started tapping her feet on the floor.

Fin stacked all the test papers on the corner of her desk and then took her seat; it had been a rough couple of days at school for her. Someone had seen her going ballistic at the accident scene and had left homophobic remarks on her chalk boards. She could care less what they thought of her, it was the kids who were in the closet that would suffer. She rested her elbows on her desk, brought her hands up and covered her face. "Mother fuckers are all a bunch of fucking losers," She removed her hands and looked out the window to the parking lot, what made her temper shoot through the roof was what was spray painted on the side of her car. "I'm gonna kill 'em all!" She yelled and grabbed her cell phone from her back pack, after she heard a sleepy voice grumble hello, she went off. "Get out here...some fucker spray painted my car!" She got up, shoved her chair back into the wall and stormed from her classroom. She hoped that someone got in her way just so she could kick them and take out the frustration she had been feeling for the last week. She pushed open a side door of the school and stomped out to stand beside her car,

she turned and looked to the building to see if anyone was watching her.

"That was Fin, she's not a happy camper and I'm scared shitless right now." Merc said and dropped the phone on the couch. "She said someone spray painted her car and wants us out there." She looked to Tracy and then to her ma. "We may have to sedate her with the tranquilizer rifle."

"You shoot her; I'm staying in the cruiser where it's sorta safe." Tracy said and took the last bite of her triple cheeseburger.

"Ohh so I can sleep all alone for the rest of my life, not a chance!" She got up slowly, grabbed her baseball hat and waited for Tracy to get up. "You coming with us Ma?"

"Nope, I'm going home and making sure that Timmy hasn't turned it into a whore house, if he did then he better give me half of the earnings." She walked with them to the front door and out to her car. "Call me later and let me know if I have to post bail for Fin, or help hide the bodies."

Merc rubbed her face and looked to Tracy; she hoped that what ever was painted on the side of her lover's car it wasn't too horrible. "Do you still have that paint reducer at home; we may have to do some quick body work?"

"Yep or we could just repaint it, I got some spare paint in the garage, kinda a blue color." She got into her cruiser, flipped the radio on and called in to the dispatcher where she was going, when finished; she pulled out of the driveway and tore off towards the school. "I've been running checks on the license plate from the car that hit you and I keep coming up with it not being registered since 1982 and the person who had it last has been dead since 1981." She cast a quick glance to Merc and then turned down a road that would bring them on the side of the high school. "I ran the make of the car and there's like over 2200 of the damn things in the surrounding three states, any other ideas?"

"Gimme the name of the deceased and I'll run a check on any relatives or what ever and see if anything pans out from that." She looked out the passenger side rear window and tried to see where her lover was. "I wonder where she parked her car?"

"Probably where she could see it from her class room window, which side of the building is it?"

"The other side, it's where the horse shoe is and the school buses."

Finnegan cursed and shook her hand again before gripping the pole with both hands and swinging with all her anger and frustration behind her, when she made contact with the other pole, it clanged. "FUCKING...GODDAMN...SONS OF BITCHES!" She yelled and shook her hands out again. "COCK SUCKERS!" She swung the pipe and then jumped when her full name

echoed through the parking lot.

"I can't leave her alone to even teach class," Merc said to a snickering Tracy and stomped up to pull her lover away from the steel pole. "What in the Hell were you doing?" She looked over her shoulder to where the smaller pole was bent around the larger one in a U shape.

"What...I wasn't hurting anyone or myself!" She turned and stood up on her toes to be taller. "They painted pussy licker on both sides of my car!" She gritted her teeth, narrowed her eyes and lost the battle when Merc pulled her into a tight hug. Merc looked to Tracy and nodded her head when she walked towards Fin's car. "I hate this place," She broke down into sobs and hugged Merc tighter. "Wanna quit."

"I'll take care of this, security will have the parking lot tapes and then we'll bust the asshole." She dropped her head down and placed a soft kiss to Fin's cheek and held her tighter. "Why don't you go sit in the cruiser with Tracy, give her the specifics and I'll go get the tapes."

"Why can't I go with you?" She pulled back and looked up with tear filled red rimmed eyes.

"Twerp, if I take you in there you'll see the bad cop and I don't want you seeing me that way." She pressed a lingering kiss to her lips and then handed her off to Tracy before she turned to go into the school. She let her expression slide from her face to be replaced by one of stone, her eyes searched the windows for anyone watching before she pulled the side door open. The click of her boot heels echoed as she walked down the hallway in the direction of the principal's office, she hoped someone gave her a problem with her request for the security tapes; she was aching to smash someone's face in. She pushed open the door, walked up to the long counter that divided the office and waited for one of the women in there to notice her. After five minutes of them ignoring her, she slammed her hand down hard enough that it sounded like a rifle shot. "Is this how you people treat others?" She asked and leaned over to get closer to one of the women that walked by. "What is it that I'm too ugly to warrant any ones attention here?"

"You're in here during off hours, we're only open until eleven o'clock and then after one o'clock. So you'll have to come back then if it's important."

"That's it," she walked to the small wooden gate, pushed it open and walked to the principal's door. "I'm charging everyone in here with impeding a police investigation and obstruction of justice, now where's the principal?"

"He called in sick today, he has the flu. Now if you would leave." An older woman said and tried to pull Merc towards the office door.

"You people are all demented, I want to see the security tapes for the teachers parking lot and I'm not leaving until I see them now where are they?"

"We don't have a security office so there are no tapes." The woman said and tried once again to remove Merc from the office.

Merc rolled her eyes and pulled out her badge. "Don't piss me off any more than I already am, I have one pissed off and upset teacher right now who wants to know who vandalized her car." She started opening cabinet doors until she found the cabinet with all the security equipment in it. "You know you people are in deep shit when the DA hears about this?"

"Don't you need a search warrant for what you're doing?"

"Please, I've got the car sitting in the parking lot, the teacher sitting in the cruiser with the other trooper and you people impeding my investigation. Push me and I'll have the DA out here writing up every tiny little problem and obstruction you've thrown in my way!" She took the tape from the VCR and the one sitting on top of it. "I'll have these returned as soon as I look at them." She left the office and stopped right next to the door to eaves drop; it never failed to amuse her how many asshole people there were in the world.

"Call the principal and tell him that the police were here, he should be home by now."

Merc's face turned into a sinister mask, she stepped back around the corner and pointed a finger at all the women. "That's another mistake, lying to a police officer." She walked from the school with the video tapes in her hand, when she got to Tracy's cruiser, she saw her lover twisting a red bandana in her hands. "OK I got the tapes, lets take them back to the barracks and we can look at them there." She pulled Finnegan from the cruiser, walked her over to her car and helped her into the passenger seat. "I have this feeling that all your stuff is in your classroom so I'm gonna go get it so I don't have to bail you out of jail after Tracy has to arrest you." She gave her a quick kiss before she ran back to the school.

Finnegan stood practically on top of the TV while the security tape was playing, no one else could see it so they had to depend on her. "Fucking little bastard I hope his dick gets caught next time." She mumbled and then pointed to the screen. "You see what kind of kids are in this world; this little fucker is pissing in someone's gas tank!" She waited a few minutes and then stopped the tape. "I don't fucking believe this," She turned to Merc and Tracy. "I'm suing for everything I can and then I'm gonna retire to be a kitchen bitch." She stepped back and let them see one of the office secretaries and the principal spray painting the side of her car. "And they lied and said that he was at home with the flu?"

Merc nodded her head and then looked to Tracy. "Grab a couple guys and go serve arrest warrants to those assholes for destruction of private property." She grabbed the phone, called the ADA and asked for the warrants needed and told her that one of her troopers would be there to pick them up. "OK Twerp, I'm hungry so we're going for lunch." She got up from her desk, turned the TV and VCR off before pulling Finnegan into her arms. "And then we're going home, my hip is killing me."

"And here I thought you were indestructible, you know like Robocop." She kissed her softly and then pulled away. "Let's just go home and I'll make us something to eat and then give you a rub down, thank you for coming to my rescue earlier."

"Just glad I could save that poor pole from any more pain, you should have taken it out on those nasty bitches in the office." She told her about their attitudes towards her when she was in there and how they denied having any security equipment.

"Since I was gone, they all changed, it's like they're born again or something." She wrapped an arm around Merc as they went through the barracks. "Ya know they won't even speak to me, I go in and get my stuff and go to class." She hip checked her lover and whispered in a deep voice. "I'd like ta jump up on that counter and moon their dumb asses."

Tracy pulled into the principal's driveway and waited for the other Trooper to park before she got out of her cruiser. She looked around and then shrugged her shoulders when she didn't see a car in the area. "Maybe he parks in the garage," She said to the other trooper and then went up to the front door, she hit the doorbell, stepped back and placed her hand on her pistol. A few minutes went by with no one answering the door; she hit the door bell again and gave up waiting. "I don't think any ones here, is he married?" She groaned when he shrugged his shoulders. "Just great the most exciting thing to happen to me this week is to serve an arrest warrant to...no one!" She walked back to her cruiser and grabbed the radio microphone from inside, she told the dispatcher what was happening and that they were returning to the barracks.

"You mean hanging around the First Sergeant isn't exciting, I'd give a stripe to be around her for an hour."

Tracy shook her head and gave him a raised eyebrow look that was close to one Merc threw at everyone. "You do realize that she's a dyke and wants nothing to do with men don't you?" She raised her hand when he opened his mouth. "I know what you're gonna say so just forget that idea, we don't care how many years it is between partners, we will never be with some dumbass man and ya can't change our lifestyles no matter how big your dick is."

"So you sleep with our first sergeant, is that how you got your stripes?"

Tracy balled up her fists and was close to knocking all his teeth out. "That is beyond gross that would be like incest you sick bastard and I got my stripes by taking the tests you dumbass." She was about to tear into him again when they got a call from the other Troopers that were serving the arrest warrant to the secretary, they were in a car chase and needed back-up. "You just got your ass saved, you know that don't you?"

Merc dropped down onto her couch and looked at the chalet's ceiling; they had decided to just stay there even though both of their places were somewhat safe, it seemed more of a home to them than either one of their own places. Merc wondered if her uncle would sell her the place, it wasn't used that much and with her cousin graduating from college it would be empty most of the time. Plus she loved the openness, the lake and that she could have a dog if she lived out

here. "Are you goin ta work in the morning?"

"I really don't have much of a choice," Finnegan came around the end of the couch and looked down at Merc. "I know there's gonna be a bunch of shit because of the principal and his secretary being arrested and what ever else that can go wrong before morning." She crawled across the couch, lay down on top of her lover and pressed her face into her neck. "I'd rather stay home and bake cookies," She heard Merc snort and then clear her throat. "I can bake 'em if they're doughboy kind that ya just slice and burn in the oven." She raised her head and looked down into silvery eyes. "Or better yet I'll just buy some and spend all that extra time getting you naked." She slipped one hand up under Merc's shirt and ran her fingers across her hardened nipple, the low moan that came from her sent tingles down Fin's spine. "Is the door locked?"

"Who cares if it's not," Merc growled as she got up from the couch and carried Fin all the way up the stairs to the bed. "No one knows we're here." She laid them both down on the bed and then let Fin undress her. For hours they caressed each other and loved with a gentleness that came from an emotion deeper than love, with no loud yells or animalistic rutting, they rode on euphoric waves into a deep restful sleep.

Tracy checked her and Merc's e-mail and came across one from Timmy, she opened it and within reading the first couple of sentences, she was cussing and grabbing her smoky hat. On the way to her cruiser, she stopped by Junior's office and waved a hand at him. "Call Merc, our perp may be on his way over there...its Fin's boss." She ran from the barracks and right to her cruiser without looking back when Junior yelled after her.

"Son of a bitch, what have they gotten mixed up in?" He went back inside and to his office, he wasn't sure of where Merc and Fin were but he would start at his Aunt's house and work his way to the other places. "Those three have managed to get into more trouble than my sons," He grabbed the phone and started making calls.

Tracy used her cell phone and called the Chalet, she hung up when it went unanswered. "Where the Hell are you guys...Ohhh shit!" She pulled off the side of the road, pulled a U turn and headed in the direction of the Chalet; she had a bad feeling that they were busy and would leave the phone to ring. "Damn sex fiends, I hope you two are just not there, maybe renting a movie or something." She flipped the siren and lights on to get through the intersections and then floored the gas pedal once she was on the open road. She hoped that she was completely wrong and that the principal was on his way to another country instead of trying to find her best friends. She had taken it upon herself to have a patrol car make passes in front of his house and when he showed up the trooper had rights to arrest him. They had the secretary behind bars for not only vandalism but for striking an officer and damaging Local Government property. They had one less cruiser thanks to the woman throwing her cordless phone receiver through the windshield. Grabbing the radio microphone, she called the dispatcher and asked to be connected with Junior; a few seconds went by before she heard his voice come over the small speaker. "I'm on my way over to

the chalet, I have a feeling that they're over there, any word on the trooper in the principal's area?"

"You have a trooper stationed over near this guys house, under whose authority...never mind, I haven't heard anything beyond that damn bitch beating up a cop over at the jailhouse." She heard voices in the back ground and then Junior's again. "I had a trooper go over to both of their places and they're not there, you let me know if they are at the chalet and then stay there until we pick up the principal."

"OK I'll do that and as soon as I find them I'm beating their asses, get me all worried and...I'll let ya know." She hung the microphone over the rearview mirror and peeled around a corner and shot up a back road that would take three minutes off the trip.

Finnegan grabbed a large bowl from the cupboard, filled it with the deep fried shrimp and mozzarella cheese sticks she had just made and went towards the stairs where Merc was still in bed. Popping a shrimp into her mouth, she chewed slowly as she took in her tall extremely muscular lover. Merc was a total mess; her hair was still damp with sweat and tangled. She lay down beside her with the bowl between them and continued to eat as she took in every detail of her lover's face. She no longer saw the facial scars that covered a portion of her face or the wrinkles at the corners of her eyes and lips. It was the grey hair at her temples that were multiplying daily that held her attention. "Why are ya staring at me and not feeding me?"

"I was busy counting all the grey hairs, ya know you're gonna be all grey before the years out." She ran her fingers through the short hair at her temples and then placed a soft kiss to the side of her neck. "It's quite distinguished and adds a maturity to ya."

Merc opened one eye beneath a raised eyebrow. "That's a nice way of saying I'm older than dirt and beginning to look like it as well." She rolled to her side, looked in the bowl and took a cheese stick.

"That makes us both older than dirt," Fin said and held out a jumbo shrimp. "And I'll love you even when all your teeth fall out and ya have to gum your food." She grinned and chuckled when Merc stopped mid chew to look at her. "I'll even smash your food so it's easier to gum."

"Gee thanks Twerp but I'll just use your false teeth instead of gumming my food."

Mr. Penten fought with the door to the chalet's basement and finally managed to get it open without making a lot of noise. He blinked and tripped his way into the darkness and stopped to listen for any noises that he had been heard. When nothing happened, he went towards the dim light at the top of the stairs. At the top, he stopped and looked into the dim light of the kitchen; he didn't hear anything so he stepped in further. He then heard soft laughter and a loud thump, stepping back into the shadow of the door, he waited.

"Ohh come on Fin the lake's not that cold and besides it'll give us a reason to take a nice hot bath." She said from where she lay on the floor beside the bed. "I'll make it worth it; I'll make us real hot chocolate with little marshmallows in it." She fell back on the floor when Fin stepped over her and went down the stairs.

"You'll have to do more than that Mac; I'm not a cheap date." She placed the empty bowl from their snack on the counter and went to look out the window that showed the lake. "It'll cost you a Hell of a lot to get me out there naked and in ice cold water." She mumbled to herself and then turned when she heard footsteps behind her. "I heard...what the Hell...MAC!" She yelled and stepped away from Penten. "How did you get in and what the Hell are you doing here?" She asked and searched for something to cover her naked body with.

"I came to finish what that idiot Mallory couldn't do, I've been trying to catch you alone but this will work." He pulled a small caliber pistol from his pocket and waved it at her. "You know he was supposed to kill both you and the shop teacher and I thought it was all taken care of when you just happened to be the one to investigate the noise." He stepped closer to her and looked over her body with insane eyes. "I had to take care of him...he was a liability." When he heard a slight squeak he looked to the stairs and saw Merc trying to sneak down behind him. "The world can't have you people near its children...you'll poison their minds and convert them!" He swung his arm towards the stairs, pulled the trigger and watched Merc slam back into the wall. Finnegan let out a loud yell that made her own ears hurt, she charged Penten and knocked him over to the floor. Grabbing the pistol from his hand, she threw it across the room and started to pummel him with her bare hands. The screams that came from her with each punch were animalistic and hair raising. Merc clutched her side and moved down the stairs, she stopped when she saw her lover and knew if she didn't stop her she would kill the principal with her bare hands. Checking her side, she saw that the bleeding had stopped a little.

"Finnegan stop, you're killing him!" She wrapped her arms around her waist and picked her up from the unconscious and badly beaten man. "He can't hurt us anymore," she whispered in her ear. "He's finished and it's all over with now." She let her lover turn in her arms and wrapped her in a tight hug. "Maybe I should teach school and you catch bad guys." When the door opened and Tracy came flying in, she pointed to the floor and stepped back. "Call for the wagon, Twerp beat the shit outta him."

"God damn, I was too late again!" She said and flipped Penten over to handcuff him. "I tried calling and you guys never answered, Timmy traced the car and the license plate of the dead guy came back to this asshole. It was his great uncle or something," She stood up and kicked the principal in his ribs. "Sick fucker here sued his own Aunt and contested the will because money was left to a gay cousin." She looked to see how pale Merc was and knew that something was wrong. "OK what else happened?" She stepped closer and saw the blood on her hand and all down her leg. Fin pulled back and looked up at her lovers face and remembered what happened before she tackled her boss.

"Ohhh God he shot you...sit down!" She pushed her back to the couch and started checking her while Tracy called for the ambulance and Junior.

Merc rolled her eyes. "It's just a scratch...Twerp; I've cut myself worse shaving." She rolled to her side and looked down where she was grazed. "Just get the peroxide and a band aid and I'll be good as new."

A week later, Ma and Timmy walked towards the Chalet's lake and had to stop and make sure of what they were seeing; Merc paced along the edge of the lake and threw her hands in the air every few feet. "Ma has she flipped on us, I can actually say that she's no where near normal." He blinked his eyes and looked to his ma. "And why are we out here and not inside with my queen and the little hotty?"

"For the simple fact that you're a little dog and your sister's worst man, no go see what she did with the camera."

"Ohh you just wanna see her toss me in the lake when I laugh at her, can't fool me, I'm not as dumb as she is." He moved quickly to his sister's side and bit the insides of his mouth to keep from laughing. "Hey Merc, Ma wants ta know what you did with the camera and...nice legs sis!" He ducked her hand and almost landed in the lake if not for her quickness.

"Asshole little pervert," she waved to her ma and yelled. "In the freezer!"

"You put the camera in the freezer," he shook his head and gave her a wide grin. "Any pictures of Fin naked or how about my queen Tracy?" He backed up when she growled and leveled a long finger at him. "Just kidding geez ya act like I don't have pictures of you naked." He waved a hand at her. "Sorta naked, it's for the CGI on my gaming program. Would ya put on a blue leotard with censors on it so I can record your clumsy ass way of moving?"

"You are really pushing it Tiny Tim, are they almost ready up at the Chalet, I'm tired of walking around out here?"

"Yep, that's another reason why we came out here and to let the wild animals know that you're not a hazard to their health." He slapped her on the back and walked with her back towards the Chalet. "You know I never thought either one of us would ever get married and with this last fiasco that you were in..."

"I'm just glad that the asshole is locked up in solitaire and will never see the light of day." She pressed her hand to the area where her new scar was and shook her head. "Who knew that the Twerp was so dangerous, Penten's face will never look the same."

"Knowing what she did I'm not worried about you as much, you have someone to help you kick ass when needed, that is besides Tracy."

Merc stopped and looked down at her brother with raised brows. "Are you really my brother or one of his creations?"

"What like I can't tell you that I've worried about you all these years cuz you're a cop?" He snapped his fingers and pointed at her. "I almost forgot I got an e-mail from one of the guys at headquarters." He wiggled his brows and gave her a toothy grin.

"Come on Timmy before I smack you."

"Guess who's in prison for being a pedophile among other things true and fictional?" He waited and flinched when she growled. "Davis Ferguson, it seems that when the IRS took his PC, they found numerous pictures of little neighborhood boys. The FBI broke one of the biggest pedophile groups in the area and Davis was the head honcho, he's in the population and I made sure that all the prisoners got the word of why he's in there."

"And just how is it that you have connections in the prison?"

"Where do ya think the FBI puts all the PC hackers?"

Ma helped Fin with the last of her wedding gown and turned to wink at Tracy. "Ya know Merc's gonna fall over the second she walks in here, maybe you should go out there and at least get one shock done with?" She waved a hand at the long white hose that Tracy wore. "Looks like old lady support hose." Once they were alone, ma looked to Finnegan and gave her a bright smile. "I'm so proud of both of you, and so happy that you're joining our little family." She gave her a hug and kissed her cheek.

"Little family, ma there's how many of you Macgregor's in this county alone?"

"Ohh they don't count, I mean me, Timmy and Tracy. Now we have one more in our little family and I pray that some day they'll be a little Mac of Fin running around."

Finnegan smiled and shook her head. "I knew that was coming, give us some time, right now the mere thought of kids scares me." She looked towards the door and waved at Timmy. "Looks like we're almost ready here just need Mac and Tracy."

"I can't fucking believe this," Tracy mumbled and tried to figure out how to sit without catching a draft. "When this is over with...you OWE ME BIG TIME!" She yelled with her arms up over her head.

"When this is all over I may be passed out on the floor," She spun the Celtic wedding band on her little finger and examined the delicate woven pattern. "I never expected her to say yes when I asked her to marry me, I mean I was in the ambulance when I asked."

"I can't think of a better place that way if she slapped the shit outta ya at least there was someone

there to take care of ya."

Merc snickered at the memory; she had been strapped to a gurney with Finnegan sitting on the small bench beside her. It was just like when she had been hit by the car and Finnegan had threatened her. Not being a romantic person, she had turned her head, looked into brilliant green eyes and asked her to marry her. Finnegan had blinked a few times, her mouth fell open and she started to hyperventilate. The paramedic slapped an oxygen mask over her face and pushed her head down between her knees, Merc was praying that the back doors would pop open and she'd slide out gurney and all.

"Well she said yes then now let's see if she does it again." Just then Timmy opened the door and gave them both the rolling eyes and exasperated expression.

"Guess it's that time," Merc mumbled and got up from the step. "Come on Tracy lets go before ma comes out here." She walked in and felt her very breath leave her body, the living room was cleared except for a small table near the fireplace, red and white rose pedals covered the floor and two white candles burned on either side of the mantel. She stepped in further and looked up to see her ma coming down the stairs from the loft.

"Don't you move you stay right there until I get down there." She rushed down the stairs and grabbed Merc by her elbow. "Stand right here next to Timmy, Tracy get your ass upstairs." Merc snorted when Tracy lifted the back of her kilt and flashed her Superman boxers at them and then went up the stairs with the grace of a man in a dress. Now stay right there, I have ta start the music and get the handcuffs ready." She gave her daughter a huge grin, walked over to the stereo and then stopped by the small table. She turned to face the stairs and smiled brightly when Tracy stepped forward and then Finnegan. She was a beautiful bride; her pure white gown had thin red ribbons threaded through at the waist that matched the red roses in her bouquet and Merc and Tracy's Kilts. She smiled lovingly at Merc when she saw her standing next to Timmy; she couldn't believe her eyes when she saw the red, black and white kilt in the Macgregor tartan. Her black Prince Charlie Coatee and vest were set off by the gold buttons down the front and the white rabbit fur Sporran at her waist. When they reached the bottom of the stairs, she placed her hand on top of Tracy's forearm and walked with her to Merc's side. She looked up into pale blue eyes and felt her heart flip. She reached out and took Merc's offered hand and swore that she felt a small shock.

"OK people this isn't gonna be one of those long ass weddings like the other ones have," Ma said and stepped in front of them with a red and black ribbon in her hands. "Plus the fact that we're not Catholic helps a lot." She raised the ribbons and held them over Merc and Fin's joined hands. Merc dropped her head down and took her wife's lips in a gentle kiss; she lifted her head and then whispered in a deep voice. "You are my heart and soul, I will love you forever." She slipped the band on Finnegan's finger and placed a lingering kiss to her lips.

Fin squeezed her hand and gazed up with tear filled eyes into Merc's. "You are the very breath I take and the only one to ever have my heart." She slipped the matching band on Merc's finger and then pulled her down for a breath stealing kiss.

"This is how our kin were married hundreds of years ago, no fancy stuff just the binding of two hearts with a simple ribbon." She tied it around their wrists and then took Merc's silver and gold sgian dubh from the top of her hose and held it over the ribbon. "May death not even part these two hearts," She cut the ribbon and then handed the knife to Tracy. "Now give your wife a real smooch Merc and where's the booze?" She gave them a group hug and went into the kitchen to get the bottle of Champagne from the refrigerator.

Hours later with everyone at home, Merc lay at the foot of the bed in just her kilt and sporran, Fin's wedding gown was across a chair and her shoes and stockings were strewn across the floor. "What are ya doing down there?"

"Looking for something to eat and don't you dare say haggis, that stuff is horrible!"

Merc chuckled, got up from the bed and leaned against the wall with one hand. Her legs were still weak and she swore that her blood sugar level was at zero; she shook her head and felt a wave of dizziness come over her. "Twerp can ya get me something with a lot of sugar in it, like that box of Lucky Charms or the Twinkies?" She leaned forward with her forehead against the wall and groaned when Finnegan placed a kiss between her shoulder blades.

"I got better; I made you one of those protein drinks and put ice cream in it." She handed her the giant plastic 64 ounce cup and the box of Twinkies. "I ordered us pizza and bread sticks from Dominos; it'll be here in a little while." She ran her hand up under Merc's kilt, caressed her nether lips and moaned at the wetness that covered her fingers. "You know First Sergeant Macgregor; it's a good thing you took the week off because you would never make it into the office." She fell back on the bed and watched her wife shiver and look at her from over her shoulder. "Drink up because we have 30 minutes before the foods here."

"It's a good thing my wills up to date because I don't think I'm gonna survive the week," she put her cup on the dresser, fell sideways onto the bed and ran her hand across Finnegan's stomach. "Just make sure that Tracy and Timmy don't fight over my *Playboys* it'd be a shame if any of them got damaged."

"Don't worry you'll be around to look at your nudy magazines, in fact I'll keep you around for a lot more than that." She pulled Merc over to her and wrapped her arms and legs around her. "And we're keeping the kilt; you're sexy as Hell in it."

The End
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