

~ Ripper's Heart ~

by Larisa

Disclaimer: Yada yada yada, ya all know this stuff.

Violence: Brian and Xepher without it? NOT!

Sex: Them without it would be a dangerous situation for the State of Maryland.

The jailbait thing: Yeahyeahyeah Go away!

Thanks to Lesia, Ri and the Webwarrior who suffers through my God-awful spelling and punctuation.

This is a sequel to [Body Parts](#) and [Lover's Tryst](#).

Ripper's Heart

By Larisa

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The sound of a deep voice cursing every thing that breathed and the sound of a loud snap came to Boggs ears. He cringed and wanted to be anywhere but where Xepher was, she was beyond cranky and had been that way for the last three hours. Who could blame her after being called out in the middle of the night to a crime-scene? What made it bad was, they were out wandering around the woods in a torrential downpour, mud shin deep and the worst murder he had seen since their last case. He like the easy ones, the drive by shooting, wife goes nuts with a frying pan; husband cuts brake lines on wife's car and all the other cut and dry murders. This one was going to be the death of one of them and he was sure it was him.

"BOGGS! Where the fuck are you?" Boggs covered his ears and pretended that he hadn't heard a thing, which was his first mistake. His second was laughing at his LT. Xepher tripped, slipped sideways and ended up sprawled out on her stomach at his feet. She looked up, spit muddy water all over his shins and growled. "You son of a bitch!" He held out a hand and helped her to her feet. "I'm in that fucking mess and you're out here hiding!"

"Come on Xe, I was just coming back with the evidence bags and this." He handed her a towel and held back the grin when she found out that it was just as wet as everything else was.

"Gee thanks Boggs, this will help." She wiped the mud from her face and draped it over her head. "Let's get this done so I can go home and get my ass kicked."

"Ohh the little woman's pissed because you left her at home."

"Noooo, she's still sleeping. I didn't wake her up..."

"Wanna borrow my couch?" He winked at her; he knew how Brian got when Xe didn't tell her stuff.

She turned and gave him a glare. "I'm gonna tell Bri that it's all your fault that I have pneumonia!"

Xepher ducked beneath the crime scene tape and adjusted one of the spotlights on the corpse. The victim was a female about 25 years old; she had hundreds of deep knife wounds covering her entire body. One went so deep that it penetrated the tree that she was leaning against. With the weather such as it was, there was no way of telling if all the wounds had been done at the scene or just the one hitting the tree. Her hands were bound behind her with wire as well as her ankles being crossed and bound. Taking care not to disturb the way the wire was wrapped around the victims ankles, Xepher helped place the body in the black body bag and place it in the basket stretcher. It would take them close to an hour to get back to the road from where they were. Normally they would not be working in this area since it was out of their jurisdiction but a reporter had called the precinct and relayed a message from the killer that Lt. Sallano was to be the one to work the case. That was the reason she had not woken Brian up, she didn't want her to know this soon about the killer's requests. By the time they got back to the road, it was seven o'clock in the morning. Xepher stretched her aching back and limped towards her car, shedding her wet coat and T-shirt; she tossed them on the floor and got in. With the heat on full blast, she headed the 43 miles to the hospital to get her ass kicked by her wife.

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Music blasted out when the back door to the morgue was opened, the paramedics covered their ears and looked inside to see one pissed of Medical examiner looking out at them. They jumped when her voice was heard over all the noise.

"MY WIFE HAD BETTER BE IN THERE!"

"No ma'am, she's not with us." One of them said while his partner pulled the door on the ambulance open. "Lt Sallano left after we did."

With furious eyes, Brian watched Xepher's muddy Crown Victoria pull in next to the ambulance. The first words that fell out of her mouth were "Holy shit!" Xepher slowly got out of her car and limped up the steps to stop right in front of Brian. With her head down, she whimpered, looked up with watery eyes and wiped her runny nose.

"Baby I feel awful."

Brian's anger disappeared instantly when she looked at her wife, Xepher was covered in mud, twigs and leaves littered her hair and the pallor of her skin showed she was getting sick.

"Put the body in a drawer for me guys." She took Xe's hand and pulled her out of the rain. "What have you been doing? I swear you can get in to the damndest things when I'm not around."

"It's Boggs fault, you should kick his ass." She sniffled and sneezed. "Are you mad at me for not waking you?"

Brian looked up at her mess of a wife and shook her head. "In a way I'm glad you didn't." She smirked. "I got to stay in a nice warm comfortable bed, snuggle into your pillow and sleep to the sound of the rain on the roof. So no, I'm not mad at all."

"I just can't win; my own wife won't show any pity for me." She sneezed again and wiped her nose on Brian's scrub shirt.

"EEWW! Gods you're sick!"

"I know and I feel like shit."

Brian pulled her into the office and to the small bathroom. Pushing a shivering Xe down on the toilet, she turned the shower on. "Just sit there and let me get you something to wear." Xe couldn't move if her life depended on it, her hip was killing her and she was shivering so hard that her teeth rattled. Using her toes, she pushed her soggy boots off and started working on the button of her Levis. "Let me get that, you just sit there and don't sneeze on..." She ducked the second she heard Xe take a deep breath. The sneezed racked Xe's body so hard that she smacked her head against the wall. "Boggs is a dead man!" Brian mumbled then helped Xe stand up, once she was undressed, she got under the hot water of the shower and just stood there shivering.

"I see this is going to work well." Brian undressed and crawled into the shower; she pulled the debris from her wife's hair and washed her entire body. "When we're done, you're going right to bed."

"Will you leave me a little piece of Boggs to stomp on?"

Brian gave Xepher some Nyquil before she got into the futon that was in the office, the second Xe's head hit the pillow a God awful rasping snore filled the room. "This is going to be so peaceful. Damn dummy going out in this weather without raingear." She covered her wife with another blanket and left her to sleep.

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It's 9 am August 29, 2002. This is Dr. Brianna Meadows-Sallano Chief Medical Examiner of Frederick County. Case number 87210; victim is a white female approximately 20 to 27 years of age. Remains found in wooded area, weather has completely washed away all trace evidence from the body." Brian hit the pedal on the floor to shut off the recorder and went over to the papers that the paramedics had left with her. Scanning the notes that Boggs had written up, she saw that the body had been under a canopy of trees, but that the rain had washed down the hill and around the body. "Just fucking great." She went back to the body and continued her examination.

"Upon further examination we have complete severing of the right carotid artery at an angle starting just above the junction of the shoulder and trunk of neck to end beneath the jaw on the left side. Weapon was handled by a left handed person and at this time I have no clues as to what type of knife was used."

She continued to examine the body until she heard someone clear their throat behind her. "If you're a sick fuck who likes to play with dead things, the jobs already taken."

"I'll share my cookies if you share your body." Brian spun around and gave out a loud yell, she pulled her apron and gloves off before she wrapped her arms around a brunette that was just a bit taller than she.

"I'm so glad you took up my offer Sam." She pulled back and looked in to the odd golden eyes. "Did you just get here?" She let go of the woman and took her over to the counter where the coffee pot sat.

"Nope, late last night. Had a Hell of a time finding a place to stay." She said and took the offered cup of coffee. "We finally got a hotel room at the Red Horse or some bullshit name."

"So where's Dan? Still sleeping or out tearing Maryland apart?"

"Where I'd like to be right now, in bed with the covers pulled over my head." She grimaced with the first taste of the dark brew. "Gods I missed this nasty shit, so when do you want me to start?"

Brian looked over at the body and back to Sam. "How about now?"

"You got it, where's the scrubs and stuff?"

"In that cabinet there, and if ya give me a second I'll get you a new apron." Brian was ecstatic; she finally had a competent assistant that she trusted with her own life. Not wanting to disturb Xe, she took Sam down the hallway to the larger bathroom/locker room so she could change. "When you're done just give me a yell and I'll give you the penny tour."

"Damn must be rough here if it's down to a penny tour, the less inhabitable the better I like it."

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Brian was examining the knife wounds when she heard a slurred voice echo through the room. Recognizing her wife's voice, she ignored her and kept on working.

Xe stood weaving in the doorway of the autopsy room and blinked her bloodshot eyes a few times to focus on the spinning room. "Hey bartender gimme another Tequila!" She grabbed onto the nearest thing and wobbled on her feet. "Yeeee haaaaa baby!" She looked down into golden eyes and winked. "Here hold this!" She took Sam's hand and brought it up to cup her bare left breast. "That's better now it won't fall off. Where's my...hey why's the room spinning?" Sam snorted and looked up at the tall woman before her. Xe blinked her eyes a few times and slurred. "You're short and not the bartender." Her eyes rolled up in her head and she fell sideways into Sam's arms.

"Hey Brian I think we have an escapee from upstairs."

Brian turned and rolled her eyes, pulling her gloves off; she walked over to where Sam was cradling Xe in her arms.

"Yeah she escaped all right but from my office." She helped Sam carry Xe back to the futon and covered her back up with the blankets.

"Do you always keep naked women in your office?"

"Nope just her, wonder where she threw her scrubs?" She looked around the office and found them laying across her PC monitor. "Sam you want to have some evil fun like we used to?"

Sam recognized the look in her friend's eyes, that meant only one thing: trouble.

"Toe tag time?"

"You got it and maybe some other stuff." She grinned and then looked down at a snoring Xe.

Sam looked down at Xe's large hands. "Uuhhmm Brian, who is she?" Picking up her hand, she looked at the wedding band on her finger. "You have a naked woman in your office, she's drunk as shit and she's married?"

"I'll let her tell you when she wakes up again, it'll be much more fun that way...for her." She slapped Sam on her back and pulled a blank toe tag from her pocket. "It's all yours have fun."

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Brian was hovering over the victim with a micrometer measuring the distance between the entry wounds. She was confused because each one was the same distance apart. "Sam is it possible that the knife was double bladed, you know one of those fantasy type weapons?" Sam took the micrometer from Brian, measured on a piece of paper, and then drew two blades.

"Is the flesh at both sides of the entry a clean cut or one side blunt from say the flat part of a blade?" Brian checked again and shook her head.

"Both sides are clean, so that means we have a double edged weapon that has two blades."

"And I know just the place to check for one." Sam turned her head and saw a groggy Xe leaning against the doorjamb. "Time to play Brian, how bad do you want this?"

"Drop dead embarrassing."

Sam gave her a wicked grin, yanked her gloves off, tossed them in the air and messed up her long dark hair. "Ya got it Bri." She approached Xe and licked her lips seductively, cracked her knuckles in front of blurry blue eyes and grabbed both of her breasts. "Not bad, little saggy but

that can be fixed." Xe's eyes shot wide and looked down at Sam. "Nice ass could use some tightening up." She slapped Xe on her ass and turned to Brian. "Two bucks not a penny more; we got a deal or what?"

"Hey what the Hell?" Xe wobbled over to Brian and tried to hide from an advancing Sam. "Brian who is that, what's she talking about and why'd she grab me?"

"Ohh she's from upstairs, she's a transplant specialist." She moved from in front of Xe and pushed her towards Sam. "They need some spare parts so I told them to come on down."

Sam rubbed her chin and looked over to Brian. "Now that I think about it, what's her teeth look like, I can make some dentures out of them."

Xe's foggy mind started to clear the more she moved around, she grabbed a hold of Brian, pulled her back against her, and hung on for dear life. "Take her she's smaller and takes up less room!"

"I would but she's not wearing a toe tag." Sam pointed to the large tag hanging off of Xe's toe. "So let's go so I can go to lunch."

"Brian! Have you finally lost it?"

"No but you did earlier, wandering around naked just like you are now, ordering shots of Tequila and letting strange women play with your breast."

"I didn't do that...did I?" It hit her that she was in fact naked and felt like she had a hang over. "That stuff you gave me, was it Nyquil?"

Brian tilted her head back and looked into panicked blue eyes. "Yeah why?"

"I have bad side effects from that stuff; I didn't do anything else did I?"

"You mean besides trying to hump a dead body? Nope." Brian stepped away and grabbed Xe before she hit the floor. "Oohh nooo you don't Xepher, you are not passing out on me!" She leaned her against a gurney and cupped her face. "Damn you're burning up."

"Baby I feel awful and the rooms spinning, want you...hold me." She whimpered and buried her face in Brian's neck.

Sam stood back and watched her friend and the tall woman, Brian wasn't telling her something and she was ready to drop kick her ass real soon.

"Hey Sam can you get me a clean pair of scrubs and some ice in a towel?"

"If I get it will you tell me what's going on besides me scaring the shit out of her?"

"Yep, I'll tell ya everything."

They fought Xe so that they could get her dressed, Brian had no idea she was this bad when she was sick. She now had a six-foot, 190 lb. toddler to contend with. Making her lay down on a gurney, she placed the ice-filled towel on her forehead and held it there. "You move and I'll kick your ass."

"Hate you Bri."

"Good because you're still top of my list." She placed a soft kiss on her warm lips and sighed. "What am I gonna do with you." She brushed the hair from her cheek and blushed when she noticed Sam watching her.

"Spill it Bri or else?" Sam raised a dark eyebrow at her and grinned with a knowing look. "Ohh soo the mighty Meadows has fallen."

"More than you can possibly imagine." She ran a fingertip across a dark brow. "This is Lt. Xepher A. Sallano, my wife."

Golden eyes widened at the information. "Holy shit Bri, you got married!"

"Hard to believe huh? Xe's not normally loopy like this, she went out last night to investigate a crime scene and..."

"Was out in all that shity weather."

"Yep, guess Nyquil is out of the question from now on." She felt Xe's cheeks then rested a hand on her chest. "Will you watch her while I go raid a supply room upstairs?"

Sam pulled a stool over to the gurney and sat down; she studied the classical structure of the sleeping woman's face and shook her head. "Damn if you didn't pick a good one Bri, glad you did better this time." She had been Brian's assistant in Ohio when all the problems had started with the Psychopath Dr. Franks. Even before they had become serious, she had told her that she didn't like the woman but there was no convincing Brian of anything. She and her wife had tried time and again to get her to see the whole picture. By then it was too late and Brian was in the hospital in critical condition. When Brian left Ohio, she had been saddened because she was losing a friend but knew that she had to leave. They had kept in contact by e-mail and occasional phone calls but Brian had never said anything about meeting someone, let alone getting married. A wide grin covered her face. "Just wait until I tell Danny."

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After checking Xe's temperature and giving her a shot to bring it down, Brian covered her with blankets and left her sleep right there in the autopsy room while she and Sam finished up on the victim. When they were done, they went into the office and went on-line to a knife company that Sam dealt with on occasion. They went through page after page until they found what they hoped was a close replica of the murder weapon.

"I'll go ahead and order it and have it sent here." Sam said. "It should take maybe two days at the most, they like me." She grinned and completed the order form.

"Isn't that the place in Toledo where you order all your swords from?"

"Yep, they own me."

"OK, now if that knife fits the wounds, what are the chances that the killer bought the knife from them?"

"Come on Brian you know as well as I do that nothing is ever that easy."

They left the office and went back into the autopsy room for more coffee.

"Who says I can't hope, after the freaky cases we've had I'd love to solve one in a day or two." She told Sam about the two big cases she and Xe had worked on and how both times one of them had been hurt.

"You mean that you go out on calls with her?"

"Sure, she helps me collect evidence and I take out the bad guy."

"By letting them grab her first." Xe mumbled and then rolled from the gurney. "I'm sleeping in the autopsy room?" She looked down at her feet and saw the toe tag. "And I've been tagged for the city pound?" She pulled the tag off and waved it at Brian.

"How do you feel?" Brian asked her and checked her temperature.

"Like shit but not as bad." She wrapped her arms around Brian and nuzzled her neck. "I'd kiss you but I'm sick and there's a strange woman looking at me."

"I know she's strange but Sam doesn't care if you kiss me." She kissed her softly on her lips and smiled up into her pale blue eyes. Turning to face a grinning Sam, she introduced the two women.

"About time you picked a good one Brian."

"Sam you're an idiot but you're right about Xe. I asked Sam to come here from Ohio to be my assistant. And don't worry; she may be insane but not like that other one."

"Hell my wife would have killed me if I pulled shit like that bitch did."

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With the autopsy room put into order, the three women left by way of back door. Brian looked

around but only saw her truck and Xe's Victoria. "Sam where's your car?"

"Danni's got it; she dropped me off this morning." She looked down at her watch and counted on her fingers. "She should be here in an hour or so."

Brian pulled her keys from her pocket and tossed them to Sam. "Take my truck, we've got Xe's car and she can drop me off in the morning."

A huge toothy grin came across her face. "Cool I get to play with the lights and shit!"

Xe looked at the twin grins planted on the women's faces. "Bri are you sure you two aren't related?"

"She's my cousin, does that count?"

"Ohh shit, Maryland is doomed." She watched Sam take off out of the parking lot with both lights and sirens going. "Let's go home before all Hell breaks loose around here." She went to get in her car but was blocked from the door.

"You're not driving, you look like you're about to fall over."

"But you'll get all wet, the seats..."

Brian cupped Xe's face between her hands and gently kissed her. "Sallano, I get wet just thinking about you." She took the keys and got behind the wheel. "Come on LT. the kids are waiting and I'm hungry."

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They were met at the door by two wiggling little dogs that had one of Xe's sports bras' stretched between them. Bear went running towards the kitchen and dragged Fugly right behind her and out the doggy door they went.

Xe covered her eyes and murmured. "I don't even want to think of what else is out in the yard."

"That'll teach you to let your clothes lay on the floor." Bri snickered until she looked out the window. "I'm gonna kill them! BBQ spitted dogs!" She yanked the kitchen door open and looked at all of their clothes spread through the back yard.

"That'll teach you to put your clothes away." Xe said over her shoulder. "Ohh look, they have all our shoes to. Maybe we should leave 'em there and dress outside."

Brian turned and poked her in the chest. "You have the worst damn dogs in the world!"

"Ohh so when they're rotten they're mine." She grinned and gave Brian a quick kiss before going to collect their clothes. She looked down at the two little thieves and pointed a finger at them.

"Mama's mad at you guys, you better go make up to her or no supper." Bear and Fugly went running into the house and left Xe to clean up their mess. That's when she found the huge pile of fresh dirt in the far corner of the yard. Looking closer, she knew that there was no way in Hell two little dogs weighing five pounds combined could dig a hole that big. "BRIAN I NEED YOU!"

Brian came to the doorway and yelled back. "Not tonight you're in the dog house."

"Come look at this, I think the kids rented a back hoe."

Brian came to stand beside her in front of the pile of dirt; she looked up at Xe with a worried look on her face.

"Come on Bri, let's go call Boggs."

"I'll see if I can get a hold of Sam and have her come out."

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Brian and Xe were sitting in the kitchen when Boggs came through the door, he looked at them and then through the kitchen window to the back yard. "So the kids rented a back hoe?"

"Looks like it, is CSU coming out just in case?"

"Nope, I figured we'd dig what ever it is up and if we need them then I'll call. I know you guys don't want them to see all you underwear buried in a hole."

"Believe me that's all I want to find out there." Brian shook her head. "I leave work at work."

"Thank the Gods she doesn't bring any of it home with her." Xe shivered at the thought of finding a stiff sitting on the couch.

With the three of them with shovels, they started digging away at the pile of dirt. Xe kept glancing at Brian and wondering when her tirade was going to start. Every time she tried to dig, she hit a rock or one of their shovels. Boggs was red in the face and was soaked in sweat from his efforts, they were all given a break when Sam and Dan stepped into the back yard and started singing a chain gang song. Xe looked at the two women and saw what she and Brian must look like to others. Where Sam was dark and stoic, Dan was blonde with a quick smile.

"So what's going on Bri?" Dan asked and held out her arms and engulfed her friend in a huge hug. "I've missed you Bri." She placed a kiss on Brian's head before releasing her.

"I'm so glad you guys are here, come on I want to introduce you to my wife." Danni's hazel eyes grew wide. "Did you just say wife?"

Sam wiggled her darks brows at Brian. "I didn't tell her Bri, I knew you'd want to shock the Hell

outta her."

"Gods Bri let you run off for a little while and you go off and get married." She followed behind Brian to where the others were still digging. With one look at the tall muscular woman, Danni knew she wouldn't have to worry about her friend. The look that came over the woman's face with one glance at Brian was enough to light up the darkness.

"Xe this is my friend Danni Shepard, Sam's wife. Danni this is my wife Lt. Xepher Sallano and that old man there is her boss, Chief Boggs."

Danni reached out a hand, laughed when Xe held hers up and showed it was covered with dirt. "Don't worry about it, a little bit of dirt never killed anybody. Glad to met you Xepher."

"You can call me Xe." Her pale blue eyes studied Danni for a second and a smile came over her face. "Glad to met you too you look familiar to me."

Boggs snorted and threw a clump of dirt at Xe. "She should you big dummy." He reached out to Danni and shook her hand. "Nice to meet you Judge Shepard."

"Oohh shit, sorry about that." Xe gave Brian 'The look.' "Why didn't you tell me?"

"Why? She's just Danni to me, well she was my PD at one time but that was a long time ago."

Xe's brows raised into her bangs. "PD as in Public Defender?"

"Yep, actually she was both of ours, except I kept her after she got us out of the charges." Sam wrapped her arms around her wife's stomach and nuzzled her neck.

"It was cheaper to marry me than to pay my legal fees." She pulled the hair on Sam's arm and grinned when she gave out a yelp. "You didn't marry an angel Xe, between her and Sam I was in court at least once a week getting them out of trouble." She gave Brian a raised eyebrow. "Right Bruiser?"

Xe cast a glare at Brian and growled. "Uuhh huh? I think someone has some explaining to do after we dig up the buried treasure." She pointed a finger at Brian. "We will talk about this later."

"Ohhh this is different! Xe wants to talk!" She smacked her wife in the stomach as she went past. "It would kill you if you saw my rap sheet." She took Danni by her hand and pulled her to the house. "We'll make supper, you slaves get digging."

Boggs looked at both Xe and Sam and shook his head. "Damn women always bossing us around."

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30 minutes later Boggs gagged and crawled out of the hole leaving Sam and Xe in there. "Gods

how can you guys stand the stench?" His face paled as he gagged and stumbled towards the house.

"Men always acting like wimps." Sam said and then dropped down on her haunches and carefully moved the dirt around with her hands. "Jack Pot! Tell the womenz ta get the BBQ sauce ready it's hog spittin time!"

"Who the Hell would bury a hog in our back yard?" She looked down to see the snout of the pig and then the front hooves.

"What the fuck is that?" Brian asked and pointed to the long tail sticking out of the dirt. Sam and Xe pushed the dirt away and moved away from it. "Some sick fuck put a donkey's ass on the front of a pig?"

Xe looked at her wife and took a shuddering breath. "I'm just glad that it's not a roan color." She looked towards the barn and saw her filly's head sticking out over her stall door.

Danni placed a hand on Brian's shoulder and whispered in her ear.

"Oohh nooo! It can't be."

"What?" The three voices of Boggs, Sam and Xe asked.

"The pig is you Xe and the donkey is Danni. You're a cop and Danni's a Democrat."

"I don't get it." Xe crawled out of the hole. "You guys just got here last night, how could you be involved and who would connect the two of us?" She pointed to Danni.

"The same person who contacted the reporter in Chicago." Danni said and watched Xe and Boggs lock eyes. He held up his hands and shook his head.

"Don't look at me I didn't say a word, not one tiny little word."

Brian's eyes narrowed, she stepped in front of Xe and grabbed her by her scrub shirt. "What the Hell is going on Sallano?"

"Boggs shoot me now, it'll be less painful than what the Boss is gonna do to me." She dropped her head, scuffed her toe in the dirt, and then let out a yell when her ear was grabbed and Brian pulled her into the house.

"Well that settles it, you owe me Sam." Danni held out her hand and wiggled her fingers. "Pay up, you owe me five bucks."

"Damn I never win, you cheat!"

Boggs busted up laughing at the way the two women acted towards each other. It was like

looking at a different version of Xe and Brian.

"Ain't fair Danni, you do that voodoo lawyer thing."

"Haa! I just know Bri and she's the boss here just like when you two were little. So there!"

"Was not!" She ran after her wife continuing to chant 'Was not,' the entire way.

"Gods have pity on the world, there's four of them." He shook his head and followed them.

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After everyone was cleaned up, Brian pointed to the 'Hot seat' as she called it and made Xe sit down. She then had the dogs stand guard and told them to bite her if she moved.

"Turn my own babies on me; you're a mean woman Bri." She crossed her arms over her chest and pouted. Which got her absolutely nothing from her wife but snickers from the others.

"Now what about this reporter and I want ever single nasty little detail."

Between Xe and Boggs, the re-told the story of how a reporter from the Chicago Tribune had called the cop shop and requested to speak with Xe. When he found out she wasn't there he asked to speak to the Chief of police because it was a dire message he needed to pass on. He faxed a copy of the letter he had received at the paper along with a detailed map of the wooded area that the person wanted Xe to search.

"So that's when you two were out in the weather last night and this morning. You were going on this reporter's message and found that woman's body." She dropped onto the couch next to Sam and Danni. "How does this involve you then?" She looked to Danni with a raised eyebrow.

"About two weeks ago I started getting threatening letters from some nut case, which isn't that strange since I'm a Judge and former Prosecuting Attorney. What had me scared was that they kept referring to a botched murder and that I should have kept my nose out of it. So I went back over all my dockets for the past year and I had only judged two cases where there was an attempted murder. None of them had anything that would cause a person to threaten me. One was a woman who tried to kill her husband after years of abuse and the other was a guy who ran over a friend with his car because he had lost to him during a poker game."

"Then a few days ago, she got a letter in the mail with the medical caduceus drawn in the center of the page and below it were your initials." Sam said and looked to a shaken Brian. "That's why we came down here, to protect you and try to find out who it is." Two sets of eyes went to a disturbed Xe. "We had no idea you were married or to a homicide lieutenant."

Xe stood up from the chair and got two little dogs attached to her pant legs. "And when were you going to tell her?"

"In the morning," Danni answered. "I spent all day today trying to find out from the FBI in Quantico if they had anything on the letters. They were sent off to the handwriting analysis people, I told them to get a sample of Dr. Franks handwriting for comparison."

Brian stood up, pulled Fugly off Xe's leg, and hugged her close. "It's got to be that psycho bitch; she's the only one that would know about the connection between me, Sam and Danni."

"Did the FBI say anything? We know that Franks is a profiler for them down at Quantico, it would be no problem for them to go and get a sample of her hand writing."

Danni ran a hand across her face and looked up with concerned eyes. "They don't know where she is, she's not been at work for the last month. All her files are gone and her apartment is empty."

"Son of a bitch!" Xe threw her head back and took a deep breath before looking over to Boggs. "Can we find her boss?"

"Shit Xe, if the feebies don't know where she is how are we gonna find her?" He saw the look coming over Xe's face and shook his head. "Oohh noo, we can't do that. No way it's beyond illegal."

"Have you known me to ever do anything legal?" A corner of her mouth twitched and filled out to a full grin when Boggs sighed.

"I don't know a damn thing, you hear me?"

Brian held up a hand and looked into mischievous blue eyes. "Hold on there a minute, what are you going to do?"

A huge grin covered Sam's face; there was nothing she liked better than trouble. "I'll help!" She ignored the glaring look Danni gave her. "What's one more black mark on my record?" She shrugged her shoulders.

"Hack into the system and run her credit card numbers, see if she's used them in the last month and where. I'll try to get into the phone companies files and check for her name, if she's used her cell phone I'll be able to look at the phone numbers and then see where she's pinged."

Boggs shook his head at her, he had no idea she knew all that stuff. "Where'd you learn about this?"

"All those boring ass courses you send me to down in Quantico. You know they do let us have lunch and that's when I get all kinds of interesting info."

Brian stepped up to her so that they were nose to chest, she grabbed a nipple and pinched it hard enough to make Xe's eyes widen. "Not tonight you aren't, it's late, and you're sick and ready to fall over. Now get your ass to bed."

"You are so mean to me, hate you Bri. Night everyone Ma's sending me to bed." She grinned and gave her a quick kiss before heading to their room.

Three whip lashing sounds came from behind her and then snickers. "Hey someone's gotta keep her in-line." She waved at Xe who she could see peeking out of their room with her tongue sticking out at her. Keep it up Xe and I'll show you where you can put that." Turning to her friends, she gave them a smirk. "You guys can stay here tonight; we've got plenty of room, you too Boggs."

"Nah I'm gonna head out, the boss wants my ass hanging from a tree as it is. Nice meeting you guys, hope you have ear plugs."

"OOHH is someone a screamer Bri?" Danni nudged her shoulder.

"Yeah Xe, she takes the plaster right off the ceiling. Come on I'll show you to your room."

"Uuhh huh, I think it maybe the other way around." Sam slapped Brian on her ass then ducked behind Danni.

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Xe was in the shower when Brian went into their room; she shed her clothes, dropped them on the floor and pointed to the dogs. "Don't even think about it." She stepped into the shower and wrapped her arms around Xe from behind. Resting her head in the center of her back, she moaned when the hot water splashed down onto her shoulders. "Gods that feels good, my shoulders are killing me." Xe turned in her arms, turned her so that she was facing away from her and then started to work the soreness out of her wife's shoulders with strong fingers. "Keep doing that and I'll fall asleep right here." Xe pulled her back against her chest and placed her lips close to her ear.

"I'll find her Bri, I promise and I'll make sure she goes away for a long time."

After their shower, Brian noticed that the dogs were gone and so were her clothes. "Xe did you close the doggy door?"

"Nope I thought you did why...oohhh shit! The kids and that nasty stuff out there!" She ran from the room, down the hallway and stopped when she found the kids on the couch with Brian's clothes. Fugly was doing little spins and then plopped down on Bears head. "You two are so lucky!" She went into the kitchen and locked the door, the last thing she wanted to do was give the dogs baths after they rolled on the disgusting carcass in the yard.

Brian was snuggled under the covers waiting for Xe to come to bed, a grin came over her face when she heard a slap, Xe yelp and snickers. She knew that one of her friends had caught her in the hallway and just couldn't pass up the chance to smack her on her ass. It was one of her favorite parts of her lover and couldn't help but smack it every chance she got.

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After calling a guy that she had busted years earlier for hacking into a banks files, Xe had all the information she needed to start her search for Dr. Patricia Franks. With notebook in hand, she left her office to head over to the morgue where she would use Brian's computer to start her project. The last thing she wanted was for the police commissioner to walk in and catch her hacking systems.

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"What have we got boys?" Sam asked as she jumped down onto the dock and opened the back door to the ambulance.

"You're new here aren't you?" A young paramedic in his middle twenties asked with a deep cracking voice and then finger combed his hair.

"I'm Brian's new assistant and just forget the pussy primping, I wouldn't touch you with a ten foot pole and my wife would just love to test the new tazer I bought her on you nuts." She gave him a wicked grin and snarled at him.

"Play nice Sam or I'll tell Xe you're a peeping pervert." She looked into the ambulance and saw the very thin body on the stretcher. "Did you bring me a charley bones?"

"No Doc, he got smushed during a domestic violence fight."

"Damn!" Sam looked at the paramedic. "What did she do run him over with a steam roller?"

"You could say that." They pulled the stretcher out and took it into the autopsy room, once they were gone; Brian lifted the sheet and stared.

"What ever she used it worked." The man was basically crushed; his chest and ribcage were nothing but mush. She picked up his arm and noticed that every single bone was broken. "I hope I never run into this woman."

"I'd like to know what she looks like, maybe like Chyna."

"Well, let's get started." She looked up with a grimace. "Think if we put down; say cause of death is smushing we'd get in trouble?"

"How we gonna do this, unzip him shake him into a garbage bag and zip him back up?"

The sound of a horn honking came from the back of the room near the bay doors; Brian looked over and saw Xe coming through the side door with a look of complete shock on her face.

"Baby you will not believe what's sitting at the dock." She threw a thumb over her shoulder and

shook her head. "You guys gotta see this to believe it." She went to the door and hit the button to raise it. When it was up far enough, they saw a flatbed tow-truck backing up to the door. On the flatbed was a lump covered with a blue tarp. "Did you guys order something?"

Two heads swung back and forth and then looked to each other. "Sam you didn't order a hog for a BBQ did you?"

"Nope, not me this time."

The driver got out and limped around the side of his truck, he looked up at the lump and then to the women. "Where ya want her?"

"Want who?" Brian asked.

"The woman on my truck, where ya want her?"

Brian and Sam looked to the smushed body on the table, then to the lump on the truck.

"Ohh my Gods..." Brian whispered.

"It's the steamroller!" Sam ran across the room jumped on the back of the truck and pulled the tarp off. "Holy shit Brian! She must weigh five or six hundred pounds!"

Brian ran a hand down her face, looked to a gawking Xe and back to a grinning Sam. "Ohh my Gods!" She repeated.

"Hey I got a couple of cars ta pick up, where ya want her?"

"Uuhhmm...Bri?" Xe asked.

"Will she roll off if you raise the bed on your truck?"

"Yeah but ya better stand back cuz once she starts, she'll smush ya."

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They were in the middle of the floor, dressed in surgical scrubs, aprons, safety gear and big yellow boots that they had borrowed from the firefighters that came to help them roll the woman over.

"Can't we use the sucky thing?" Sam whined and struggled to hold back the fat in the abdominal area so Brian could extract the organs. "I don't think anyone would notice a few hundred pounds missing."

"How about a jumbo shop-vac?" Xe asked from the other side of the woman's body where she was doing the same as Sam.

"GODDAMNMOTHEFUCKINGSONOFABITCH! How about someone help me get unstuck, my arms being crushed in here." Xe got up from where she had been squatting, wrapped her arms around Brian and pulled. A loud suction noise was made and then both of them were falling backwards onto the floor. "I'm ruling cause of death as too many fucking Twinkies!" She dropped her head back to rest on Xe's shoulder.

"Ohh my Gods, if I hadn't seen it with my own eyes I wouldn't believe it." Boggs stepped closer and looked at the women.

"What brings you here Boggs, come to see us struggle?" Xe asked from where she and Brian were still lying on the floor.

"I had to bring two officers here for treatment; they came back to the cop shop holding their nuts."

"Uhhmm they wouldn't have been anywhere near this one would they?" Xe pointed to the corpse.

Sam wiggled her eyebrows and asked. "Hey Bri whatcha think Inguinal Hernias?"

"Glad I'm not them." She sat up and shivered. "Will they get a medal for wounded in the line of duty; ya know a tiny little pair of nuts to hang on their chest?"

"Bri sometimes I wonder about you. And yeah they were trying to subdue this woman when she started to fall, those dumbasses tried to catch her."

"EEWW, we could have had three smushed cases in one day!" Sam got up from the floor and stretched her sore back. "What I want to know is how are we gonna get her out of here?"

Xe got to her feet, pulled Brian up and groaned when a sharp pain shot through her hip. "I don't know about you two but I need to sit down, plus I need to play on the computer."

"Go ahead baby, we'll think of something to do with this." Bri pointed to the corpse on the floor and shuddered.

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Sneaking in through the back door of the phone company's firewall was easier then she thought it would be. She searched through pages of information until she found what she needed. Writing down notes and numbers, she checked her note pad and typed in what her hacker had instructed. Seconds later, she knew where the cell phones signal was coming from by tracing the satellites it pinged off. "Florida? Can't be." She rechecked and sure enough, the phone was being used in the state of Florida. Covering her tracks as she backed out of the phone company's records, she started to hack into the credit card companies one by one to see if Dr. Franks had used her credit cards within the last month. This part was a little trickier and she knew she had to have set off at least one alarm within the American express firewall security system. She didn't much care; the

sign on name would come back to one of the upper management people for the company.

Her hacker friend knew a little too much about the companies for her comfort, but she could careless what he did. Finding Franks account, she noted that it had been used at gas stations in the state of California three weeks ago. When she was finished, the four credit cards that Dr. Franks had, were all used in different states at the same time. The only thing that explained the use of the credit cards was that they were stolen and sold on the black market along with maybe the cell phone. Shutting down Brian's PC, she went back out to find Brian and Sam sitting on a gurney watching mist rise into the air from the tarp covered lump in the center of the floor.

"What did you two do?" She watched the white smoke rise and disappear.

"We're trying to freeze dry her." Sam used a squirt bottle, sprayed the tarp and chuckled when steam rolled off it. "I love playing with dry ice, Bri remember when we blew up that phone booth?"

Ice blue eyes narrowed and zeroed in on a blushing Brian. "You two blew up a phone booth?"

"It was on campus and they refused to come out and fix it, so...we did it for them." She shrugged her shoulders and elbowed Sam in her side.

"It was a bitch stealing 200 pounds of dry ice and filling that damn thing. The fun part was after we taped the door closed and poured bleach threw a hole on top."

Xe covered her ears and gave them both nasty looks. "We will talk later." She pointed to Brian. "I have to go into the shop and check something out, Dr. Frank's phone is in Florida and all her credit cards are through out the US. I need a court order to check if she reported them stolen." She sighed and ran a hand through her hair. "Finding a judge to grant it will be another thing."

"Go see Danni, she'll do it." Sam slid off the gurney and handed her a business card with Danni's cell phone number on it. "She's being sworn in today as a sub-judge and taking over as Prosecuting attorney."

"Wait a minute here Sam." Brian slid off the table and stood beside her. "She has to be licensed in Maryland."

"Ohh she's always been, she's licensed in West Virginia, Virginia and Washington DC." She scratched her head before speaking again. "I think she has Kentucky too?"

Xe raised an eyebrow at them. "Brian are the three of you like all child prodigies?"

"Nope, just me and Danni are prodigies, Sam's the child."

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Xe tracked Danni down at the court and had her court order in her hand with in minutes. Danni

told her what ever she needed to just give a yell; she would do everything she could to help get Dr. Franks behind bars and that included being the prosecuting attorney in the trial.

"How do you know it's her for sure?" Xe was interested in the Judges theories and wondered if they matched her own.

"It's easy Xe, she has a history of being violent, she has attempted murder at least once that we know of but daddy saved her ass." She sat down on the table in the courthouse hallway and crossed her legs to sit Indian style. Playing with the threads on the torn knees of her faded Levi's, she looked into pale blue eyes. "That woman has been out of control for years, after Bri was attacked I started working up a case against Franks but was more or less threatened to stop all my investigations."

"Her father stopped you didn't he?"

"Yep, said that it was none of my business and it was all lies where his daughter was concerned. She's an upstanding citizen and a highly respected Psychologist. You know the normal bullshit to cover the monster that she really is."

"Do you still have the stuff you got on her?" Xe knew that any little bit of information could lead her in the right direction.

"It's all at the motel; I can get it to you or Brian later today. And Xe, be careful, Franks is a manipulator and can have people eating out of her hand in seconds. There are a lot of cops on the streets in Cleveland that shouldn't be there."

"Fuck, you mean she convinced the police board and everyone that mentally unstable cops were fit for duty?"

"That's exactly what I'm saying; her alibis for the night Brian was attacked were cops that she treated. And for her credit cards being used all over, what better way than for her to have proof she was nowhere near Maryland when crimes were committed."

"Son of a bitch." She ran a hand through her hair and tried to think. Her main concern was Brian's safety and how to remedy the time that she couldn't be near her. "Have you and Sam found a place to live yet?"

"No, we were going to go this weekend and look at apartments and condos."

"Would you consider staying with us, I know Brian would love to have you guys close and..."

"You don't want her being alone" Hazel eyes looked calmly into Xe's and then took on a protectiveness that Xe herself had.

"Yeah, I mean I know she can handle herself but I'd feel better if you guys were there with her."

"No problem, I know that Sam will be thrilled to death. But I'll warn you, Sam and Brian together can be a Hell of a ride. They can find trouble where none exists."

"Can't be any worse than what Bri has put me through already. Thanks Danni, as soon as I find out something's, I'll let them know about the arrangements we've made. May keep me out of the doghouse." Giving Danni's shoulder a light squeeze, she smiled and left.

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Xe pulled two of her best investigators into her office and divided between them the credit cards and the phone numbers. She instructed them to find out as much information as they possible could on what city the cards where used in and to call all the numbers to find out who the people were and if they knew Dr. Franks or where she was at the moment. It was a long shot but maybe they would be able to find something that led them to where Dr. Franks was hiding. After they had left her office, she got on the phone and called her connection within the FBI down in Quantico. A few minutes later and Agent Montgomery was on the phone.

"Hey Monty its Xepher, I need a big favor."

"I can't guarantee that I can help but go ahead and ask me."

"You guys have a Dr. Franks down there as a profiler; I need to know where she is right now."

"Give me a second and let me call down the hall."

While she was waiting, she scribbled down some notes and then started making the initials B&X all over her paper. When she realized what she was doing, she felt the heat run up her neck. "Just like a damn kid." A small smile came to her face when she started drawing hearts around the initials.

"Hey Xepher, I just talked to her boss down there and they have no idea of where she is. He said that about a month ago, he went in to consult a case with her and her office was empty. Everything is gone including her case files. And you know those cannot leave this building without proper authorization. He went over to her apartment and he said it looked like a cyclone went through it. The place was destroyed to the point of walls having huge holes in them."

"Just fucking great, did she have any one there that she talked to? A co-worker or anything?"

"Not as far as her boss knew, she basically went to prisons and spoke to serial murderers, rapists and all the other low lives to compile information for the computer."

"You mean she was getting the stuff so that the computer could spit out a profile?"

"Kind of, she updated the computer files with new information. Like MO's, techniques in stalking, everything that the death row inmate did, down to what color socks he wore during his crimes. What has the FBI worried is that those files are the ones that are missing."

"Fuck me! If someone gets a hold of that stuff, they could copycat what ever murderer they wanted and get away with it."

"Exactly." He replied and then groaned. "I don't even want to be around if we all of a sudden have a crime spree of copycats. Why do you need to know where she is anyway?"

"She tried to murder my wife about a year or more ago and got off Scott free because Daddy's a judge. She told him about Danni and the threatening letters, the reporter being contacted by whom they think murdered a woman in the area and the mutilated animals buried in their yard."

"Damn Xepher, I had no idea about Brian and our former Profiler, her record was clean as the Virgin Mary and she came highly recommended from her boss up there in Cleveland."

"Of course she did, she had her daddy to tighten the screws on everyone. I've been told that she turned mentally unstable cops back out on the street. We need to find this bitch before she does something with those case files."

"I'll start calling all our other offices and put out the word, I'll send a courier up to you with a copy of her personnel file along with the picture they took for her FBI badge."

"Thanks Monty, if I find out anything I'll give you a heads up."

"Appreciate it Xepher, tell Brian I said hello and be safe up there."

"You too Monty, Later."

She hung up the phone and rested her face in the palms of her hands. If the world only knew the kind of people running around loose, everyone would carry a gun. Rubbing her eyes, she sniffled and sneezed so hard that her ears popped. Moaning from the pain, she pulled out a bottle of sinus medicine and thought better of taking the small pills. "Damn things will knock me out." Tossing them back in her drawer, she stuffed her pocket with Kleenex before going in search of Boggs. He had to know what they might be facing if Franks was indeed the one behind the threats, murder and dead animals. She would then need to call the reporter in Chicago and see how he figured into the picture.

"I need 40 hours in the day to get everything done."

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Xe came down the stairs to the morgue; she had been upstairs to see the injured officers from earlier that day. She still couldn't get over what she had helped Brian and Sam do in the autopsy room. As soon as she came through the door, her sore nose twitched at a slight scent of polish sausage. By passing the autopsy room, she went into Brian's office and found the slow cooker with sausage and sour kraut cooking. Taking a bun from the bag, she made herself a sandwich and moaned at the taste of herbs dancing on her tongue. Even with her cold, the flavor came

through. She walked through the door to the autopsy room moaning each time she chewed. Stopping to lean against one of the empty tables, she saw Brian and Sam working at the long table against the wall. Taking one more bite, she headed towards them.

"Damn this is good stuff guys." She held the sandwich up and rolled her eyes in ecstasy.

Brian looked over her shoulder and smiled at her wife's display of pleasure. "Just made it after you left today, it's one of our specialties."

"All fresh herbs, meat and made with our little hands." Sam nudged Brian with a shoulder. "Ain't that right Bri."

"Hey you guys got rid of Orca." She walked closer to the two women and seen that they had a sausage maker and buckets full of fresh meat.

"Right after you left matter of fact. So ya really like the sausage?" Brian asked with a smirk on her face. "We only use the freshest of meat, a few hours dead."

"Xe stopped in mid chew, looked down at her half eaten sandwich and paled. "Bri...Oohh my Gods!" She rushed over to a trashcan, spit the mouthful out, and tossed the sandwich with disgust. "BRIAN!"

"What it's good, we didn't poison it or anything and we make sure there's no funny stuff in it."

"And we managed to fit all the bodies into one drawer afterwards!" Sam tossed in at the end and gave Xe a huge toothy grin.

"I'm gonna be sick!" Her face was turning a nice shade of green and her eyes started to water.

"Xe baby it's not what you think." Brian wrapped her arms around her and pulled her head down against her neck. When Xe moaned and shuddered, Brian started to laugh and Sam joined in to the point that she fell over on the floor and had tears rolling down her face. Danni walked in and gave out a holler.

"Where's it at!" Brian pointed to her office and watched Danni take off running.

"See it's safe, we didn't use anything but pork, spices and herbs. But you have to admit it was funny."

Danni came back into the room with two sandwiches and a mouthful. The second she saw Xe's face, she knew what had happened. Swallowing, she started to chuckle. "They got ya didn't they?"

"So I'm not the first victim?"

"Nope, one of the reasons I was in court with them. Improper use of the autopsy room at the

college, they were using the cranial saw to cut the pork bones with."

"It was sharper than that damn hand saw." Brian mumbled.

"And it made this really neat noise!" Sam said from where she was still lying on the floor.

Danni looked around Xe and Brian to see her wife. "Sam what are you doing down there?"

"Hoping a nurse comes in wearing a skirt."

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The four women sat around the table in the small office discussing what Xe had found out from Monty and what she was doing to try and find Dr. Richards. Danni handed her the file she had started after Brian had been attacked and pointed out a handful of names.

"Those women all dated Dr. Psycho at one time, I spoke to them and she did the same stalking thing with them. The only way they were able to get away from her was to move away."

"Did any of them go to the authorities like Bri did?" Xe asked while she took down notes.

"All of them and they got the same treatment, until she did them bodily harm there was nothing they could do."

Brian snorted and rolled her eyes. "Lot of good it would do once she was finished with either her car or that damn baseball bat."

Sam looked at the other three and groaned. "You don't think she would go after them do ya, I mean she did work for the Feebies and they can get information on just about anyone."

Danni smacked her forehead then looked to Xe. "Can you get their numbers and get a hold of them?"

"I'll call the shop and get some detectives on it right now." She pulled her cell phone out and made the call, giving one of her detectives the information; she made sure to have them not start a panic with the women. That they were just to warn the women and have them call her if Dr. Franks tried to contact them.

"Are you going to tell Boggs about this?" Brian asked.

"Yeah, maybe the five of us can meet at the house and have a round table kinda thing, ohh and Bri,. Sam and Danni are going to stay with us for a while. Is that OK?" She knew it was as soon as she found her arms full of a hyper little Medical Examiner. "Let's go home, I still have to figure out what to do with the freaky animal in the back yard."

"Already done," Sam said. "We called the protein guy and he said he'd take care of it. That's one

job I wouldn't want, picking up road kill all day long!" She shivered and looked to see three raised eyebrows. "What?"

Danni smacked her in the stomach. "You two already pick up road kill."

"Yeah but we can pick their pockets, big difference."

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Xe and Brian went home while Sam and Danni went back to their Motel room to collect their clothes and other items. The rest of their stuff was packed and would be sent to Maryland as soon as they sent word. They decided to rent out their home in Ohio as furnished so the only things that would be shipped were clothes, odds and ends and the stuff that they could not replace. Now with them staying with Brian and Xe, they would make the call in the morning and what ever they didn't need, they would put into storage. When Brian and Xe got home, Xe automatically started picking up her and Brian's clothes from the floor, couch and their office. The kids even had the towels from the bathroom piled up into a nice little nest in the middle of the living room floor. Brian shook her head and went down the hall to ready the largest of their spare rooms for her friends and make sure the bathroom had clean towels. Xe wandered into the room and fell across the bed to watch Brian, leaning up onto an elbow; she leered at Brian when she bent over to check the dresser drawers.

"I know what you're thinking so just stop."

"What am I thinking?" Xe asked and continued to try and will Brian's clothes away. Brian looked over her shoulder and raised an eyebrow at her.

"You just wait until later, right now I'm hungry and food comes first." A wicked grin came over her face. "Want some spaghetti with homemade meatballs?"

"Should I ask what kind of meat they're made out of?"

"It's a mystery; no animals were harmed in the making of them." Xe rolled her eyes and fell back on the bed.

"Please don't let them be human rocky mountain oysters."

Brian crawled across the bed and laid on top of Xe, running a hand up her ribs to cup a breast, she ran a thumb across her nipple. "It's a special recipe that I got from a famous person."

"Who Dom Delouise?"

"Nope, Jeff Dahmer, he was a Hell of a chef."

"That's it, from now on we eat take out." She wrapped her arms around Brian and rolled them over so that she was hovering above her. "Are you OK?"

Brian gave her a confused look. "Yeah why?"

"With all that's happened in the last couple of days, I just want to make sure that you're alright."

Brian pulled her down for a deep kiss, ran her hands up her back and into her hair. When the kiss broke, she looked into worried blue eyes and smiled. "I'm alright Xe, I have you to protect me, plus with Danni and Sam being here..."

"Figured out my plan huh?"

"You're easy Sallano, come on I'm hungry."

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Xe had just set the table when Sam and Danni came into the house lugging backpacks and suitcases. Brian took them down to the bedroom and helped Danni unpack while Sam went to terrorize Xe and the dogs. Both women had seen a connection between their spouses immediately, Xe and Sam were kindred spirits as were they.

"How long before they arm wrestle?"

Brian looked up from what she was doing and smiled at Danni. "How long before they wrestle period? They're like guys; ya know the guns, swords, who's tougher and meaner..."

"Who's the real boss?" Danni added.

"We are." They said in unison.

"Come on, supper should be done, I made spaghetti and Jeffballs."

"I bet Xe was squirming, speaking of squirming." She opened her backpack and pulled out her baby. "I almost forgot about you huh?" She kissed the top of her blue Iguana's head and placed her on the dresser. "You stay right there and leave the dogs alone."

"You brought Lubriderm, I was wondering what you were going to do with her." Brian ran her hand across the lizards four-foot back and chuckled when it's back arched into her hand. "Still think you're just an ugly cat in disguise."

"Speaking of ugly, that little bald dog, what is it?"

Brian smirked and rolled her eyes at the thought of Fugly. "Xe gave her to me and she's not ugly, she's Fugly and my spoiled baby. Bear is Xe's master and I bribed her so she's mine to."

"I never thought of you going after a cop after what happened with the Psycho."

"Believe me it wasn't love at first sight between us. First time we met, I was sleeping on a gurney in the autopsy room and she pulled a gun on me."

She told Danni about their head butting and how things made a drastic turn and they found themselves inseparable. They spoke on their way to the kitchen where they found Sam and Xe arm wrestling and the dogs sitting on chairs watching them.

"We knew it would happen." They said together.

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After eating supper and cleaning up it was close to ten o'clock, the four women headed to their rooms for the night. None of them had the energy to do anything but fall into bed and surrender to sleep. Early the next morning, Brian felt warm fingertips caressing her from hip to breast in tantalizing movements. Pressing her body into Xe, she kissed the closet skin and arched her back when her nipple was stroked.

"Xe what are you doing?" She murmured still half asleep.

"Hinting." She flicked the tip of her tongue across a breast. "It's been weeks!"

"Hint harder and it's only two days." She fell onto her back when warm lips enveloped her nipple and sucked gently. Xe's hands ran across her body with such gentleness that it felt like butterfly wings. Low moans escaped her lips as she arched upward to her lover's wandering lips. Grabbing Xe's ears, she moved her head to where she wanted her. "Love you Xe." Brian mumbled incoherently when lips traveled down her stomach and nuzzled the cinnamon curls at her center. Spreading her legs apart and lifting her hips upwards, she felt Xe's warm body settle between her legs and her tongue flick out to tease her clit. Tangling her fingers in dark hair, she thrust upwards with each flick of a warm tongue. "Faster...Xe...Gods...faster!" Her control was spiraling away from her, lower nerve endings danced against each other until finally, her back arched and her climax claimed her with a loud yell of Xe's name. Xe crawled up her body and captured her lips for a long deep kiss that set fire to both of them.

"Turn around Xe." Brian murmured against her lips then pushed on her shoulders. She wrapped her arms around Xe's upper thighs and pulled her down so that she could bury her tongue deep inside of her center. Xe's head dropped forward to land between Bri's thighs, a deep moan came from her and she pressed her hips downward before licking at her lover's center. With soft moans and growls. They pushed each other higher until Xe was pushed over and let out a howl against Bri's nether lips. From the vibration, Brian followed; the kids soon joined their noises. Bear and Fugly sat near the door and howled until Brian threw a pillow at them. Laughter came from the room down the hall and then a loud thump.

"Serves them right." Brian mumbled in between trying to catch her breath.

"Uhh huh." Xe rolled over onto her side and moved so that her head was resting on Brian's stomach, small hands worked their way into her hair and massaged her scalp until she fell back

to sleep. "Love you Xe." She said before closing her eyes and falling asleep.

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Brian was making breakfast and Xe was out feeding her filly when Sam and Danni dragged themselves into the kitchen and dropped into chairs. Their yawns were so wide that Brian could see their tonsils. Smirking at her disheveled and half-dressed friends, she showed pity on them and handed them cups of coffee.

"Didn't you two sleep good?" She asked and dropped down into a chair across from them.

Danni looked at her with bloodshot eyes and pointed a finger at her. "We were until about three o'clock this morning when two little dogs started doing back-up to your howling."

"How do you know it was me?"

"Because I don't think Xe would scream her own name, only I do that." Sam covered her grin by taking a sip of coffee. "How come this stuff tastes better than the nasty sludge at work?"

"Because I made it." Xe stepped into the kitchen and received strange looks. "What?"

"Nice look Xe." Danni smirked at the way Xe was dressed in Brian's Deputy Dawg boxers, half shirt and cowboy boots.

"This is one of the reasons I cancelled the Playboy station." Boggs dropped into a chair and took Brian's coffee. "We got another call from that reporter in Chicago." He slid the note across the table to Xe.

"Water water every where and not a drop to drink?" She read aloud. "What the Hell does this mean?" Four sets of shoulders shrugged, she dropped down to sit on Brian's lap and reread the note. "Is this idiot telling us that there's a body in a river?"

"If he is, then we have a lot of water to search and with all the rain we've had there's no telling where it will end up from the drop point." Boggs laid a map on the table that showed all the rivers and small creeks and streams that ran into them. "No clues or fancy maps this time guys."

"Xe closed her eyes and tried to think of the easiest way to search." Boggs can we get the water rafter guys out to help us, they know every inch of the river."

"I'll give them a call and I'm gonna see about getting a chopper to fly the river, maybe we'll find something that way."

"Hold on guys." Brian pointed to the note. "'Water water every where but not a drop to drink' is a quote about being out on the ocean but I think what the killer means is that the water is all around the body but the bodies not in it. The bodies on the shore, if he's copying the Green River Killer, one of the bodies was on the shoreline under that bridge. I think it was the Peck Bridge or

something."

Xe leaned close to her ear and whispered to her. "You're scary Bri but I think you're right." She pulled away after nipping the small ear to face the others. "OK, we need to find all the bridges around here and have search teams check them. If anything is found, we head there."

"Boggs the victim if there is one, that the murderer is copycatting, she'll be a hooker."

He nodded his head. "I'll put the word out to contact us of any missing persons, we still don't have anything on the first victim but the FBI is searching their database for us." He scratched his stubbled chin and shook his head. "Why do I feel like I'm looking at an Amazon war party?"

Boggs left to head back to the office to get things rolling, while the four women got dressed and decided to take Xe's car as well as Brian's meat wagon truck. The scary part was that Sam would have the truck.

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A grouping of fifty volunteers including the near by joining of Virginia and West Virginia Troopers, started searching the rivers shore from as far away as Whites Ferry and Martinsburg. Xe and her crew of five would start in Frederick and work their way east towards where the three states touched. The river was still high and flowing quickly over rocks and downed logs, every once in a while, they would see debris floating past and getting hung up on the large jagged rocks. Xe knew that if the body was in the water, it may take weeks or possibly never to find it. Numerous people were lost every year in the Shenandoah and Potomac River, with the amount of underwater sinkholes and tangled snares of trees and debris, a body could easily become lodged beneath or sucked into a hole. That's what she was hoping wouldn't happen this time. They had split up with Sam and Danni on one side of the river and she and Brian on the other. Boggs being the oldest and out of shape, was their point driver. He drove up ahead a quarter mile and used binoculars to check the riverbanks. Xe handed out rescue harnesses and now had Brian tied to her, it was a precaution that she insisted on. If one of them was to slip and go into the water, the other would be able to pull them back out. They now walked as close to the tree line as possible but still able to see far the bank and surrounding areas.

"What happens if we find something, how are we going to get it out of here?" Brian asked and looked upward to the steep climb through trees up to the road.

"Boggs calls the chopper in and if that doesn't work then we have the river rescue guys that should be somewhere around here."

They continued to walk and at the same time keep an eye on the other two across the river from them.

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Miles away a set of maroon eyes watched through a high power riflescope for the small party. One of them would be taken care of that day, but it was a long ways off from total revenge. One by one, they would all die and only then would the world be right for the killer.

"Which one of you caused the most problems for little ol me?" The scope trained up and down the riverbank, searching for a target. "Would it be Dr. Cold as ice Meadows, steroid dyke, the honorable Judge Shepard or the tall dark thief?" The scope stopped and pinned a rescue boat in its cross hairs. "Nah, you assholes are nobodies. I want one of the others to start the game. Keep on going little tin policemen, you'll not find what you're looking for here." The killer looked down at the crumpled form the woman's naked body and gave it a nudge with a booted foot. "You don't mind waiting a while do you?" A horrible cackling laugh came from between pink lips. "Ohh this is sooo much fun! Come on little ducks, line up for me."

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"Xe I'm hungry!" Brian bellowed and grabbed on to the backpack Xe had on. "Gimme food or I throw you in!" Xe stopped and gave the rope a yank until Brian was pulled up against her chest. She dropped her head and kissed Brian until she saw lights dance before her eyes. When the kiss broke, she watched dark green eyes flutter open.

"Still wanna throw me in?"

"Maybe I'll wait a while for that but I'm still hungry!"

"Look in the side pockets, I filled them with Brian food." Brian opened the pocket and pulled out what amounted to the junk food isle at the grocery store. Choosing a super Slim Jim, she ripped the plastic with her teeth and offered some to Xe. "Where's Sam and Danni?" She looked to the other side but only saw trees.

"Nature call, I saw them head up into the trees." Xe pointed to a small break.

"Better only be that and not calling nature." She chewed on her Slim Jim and teased Xe with the other part by hitting her on the nose.

"Like you wouldn't do the same thing." Xe took her hand and pulled her along beside her. "I remember quite well what we did in the back yard when we first moved in, poor squirrels will never be the same." They trudged their way up the bank until they came to a spot that they would have to go up into the trees to get around. Waiting until they saw Sam or Danni. When Danni came out of the tree line pulling leaves and twigs from her long curly blonde hair and Sam trying to get her shirt fixed under the harness, they knew exactly what kind of call they had answered.

"See I told you!" Brian slugged Xe in her shoulder and started to wave at their friends. Getting their attention, she pointed to the blocked path and then to the trees. "Nature call my ass." She grumbled and dragged Xe behind her. "Make my own call." She kicked a rock out of her way, spun around and jumped Xe. They hit the wet soggy ground and rolled around like rabid animals until Xe felt them sliding towards the bank. Grabbing a small tree trunk, she kept them from the

icy river.

Sam pointed to where Brian was laying on top of Xe and trying to rip her clothes off. "See that Danni, we didn't have to go up in the trees."

"She sure has changed hasn't she?" Danni shook her head and pulled Sam away from the shoreline. Come on pervert lets give them some privacy.

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"There you are, I was beginning to wonder if you'd ever get here." The scope stopped to where Brian and Xe were laying on the shore. "Filthy animals!" Moving the scope back to the other side to see Danni and Sam walking close to the shoreline. "Looks like its time for you to meet the little group." A booted foot kicked out and sent the woman's body down the muddy slope to stop in a thicket of branches and trash. "Come closer to your fate, just a little more now, come on...stop!" Was echoed by the sharp snap of the rifle firing. Without taking a chance on getting caught, the killer took off up the embankment and disappeared into the dense trees and freedom.

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Danni felt a searing pain in her upper chest and shoulder and then the icy cold water covering her body. She panicked and swallowed a mouthful of water before she was able to close her mouth and fight to stay above the rapids. Sam was trying her best in the water to tow her closer and swim back towards the shoreline. The water was winning. Sam struggled but was pulled under into the murky darkness. Grabbing the rope, she held on tight and worked her way to where Danni had been pulled under.

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Xe let go of the tree and held onto Brian as they slid down towards the bank of the river. When they stopped, she rolled over on top of her and looked to see where the shot had come from, that's when she saw Sam fighting and then go under.

"Fuck! They're in the river." She got up, pulled the backpack off and unclipped the rope from her harness. "Bri call Boggs tell him we got two down."

"What are you doing?" He eyes grew wide with terror when Xe kicked off her shoes and then pants.

"Going in after them."

"Xe! You can't do that, I'll go!"

Xe gave her 'the look', pulled a rope from the backpack and clipped it to her harness. "You stay here and pull us in." She handed her the rope, ran down the bank until she was ahead of the couple and then dove in.

"I'll kill you if you die!" She screamed and then ran after her while calling Boggs on her cell phone.

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Sam dove under the water and found where Danni was wedged against a huge log. Swimming up to her, she put her lips over hers and gave her the air from her own lungs before going up to the surface. Taking another couple breaths, she went back down to Danni.

Xe saw Sam shot upward from the water then back down, she swam as hard as she could against the current until she hit the end of the log. Looking back to shore, she saw Brian tying the rope off to a large tree. Taking a deep breath, she dropped under the water and tried to see through the murkiness. Finding the rope, she followed it to where Sam and Danni were. She grabbed Sam by her leg, pushed her upward towards the surface, and went over to Danni. Placing her mouth over Danni's, she gave her air and then resurfaced to see a panicking Sam.

"Her legs stuck under the tree, I can't..." She took a ragged breath.

"You breathe for her, I'll get her loose." Both women went back under, Xe swam to where Danni's leg was stuck beneath the tree, she dug with her hands in the area around her leg but all she found were rocks and sticks. Shooting back up to the surface for air, she took hurried breaths before going back under to try and figure a way to get her loose. She turned and looked into green eyes and felt her heart slam in her chest. Brian held out a long thick tree branch and pointed to the tree. Together they wedged it under the tree and rocks and put all their weight on it. The tree did nothing. Xe grabbed Brian's arm and shot them to the surface.

"Are you nuts?" She yelled over the roar of the river.

"Yes goddamn it!" Brian yelled back. "We need leverage!" She felt Sam come up against her body, resurface, and take a couple breathes and go back under. "Rocks or something."

"Come on lets try again." Moving to the side of the tree nearer to the shore, Xe found a spot where the tree was balancing on the edge of a large rock. Pushing the branch under it, she pointed to it and Brian. Moving back to Danni's side, she put her hands under the tree, braced her feet against the bottom and pushed with all her strength. The tree rocked, settled and then rocked again to be pushed away by the current. Xe reached out, grabbed Danni's shirt, and pulled her and Sam to the surface. Looking around, she didn't see Brian until her name was called and she saw Brian crawling up onto a large rock. Helping Sam, they fought the current over to the rock. Brian pulled a limp Danni onto the rock and started CPR while Xe and Sam crawled up beside them.

Danni rolled her head, coughed up the dirty water, and then clutched her chest. Brian saw the bullet hole in her shirt, taking the material between shaking fingers, she ripped it open to see the hole in the upper part of Danni's chest.

"Oohh Gods Danni." Sam cried out and ran her fingers across her wife's pale face. "Xe we have to get her out of here." She moved so that she was cradling Danni in her arms. "I didn't know Danni, I didn't know..." She broke down into tears as she held her wife.

"Brian please tell me you have the phone." Xe was as close to panic as she ever got. Looking to where they had been to where they now were, she knew that they were stuck. The road was on the other side along with civilization.

"Of course I have the phone." She handed Xe the watertight hip bag with the phone in it. Then ripping her shirt into pieces, she folded them and placed them over the seeping bullet hole and applied pressure. "How ya doing Danni?"

"Fucking hurts like a bitch." She reached up, tangled her fingers in her wife's hair, and brought her head down. "Sam I'm not dying, just freezing." She knew how scared Sam was it was the only time she ever cried or lost control.

Xe covered her one ear and yelled into the phone for Boggs to get the chopper to where they were. She gave him a landmark so that the pilot would be able to see them and then told him that Danni had been shot and to call the nearest hospital and have a surgical team waiting. Closing the phone, she checked on Brian and then Danni. She just hoped that the shooter was gone because they were all sitting targets. Pulling Brian into her arms, she kissed her temple and hugged her tight.

"Didn't I tell you to stay put?" She whispered hoarsely into her ear.

"When have you known me to follow orders?"

"Never. I couldn't have done it without your help. Thank you." She hugged her tighter and sat there wondering why the killer had gone after Danni.

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"I don't give a flying fuck that it's your lunch time!" Boggs screamed over the radio. "I've got a Homicide Lt. in the river with a wounded Judge and two other public officials. You get here or I'll send Sallano herself after you sorry ass!" The pilot stuttered on the other end when he heard Xe's last name. He guaranteed that he would be there in ten minutes if not sooner.

"Doesn't care that I'm a damn police Chief but one mention of Sallano has them pissing themselves." He grinned knowing that he had the best officer in the Tri-state areas and she instilled fear even in a National Guard chopper pilot. He tried calling Xe back but her phone must be dead or turned off. He got into his car and drove with his top hat and siren on back in the direction he had come. At certain areas, he could see the water between the trees. Stopping at the next clearance, he used the binoculars and saw all four women sitting on a large rock in the middle of the river. He knew they had to be freezing and wished there was something he could do. He swung his head back the other way and saw something lying close to the waters edge. Stepping closer to the trees, he looked again and saw what he thought was a foot. "What is that?"

He said to himself and tried to get closer, in a split second, he was sliding down the muddy embankment on his back. He came to a jarring halt seven foot away from the woman's body.

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"Xe was that Boggs bobsledding down the hill?"

"Yep, I wonder what he's doing the old fool." They watched as he got up and then started waving at them and pointing to the ground. "I think he's found the body, we were so close to it that I know this was a set-up." She looked to the sky and saw a chopper dip down over the trees and hover above them. A bright orange rope and harness was being lowered from the bay doors, Xe reached up, grabbed it and pulled it lower so that she could hook it onto Danni's harness. "OK Danni, they're gonna pull you up so hold on." Xe waved and helped Danni to her feet, with in a minute or so the rope was coming back down and Xe was hooking it onto Sam's harness. "Go take care of Danni and we'll be at the hospital as soon as we can.

"OK, thanks guys." She squeezed Xe's shoulder before she was pulled into the air.

"What about us? I'm not staying out here until I can learn how to walk on water."

"Damn I thought you already knew how to do that." She kissed her cheek and buried her face in her neck. "As soon as the rope comes back down, I'll have the pilot swing us over to Boggs."

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While Xe ran back down the bank to get their stuff, Brian went to where Boggs was standing near the body.

"Brian what in the Hell happened?"

"I don't know, one minute everything was fine the next Danni and Sam were in the river with Xe going after them. I don't even know where the shot came from. But it hit her in the upper right quadrant of her chest, I'm just glad that the waters so cold."

"Is she going to be alright?"

She gripped his upper arm and smiled. "Yeah, she's tough and the water kept her from bleeding too much." She looked into his worried eyes. "We were set-up Boggs, the killer was waiting for us."

"I kind of figured that out once I got down here." He turned and pointed to the two paths in the mud and brush. "One of those is mine the other ones from the victim."

"And that's where the shooter was at when she shot Danni." Xe pointed to a cluster of trees right above where the body had rolled down. "If we check up there we'll find foot prints from the shooter."

Boggs finally noticed that both women were standing there in their underwear; he blushed a deep red and covered his eyes. "Damn you two, will ya put your pants on before I keel over."

"Why? I kinda like standing here and being able to see my legs turn blue." Brian chuckled when he peeked from behind fingers and looked down at her legs.

"Come on I'm an old man and I can't carry the body up that dam embankment."

Xe raised an eyebrow at him. "What body?"

"The first guy on the scene that drools over you and Brian kills, that body."

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After the CSU crew took the body up the embankment and transported it to the morgue, Boggs called the nearby hospitals but couldn't find Danni or Sam in any of them. "What the Hell?" He looked at his phone and closed it. "They lost Danni and Sam."

"Ohh I know what they did!" Brian took Boggs phone, called her hospital, and asked the ER for a Mrs. Maria Janas. In three seconds, the ER admitting nurse told her that Mrs. Janas was in surgery.

"She's in surgery at our hospital; Sam must have had the chopper pilot take them there."

Boggs raised his hands in the air. "But how did you know?"

"Easy, she used my aunt's name to check Danni in. Come on lets get out of here, can you take us to our cars?"

"I'll run you two to the hospital, I had the guys take your vehicles back to the cop shop."

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The waiting room was packed with patients and family waiting for news, Xe and Brian walked in and searched the room for Sam. Brian spotted her sitting on the floor in a corner of the room. The look on her face broke Brian's heart into thousands of pieces and caused tears to fill her eyes. They walked up to her, Brian kneeled down in front of her and enveloped Sam in her arms. The sobs that came from Sam tore Xe's very soul; she kneeled down, wrapped her arms around the two women and felt tears come to her eyes. Helping them up, she ushered them from the waiting room and out the doors to follow the side of the building around to the back. They went in to the morgue and back to Brian's office, to calm down and clean up before trying to figure out what to do.

The next morning, they were in Brian's office with the local newspapers and the small TV tuned to the local news station. Brian had the front page of the Frederick Sun in her hands reading

while the others had the Jefferson County journal and the Washington Post.

"They did good." Brian held up the paper with a color picture of Danni on the front. "Local Judge Daniela Shepard was shot yesterday while walking along the Shenandoah River, police have yet to apprehend a suspect and have no clues at this time. Judge Shepard had just been sworn in at the county court house this week after leaving a distinguished career in Ohio. Her spouse Deputy Medical Examiner Samantha Shepard survives her."

Sam turned the volume up on the TV and sniffled. "My babies on TV." The same report was said on the news with the exception that a reporter was on scene at the river. Xe turned and grinned at everyone. "You look damn good for a dead woman."

"They could have used a better picture of me though, that one sucks." Danni tossed the paper on the foot of the bed and picked up another one. "Pretty damn good I get famous after I'm dead, I feel like Elvis." She rolled over, snuggled into Sam's side, and closed her eyes. "Wake me up when it's time to eat."

Brian sat on Xe's lap and laid her head on her shoulder. "Where are we gonna hide Danni when she's released?"

"I'll get some of my FBI buddies out to the house to put in an alarm system. Once that's done then no one will be able to get near the house without us knowing. We should be fine there as long as Danni stays out of sight.

"OK. I'm hungry Xe." She whined and tugged on Xe's shirtfront.

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A loud nerve-shattering laugh came from the dilapidated shack near the C&O Railroad. The place was well hidden amongst the dense tress and tall brush, if not for finding notes on the place in a serial killers journal, it would never have been found. The killer sat amongst scattered newspapers reading about Danni's death.

"Just perfect! Once there were four little Amazons..."

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"Now there's three, all because of little ol me.
Who will it be, only you will see?
Sam I'm coming, so watch your back
If you're wondering whom, the name is Jack.

Xe handed the note to Brian and dropped down behind her cluttered desk. "I need to talk to this reporter; I want to know why the killer keeps sending him the notes."

"Now is Jack the person's real name or one they're using for the next crime?"

"Either way we have to tell Sam and Danni." She got up from her chair and waved to Boggs where he sat in his office. "Tomorrow night, seven OK with you boss?"

"I'll be there with the pizza!"

Brian took Xe's hand and held on tight, she looked up at her wife's face and saw the fine lines around her eyes and at the corners of her mouth. She knew the stress was getting to her because she couldn't sleep at night. She reached up, ran her fingers through the hair at her temples and noticed more pure white hair showing. "Come on baby, I hear a Jacuzzi calling our names."

"When we get home I want to call the Psycho's father and have a nice little talk with him."

"Won't do any good, he'll deny anything and everything. He'll protect her if she takes out a whole country."

"Not if I say that the Prosecuting attorney will bring charges against him for with holding information concerning a murder case, obstructing justice and harboring a fugitive."

"We'll see Xe, but I'm telling you that he won't say a word." They walked out of the police station and ran right into a herd of reporters and flashing cameras. Xe spun them around and headed to the back door hoping that they weren't waiting there to. "Damn vultures." She mumbled and hustled Brian out the door and to her car.

"You know that you're going to have to give them a statement sooner or later." Brian said as she crawled across the seat.

"I'd rather it be later. Let's get home before they find out what we just did." She pulled out of the lot and took the back way home; she was glad that it wasn't on public record where she and Brian lived.

She pulled her car in next to Brian's truck and waited for her to slide across the seat, taking her hand; they went through the side door and into the kitchen.

"Honey we're home!" Brian called out and went into the living room. "How do you feel Danni?" She dropped down onto the couch next to her and Sam.

"Like a truck ran over my chest. I think I have pneumonia or some strange disease from the river."

"If you turn into swamp thing, Xe will dig you a pond in the back yard."

Sam looked up from where she had her head resting in Danni's lap and grinned. "Can we have little baby ducks to swim around Danni?"

Brian looked into dilated golden eyes and snickered. "You're wasted."

"She took Nyquil an hour ago and has been weirder than usual ever since."

All three women jumped when an ungodly yell and a string of cuss words came from Xe.

"HolyshitGoddamnsonofabitchwhatthefuck!" She came running out into the living room with a terrified look on her face and shaking. "There's a damn lizard in the Jacuzzi!" Brian covered her mouth and looked to Danni and Sam.

"Ohh so that's where my babies been!" Danni moved out from under Sam and went to retrieve her iguana.

Xe stomped towards Brian and pointed a finger at her. "Why didn't you tell me?" Brian shrugged her shoulders and busted out laughing. "Sorry baby I forgot all about Lubriderm."

Danni put Lubriderm on a sleeping Sam's chest and dropped back down onto the couch. "Sorry Xe, I thought you knew about her."

"It's OK as long as she doesn't eat the kids. She won't will she?"

"Nooo, she's a vegetarian so the kids are safe."

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[Continued in Part 2](#)

[The Athenaeum's Scroll Archive](#)

~ Ripper's Heart ~

by Larisa

Disclaimer: Yada yada yada, ya all know this stuff.

Violence: Brian and Xepher without it? NOT!

Sex: Them without it would be a dangerous situation for the State of Maryland.

The jailbait thing: Yeahyeahyeah Go away!

Thanks to Lesia, Ri and the Webwarrior who suffers through my God-awful spelling and punctuation.

Ripper's Heart
By Larisa
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Part 2

Xe and Brian retired for the night and fell asleep wrapped in each other's arms, into the early morning hours, Xe shot up in bed drenched with sweat. Her heart was pounding and she could hardly breathe after seeing Brian's death in her dream. It was the same night after night; Brian dying at the hands of a maniac and she not being able to do anything but watch. Getting out of bed, she went to their small office and pushed the dogs out of the chair. She booted up the computer and had to chuckle at the background picture that someone had put the screen. It was a picture of Brian and Sam doing an advertisement for their sausages. With the Medical Examiners sign at the top left corner of the screen. The caption read, 'No animals came to harm in its making.' "Sick puppies." She mumbled to herself. Going on-line, she pulled up everything she could on Jack the Ripper, Green river serial killer and some other well-known killers. After spending three hours reading, she sent off an e-mail to Monty to see if he could give her a list of the serial killer files that Dr. Franks had taken. Linking into her computer at work, she checked on any updates that her detectives might have found while researching Franks credit cards and cell phone numbers. So far, everything was still being used in different states at the same time.

"Damn there's got to be something." She ran a hand across her tired eyes and sighed when she felt small hands massage her sore shoulders.

"Nothing yet huh?"

"Nope, not a damn thing."

"Come on lets go back to bed." Brian took her hand and pulled her from her chair. "You're exhausted and we need you healthy." She pulled Xe into bed with her, took her into her arms, and held her close. "I'm here Xe, I'm not going anywhere." She brushed her fingers across the lines on her wife's forehead until they smoothed out and she fell asleep. "I'll never leave you." She whispered before she fell asleep to the sound of Xe's deep breathes.

For three days all was quiet, Sam and Brian had a few autopsy's to perform, tests to run and each other to terrorize when it got to be too boring. Danni was home cleaning house, cooking their meals and doing research on all known serial killers, she was using Sam's sign on to gain information from the FBI's records and Xe's when she needed to get information from the police files in different states. So far, she had found four missing person cases that could be the unclaimed body of the first victim. She requested medical and dental records and had them sent to the morgue under her wife's name. Creating a new screen name, she went into the webpage for the State of Ohio's court cases and pulled up Judge Franks, she wanted to know what he was up to, if he was still on the bench or had taken any time off since the disappearance of his daughter. Going to the page where it listed all the monthly cases, she didn't find his name mentioned once. "How strange, maybe you're not in Ohio." Picking up the phone, she called Xe's cell phone number and told her what she had found and if she could find out where he was without causing too many questions.

"I'll have Boggs give the court system a call; he's good at making up bullshit."

"OK, it's just odd ya know? He's the senior judge on the bench and it's not like him to not have any cases."

"I'll give you a call if Boggs finds anything out. What's for supper tonight?"

"I was thinking maybe BBQ baby back ribs, corn on the cob and Cole's slaw."

"Wanna marry me?" Xe chuckled when Danni said sure, as long as Brian was part of the wedding package.

When Xe got off the phone with Danni, she called the Chicago Tribune and asked for the reporter who was sending her the notes. When he got on the line, she was surprised by his voice. He was no spring chicken that was for sure, she asked him if he knew any reason at all why the killer has chosen him to be the go between.

"I think it may be the article I did a few months ago about how our tax dollars go to taking care of inmates. I was nowhere kind when I wrote it but I was telling the truth. We spend 40,000 dollars a year to take care of people who committed a crime; they live better than most working people do. I put in the article that if someone is on death row, they should be executed within a week of their conviction. And that its bullshit that a convict can get a college degree while incarcerated when we have kids that can't go to college because of lack funds."

"I agree with you but obviously the nut case has a different opinion about it. How are these letters coming to you?"

"In the mail, I've checked the post marks and they're coming from different states. Every time I get one, I call your chief and have the letter and envelope sent by courier. I was hoping that maybe you people could lift prints or something."

"We've tried but the killer is being really careful. Maybe you could do me a favor?"

"Sure anyway I can help would be a pleasure."

"I'm trying to get information on Judge Franks; he's a judge in Cleveland."

"That old buzzard? I hate that son of a bitches guts. Sorry but he overturns more cases and puts more criminals back on the street than he puts away. I think he's senile, I may be 63 but I have more of my faculties than he ever did."

"His daughter is just as bad, she does the same thing. She's one of the reasons I need information on him. She's missing and no one seems to know where she's at."

"Give me a couple days and I'll see what I can find out for you."

"Thank you Sir, I appreciate it." She hung up the phone and leaned back in her chair. "Maybe

just maybe you'll screw-up Judge Franks."

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"That is such a preeety color Bri." Sam leaned over Brian's shoulder and watched her paint the toenails of their latest victim. "It matches his lipstick."

"I just wish we could be around when he wakes up." She closed the bottle and whispered back. "Let's get out of here before we get caught." They crept from the ER call room and ran down the hallway to the stairs. Once they were far enough away, they high fived each other and burst into laughter. "Now we page him to the ER and see what happens."

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Xe came through the back door of the morgue, she hated to have to do this but there was no other way. She pulled the backpack off her shoulder and set it on the desk in Brian's office. Pulling out two cardboard boxes and a paper bag, she put them in the center of the desk and went in search of Brian and Sam.

"Bri? Sam? Where you guys at?" She looked around the brightly lit autopsy room. "Maybe you're upstairs?" She mumbled to herself and walked towards the door and ran right into a very pissed off doctor.

"Where's Sallano and Shepard?" Spittle flew from his lips as he yelled.

"I don't know, I was looking for them." She crossed her arms over her chest and studied the doctor's face, he had bright red lipstick smeared across his lips and chin and an ungodly red color of fingernail polish on. "What do you need them for?"

"I'm going to kill them! That's what I want them for, look at me!" He held out his hands and then pointed to his feet. "I got paged to the ER and everyone started laughing. I went to sign off a case file and see that someone painted my nails while I was sleeping!" He ran both hands across his face and smeared the lipstick more.

"If I see them I'll tell them that you're looking for them."

"Just wait till I get my hands on them! I thought it was over when we got out of college!" He stomped off towards the elevator mumbling about diseases he wanted Brian and Sam to contract.

"Ooohh was Danni ever right." Xe began to chuckle when she thought of the doctor going back upstairs with his face covered in lipstick. She crossed the floor and was going past the storage drawers when two of them slid out and scared the shit out of her.

"God damn son of a bitch!" She yelled and clutched at her chest. "What the Hell!" She pointed a finger at the two culprits. "I could have had a heart attack!" Brian and Sam looked up at her with huge grins planted on their faces. "What are you two doing in the drawers?"

"Hiding from Dr. Wayne." Brian said as she crawled out of the drawer. "Is he gone?" She looked around Xe and then helped Sam out of the other drawer.

"Yeah and he wants to kill you two." She smiled and messed up Brian's hair more than it already was. "He left here with lips stick ALL over his face. Tell me something, why?" She crossed her arms over her chest and waited for an answer.

"Ooohh it's like this." Sam said and they launched into a song.

Jesse James was an outlaw man
He was always breakin the law
Six guns firing from both his hands
Fastest you ever saw
Did he do it for the money?
Or was it for the fame
Finally, somebody asked him
Jessie, why you wanna rob them trains
And Jessie said
It's just what I do when I can't get no lovin'
It's just what I do when I can't get no lovin'
I the meanest hombre you ever saw
'Cause lately I ain't gettin' no lovin' at all

She winked at them and grinned evilly. "I swear you two are just like little kids, can ya do it to Boggs?"

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"OK, now on the first victim we have this weird ass stab wounds, we thought it was this knife." Brian held out the one from the knife company. "But the damn blades and the wounds don't match up. So Sam the walking armory here pulls this out of her back pack." She held up a very flashy collectors knife and lined the blades up with the wounds. "This knife is made by Gil Hibben, he's one of the most famous fantasy knife makers around." She handed the knife to Sam and then looked at her wife. "That knife costs about \$250.00, and not meant for use, why did the killer use it?"

Xe rubbed her jaw and shrugged her shoulders. "Hoping maybe that we wouldn't be able to match up the murder weapon? If that's a collector's knife, don't they come with a registered certificate?"

"Yep, and they only make so many of them. I think like maybe 100 at the most." Sam searched her bag and came out with a Bud K knife company catalog. "Some of his knives are in here, maybe one of us can get a hold of their office and get a listing, Lt. Sallano?" She fluttered her lashes at her and grinned.

"I got the hint you sick pup, I'll have one of my investigators check it out." She took the catalog and practically drooled over the swords. "Can I have this?" She fluttered her lashes at Sam and stopped when Brian gave her a raised eyebrow.

"Wanna see my sharp pointy things?" Sam asked Xe and shook her backpack.

Brian rolled her eyes at them. "You two and weapons, just give me a big stick."

Xe took both their hands and dragged them towards Brian's office. "I got something you'll like a whole lot better than a stick. She pointed to the two boxes and bag on her desk. "I just picked those up on my way here, they've been registered in your names and Sam if you don't have a concealed License I'll get you one."

Brian opened the box on top and whistled under her breath, taking the matte black Glock from the box, she checked the clip, aimed it at her wall and dry fired it. Sam pulled the other one from the box and did the same, a low evil laugh came from her that made the hair on Xe's arms stand up.

"Xe this won't fit in my sock ya know." Sam threw her leg up on the desk, pulled her paint leg up and showed the long throwing knife strapped there.

"You can't go through metal detectors can you?"

"Nope, tried at the court house once and ended getting the nickel tour of what's in the basement."

"Yeah and who had to come bail you out?" Brian asked while still playing with her pistol.

"Wasn't you, we had that tour together." Sam turned to Xe and whispered in conspiracy. "She's really the reason behind our arrest records, I was an innocent bystander."

"HAA! Don't believe a word she says, they were her ideas too. Here moron, put this around your neck and tighten it." Brian handed her the shoulder holster and took the other for herself. "Xe are these from the police supply room?"

"Would I take something from my own department? Hell yes that's where I got them. I'll be damned if I pay for the stuff out of my tiny paycheck." She wiggled her eyebrows at her. "I got us four of the new swat team vests too."

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The kitchen was full of smoke, grunting and cursing. Boggs rubbed his bloodshot eyes and spoke around the huge cigar in his mouth.

"Gimme three ya sucky ass dealer."

Xe switched her cigar to the corner of her mouth and growled at him. "I don't suck ass you

baldheaded geezer. I suck on Brian so there."

Danni threw her cards down, leaned back in her chair and blew smoke all over Brian. "Who doesn't know that is deaf or dead, three continents hear you two."

Sam snickered and looked at Xe out of the corner of her eye. "Shut-up Sam; put that damn lizard in our bed. I just about had a heart attack, and then Bri screams right in my ear when she thinks Lubriderm's biting her ass." She smacked Sam in her head for the Hell of it. "Damn false teeth in there with us!"

"I told you they were trouble when together." Danni pointed a finger at her wife. "Leave Lubi alone or I'll take the batteries from your toy!" All eyes swung to gapping mouthed Sam.

Brian wiggled her eyebrows and spoke in a deep purr that had Xe squirming in her chair. "What kinda toy Sammy, does it have multiple heads?"

Danni dropped her head on the table, Boggs cleared his throat and Xe was sinking lower in her chair.

"No but it's got two arms." She grinned, placed her Energizer Bunny on the table, and turned it on.

Danni whined from where her head was pounding on the table. "You just had to do that didn't you Bri."

Brian gave everyone a big toothy grin. "Of course I did, who needs more beer?" She left the table before Danni could beat her senseless. She heard everyone yelling for Cheetos and pretzels. She searched and found the former but had no idea of where the cheese puffs had gone until she saw little orange footprints across the tile floor. "Ohh some little dogs are going to get it." She followed the paw prints to the laundry room and found them both with their heads inside the bag. When they looked up, all she could see were orange muzzles. "Uuhh huh, guess what little dogs, its backpack time." She scooped them up, put them in Xe's backpack and carried them back to the poker game with the rest of her refills. Dropping a full beer in the holder on Sam's head, she passed out the others then handed Xe her cheese puffs and waited for her to eat some. As soon as Xe swallowed, Brian handed her the backpack.

"What's this?" She asked with a questioning glance.

"Look at their faces and you tell me." She sat back down and waited for the explosion. Xe looked into the backpack and two little orange faces popped up and licked her face.

"You guys smell like Cheese...", She narrowed her eyes at Brian. "Puffs and your mom let me eat some!" She shrugged her shoulders, put the backpack on and went back to eating her Cheese Puffs. Brian threw her hands in the air and groaned.

"What's a little dog slobber?" She grumbled. "I am not kissing you until you brush your teeth

Xepher."

"Look dog slobber!" Xe gave her a rakish grin and then stuck her orange tongue out at her.

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Xe lay in bed with files all around her and Brian, she ran her finger down the list of serial killers that Boggs had gotten from the FBI and wrote side notes next to them. Out of the seven names, only two of them fit any of the crimes committed that she was investigating. She had a copycat somewhere but a lot of good it did. The one who originally did the one crime was dead and the other was on the death wing. They were not fond of police to begin with and there's no chance of any of them saying, "Yeah I told her how to do it."

"Bri take a look at these lists and see if you see something that I'm not. These are the death wing scumbags and these are the scumbags that Franks interviewed." Brian took the lists and held them side by side.

"OK, the ones on death wing. According to the list from Monty, some of them talked to her. I'll highlight them in pink, the ones she couldn't or didn't get to, I'll highlight them in green." She cross-referenced the lists and came up two names not high lighted, she wrote them on the bottom of the paper. "OK, I'll give you a name; you tell me where they are. Then we can check to make sure they didn't pull a Hannibal Lecter on us and are now the Psycho's sidekick."

When they were finished, they still had two names that they had no idea where the men were.

"Xe could these guys be in a mental facility somewhere? I can't see her only talking to inmates, not all of the killers are in prison."

"Son of a bitch!" Xe fell back on her pillow. "She had free reign over who she talked to, that means she could have gone to any institution and spoken with any number of people. How in the Hell are we going to find all of them?"

"Especially since all her files are missing, the only thing that I can think of is if the hospitals kept a log of all visitors coming in to the hospitals."

"I'll call Monty in the morning and have him get me a list of every Government mental facility that they have record of and all the private ones. She could have talked to people that were put away by family members." She became very quiet, her hands flexed on the sheet and then a low growling noise rumbled in her chest. "Mother fuck! Bri who would be able to make a chest shot at a long distance, with the air flow coming down a river, change in pressures from temperature and everything else?"

"Someone from SWAT or a Sniper." Her green eyes flashed with what they may be up against. "Are you thinking what I'm thinking?"

"Yep, we may have a lunatic cop or a war Veteran helping her, Hell she could have half a dozen

lunatics out there committing crimes. This could explain why her credit cards are all over the damn place. Likely, it's one or more that she has gotten off the hook, now we have more stuff to dig through. Problem is that we don't have Danni to throw her weight around to get us the information."

"That's why she was targeted! What about Sam, why has she been targeted?"

"No idea, it could be that she's married to Danni and that's a link to you. Plus she's your cousin and you were her boss in Ohio. Might be something totally different." Xe shrugged her tired shoulders. "Maybe if you two go over all the cases she worked up in Ohio you can find something. Look for the ones that a cop was involved in the shooting, after a cop shots someone..."

"They are put on leave and an investigation along with a Psyche evaluation is done." She rolled over onto her side and rested her head on her wife's shoulder. "You know the saying, needle in a haystack?"

"We have a whole fucking field of hay to search through."

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The low glow of an oil lamp lit the old shack, cobwebs swayed with the breeze coming through the gaping slats. Dust swirled around the floor in a small twister and picked up tiny shreds of papers. The crickets choir was interrupted by the creaking of a rusty chain, the person suspended from it swayed back and forth and reminded the killer of a marionette.

"So many to slay so little time." Was chanted as the killer paced the dirt floor, with each pass, a pasty white hand pushed on the hanging body of the captive. "But who will pay, for your evil crime?" The killer tap danced around the body and kicked up more of the choking dust. "You are here, you are there, thanks to me, you are every where." A knife blade flashed in the dim light and slashed the pale skin of the body; a low groan came from between dry cracked lips. "Will they find you, do they care? Will they come, for my bloody fair?" A horrible ear-splitting scream rushed out on the winds to stir the silence.

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Between the files that Boggs, Monty and Danni gave to Xe, she was buried up to her knees. A headache pounded behind her eyes and made it hard for her to concentrate on anything but the pain. Her lower back and hip were screaming from the constant bending and sitting, she wanted to just throw a match and run from her office. After ten hours of shuffling papers, she was no closer to singling out a perp or even close a specific location to start looking for one. A low growl came from her throat when her phone rang, moving folders and boxes; she found the pain in her ass and yelled into the receiver.

"SALLANO!"

"You called."

"Called who?" Her eyes narrowed at the strange voice she heard.

"Called me."

"Me who?"

"The one you called."

"Who the fuck is this and what do you want?"

"I want you study!"

Xe slouched back in her chair when she heard her wife laughing in the background. "Sam you're an asshole."

"I know that but don't tell anyone, especially my boss. She thinks I'm great. In fact right now she's worshipping at me feet."

"And why is that?"

"Ohh because we found a couple of cases I worked where the same cop was involved. Former swat team sergeant, suspended for police brutality a couple times. Huge asshole on the force that just happened to be treated for anger management by Dr. Psycho Franks."

Xe pumped a hand in the air and did a silent 'YES' "Tell Bri to worship for both of us, I'm bringing lunch what do you guys want?"

"Ohhh something dead and entirely bad for us."

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Boggs came trotting down the hall to Xe's office; he leaned against the wall and tried to catch his breath. Wiping the sheen of sweat from his brow, he then waved a hand at her and tried to get the words out in between pants.

"Stiff found...mental hospital...Boston...hacked up...nasty."

"For Gods sake Boggs take a seat before you fall over." She stepped over the files and pushed a chair towards him. "Now what about a hacked up body in Boston?"

He took a deep breath and started over. "Monty just called me; they just got a report in from Boston Psychiatric ward about a patient being hacked up in his cell. They thought it was a self-mutilation thing at first but they found his straight jacket in a corner of the cell. They checked his records and he's been strapped for the last month because he kept ranting that he was next."

"Next for what and who's been into see this guy?"

"No idea and the last person to see him was Dr. Psycho."

"Ohh shit!" She grabbed her leather jacket and ran past Boggs. "Get the file for me." She yelled from down the hall.

"When did I become her lackey?" He asked himself before going back to his office.

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"This cop was more than brutal." Brian ran a finger down all of the wounds that had been inflicted after the victim had been shot point blank in the chest. "What was his excuse for the victim having all his limbs broken to compound breaks, crushed skull, four ruptured vertebrae and most of his internal organs smushed?"

"If I remember it right, I heard the cops saying that the guy tried to run away. Amazing since the chest shot was an instant kill, it took out his heart."

Brian opened another file that they had downloaded from the Ohio ME's office. Scanning the information, she coughed and looked over to Sam. "This isn't police brutality, this is homicide! I've seen less damage to a body that's fallen from a ten story building!" She read off the injuries from the ME's report. "Crushed spinal column, pneumothorax, crushed left hip and fib, ruptured bladder and testicles, dislocated left shoulder, compound fracture to left clavicle, crushed cheek, upper and lower mandible, crushed orbital bone and ruptured eyeball. What did he use on these victims a steamroller?"

Sam pointed to all the areas of damage and named the weapon. "I matched some of the wounds up with a nightstick; the others were steel toed shoes, a metal pipe and the butt of his .357"

"And this guy was trying to run away to I bet."

"Yep, kinda hard when I found rope burns on his ankles and fibers from the rope forced into a wooden beam in the ceiling."

"Sam this has got to be the killer, all we have to do now is figure where all of us fit in."

"Who's the killer?" Xe asked from just inside the doorway. She carried the four huge bags of Chinese food in and put them on the small filing cabinet.

"This cop, look at the damage he did to these two people. I mean carjacking is a good reason to be arrested but not smushed."

Xe read over the reports and groaned. "And Dr. Psycho released this guy back to the force after his anger management classes. I'll check into it and see if Internal Affairs have him under

surveillance. Plus we have a hacked up mental patient in Boston to look into. Either one of you have any contacts up there?"

"Yeah we do." Brian pulled one of the bags onto her lap. "Thank the Gods for ME conventions and the Chinese for eggrolls." She slapped at Sam's pawing hand with a pair of chopsticks. "Get your own this ones mine ALL MINE!"

"Thank the Gods for my huge expense account; hope they don't figure out that this isn't a meeting between me and the FBI."

"Gotcha covered Xe." Sam pulled open her long white jacket to show a black T-shirt with FBI in huge white letters.

Xe's brows arched upward into her bangs. "Female Body Inspector?"

"Got a CIA one too, says below Clitoris Inspection Agent. I tried and got slapped."

"Did not, you got stepped on." Brian said around a mouthful of food. "Told you not to lay under the professor's desk."

"Yeah that too, Danni slapped me when she found me under her desk."

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Piles of papers littered the desk in Xe and Brian's office, Danni had been down loading the docket from the Ohio court system all day so she could go over them and try to find out what Judge Franks was up to along with trying to find court cases where police officers were involved in wrongful death suits. One name in particular was a Sgt Dean L. Patterson; Xe had called her with the name and wanted her to snoop around. She was able to use a friends ID number, get into the Internal Affairs files, and see what they had on him. What she found just about had her falling out of her chair. Pulling a highlighter from the desk drawer, she set down to reading the numerous dockets and court findings.

She heard her friends and wife come in the house way before she saw them; at times, she wanted to turn the living room into a giant playpen. The noise they could make was louder than a day at the races.

"I DID NOT!"

"DID TO!"

"DID NOT!"

"OHH YES YOU DID!"

"WAIT A MINUTE! SO WHAT IF I DID?" Sam yelled back and ran down the hallway to hide

from Brian's wrath.

"For Gods sake do you two have to yell when you get home?" Danni massaged her temples, dropped down into a kitchen chair and laid her head on the table. "What were you arguing anyway?"

"Ohh you'll see as soon as Xe gets in here." She ran from the kitchen as soon as she heard her wife's mumbling outside the door. Xe came in to the kitchen with a look on her face that could melt steel. "Where did those two delinquents go?"

Danni pointed to the hallway and then raised an eyebrow at the steaming cop. "They ran that way, what did they do this time?"

"Ohh something that I would have been harassed about if I had gone back to work instead of hanging out in the parking lot waiting for two juveniles." She turned around and showed Danni her ass. "I'm a walking billboard for their sausage business." Across her ass was a bumper sticker promoting B&S homemade sausage with their 'no animals were harmed' motto at the bottom.

Danni held back a chuckle at the sight. "Just how did they get it there without you knowing?"

"I thought it was Bri playing grab ass with me, instead it was Sam slapping a damn sticker on my bumper."

"While you guys were playing, I found some information on Patterson. He was fired from the Police force. He beat the shit out of his wife, put her in a coma and then tried to take out the officers that came to investigate the disturbance call. Right now, he's wanted for not appearing in court. After Judge Franks released him on his own recognizance, some dumbass at the jail gave him back all his gear. He's out there with his police issued weapons, Badge and everything else a SWAT guy would have."

Worry showed clearly in Danni and Xe's eyes. Xe dropped into a chair and closed her eyes to think.

"Does it say what his specialty was on the SWAT team?"

"Sniper, he's the Grand Champion at all the shooting competitions."

"Just peachy! Do you have a picture of this guy?"

"Yep and in color to. You want if faxed out for an APB?"

"Yeah, to every police station and the FBI, just maybe we can pick the fucker up and get him put away. What I can't figure out is how everyone fits into this assholes little game and why the name Jack?"

"Now if we could get a hold of Dr. Psycho's transcripts on him would answer some questions. Of

course, those are all gone, so I can only make a guess that he's pissed because 1. I was the Judge issuing the bench warrant to bring him in on a brutality and wrongful death charge. 2. Sam was the Deputy ME that did the autopsy and ruled the cause of death. 3. Brian was her boss who agreed with her. 4. You're a good cop."

"Where does Dr. Psycho fit in?"

"She's a sympathetic ear, kindred spirit of sorts?" She shrugged her shoulders.

"Call the children in here and let's see if they can come up with anything else."

Danni winked at her. "So are you getting the hang of being a parent?"

"Never thought I'd need to know how, til now."

"Watch this, this is lesson number one. TIME TO EAT!" The sound of feet pounding down the hallway and then two bodies sliding across the floor in their socks announced Sam and Brian's arrival.

"Hey where's the food?" They asked in unison.

"In the refrigerator."

"Please tell me we don't have to cook." Brian whined.

"No, I got two buckets of chicken. You know I don't trust your cooking even though you're learning."

"Gee thanks, love you too." She stuck her tongue out and then fought Sam at the refrigerator.

With the food spread out on the table, Xe pulled Brian onto her lap to show that she wasn't mad.

"OK guys we have a good suspect but we need him to show himself or make a mistake. How are we going to do this?"

Danni took a deep breath, looked to her wife and then spoke in a low voice. "Resurrect me, I'll be the bait."

Both Xe and Brian shook their heads. "Danni you can't do that."

"You sure as Hell can't!" Sam took her wife's hand and held onto it tightly. "I can't handle going through you getting shot again and it'll kill me if I loose you."

"Listen guys, it's the only way. I have a vest and if I stay close to Xe how can he get me without showing himself?"

Xe was about to answer when her phone vibrated on her hip. "Hold on guys, let me answer this." She flipped her phone open and groaned at the number showing. "Yeah Boss."

"We got something at the hospital; a kid came in after being shot down at the C&O."

"OK, I'm on my way."

"Xe bring the girls with you, all of them."

She hung the phone up and looked around the table. "Something's going on, a kid showed up at the hospital after being shot down at the C&O. Boggs wants all of us down there."

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"I told that old dude, me and my buddy were down there smoking some weed, drinking a little Jack and all of a sudden someone starts shooting at us. My buddy went down and I took off running. Dude I didn't know I was hit until I saw all the blood. Ruined my good shirt dude." He pulled out the bottom of his blood-soaked Metalica and stuck his finger through the bullet hole.

She tapped him on his shoulder to get his attention back to her. "Where exactly were you and your buddy?"

"We parked at the liquor store by Cindy D's and walked down the path towards the Ferry Dude." He blinked his bloodshot eyes at her. "You gonna get my Buddy?"

"Yeah we'll get him." She turned to the nurse and nodded her head. "I'm done with him; Chief Boggs is arranging a guard for outside his room. So if you can let him know where Dude here will be after he's patched up."

"Sure Lt. Sallano, I'll let him know."

Xe went out into the hallway where Brian, Sam and Danni were standing she took Brian's hand. "I want you and Sam to take Danni downstairs and hide in the old section. Now listen very carefully, do not open the door for anyone but me or Boggs, understand?"

Brian gave her click of her heels and saluted. "Got it boss, no password, no enter." She gave her wife a lingering kiss before she took Sam and Danni the back way to the morgue. Xe waved Boggs over and whispered in his ear.

"I want a guard posted in the morgue; I can't trust two of the three as far as I could throw them."

"I know which two you're talking about." He pointed to one of his officers. "Look what your wife did."

"I can't believe her." She shook her head and chuckled, at the sight of the officer with the bumper sticker stuck to his back. She lost it completely when Boggs stepped away from her and had one

on his back as well.

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With Xe walking point, she and ten officers walked in a line starting at the edge of the woods near the path and headed towards Harpers Ferry. After fifteen minutes, they came across the other kid. He was shot through the back of his neck and his head was held on by skin alone. Xe called the CSU unit in from where they were waiting in the parking lot and told them to bring a stretcher and body bag with them. Using a laser pointer, she estimated the kid's height, projection of the line of fire and started in that direction with the officers in tow. Pulling her Glocks, she dropped down to one knee when a shack came into view. Holding out a hand, she pointed in the directions she wanted the officers to go. Easing up to the shack, she looked through one of the slats and saw a figure in the dim light. Signaling the officer close to her, she had him ease around the corner, past the door and wait. She counted to six and then took her position on the other side. She counted off on her fingers and then kicked the door in on three.

"FREEZE POLICE!"

"Ohh my Gods Lt." The officer covered his mouth gagged and ran from the shack, she could hear him heaving on the side of the shack. She pulled her radio and called for an ambulance, then called Boggs.

"Boss better get down here."

"Where you at Xe?"

"Just follow the path, you'll see the CSU team, turn left and about 200 yards in you'll see one of our finest barfing his guts out." She stepped closer to the body that was suspended from the rusty chains, saw the boney chest move and heard a soft groan coming from between dry cracked lips. "Boggs get the paramedics down here now! She's still alive!" She hung up her phone and looked for a way to release the badly beaten woman from her chains. Finding where the chain was fastened on an old hook in the wall, she pulled it off and slowly lowered the woman to the floor. The sound of bodies running through the brush and trees alerted her to the paramedics and the huffing and puffing Boggs.

"Hurry up and get in here!" She yelled then shined her flashlight on the skeletal woman. The paramedics brought the stretcher in, laid it beside the moaning woman and moved her onto it as carefully as they could. Within minutes, they had IV's running, pressure cuff, heart monitor and the lead paramedic was calling in her vitals to the hospital. Boggs came panting in and grabbed onto Xe's arm for support while he caught his breath.

"Too old...and out of...shape for this."

"I told you to go on a diet." She shined her flashlight around the shack, saw all the papers lying around and then stopped when she came to white file boxes. "Boggs I think we hit the jack pot." She pulled Boggs to the side and out of the way of the paramedics. "I think that's Dr. Psycho

they're taking out of here, her pet must have turned on her." She pulled the lid of one of the boxes and shinned the light down onto the files. Across the front was the FBI seal. "We better get CSU in here, all this stuff is going to have to be dusted for fingerprints."

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The police officer that Boggs had sent down to the morgue stood leaning up against the wall near Brian's office. He had no idea why he was guarding an empty area. "Who in their right mind would come down to this place?" He asked himself.

"Someone who's not in their right mind." Another officer walked closer to him. "I have no idea why I was sent down here, except maybe to do this." In a flash, a baton appeared in the officer's hand and then struck the other across the bridge of his nose. Blood spurted out as he howled in pain. He grabbed his face and then fell forward when the baton came down at the back of his head. A loud crunching noise echoed in the hall and then a thud as his body fell to the floor and shuddered its last breath.

"That was fun."

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Danni lay across one of the gurneys reading over some files while Brian and Sam played with her sharp pointy things she kept in her bag. She had no idea why her wife insisted on carrying more weapons than a mercenary carries. She knew what they were doing just by the whooshing sounds, seeing the flash of a blade out of the corner of her eye, she turned and watched them doing figure eights with short swords. Another mystery was how Sam fit them in her backpack.

"Someone's gonna get hurt."

"No we won't ma, we're real careful see."

"Oooww that hurt you ass!" Brian rubbed her ass where Sam had jabbed her.

"Did not you sissy."

"I'll sissy you!" Brian kicked her in her shin and grinned when Sam hopped around on one foot while rubbing her leg.

Brian held up, hand and listened carefully. "Did you guys hear that?"

"Hear what?" Sam asked while still rubbing her leg.

"I heard someone yelling help."

"You're hearing things."

"No she's not." Danni said as she got down off the gurney. "It's coming from the other side of that door." She pointed to the door that led to the morgue.

Sam shrugged her shoulders. "Too bad they'll have to look somewhere else for help. Xe said not to move from here, until either she gets here or Boggs."

"And what if it's really an emergency?" She walked towards the door with Sam right behind her. "Just let me look and if it's not a dire emergency I'll send who ever upstairs, OK?"

"I don't like this Brian." Sam said but still followed.

"IS ANY ONE HERE? OFFICER DOWN!" Came from the other side of the door, Brian pulled her keys out and opened the door to see two officers in the hallway. The one yelling was leaning over the other who had blood covering his entire face and chest.

"What happened?" She dropped down beside the officer and felt for a pulse.

"Ohh just this." He brought down his baton on the back of Brian's head and was about to hit her again when a war cry split the air. He spun on his heel and fell back a step when Sam swung her short sword at his gut. Going on the defensive, he blocked each blow with his baton while backing down the hallway.

"I've always wanted to fight an Amazon but this is getting tiring." He pulled his service revolver and aimed it at her. At the last second, Sam threw her sword over hand and watched it stick into his stomach. Then she dropped to the floor in extreme pain. The officer aimed at her again and ducked when bullets ricocheted off the wall above his head.

"YOU MOTHER FUCKER!" Danni screamed as she ran down the hall firing Brian's revolver. She stopped when he turned and limped to the other door and disappeared. Going to Sam first, she checked her leg and then smacked her in her head. "What the Hell were you thinking?" She slid across the floor on her knees to Brian's side. "Sam help me with Brian, I don't know..." Tears were running down her cheeks making it hard for her to see. "She's bleeding everywhere!" Sam crawled to Brian's side, she lifted one eyelid and seen that her pupil was unresponsive. She checked the other one and found it sluggish.

"Baby go in the morgue and in the cabinet near the drawers is a cervical collar and a mini board." She held Brian where she was and waited for Danni to come back. "Goods Brian don't do this to me." She rested her head against her friends back and sniffed back her tears.

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Boggs and Xe were helping the CSU unit load all the boxes and loose papers in the back of the CSU van. They knew that they would have to come back to collect the rest of the cache and post a cop at the scene until the place could be gone over with a fine tooth comb. Xe was carrying the last of the boxes that would fit when she felt a stabbing pain behind her eyes that was so sharp

that she dropped the box, grabbed her head and fell to her knees with a loud moan. Boggs went to her side and kept her from falling over.

"Xe what's wrong?" He squatted in front of her and pulled her hands from her head. "Gods Xe your eyes are full of blood, where's the fucking paramedics!" He looked around frantically for someone to help. "Stay right there don't you move!"

"Brian...have to go." She stumbled to her feet, grabbed onto the van for support until her head cleared.

"Damn it Xe I told you..." He took a step back when he saw the feral look come down over her features. The low snarling sound that came from her sent shivers down his spine.

"He's got Brian!" She took off at a stumbling gate until she regained her balance. Down the path she sprinted until she came to her car, jumping behind the wheel, she flipped on the siren and slapped a top hat on the roof. Other officers in the parking lot heard their Chief yell at them to escort her to the hospital. Three cruisers tore out of the lot under full sirens and lights after their Lieutenant.

Xe tore down the road back towards Frederick and the hospital, people who were moving too slow for the frantic cop found that a Crown Victoria could turn a two lane highway in to three lanes. She went around people by driving in the grassy median or taking over the burn area of the road. Calling the morgue, she hung up after the phone continued to ring. Neither Sam or Danni had a cell phone and Brian kept hers in her backpack. She called Brian's cell phone and after the tenth ring, she was ready to hang up when Danni answered. With her first shaky words, she knew something was wrong.

"Where's Brian!"

"Just get here Xe!" Danni yelled back and hung up the phone. She didn't know how to tell her friend what happened. She paced the floor outside of the Triage room where both Sam and Brian were being treated. The curtain to the section where Sam was came down off the metal rod and crumpled to the floor. Sam shrugged of the attending physician's hands and pushed past the nurse.

"Get out of my way! God damn incompetent asswipe!" She flung the curtain back where Brian was lying on her side on the gurney. She pulled a pair of gloves out of a box, grabbed a gown and mask and moved in between the attending ER doctor and a nurse.

"What the fuck are you people waiting on? She needs to be in the OR right now!"

"We're waiting for X-rays to get here and she needs to be stabilized."

"Stupid God damn people!" She went over to the wall phone and called for an OR room, a portable X-ray, catscan and the on-call neurosurgeon. "Get her up to OR #3 and when her wife Lt. Sallano gets here I'm giving her your name!" She pointed to the ER doctor and then checked the IV bags, portable monitors and Brian's stats before ordering the nurse to take Brian to the

elevator.

"You can't take over in here!" The doctor yelled at Sam. "I don't even know who you are and you have no right to order my staff around!" He found that grabbing on to the moving gurney was painful. Sam gripped his wrist so hard that they heard cracking noises.

"You wanna make a bet I can't, I have more damn diplomas on my wall than paint. I graduated number two in medical school, number one is laying on that gurney. If you want to push it, I'll have your body down on one of my tables in the morgue!" She pushed him up against the wall and growled at him. "And I won't be the one to put you there, Sallano will be the one!" She thumped his chest and limped from the room to her waiting wife.

"Xe's on her way she should be...ooohh fuck." They heard her before they'd seen her. The sound of clattering trays and yelps of pain and shock came from the ER admitting area and then a feral looking Xe came busting through the doors and headed right for them. She faltered when she saw the blood covering both her friends.

"Where's Brian!" She stopped in front of Sam and lifted her off the floor by the front of her shirt. "Where's BRIAN!"

Danni grabbed a hold of Xe's forearm and shook her. "She's in the OR right now, put Sam down and let her explain." She felt a coldness when icy blue eyes swiveled to look at her.

"What happened?" She shook Sam and heard a deep groan when she pressed into her body.

"She's up in surgery with a head trauma."

"I have to go to her, which OR!" She shook Sam again and ignored Danni's strong grip on her arm.

Danni lowered her voice and spoke to Xe. "You can't help her up there, let the surgeons take care of her."

"Xe I'm dying here." She pointed to the floor and saw the small puddle of blood forming."

"Jesus Christ!" She eased Sam down and scooped her up in her arms.

"Put me down I can walk, just need a band aid." She tilted her head back to look at Danni. "Help me baby!" Xe put her on the nearest gurney and flipped the surgical gown away from her leg.

"What the fuck happened and I want every rotten detail." She ripped Sam's pant leg open, poured betadine on the bullet hole and ignored Sam's yell. "You want me to suture this while you tell me what happened or what?"

Danni put a hand on Xe's arm. "I'll tell you while you do it, Sam's going to pass out the minute you start."

When Xe pushed the suturing needle into Sam's leg, she went white as a ghost and fell back on the table unconscious. Xe looked to Danni and shrugged her shoulders.

"We heard someone yelling for help, Brian opened the door and there were two cops there, one was on the floor covered in blood. She knelt down and the other one hit her with his baton. Sam went after him and he shot her, I took Brian's pistol and shot at him. I think I hit him in his shoulder I'm not sure. But he left with Sam's sword sticking out of his stomach."

Xe brought her eyes up to connect with tear-filled hazel. "How bad is Brian?"

"I don't know, she was unresponsive when we got her up here. He hit her in the back of her head and she was bleeding bad."

Xe finished off the sutures in the front and side of Sam's leg, pulling out her phone she called Boggs and had him put out an APB on Patterson and a warning of armed and dangerous. "I'm going up to the OR, when Boggs gets here send him up." She took off at a sprint to the stairs, taking them two at a time, she burst through the doors and ran down the hallway to the door to OR #3. All she could see was Brian's form under the white sheet's, a stand was at her head with more sheets draped over it. She tapped on the window, flashed her badge and waited for a nurse to come into the hallway.

"I'm Lt. Sallano, how serious is my wife?"

"Right now it's hard to say, she has swelling around the impact area and a small hematoma on the lower left lobe of the brain. The surgeon will know more after he's done releasing the pressure. I'm sorry that's all I know."

Xe nodded her head, ran a trembling hand down her face and walked away. The more she thought about it the more the rage poured from inside of her. By the time she was back down stairs, she was like a wild animal that was cornered. She saw Boggs coming towards her and seen him flinch and grabbed his chest.

"I'm going after him and when I find him I will tear him into small pieces!" She went into the room where Sam was laying and slapped her a few times on her cheek. When her golden eyes opened, she pulled her up so they were nose to nose.

"Where's your backpack?"

"Downstairs why?"

"Because I want the biggest god damn pig sticker you got."

"We're going with you." Danni said while helping Sam off the table. "He couldn't have gotten to far, he may still be in the hospital."

Boggs stepped up between Xe and Danni. "I've got the doors sealed off on all levels, CSU is down stairs with the kids body and that woman is being treated right now. I'll get other cops in here to do a floor by floor search and have the cruisers on the look out."

"I don't know where I'll be but Patterson can't hide from me!" She strode off down the hall and turned when she heard out of beat steps behind her.

"I'm going with you!" Sam yelled and limped towards Xe. "He hurt my cousin and shot me, I want a piece of him." She took Xe's hand and headed for a side door. "I have stuff in Brian's truck."

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Patterson checked the door to the floor where all the physical therapy and rehabilitation was done. Turning the door handle, he listened for any kind of alarm to sound. When nothing happened, he stepped through the door and looked down the hall to the nearest door. He had stolen a lab coat after leaving the morgue, but knew his dark blue uniform pants with the stripe down the leg would give him away. And the fact that blood was soaking the lab coat and dripping from various wounds to leave a trail behind him. The worst of the wounds was the one from the sword, he never imagined that she would be able to actually spear him and the gunshot to his right shoulder hit the brachial nerve leaving his shooting arm useless.

Trying the door, he found it unlocked and dark inside. Going inside, he flipped on the light and started searching the cabinets on the wall. All he found were some ace bandages and metal splints for arms and fingers. Using one of the ace bandages, he bound his stomach and grimaced from the extreme pain. He knew he wouldn't last much longer with the blood loss but refused to be taken down by a woman cop. He was already pissed that the Judge was still alive and had shot him, he wanted to know how she managed to survive the chest shot and the fall into the river. A voice inside told him he would never learn those details.

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Sam and Xe went through the back door of the morgue and followed the blood trail up the steps to the first floor, laying by the door was the sword that Sam had been using at the time of the attack. Xe picked it up and saw the blood covered blade.

"This is what you were using?"

"Yep, Brian and I were doing sword movements, we didn't have our pistols on us." Xe saw the tears filling Sam's eyes and felt her own eyes start to mist over.

"Let's find this mother fucker, I want his head."

Xe went up the steps checking for the blood trail while Sam stood below. When she found nothing, she went back down and they continued to search the ER area and asked the staff if they had seen anyone matching Patterson's description. A cleaner said he saw a couple of police

officers heading towards the lounge but that was all. Xe looked to Sam and then headed to the door adjacent to the lounge. At the bottom of the door, she saw a drop of dark blood and more once the door was opened.

"He came through here and most likely went upstairs to double back and escape without notice."

"You want to split up and search that way or what?" Sam pulled the sword from the sheath on her back and laid the blade across her shoulder. "How about if we start at different ends of the hallway, we can trap him in between us then?"

"OK, well do that after we searched this floor." She pulled her Glock from its holster and motioned for Sam to angle off from her. Stopping at each door, she listened before she looked in. They did that until she came upon a nurse who said that she was the only one on the floor besides a couple of patients and the on-call doctor. Xe had Sam go to the closest door while she ran back down to the other. Stepping through the door, she went up the stairs and then waited a few minutes before opening the next door. She saw Sam at the other end and they started their search. When they found nothing, the only place left was the roof. Xe knew that at the back of the building was a ladder attached to the wall for access to the air conditioning units and satellite dishes. She ran to the other door and sprinted up the steps, without waiting, she burst through the door and saw Patterson a few yards in front of her.

"FREEZE YOU MOTHER FUCKER!" She aimed her Glock at the center of his back and waited. "Hands up and turn your sorry ass around!"

"Ohh so you must be the Calvary that thinks she's going to take me in?"

"No thinking about it, I take you in dead or alive, no difference to me!"

"Would you shot a man in the back?"

"No but that doesn't mean I won't take out your legs!"

He turned slowly and faced her with a smug look. "You must be Lt. Sallano, how's is Dr. Meadows doing? I hear she has a headache."

"None of your fucking business asshole! Ohh and I found Dr. Franks, you had her chained up for what, forced sex?"

"I wouldn't touch that bitch with a ten foot pole, you fucking dykes! You're the down fall of the human race!" He steadily walked closer to her until he was inches from the barrel of her gun. "The entire time I was with her in Quantico, all I heard was Brianna this Brianna that and how she was wronged. Then how Judge Shepard and the Deputy ME wronged her. She was supposed to help ME!" He jabbed himself in the chest. "I went to her because I had problems, not to listen to her sob stories! Then it was her job." He held his hands in the air and waved them. "Ohh woe is me, my jobs sooo hard! She talked to serial killers! How fucking hard is that?" He groaned and grabbed his side. "You know it was her idea to have revenge against you dykes." He started to

sweat heavily and blood came to his lips as he breathed deeply. "All was going soo nice and planed out until she wanted me to kidnap Dr. Meadows so she could torture her. I swayed her to letting me have some fun by taking all of you out one by one and Dr. Meadows would be the last one to go." He threw a hand in the air. "So I got kind of out of order, you're the last one to go!" He pulled his pistol from his holster and it dropped to the rooftop.

"If you're such a brave man, fight me like a man!" She kicked the pistol across the roof and went to take her shoulder holster off and felt hands touch her shoulders.

"I got it Xe." Sam said from behind her. "Kill that fucker for Bri." She whispered before taking a step to the side.

"Ohh so you think you're more man than me? HAA!" Patterson pulled his baton from his belt and spun it in his left hand.

"Come on little man, give it your best shot." She waved him forward and dodged the baton when it came towards her head. "Ohh what's the matter, can't beat an unarmed woman?" She threw her head back and laughed. "Fucking pussy! You can't do shit!" He roared and swung at her head and missed, his face was getting paler by the second, blood was running down his chin to drip on his uniform shirt.

"Fucking dyke!" He pulled his cuffs and threw them at her face, when she turned her head, he caught her in her ribs with his baton. A sickening crack was heard and Xe gasped and wheezed.

"Lucky shoot dumb fuck, come on beat me like you do to all the woman you know."

"Now you die! He spun the club over his head and laughed like a lunatic. "A word before you die, I got off killing your wife!"

Xe put out her hand and growled deeply to Sam. "Sword." Sam threw the sword to her and without looking, she pulled it down out of the air. She did something that Sam had never seen before, she spun the sword in intricate movements so fast that the blade was a blur but made the air sing in her ears. Xe pulled the sword up high over her right shoulder, placed her left foot out and turned her left side to face Patterson. When he charged at her, she ducked, spun around with the sword level and took his head from his neck in one clean swing.

"May you burn in Hell!" She stepped forward and drop kicked his head up and over the roof. Using the headless corpse, she wiped the blood from the blade and handed it back to Sam.

"Come on Sam I need to go see my wife."

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Boggs and Danni were sitting outside of the ICU unit waiting for any word of Patterson's location or to hear from Xe. When Sam and Xe came down the hallway, they knew that something had happened. The huge grin on Sam's face was a tell tale sign that she had been an

accomplice to trouble.

"Any word on Bri yet?" She stopped by the door to the ICU and looked through the window.

"The doctor wants to talk to you." Danni said softly and wiped the tears from her eyes.

Boggs stood up and touched Xe's arm, he looked into her steel colored eyes and knew what she had done. "Where did you leave him?"

"His body's on the roof but his head is on the ground somewhere."

"His head is on the ground?" Boggs looked to Sam and saw her shrug her shoulders. "How did it get there?"

"I was playing soccer and Sam sucks as a goalie." She pushed through the door into the ICU and saw the doctor checking on Brian. She stopped slightly to his side and looked down at her wife. She felt like her heart was being torn from her chest, tears filled her eyes and trailed down her cheeks to drip onto her chest. He turned when he heard a low voice beside him.

"Lt. Sallano?" He stepped forward and offered her his hand.

"How is she?" She wiped the tears from her eyes but kept them trained on Brian.

"She's stable and very strong willed. With the kind of injury she has, most don't make it off the table in the kind of shape she did." He held out a hand to stop Xe. "I didn't put that right, she had no complications at all during surgery or afterward. From the blow that she received, it cracked her skull right above the cerebellum in the area of the occipital lobe." He knew he lost her with the first word out of his mouth. "OK, at the back of your head, right near your neck is the cerebellum. It controls your balance, movement and muscular coordination. The occipital is right above that and it controls your vision."

"So you're saying that she may be blind?"

"If she comes out of the coma, it's a possibility. We won't know anything until then, your wife sustained a skull fracture in the occipital area, we would not have had to do any surgery except that a epidermal hematoma formed and caused pressure between the skull and the dura. I drilled a hole and released the pressure, but we found out from the CT scans that she also sustained a subdural hematoma as well. All we can do is wait and keep checking to make sure that the bleeding doesn't get any worse. If it does, then I'll go back in and try and stop the bleeding."

Xe sunk into the chair beside Brian's bed and took her small hand in hers. "So she may never come out of this coma and if she does, she may be blind." She looked up at his weary face. "This hematoma can kill her if it doesn't stop can't it?"

"I'm afraid so, the pressure will get so bad that her blood pressure will drop and possibly send her into cardiac arrest. The pressure in her brain will increase while the blood flow to the brain will

decrease." He clasped his hands together and looked to Brian. "All we can do now is pray. I'm sorry." He left the room without a backward glance.

Xe moved the chair closer and rested her forehead on Brian's hand, tears flowed down her face and sobs tore from her tight throat. She had seen Brian's death in her dreams so many times but nothing could prepare her to sit by and watch her slowly die. She continued to sob even though she felt hands rub her back. Sam, Danni and Boggs kissed Brian's cheek and then left Xe to her pain. When nurses came into check on Brian, Xe refused to leave her side. Their threats to have her removed fell on deaf ears. At one point, a security guard came in, took one look at the gold shield on her belt and left without a word. Three days went by with Xe not leaving the room to even eat, she sat beside Brian and spoke in a soft voice to her. When the nurses came in to bathe Brian, she took the pan of water and bathed her. She took care of all her wife's needs and forgot all about her own. Sam and Danni came by frequently and tried to get her to at least go and get something to eat. When she refused, they brought her food that went untouched.

They stood outside the door and watched Xe through the window.

"Danni we have to do something, she hasn't eaten or slept in days. She looks worse than some of the bodies in my morgue!"

Danni ran a hand through her curly hair and nodded her head.

"Can you knock her ass out with something? A shot of tranquilizer that lasts for days?"

"Yeah but how we gonna do it? Hey Xe drop your pants and let me jab ya."

"Uuhmm...that would get us beds next to Bri." They stood there in thought and then a low chuckle came from Sam.

"I got an idea, I'll jump her and you jab her."

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Xe sat hunched over the bed with her forehead resting on Brian's upper arm, her body ached, eyes burned and her ribs kept sending sharp pains every time she breathed to deeply. She looked to the door when Sam and Danni came in. She was so tired that she couldn't even offer them a small smile.

"Has there been any change?" Sam asked as she closed in on Xe.

Tears filled her eyes and she shook her head. "No, nothing, not even a flinch." Sam leaned over her back, wrapped her arms around her shoulders and laid her head on top of Xe's. Tears came to her eyes and trailed down her cheeks. "She'll come back to us, I know she will." She said softly before winking at Danni. Danni stepped close, laid a hand on Xe's shoulder and jabbed the needle into her shoulder before she knew what was happening. She jumped up, looked at the needle sticking out of her shoulder and growled.

"What did you do to me?"

"Jabbed you with a big ass needle?" Danni's voice raised an octave when Xe snarled at her. "Just great what happens if..." Her bloodshot eyes rolled up in her head and she started to fall backwards. Sam caught her and laid her in the bed next to Brian.

"Sammy why are you crying?"

"Get a whiff of her and you'll know why. Damn but she reeks! It's bad enough that it may bring Brian out of her coma to tell her to take a shower!" She looked down at Xe's blood splattered shirt and ripped it up the middle. "Ohh fuck I forgot all about her getting hit." She ran her fingers across the large ugly bruise covering Xe's ribs. They cleaned Xe up the best they could without dehydrating from crying, wrapped her ribs and covered her up with a spare blanket. When they were done, Danni put on her court room face and went to inform the staff that they were not to disturb Xe or Sam was going to have her hands full with bodies. Sam backed her up by cracking her knuckles and giving everyone an evil glare.

The next morning a small hand twitched and then moved up to tangle in long dark greasy hair. Brian's nose twitched, an eye opened and she turned her head away from Xe. Swallowing a few times to get rid of the dryness in her mouth, she croaked. "Xe go brush your teeth, something died in your mouth." She shoved on Xe's shoulder a few times before she heard her moan. "Xe wake up, Gods you reek!"

"So what, don't care." She snuggled into Brian's side and grumbled. "Tired, hangover."

"I don't care if you've been buried alive and just dug yourself out, you stink!" She yanked on Xe's ear and grinned when she yelped.

"Hey why'd you...you're awake!"

"Ya and you still stink!" When Xe went to kiss her, she covered her mouth with her hand. "Not until you brush your teeth and take a shower with lye soap." Xe ignored her and buried her face against her neck and cried. "Why are you crying I haven't been asleep that long." Xe raised her head up and nodded her head.

"You've been in a coma for over a week, they said you might not come out of it." She wiped her eyes and ran a finger across the white bandage covering Brian's head. "Can you see me?" She looked into Brian's bloodshot eyes.

"Yeah is that a problem?" She blinked her eyes a few times, looked around the room and saw all the equipment she was hooked up to. "Guess I kinda got hurt huh?"

"You could say that." She cupped Brian's cheek and softly trailed her fingers down to her lips. "I love you Brian."

"I'd love you more if you went and got cleaned up." She pointed to the door and pushed on Xe.
"And bring me back some food, I'm hungry."

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Xe came back into the room still dripping from her shower, the scrubs she wore were wet showing that she didn't even dry off before dressing. Brian looked up at her and snorted when she saw her bare feet stuffed into surgical booties.

"I don't stink no more and I brushed the fur off my tongue. Can I come near you now?"

"Only if you brought me food."

"Taken care of." She came towards the bed, leaned over and kissed Brian gently. When she pulled back, Brian pulled her back down and kissed her until her ears buzzed. When they parted, Brian ran her fingers down her wife's gaunt face.

"You look terrible, when's the last time you ate?"

"Last week sometime, stubborn asshole." Sam said as she and Danni came into the room carrying bags of food. "We knocked her ass out with a tranquilizer shot yesterday because she wouldn't sleep." Danni kissed Brian's forehead and sat down on the edge of the bed.

"How you feeling?"

"Like I have cotton between my ears, what did they do to me?"

"Took some cotton out of your head." Sam replied and handed her a carton of sweet and sour pork. "Should've put something between your rotten other half's ears."

"Ohh thanks Sam for fixing my ribs and Danni for knocking my ass out. I needed the sleep but I was..."

"Forget it we know, at least I got to see a master swordsman at work."

Brian looked to a bashful Xe and waved a hand at her. "What's she talking about?"

"Damn! Ya should have seen her! She makes us look like shit, figure eights, pommel spins and the head lopping thing was great!" Sam was just about frothing at the mouth when she finished.

"Sam sit down and eat." Danni threw a container and fork at her and pointed to a chair. "Now Samantha!"

"Meanie." She mumbled and started eating.

"You better explain to Bri what happened or she's going to get out of that bed and knock the shit

outta us."

Green eyes narrowed at Xe. "Damn well will knock you around, now tell me."

"Well, I kinda lopped Patterson's head off and kicked it off the roof."

A nurse walked in and interrupted Brian's yelling spree she was about to go on. "I can't believe you people are in here and with non-authorized food!" She stepped up beside the bed and was going to reach for Brian's food, and thought better of it when her patient bared her teeth and growled at her. "You're not supposed to be eating solid foods after being in a coma."

"Go ahead and try and stop her." Boggs said from the doorway. "I've seen her finger collection down in the morgue, she has every color of fingernail polish but yours"

"I'm reporting this to your doctor." She started for the door and watched Boggs clap his hands and grin.

"That means she can make me a new keychain out of his dick and balls!"

The nurse left with a horrified look on her face. She looked back over her shoulder at Boggs and trotted down the hall.

"Hey Brian glad to see your awake and made that dirty dog take a shower. Made my eyes water being in the same room with her."

"Thanks Boggs love you to." Xe flipped him off and grabbed more food for her and Brian.

"I know you do, and we finally found Patterson's head. It landed in the dumpster and gave the guys at the dump a heart attack when it fell out of the truck. Before I forget, did Sam tell you about Patterson's tattoo?"

"Nope, what was it a tiny teddy bear on his dick?"

"Nope, it was a bleeding heart with Jack the Ripper inside of it, the man was a sick bastard!" He stole a shrimp from Sam's container and jumped when her foot shot out at him. "Thanks Sammy, my wife won't let me eat this stuff. She put me on a phony food diet, I think she's trying to starve me to death." He grinned when she handed him a container from the bag. "Ohh and Dr. Psycho now has a permanent bed in the nut ward, she's vegetable soup."

Brian looked to Xe with a raised brow. "You found her?"

"Yep, and it wasn't pretty either." Xe filled her in on everything they had found at the shack, and that the FBI now had all of their files back and then some. Sam and Danni told her about their fighting Patterson off and how she had come to be in a coma.

"I always miss all the fun!" She pouted and slapped Xe on her thigh. "When do I get out of

here?"

"Don't know we can always do like all the other times and sneak out."

"Not this time you're not!" The hospital administrator pointed a finger at her. "As of now you are on a mandatory vacation until you're cleared by the neurologist. And I want to know who stuck all those bumper stickers on my car."

Sam and Brian looked to each other and then to Boggs, in unison they yelled his name.

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A week later, Danni and Brian were ready to throw both of their wives out into the backyard. In two days, they had not left their spots in front of the TV. They were playing a Nintendo game and refused to move until one of them gave up and declared the other Queen of Donkey Kong.

"OK Danni ya ready?"

"If this doesn't work, we're flipping the electrical breakers off."

They slapped hands and walked out into the living room dressed in leather and literally cracked bullwhips at their wives. Xe and Sam moved after being threatened just once with the end of the whips snapping their nipples. Two nasty smelling women ran for the bathrooms knowing that when their wives dressed in leather, they meant business in a master/slave sort of way. Once again, the house of juvenile delinquents was back to normal.

The end

Ripper's Heart

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