

~ Rhapsody's Silver Lining ~

by Larisa

Disclaimer; Ya'll know who they resemble, no infringement meant on anything that's not mine in the story. The normal stuff is here, sex between women, bad language, violence and everything else that I can toss in. If you're not old enough or it's one of those stupid laws about it being illegal. Grow up and move the hell to another state! Thanks to Lesia and Ri for being my sounding boards.

Rhapsody's Silver Lining

By Larisa

Hecate3366@frontiernet.net

Rhapsody Beaumont pulled her silver Mercedes up to the guard shack that was to the training area of the racetrack. Her nose wrinkled at the smell of horses and other odiferous elements assaulting her. She dropped her glasses down her nose to peer with angry green eyes at the sloppily dressed guard in his wrinkled uniform. He gave her a toothless grin and tipped his sweat stained baseball cap.

"Afternoon ma'am, can I help ya?" He drawled in a lazy accent.

"I'm looking for barn number thirteen; can you direct me there please?" As he leaned in through her window, she brought her hand up in front of her face and tried not to gag from his body odor.

"Just pull through here and hang a left and its yer first barn, its painted silver and blue." He slapped the edge of the doorframe and stepped back. She quickly raised her window and drove through the gate; she cringed inside, as her expensive car sloshed through Gods only knew what.

"I hate this Roger! I hope your sorry ass burns in the deepest flames of Hell!" She mumbled as she peered through the windshield looking for barn thirteen. She slammed on the brakes when a horse and rider trotted in front of her. "Assholes! I swear this world is full of them!" She did a very un-lady like gesture and flipped the rider off.

Pulling close to the barn, she opened her door and stepped out, immediately something warm covered her foot. She looked down and her face instantly paled. Kicking her foot, she sent her Italian pump soaring through the air to fall into a large muck container. Her head dropped in defeat.

Her brain spun like a tornado with anger. "If you weren't already dead Roger, they would have to lock me up to keep from killing you myself."

She looked around to see if anyone was watching, as she slowly limped her way to the muck container she tried to look inside. Standing on her tiptoes, she was five foot five and nowhere

near the top edge of the container that was at least six foot. Searching the area outside of the shed row for something to stand on, she jumped when she heard a lisping voice reach her ears.

"My dear lady, you do not want to look in there. It is truly atrocious!"

She turned her head slowly to see a short stocky man with sparse hair and a well-groomed beard and mustache tip toeing past piles of horse manure. "I swear that groom is the sloppiest thing alive." He pulled a lace and silk scarf in front of his nose and rolled his eyes at the sight before him.

"This is not the place to wear silk and Italian pumps; in fact this is not the place for people of our standing at all." He cast a brilliant smile. "Where are my manors? Please let me introduce myself, I am Salvatore Stein." He held out a limp wrested hand and gently grasped her small fingers. "And you must be Lady Rhapsody Beaumont."

"Yes, I am. What is it that you do here?" She looked down to see his fitted designer jeans and expensive dress shirt with frilly lace at the cuffs and collar. Thinking to her self. "I hope they use pitchforks on you Roger!"

"Oohh I am the manager of this place, but I refuse to work under these horrible conditions." He wiped his brow and replaced his scarf over his mouth and nose. "I am highly allergic to any kind of animal hair or dirt." He sniffled delicately behind his scarf. "Would you like an espresso? I have the most fabulous blend in my office."

"Yes, that would be nice. But first could someone get my pump from inside of that...thing?" She pointed to the muck container.

"Ohh certainly Lady Rhapsody, just let me find that awful groom." Stepping gingerly around steaming obstacles he looked out in to the field. "Most unpleasant sort, I can't believe what she does around here."

"Explain please?"

"Well...just look at her out there." He flitted a finger towards the field. "Rolling around in the mud like a pig. Her odor is so offensive at the end of the day that I can not bare to be within 50 foot of her."

Rhapsody turned and followed his finger to see a woman wrestling with a goat. She dropped her head and head butted the large animal. They continued to do this and chase each other across the field until Salvatore yelled for her.

"YOUUUU WHOOO! Piglet! I am in need of your assistance."

Rhapsody watched as the woman came towards them at a slow jog with the goat following behind her. She stopped to stand in front of the short man and give him a look that could shrivel vegetation.

"Huh?" She asked in a deep guttural voice.

"Always the talkative one". He backed up from her and pointed to the container. "Could you be so kind as to retrieve Lady Beaumont's pump from that god awful smelling container?" He wiggled his hand at the end of a boneless wrist. Rhapsody took in the tall woman's appearance and shivered. She wore a filthy denim work shirt with the sleeves rolled to mid forearm, a pair of worn black leather chaps over what was at one time a pair of Levis. The material so old and worn they were threadbare and clearly showed the red underwear she wore beneath them. She stepped to the side when the other woman came towards her, at the sound of mumbling she tilted her head to the side trying to pick up what the woman said.

"She's more or a less an animal, even sleeps with her horse!" Salvatore shivered and rubbed his arms in disgust.

Rhapsody cocked an eyebrow at the woman. "Really, that is so uncivilized." She flinched when the container was tipped towards where she was standing and then relaxed when it was put up right.

"Shoe."

"Yes, thank you..."

Salvatore mumbled to her. "I just call her piglet, it fits her." He jumped back at the growl that came from the woman.

"Thank you, I'm most appreciative for your help." She put out her hand for her shoe and flinched as ice blue eyes locked with hers, she could do nothing but stare into them and try to remember to breath.

"Welcome." The tall woman put the filthy pump in her hand then returned to the field to play with the goat. Rhapsody looked down at her pump and paled, trying to shake the manure from it she almost flung it back into the container.

"Please Lady Beaumont; let me take care of that for you." He turned to the field and yelled for the woman again. Rhapsody cringed when a loud horrible noise came from the field and the woman came stomping towards them. On instinct a lone, she moved to stand behind her car and out of the woman's way.

"Will you clean Lady Beaumont's pump for her, and be careful that is Italian leather not your Wal-Mart pleather. He deposited the pump into a large long fingered hand then took Rhapsody by her arm and escorted her to his office.

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"Please have a seat Lady Beaumont." Wiping the seat of a leather chair off he helped her to sit

before starting his espresso machine. "I wish I was able to fire Piglet and hire someone who has a more pleasant demeanor."

"Fire her. Why work with someone that you are not pleased with?"

"I wish I could but the contract that your dear departed brother Roger had put in place, forbids me or anyone from discharging that...animal." He sighed and wiped his forehead. "She does her work, but I have yet to hear a complete sentence come from her mouth. She growls and mumbles every time she sees me or I ask her to do something."

Green eyes studied the man before her, she knew that he was not the type to be working in a barn and wondered how he knew her deceased brother.

"Can I ask you how you knew Roger?"

"Sir Roger, a delightful young man. I was his hairdresser and confidant for years." He leaned forward over his desk and blinked brown eyes surrounded by ebony lined lids. "I was truly saddened when I learned of Sir Roger's demise. Is it true that they could not recover his body, but had to bury cement and all?"

"Yes, my mother still believes that a cement truck over turned and filled his car. She will hear nothing of bookies, Mafioso's or loan sharks." She ran her fingers through her short blond hair and sighed. "Roger was always her baby boy who could do no wrong. Anyway, how is it that you came to be here?"

"I was called by his lawyer and told that I was to be the manager for the length of my life." He giggled and waved a hand at her. "After I saw the place I was tempted to commit suicide to get out of it. I was further shocked to hear that Roger had a sister and that she was to be the new owner of the racing stables."

"Now you know how I feel. Can I look at the records of the horses?"

"Oohh yes, please excuse me for my absent mind, I abhor being here."

While Salvatore looked for the records, Rhapsody looked at her surroundings. She could not believe that he had an oriental rug on the concrete floor along with an expensive princess desk. The walls had oil paintings of lighthouses and orchids hanging on them. On a shelf below, the window was a huge floral arrangement.

"Here they are, I have to admit I have not even looked at them. I am a hairdresser not an accountant or horse trainer."

"Then who takes care of all this stuff?" She asked as she flipped through the dark green leather bound book.

"I assume that Sir Roger's other partner does it, though I have yet to meet this person. I believe

that his silent partner is in Australia or New Zealand."

"Most likely yes, I had heard that he was purchasing many of his horses from over seas." Flipping to a page that had all the listings of purchases for grain and other miscellaneous items she noticed a signature at each entry. "Who is this Ray Rawlings?"

Salvatore placed a cup of espresso in front of her and sighed.

"That, I believe is Piglet. She signs for all the stuff that comes here." He turned when the door to his office opened and showed a set of ice blue eyes drilling into him. "It is about time, I could have walked to Italy to get the Lady a new pair." He ducked when the pump came flying towards his head and was further surprised when a small hand grabbed it from mid flight.

The tall woman bared her teeth and growled "Tinkerbelle!"

"Amazonian bitch!" He huffed when the door slammed. "She is so...manly!"

Rhapsody did every thing she could not to snicker at what had just happened. Taking a deep breathe she looked up to see him wiping his brow.

"If you don't mind, I will take this with me to look it over."

"No, no that is just fine. Where will you be staying?"

"At my brother's house in the heights."

"You will truly enjoy his home, I did all the decorating myself."

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"Piglet, Amazonian bitch, animal and all the other names that fairy has called me in the last month and now! NOW! I have to put up with Lady Rhapsody Beaumont ON TOP OF Queen for a day!" She brought the soft finishing brush down her horses shoulder. "What am I supposed to do Katy?" Her mare snorted and laid her head on her shoulder. "A lot of help you are." Leaning against her chestnut Paso Fino, she pulled a peppermint from her pocket and fed it to her. "I hope Roger is being hung upside down by his nuts over an open flame." Finishing up grooming her mare, she closed the stall gate and watched as the small blonde aristocrat got into her Mercedes. A wicked grin came to her face, she was so glad that she would be long gone before Lady Rhapsody found the present in the trunk of her car. As the silver car pulled away, she waved and mumbled. "Y'all come back now ya hear."

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Rhapsody walked into what was now her home; she looked around and groaned at the blatant homosexual atmosphere that Salvatore had transformed the house in to.

"This trashy stuff has got to go!" She covered her eyes and sighed when she saw that the carpeting was a pale pink. "Damn Roger, how could you live like this? Being gay is one thing but screaming it is another. Wonder what mother would think of you now?" She chuckled at the thought of her mother fainting away.

Changing out of her silk suit, she pulled her brother's silk robe around her and couldn't help but snort. The sleeves and collar had fake fur on them in a darker pink than the robe. "I swear if I find dresses in your wardrobe I will scream." Dropping down onto the flower patterned couch with the book from Salvatore, a legal pad, pen and calculator; she was all set for hours of playing with what she hoped was not a cooked book. Then again, the IRS and all the others who had investigated her brother had not found anything wrong with his racing stable. She could probably thank his silent partner for that, who ever this person was they were probably the only legal dealings her late brother had.

"And they call me the black sheep. Hah!" Remembering back to the arguments she had with her parents when they refused to listen to her reasons for going to college to study journalism.

Mrs. Beaumont waved a dainty hand at her daughter and tsked. Her green eyes rolling every time Rhapsody tried to say a word.

"Mother, I want to write novels and poetry. Not get married to some egotistical man who only wants me for an ornament on his arm."

"Rhapsody my dear child, you are a Lady and heir to the Beaumont fortune. You do not need to work or go to college; your public standing is enough for you. So stop trying to convince me of your need for college."

The discussion ended with a small blond storming from the family estate with the sound of peeling tires. She disobeyed her parent's wishes and enrolled in the nearby college in Boston. Now four years later with three novels all written under a pen name under her belt, she's stuck in West Virginia as part owner of a racing stable and sitting in a house that looked like Liberace threw up in.

Hours later, her green eyes bloodshot from going over every single entry she was happy to see that nothing looked illegal. Dropping all her stuff onto the floor, she stretched out on the couch and sighed in relief.

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Ice blue eyes watched as the cards flipped over on the slot machine, a huge grin crossed her lips when music played and lights flashed.

"Hot damn!" Scooping the quarters from the tray, she dumped them in to the large cup and left the casino part of the racetrack. Shaking the cup a few times, she counted the quarters. "Got enough for some C-Milk and cookies." Taking the short cut through barn area, she came to the high chain link gate that separated the track property from the Charlestown its self. Climbing

over the gate she jogged the short distance to Sheetz, she was in here at least twice a day to get her junk food. Every one knew what she was getting so she dropped the money on the counter and went back to get her chocolate milk and sugar cookies. Showing the clerk what she had before she went out the door, she received a wave to proceed.

Back in the barn area, she went to the room next to Salvatore's office and unlocked the huge master lock that kept unwanted visitors and thieves from getting in to her room. Flipping the light on, she placed her stuff on the small round table and dropped down on her small cot. She had some of the creature comforts along with some things that know one would believe she would have. Leaning over the cot, she slid a wooden trunk from under it, opened the lid, and pulled out an old hardback copy of *Charles Dickens David Copperfield*. Laying back against her pillows she opened to the last part she had read and continued. One chapter later, she was sound asleep with the book hanging from one hand over the edge of the cot. She jumped awake with the loud slap of it hitting the floor. Stretching she rolled from her cot, striped her clothes off and dropped them into a large muck basket in the corner. Opening the small door that no one knew was even in the room, she walked into her small bathroom and turned the shower on. Twenty minutes later with the water turning cold, she stepped from the shower and shivered.

"Dipshit, you forgot to turn the heater on."

Dropping onto her cot, she pulled her quilts up over her and fell asleep the second her head touched the pillow.

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Rhapsody looked around her brothers bedroom, flipped the lights back off and went to the couch in the living room. "I can not sleep in a canopy bed with bug drapes hanging all around it." Taking a throw blanket off the back of the couch she pulled it around her shoulders and dropped onto the couch. Rolling on to her side she looked across the room and out the French doors to the back yard that had a few trees planted around a fountain with a statue of the Goddess Aphrodite standing a top it. "So far that's the only thing I like out of all the statues you have here Roger. To put it bluntly, your tastes and Salvatores for that matter sucks." She chuckled to her self before she drifted off to sleep. She dreamt of her brother and Salvatore skipping hand in hand down the shed rows in drag, what was disturbing to her was that Roger wore her senior prom dress and looked better in it than she did at the time. When the sun came through the doors and shone in her face, she pulled the blanket over her head and groaned. "Not yet, another hour." She tried to drift back to sleep but a lisping voice had her up and standing with her hand clutching her heart.

"Who the hell are you?" She rasped out at the young man standing at the end of the couch.

"Well, excuse me but I live here." He planted a manicured hand on his hip and looked at her like she was a homeless person. "I suggest that you take off my lovers robe and get out before I call the police and have you hauled away."

Rhapsody leaned her head back then sunk on to the couch. "I'm Rhapsody Beaumont, Rogers's sister. Now who are you?"

She looked at the extremely feminine man before her and felt her insides roll. She hated men who acted so damn wimpy. Seeing that his make-up was applied to perfection and was dressed in the latest fashion just made it worse. Now she knew why the place looked like a drag queen resort.

"My Roger didn't have a sister. So get out before I call 911."

"Hold on a minute now, do you have Salvatore's phone number?"

"Sally? Yes I do, why?" He tossed his shoulder length dyed blonde hair over his shoulder as he tilted his head.

"Salvatore will tell you who I am. Now if you will excuse me, I am going to get dressed."

"Good, because pink is definitely not your color." Huffing and flitting around the room, he checked to make sure that she had not stolen anything. "Trashy looking thing, with her hair all butch." He sat carefully in a queen Ann chair and crossed his legs before picking up the gold tone phone. After it had rang four times, He said hello.

"Sally, this most atrocious looking woman is here in my house."

"Piglets there? What is she doing there?"

"No, no. It's a small blond claiming to be Roger's sister. She looks horrid in pink, would you believe that she had the audacity to wear his pink silk robe! You know that one I bought him for Christmas. I know I'm rambling but I just so upset with finding a strange woman in my abode."

"Larry, that is Roger's sister Lady Rhapsody Beaumont and she owns the house now. I told you he put every thing in her name. Maybe you can work a deal out with her?"

"I just don't know Sally, I mean I love my privacy and I can not stand to have someone dirtying up the place." He sighs and plays with the ends of his hair. "I will talk to her and see what we can come up with. Toddles." Hanging up the phone, he huffs as he sees that the blanket is laying half way off the couch. "She is probably one of those uncouth, sloppy biker dykes that drinks beer and smokes cigars, or worse chews tobacco!" He falls back on the couch and whimpers. His jaw hit the floor when Rhapsody walked into the room wearing an eggshell colored silk blouse, grey pleated trousers and matching ankle boots. She was fastening a string of pearls around her neck as she stopped before a large gold leaf mirror that hung above an antique phone table.

"Did you by chance get a hold of Salvatore?" She swung around to pin him with her emerald green eyes.

"My apologies Lady Beaumont. Roger never mentioned you." He stood and offered his hand. "I am Lawrence Tompkins, I am very pleased to meet you."

She took his offered hand and cringed inside at the fish like feel of his handshake. "It seems to me that we have a predicament here. Is this your sole residence?" She took a seat on the couch and folded the blanket that she had left.

"Yes it is, which I would like to speak to you about."

Cocking an eyebrow at him, she nodded her head. "Proceed please."

"Would it be at all possible to remain here and be your house mate? I know we do not know each other but with time I believe we could become good friends."

Her expression was pensive, running a hand through her hair she angled her head and smirked. "One condition."

"Anything Lady Beaumont." His face took on a pleading look.

"I redecorate this place to my tastes and if I have company over. You do not wear a dress. And refer to me as Rhapsody, my mother is Lady Beaumont not me."

He fell to his knees at her feet and clasped her hands. "You are an angel. I will take care of all the house chores, cooking, laundry and anything else you need done."

"It's a deal then. Do you know of a trustworthy dry cleaner?"

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Ray tacked up one of the two year old filly's and led her from her stall, grabbing her mane she swung up into the exercise saddle and headed her towards the track. She had walked all the others on the walking machine and had six to gallop and one to take out of the gate so it could get its gate card. When she was finished with the last horse, she would muck the stalls, feed and then wait around for the races to start. She had entered one of her favorite mares in a \$5,000.00 stake race, she knew it would be an easy win for her. She normally ran seven furlongs but this was a four and half and the track was in perfect condition for the mare. She loved a sloppy track and would kick ass tonight.

She eased the filly in to a slow trot up the hill to the entrance to the track, as she got closer she posted faster to get the filly to pick up her pace, once she was on the stretch she nudged her into a slow gallop. Keeping to the outside so as not to be in the way of the other gallopers who were going faster or breezing. This particular filly had a problem of pulling her head to the outside, so to try and correct the problem Ray had been using a button bit on her. Most people would forgo the special bit and use a riding crop on the horses face to get it to bring its head back around. She would love to use the crop on them for beating the horse, too many good horses were head shy or blind in one eye because of it. Leaning forward a bit she whispered into the filly's ear and watched as her ears twitched at her voice. Easing up on the reins, she gave the filly her head and

let her stretch out on the back turn. Standing up in the irons, she felt the smooth beat of hooves.

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Rhapsody pulled her car in to the parking lot near the front doors of the racetrack, getting out she surveyed the area looking for someone who could give her directions to the racing secretary's office. Finding no one about, she went through the doors and followed the hallway until she came to a glass enclosed area that over looked the track. She stood close to the large window and watched the gallopers put the horses through their training. She was about to turn around and leave when she saw a solid black horse prancing on the track. It reared up and tossed its head then crow hopped until the rider patted its shoulder. Rhapsody continued to watch with amazement when the rider took the horse into the starting gates. In a flash the horse broke the gates and took off down the track, the entire time the rider was low over its neck and didn't seem to be doing anything but holding on. When they came to the last corner the rider reached back with there hand and tapped its flank. The horse completely stretched out and barreled down to the finish line.

Rhapsody felt her heart slamming into her chest, she had never seen anything like it. Now she could understand what people saw in horseracing. As she watched the rider bring the horse back around, she almost fell over when the person removed their helmet. Long dark hair flowed from under it to fall down their back.

"My Gods, that's pig...Ray!" She continued to watch her until she was out of sight. Dropping down in to one of the seats, she took a deep breathe.

After wondering around, she found the secretary's office and had all the paper work changed over to her name, she applied for an owner's license and had her picture taken for her badge. Her last stop was for her parking hangtag so that she would be able to park in the owner's lot. She never imagined that there was so much to being an owner. She would have to do something that she dreaded and that was to talk to Ray and find out exactly what she had to do when it came to the horses racing. On the way out the door she picked up a racing schedule for that night, looking through it she saw that her stable had a horse in that night.

"Just great! I'm here for not even a day and I find out I have a horse in!" Fear ran through her veins at the thought of having to be near a huge animal. The nearest she had been to a horse was a Shetland pony when she was ten. That was a horrible experience, the little thing kicked her in her ass.

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Ray was finishing up with the feedings when Rhapsody stepped in to the shed row. Cocking her left eyebrow over an ice blue eye, she took in the designer clothes and snorted. Leaning against the large plastic feeding bin on wheels, she waited for the small blonde to approach her.

"I need to ask some questions about the race tonight, I have no idea what so ever of what I am to do."

"And?"

Rhapsody came to stand a mere two foot from the tall dark woman, her eyes trying not to look at the flannel shirt that was opened halfway down and showing a sports bra. "Can you tell me?"

"Maybe."

Green eyes blazed at the single words that kept coming from Ray's mouth. Her fists clenched so hard that her nails were biting into her palms. Clenching her jaws, she ground out her next words.

"You are the most maddening person! Just tell me what I need to know and I will be on my way."

Ray made a chirping noise and watched as her mare's head came to the doorway behind Rhapsody. An evil grin came across her face when she saw her horse get closer to the little blonde's neck. In an instant Rhapsody was jumping forward, bouncing off her chest and wiping at her neck.

"What in the hell!?" She wiped at her neck and brought her hand away covered in slimy grain. She then turned around to see the mare with her upper lip flapping and grain falling from her mouth. She turned to glare at Ray. "I know you had him do that!"

"Her."

Rhapsody threw her arms in the air and yelled. She stomped around with her hands on her hips and tossed evil glares at Ray.

"7pm."

Ray chuckled as the little blond stomped away mumbling curses under her breath. Caressing her mare's nose, she praised her for her good deed.

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Rhapsody slammed the front door and continued to rant and rave all the way through the house. She walked in to the kitchen to find Larry cooking supper. He took one look at her angry red face and held up two fingers in the form of a cross.

"I have holy water!" He warned. "Eeeww what has happened to your blouse?"

"My employee had her horse spit on me!"

"You mean that scrumptious Ray did that?"

"Scrumptious my ass! She's an animal, uncouth, nonverbal and an all around pain in my ASS!" She dropped down on to a stool in front of the wrap around bar. She watched Larry slicing vegetables at the butcher block. "I asked her for help and all I could get were one word sentences out of her."

"Listen Rhapsody, you have to earn her trust. She's a very complicated woman, not to mention beautiful." He chuckled. "If I wasn't gay, I would be all over her."

"I would like to be all over her with a baseball bat! All she said about tonight was to be there at 7pm. What am I supposed to wear?"

Larry rolled his eyes at her. "My dear woman, you are an owner of one of the leading stables. You must dress the part. Do you have any Chanel?"

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Rhapsody rolled to a stop right at 7pm, looking around she saw Ray standing near a stall with her back to her. Getting out of her car, she slowly walked up to stand at the edge of the shed row wall.

"It's 7pm and I'm here. Now what?"

A dark head turned in her direction, her breath caught at the silvery blue eyes pinning her to the spot. She moved to the side and then saw that it was the reflection of the lights, which gave Ray's eyes such an eerie glow.

"Last call, we go."

"Not this again." She mumbled to her self. "Listen, I know you don't like me. I have no idea why since we just met yesterday." She placed her hands on top of her head, brought them down across her face and sighed. "Can we start over?" When she received no answer, she stepped forward with her hand out. "Hi I'm Rhapsody." She cringed a little when Ray stuck out her hand and grasped hers in a strong handshake. Her hand felt like it was on fire but couldn't let go for the intense blue eyes watching her.

"Ray." She released Rhapsody's hand and grinned when green eyes rolled at her. She tilted her head to the side and heard the announcement for last call for the eighth race. "It's time, let's go."

"My Gods! You said four whole words!"

Rhapsody stepped back when Ray led the mare from her stall. She had not one clue as to what she was supposed to be doing so she stood and waited for Ray to say something. Watching as the tall woman walked away with the mare she shrugged her shoulders and followed. When they left the shed row area, she had to jog to keep up which was impossible in her pumps. Ray looked back over her shoulder and snorted at the woman struggling to keep up. She let go of the led rope and walked to where Rhapsody had stopped to catch her breath. Dropping down to one knee, she

placed one hand on Rhapsody's hip to stabilize her and lifted her foot up to remove her pump.

"Hey! What are you doing? I need my shoes!"

"Not." She took her by the hand and half dragged her to the mare.

Rhapsody's face turned a bright red, she had never been handled like this before and didn't like it one bit. She sped up her pace to keep up and was half-tempted to plant a foot in Ray's ass. She looked to see the mare a good distance ahead of them and became worried.

"Ray, the horse!"

"Yep."

She lifted her other hand and jabbed Ray in her ribs. "Next time you give me a one word answer, I'll jab you harder!"

"Kay." Ray chuckled when Rhapsody did exactly as she said.

Rhapsody looked around and noticed every one looking at them. "This is so embarrassing!" She thought to her self. They made it down into the paddock area and Ray took her by the shoulders and placed her against the wall where the horse was all ready standing.

"Don't move."

"At least you didn't say 'Stay.' Like you would a dog." She gave Ray an evil look. Ray just grinned at her, then pulled the mare from the stall. She watched as Ray with the help of a member of the paddock crew saddled the mare and then threw the jockey up. She was at a loss of what to do until a large warm hand took hers and pulled her up to walk next to her.

When they came to the gate to the track, Ray let the mare go then watched as the jockey took her at a slow walk while he adjusted the girth. She turned to look down into green eyes and grinned.

"You bet?"

"What on the horses? I've never seen a horserace before let alone bet on one."

"Come on."

She replaced her shoes, when she was finished Ray took her small hand, and then thread them through the crowd to the betting windows. Pulling four twenty's from her pocket she spoke to the cashier behind the window and then handed Rhapsody three tickets. She then pulled one from her shirt pocket and handed it to her.

"This is for this race." She looked at the ones in her hand and noticed that now she had two tickets to win on the three horse. "Who owns the three horse?"

"I do." She gave her a cocky smile then led her over to the wall that lined the track. They watched as the horses were put in to the gates and waited for the gates to open. Over the loud speaker, at the moment the horses came out they heard the announcer say. "AND THEY'RE OFF!" He continued to call the race. At the last turn, Ray leaned forward and watched as Rhapsody did the same.

"And coming around the last turn is Turner Over out by five lengths, in second is Trace of Glory with Home made bourbon closing in."

Rhapsody recognized the horse crossing the finish line and then seen that the saddle towel had a number three on it. Looking down at the tickets in her hand, she saw that she now held two win tickets. A huge smile came to her face and she jumped up and down.

"We won we won!" She grabbed Ray around her neck and gave her a hug. She froze when she realized what she was doing, slowly letting go she looked up into smiling blue eyes.

"Sorry."

"S'kay."

"Now what?"

Ray rubbed her jaw. Looking down into questioning green eyes, she took a deep breath.

"Ok, remember the betting windows? Go back over there and hand the cashier our tickets. I'll meet you right here when you're done."

Wide green eyes looked up in to blue with pure shock, she grabbed her chest and gasped. "You do speak!" She cocked an eyebrow. "And with a Kiwi accent."

"Yeah and?" Ray received a jab in her ribs. All she could do was laugh as she went to get her mare.

"First we have our win picture to take." She cast back over her shoulder. Ray waited for the jockey to bring the horse back around, taking the bridle she pulled the horse in to the win circle and then motioned for Rhapsody to stand beside her.

"But I look like I was rolling in the mud!" She looked down at her muddy feet and saw the splatters of mud all over her channel suit.

"So."

Taking her place next to the groom Rhapsody forced a smile, this would be one of the worse pictures of her to ever to enter in to eternity. Her covered in mud, next to an equally dirty groom and horse.

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Rhapsody almost fell over when the cashier kept counting out fifties into her hand. Ray had picked all three winners. With two of the horses going off at such high odds, they collected more than three thousand dollars. She still had a huge grin on her face when she found Ray waiting for her at the gate to the track, she handed Ray her share and held on to hers until Ray snatched it from her hand.

"Hey! What are you doing?" She asked while trying to take the money back.

"Hold up there Princess, ever been mugged?"

"No. Is that what you just did?"

"No, I won't but someone out there will." She nodded her head towards the racetrack patrons. Shoving the bills into her pocket, she took Rhapsody's hand and led her from the track.

"We have to go to the test barn."

"Test barn? What's that and why?"

"All winners go to the test barn for a piss test, they check it for illegal drugs and if the horse pops positive then the horse is banned from racing for 90 days, we get fined and possible lose our licenses to race another horse in West Virginia from 1 year to life."

Worried green eyes looked up at her strong profile. "We don't have anything to worry about do we?"

"Nope."

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Rhapsody sat on a bucket next to Ray and watched as people walked their horses inside the test barn, then she watched Ray's mare walk by all by herself.

"Does your mare even need you?"

"Nope." She grinned.

On the next round, Turner went into the stall and not three seconds later a man went in carrying a plastic cup on the end of a pole. He was in there for two seconds and came back out.

"You're set Ray. See ya later"

"Uuhhmm Ray?" Rhapsody asked as she watched the man leave.

"She pissed in the cup."

"Ohh."

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Once Ray had cleaned up her mare, she walked up to Rhapsody and handed her the money from the race.

"Here ya go."

"Thanks. Do you always buy tickets for complete strangers and win this much?"

"Nope and sometimes."

Rhapsody placed her hand on Ray's upper arm and gave it a small squeeze. "Thank you for everything, I will see you tomorrow."

Ray watched her get in to her car and drive away. "Have to do something about the way you dress Princess." Turning off the lights, she went to her room.

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It was past 11pm when Rhapsody pulled in to the driveway, she could barley keep her eyes open on the ride home and wondered if Ray made it home OK. She surprised herself by thinking of the silent stoic woman. "Face it Rhap, she's not that bad. Just a little standoffish. Staggering to the front door, she was shocked when it was pulled open to reveal Larry standing there.

"God lord Rhapsody, what have you been doing tonight?" He took in her mud-splattered attire. "Tell me you didn't get mugged while at the track."

"No I was not mugged, I got this way by going with Ray up for the race. She pulled out the wad of bills and showed him. "We won a lot of money tonight and I had my first win picture taken."

"She had you go with her up on the track?" His head fell back, a low groan escaped his parted lips then turned to a laugh.

"What is so funny?" She asked while taking off her pumps.

"She got you good, owners do not run horses to the paddock like some lowly groom. You are of the elite owners, you have a box up stairs with your very own name on it."

Green eyes caught fire, she couldn't believe that Ray had made her run a horse like a groom. Then again, Ray owned Turner Over and she ran her own horse, besides she had asked what she was supposed to do at the races. Granted it was not what the others did but she had learned a lot

in a few hours.

"Ohh well, it was a learning experience."

"I'll say. With you wearing designer clothes to run horses in, you will make the dry cleaner a millionaire!"

"I guess I should get some work clothes."

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Ray was sitting on a bale of hay watching the two-year-old filly's playing on the walker. There was nothing more beautiful than the power of a sleek horse as it moved, muscles bunching under gleaming hair, the snorting of warm air as it became fog once past the flared nostrils, the toss of a regal head then a whining cry when it's hooves cleared the ground. A bright smile came to both her lips and eyes. As she remembered watching, the horses run wild in her home country of New Zealand, free to roam wherever they wanted and to live out their lives with out the hindrance of mankind. She couldn't wait to go back home, sit beneath the stars on a cloudless night, and just take it all in. She sat in her daydream world never seeing the small blonde standing a distance away watching her.

Rhapsody leaned against the wall of the shed row and watched Ray drift off with a smile on her face. She studied the strong profile, noting the straight nose and high cheekbones, how her loose dark hair cascaded over her shoulders to lay in disarray down her back. Her fingers working a piece of binders twine back and forth, causing her forearm muscles to twitch. Without thought of what she was doing, Rhapsody walked slowly towards her and placed a hand on her shoulder. In the blink of an eye, she was on her back, a booted foot in the center of her chest and looking into steely blue eyes.

"Could you just have said good morning?"

"Mornin."

"Cute. Can I get up now or am I at your mercy for the remainder of the day?"

"Think about it."

Rhapsody let out a howl of frustration, she flung her hands back and lay on the ground unmoving."

Ray removed her foot and leaned down to look into Rhapsody's fiery eyes. "Wanna know what you're laying in?" Her left eyebrow wiggled and a lopsided grin broke across her face.

"Please don't tell me."

"Kay, won't. Ain't nice anyway."

"Would you help me up at least?"

"Yep."

Ray reached down, grabbed the front of Rhapsody's denim shirt, and yanked her to her feet. Glancing sideways, she looked at the ground and grinned. Rhapsody closed her eyes and turned her head, opening one eye she took a peek at where she was lying. Seeing nothing, she opened the other eye.

"There's nothing there!" She took a swing and smacked Ray in her shoulder.

Chuckling Ray snorted. "Coulda been." Getting up from her makeshift seat she gave Rhapsody the once over. "Whatcha here for?"

"I want to learn the business, what you do everyday." She slapped her in the stomach. "That's for telling me last night that owners run their horses to the paddock."

"Damn Fairy Larry." She shrugged her shoulders at her. "It was fun."

"Yeah for you!" She stepped right up to her and looked up in to amused eyes. Seeing me try to walk in mud with pumps on."

"Yep. You want to learn, OK." She grabbed a stall fork and handed it to her. "Start mucking."

"What?!"

"The stalls, they need cleaned. You can start with the one right behind you."

Ray jumped up on the low wall and watched Rhapsody muck the stall. She was enjoying herself so much that she decided that it would be a good time for a nap. Stretching out on the wall, she crossed her arms behind her head and drifted off. Rhapsody wiped the tendril of sweat from her temple, leaning on the fork she groaned at the stiffness in her shoulders and lower back.

"I haven't even done one stall and I'm dying. How does she do sixteen of them a day?" She looked over her shoulder to see Ray laying on the wall. "Ohhh I don't believe her." Dropping the fork, she walked around the wall to the opposite side, stepping on a bucket she looked down into the peaceful face. A wicked grin broke across her face. In one quick shove, she pushed Ray off the wall. Crawling up on the wall to look over was a big mistake, a large hand grabbed her shirt and pulled her over. Two bodies wrestled in the shed row, kicking up dust enough to choke them. Ray had a hold of Rhapsody, rolling her body over, she thought she had the little blond pinned, until she felt herself being flipped over and a small blonde falling across her chest. Bucking her hips up she tossed Rhapsody to the side, wrapping her legs around her waist in a scissor lock she held her down for all of two seconds. She was amazed at the strength of the small woman, who was getting to her hands and knees with her over her back. Wrapping one arm under her chest, she used the other to try and knock her elbow free so that she would fall. All she got for her

efforts was a set of teeth in her forearm.

"Piglet! What in the name of the good lord are you doing and with who?" Salvatore stopped in front of the struggling human pile. "I can't leave you for two seconds with out you beating some one up, get off that poor creature or I'll turn the hose on you, not like you don't need a good bath anyway." At the sound of a deep growl, he jumped back and clasped his hand over his heart. "You are the most animalistic thing I know of." He tilted his head when he heard laughing. "Oh is it funny? I don't think your victim thinks so." The next thing he knew both of them were laughing hysterically, snorting sounds were heard and then squeals as Ray bit the person below her in the shoulder.

"Paybacks." She got to her feet then helped Rhapsody to hers. They couldn't help but start laughing all over again at the look on Salvatore's face.

"Lady Beaumont! My lord what has she done to you?" He stepped towards her but stopped when she held up her hand.

"Nothing that I didn't do to her first."

"Excuse me?"

"She was sleeping on the wall and I pushed her off."

His dark eyes widened. "You were sleeping? Well, you just lost a days pay. Let me take you to get cleaned up" He went to take Rhapsody's arm but she stepped back.

"No. It's OK I have stalls to clean and Ray will get paid today."

"Stalls to clean? But you are part owner, you don't clean stalls."

"Now I do. I'll come talk to you later in your office."

He turned and walked away from them mumbling under his breath.

Rhapsody looked down at herself and then to Ray. A crooked smile graced her face. "Damn that was fun." She took Ray by her hand and led her to the stall she had been cleaning. "Since you're part of the reason I didn't get this done, you can help me."

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A few hours later Ray and Rhapsody were sitting at the small racetrack kitchen eating grilled cheese sandwiches and soup. Rhapsody watched when a bleach blonde came up and put her hands on Ray's shoulders and leaned down to whisper in her ear. Silvery blue eyes narrowed, she shrugged the woman's hands from her shoulders and growled.

"Go away!"

"Come on Ray, I can show you a good time."

The woman jumped back when Ray stood from the table and turned to face her.

"No. Go away!"

Rhapsody looked between the two.

"Excuse me, is there a problem here?" She stepped between them and looked into the brown eyes of what she felt was a crazy person.

The blonde gave Rhapsody the once over. "Who are you, her new play toy?"

"I'm her boss RJ Beaumont. Who are you and what do you want?"

"Not a thing right now." She winked at Ray and walked out the door.

"Ray who was that?"

"A nightmare." She picked up the rest of her sandwich. "She wants me and my horse."

Rhapsody jogged after her as she went out the door, she caught up with her and walked beside her.

"Which horse?"

"My mare."

"You mean Turner Over, the one who won last night?"

"Nope. One that she can get a small fortune for if she gets her back."

"Gets her back? You have to fill me in here a bit."

"I had a yearling filly taken from her because she was abusing her. So for the last five years, she has been trying to get in my bed thinking that I'll give the mare back."

"She's got to be crazy, I mean...why would she think that she could get in your bed?"

Ray stopped, and turned to face her with a raised eyebrow.

"Princess, there's only one reason why she would think she could get in my bed."

Confusion washed across green eyes, one brow raised as she thought.

"I must have brain damage or something. Why?"

"Let's just say that men are safe from my advances."

Rhapsody stood there for a second as her mind turned over what Ray had just told her. Her mouth dropped open when it hit her.

"You're gay?" She whispered. She was answered with silence.

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"Well now every thing is ruined!" Ray said to herself after dropping down on to her bed. "You thought you had finally found a friend and now she's run for the hills because she thinks the same thing every other straight woman does. That you want to rip her clothes off." Pulling her dirty shirt over her head, she flung it against the door with as much force as she could. "Why are you so pissed off Ray? It's not like it hasn't happened before."

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Rhapsody went storming through the house looking for Larry. She checked every room until she came to the laundry room.

"Why didn't you tell me she was gay!" She yelled so loud that Larry covered his ears.

"Who?" He uncovered his ears slowly.

"Ray, she's gay, a lesbian, dyke, muffin diver etc..."

He leaned back against the washer. "And your point would be in this matter?"

She threw her hands in the air. "I was rolling around in the dirt with her and she's gay!"

"Calm down. Now if it had been me that you were rolling around in the dirt with would it matter?"

She gave him a funny look and shook her head no.

"Well, Rhapsody. It's no different with her either."

"But we are both women!"

"You think highly of yourself don't you? Just because she is a dyke, does not mean that she wants to go around and jump straight women. Just like, I won't jump a straight man."

"But I've touched her and she held my hand all last night and I'm..."

"A homophobic little putz?"

Her jaw dropped and her eyes widened at what Larry had called her. Placing her hands on her hips, she worked her mouth a few times but no words came forth.

"I'm...ahhh...homophobic putz." Her anger deflated, she dropped her head into her hands and sighed. "Great pair we make. You're a queen and I'm a homophobe."

He draped an arm around her shoulder and chuckled. "We're like the odd couple. Right Oscar?" He gave her a gentle squeeze. "Come on, lets talk over strawberry cheese cake. It always works for the Golden Girls."

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With two cheesecakes and a gallon of milk gone, Rhapsody leaned back in her chair and moaned. Patting her stomach made her flinch.

"That was very good, but now I feel sick." Closing her eyes, she took a deep breath and blew it out between parted lips. "How do I face her? I mean I tore out of there without a word."

"You'll think of something, Besides Ray is used to it. Stuff like this happens all the time to us."

"You mean people running away almost screaming? How do you handle it?"

"Not quite screaming, but they do have a way of not coming around anymore. After years, we develop a thick skin. It still hurts but not as bad as the first time."

"I've noticed something about you." She said while leaning on the tabletop.

"What? My clothes clash?"

"No. You're not as flaming as you were when we first met. Why is that?" She searched his eyes with her own and watched them sparkle.

"I use the flaming queen act to startle people. I'm not a manly man by any means, I am what I am and if I can't be accepted by other's, then they are not worth my tears." He leaned closer to Rhapsody. "What about you? I don't hear that Boston accent that your brother spoke with."

"That's easy, I took voice lessons to get rid of it. And now to hear my parents talk I cringe from the way they pronounce words." She gave him a wry grin. "I can play the act to you know, the aristocratic Princess."

She turned in that night, thinking of everything that Larry had said to her and of what had happened while she was with Ray. She still had no idea of how she was to face the tall woman the next day. She felt bad about the way she had just walked away leaving her standing there alone. After long minutes of flipping things around in her mind, she decided to do nothing for

now and just take a little time away from the track. She drifted off to sleep thinking of how stupid she really was at times.

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Weeks went by with Ray doing her normal job, she often turned while watching one of the horses being exercised, to see the small blonde sitting up behind the large glass windows of the owner's box. Her expressionless face watching for a few seconds before going back to the track. Even during the nights that she had a horse running, Rhapsody would not be in the same area. Not even when their horse would win did she make an appearance. It took her a while but she finally admitted to herself that she had lost a friend that day outside of the kitchen. Now Rhapsody fit in with all the other filthy rich owners who thought the hired merely peasants to be stepped upon. "What was three days of having someone to talk to?" She whispered to herself as she watched Rhapsody walk away from the window. "A lot considering you have no one else besides the horses to talk to."

Rhapsody stood back at a distance from the large window and watched the gallopers on the track. She came to the owners box every morning to watch the horses run, she talked to other owners and was learning the ins and out's of the business. One thing her title got her was undying kiss asses that would cough up information at the drop of a coquettish glance. She was beginning to see what dogs men really were. Not a morning went by that one of them would not hit on her or promise, to do just about anything for one night of 'rolling in the sack' as they rudely put it. The owner's box was like a singles bar, she heard the same old lines here as she did if she went out dancing. She would stop coming to the track but then she would miss seeing Ray work the horses. The tall woman had a way with the horses that no other rider did, never had Rhapsody seen her take a whip or crop to a horse. Nor punch the horse in the side of its head like she had seen one man do. With the young ones, she saw her whispering in to their ears before she would let them move from a walk to a trot and then a slow canter. What really hurt Rhapsody was that not one person ever approached Ray while she watched a horse being breezed or taken from the gates. She arrived alone and remained that way until she collected the horse and left. At times when Rhapsody would take the road that ran past the barns, she could see a tall dark figure sitting out in the grass reading a book while the barn goat would graze. She had found out that every barn had a goat. Some horses were called stall walkers or weavers and having a goat in the stall with them calmed them down. She now thought of the goats as being teddy bears for horses. From what she had witnessed over the weeks, she knew that Ray had no teddy bear in her life.

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Rhapsody decided to bite the bullet and approach Ray at the track, She had to do this for her own piece of mind, and It hurt her deeply to see Ray all alone every day and just maybe, she could change that. She waited at the side of the track near the test barn for when Ray would bring a horse up for it's morning exercise. She stood silently and waited, checking her watch she noticed that she had been waiting 45 minutes and Ray had not shown up yet. She would give her fifteen more minutes then she would walk down to the barn and see if she was there. She watched as numerous horses and riders went past and still no Ray. Going by way of the back of the barns, she headed towards barn thirteen and keeping an eye out for the tall groom. Stepping through the

breezeway, she looked both ways before making her way to the side where all her horses were stabled. She walked down the shed row and saw no one, all the horses were there along with the goat. Turning around she went to Salvatore's office, tried the knob and found it locked. Knocking she received no answer.

"Where is every one?" She rested her hands on her hips and dropped her head in thought. "Larry might know." Pulling her cell phone from her pocket, she called home and received no answer. "Damn. What, is there a party and I'm not invited?" Her shoulders drooped, feet dragged, hands beat in the air with each name she called herself. Sitting behind the wheel of her car, she dropped her head down to rest on the steering wheel. Tears filled her eyes, she had waited too long to approach Ray.

The sound of a car came to her ears, tilting her face to the side she saw a white Cadillac, pull near the barn. She watched as Salvatore got out and ran around to the other side and helped Ray out. Rhapsody got out of her car and went running up to Ray, tears trailed down her cheeks at the sight of the groom. Her white shirtfront was stained with blood. Her face was badly bruised and her nose covered by a metal splint with white tape holding it in place. She reached up to trail a finger across the swelling beneath one ice blue eye and flinched when Ray pulled her head away.

"Ray?" She questioned, her only answer was Ray walking past her to the office where she slammed the door closed and slid the lock closed. Turning to a pale faced Salvatore, she bore down on him where he had remained by his car.

"What happened to her?" Her green eyes flashing when he said nothing. "Sally, you tell me or for the love of God I'll break your nose!"

"Oohh OK, but if Ray finds out I told you, she will break more than my nose! Let us go to the kitchen and I will put my life in great danger by telling you her horrid little tale of pain."

He handed her a cup of coffee and took the chair across from her, wiping his forehead with his scarf he rolled his eyes and spoke for the first time since they left the barn.

"I was just coming out of my office when I saw Piglet out at one of the walking machines. I see her out there all the time but this time I was surprised to see one of the horses lying on the ground. The closer I got the more I saw and let me tell you it scared ten years off my life!" He raised his chin to her. "Do I have any grey in my beard?"

"Sally!"

"Ohh OK. Where was I? Oohh yes, I saw that the horse had its front leg up near its head. It had gotten its leg caught in the walker strap somehow and fallen over. Ray was hanging from the overhead bar trying to get the safety release to come undone. Before I could help her, the strap broke and it dropped her right over the horse's head. The horse jumped up, hit her in the face and threw her back against the walking machine stand. I grabbed the horse and put him in the nearest stall and went to help her." He fanned himself and took a deep shuttering breath. "She had blood pouring from her nose and bottom lip. You know how hard it was for me to get her to the

hospital?"

"She refused even though she was hurt?"

"Threw a fit! I told her that I was going to call you and have you take her. She gave me no fight after that."

"A small smile came to Rhapsody's face when she thought of the big bad groom cowering at the mention of her name. It disappeared when she realized that Ray would not want her to know she had been hurt. "Our insurance will cover her medical bills won't it?"

Sally laughed at her and waved his scarf in the air. "What insurance?"

"You are telling me that we carry no accident insurance?"

"Yes. Lady Rhapsody. Your brother was a nice enough man but he was a cheap son of a bitch!" He lowered his eyes to the table. "Sorry, it's just that I can make more money at my hair dressing profession in one week than I make here."

"Excuse me?"

"I only make five hundred dollars every two weeks, I work part time with Larry at his boutique to make up enough to survive on. And Ray makes four hundred a month."

"Ohh my Gods." She dropped her head on to the table, when she lifted her eyes to his, they were a stormy green. "What would you rather do, work here or hair dressing full time? I'll give you a pay raise if you stay-on."

"To be truthful Lady Rhapsody, my true love is hair dressing."

"OK. As of now, your contract with my asshole brother is null and void. Get a hold of Larry and tell him, I said if he doesn't put you on full time, I will redecorate his room in the most manly things I can find!" She gave him a full smile and gripped his hand. "Don't be a stranger, you know where I live."

"You are a Princess Rhapsody. Thank you." He gave her a tight hug then went skipping from the kitchen.

"Now for the hospital." She called the hospital and arranged for Ray's medical bills to be sent to her. She finished her coffee and headed back to the barn. When she tried the door to the office she found it unlocked, pushing it open she found it empty.

"Where have you gone Ray?" Finding a racing program on the table, she saw that they had a horse in the fourth race. "I'll see you at the fourth race whether you like it or not."

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The night had turned in to a torrential nightmare, rain slanted towards the ground, pounding it with so much force that it bounced back up. The lower area that was usually packed with spectators was empty but for one lone figure that stood at an angle to the rain. Rhapsody watched as Ray pulled her collar up close to her neck and hunched her shoulders.

"She's insane." She whispered to herself. "Or maybe it's the concussion she had to have gotten today." Leaning closer to the window, she waited until the last horse was put into the gates. Seconds later the horses burst forward and splashed their way down the track to the first turn, on the backstretch, she could see Turner Over taking the lead and another horse right beside her. As they came to the last, turn all she could see was mud flying and two huge dark blurs go down. The crowd started yelling as the other horses slipped and slid in the mud to try and avoid the two downed horses and riders. The outriders came from the far end to try and stop the now frantic horses. When the area was clear, she saw Ray jump the wall and take off running across the grass to where the horses were laying.

"Oohh NO!" She yelled as she fought her way through the people looking out the window, she ran down the steps and out in the rain. Jumping the wall, she ran after Ray to the shouts of the racetrack guards. When she reached Ray and their horse, she found her sitting in the mud with Turner's head in her lap, she was running her fingers across the mud-streaked head and whispering into her ear. Rhapsody knelt behind her and placed her hands on her shoulders, leaning over she saw that Turner's eyes were closed and her mouth hanging open. Tears came to her eyes, at the loss of the mare. She looked up when the ambulance came and carried away the jockey from the other horse. Their jockey came limping towards them favoring his right leg.

"I'm so sorry Ray." He dropped down beside Turner and ran a hand over her side. "It wasn't her fault, the other horse ran into us. I tried, but I couldn't keep her from going down."

Rhapsody watched as the small man broke down in to sobs, he gripped Ray's hand before he limped away. She could feel Ray's body start to shake against her, she wrapped her arms around her body trying to give her some comfort. Her heart was shattering into thousands of pieces as Ray broke down into sobs. They sat in the downpour covered in mud for what seemed hours until the State vet pulled the horse trailer up to them. Ray lifted her head from where it had been resting against the mares. She placed a kiss on the horse's head then got to her feet. Rhapsody held onto her arm to steady her, she didn't know what to do so she stood beside her groom and watched the vet and other men load Turner's body into the trailer. One of the men came over and handed Ray the bridle and blinkers before he walked back to the tractor that the trailer was hooked to.

"Come on Ray, let's go back to the barn."

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Ray leaned up against the wall near Turner's empty stall, her head dropped down to rest against the Dutch door as sobs wracked her body.

"Ray, let me drive you home." Rhapsody said between her own sobs.

"Can't."

"I can, now let me drive you, you're in no condition to drive yourself."

"I live here."

Rhapsody turned her to face her. "You live in the barn?" She reached up to wipe the muddy tears from the groom's face.

"Yeah. In the tack room."

Rhapsody followed Ray down the shed row to the door next to the office, she had never paid any attention to it before now. Watching as Ray pulled a key attached to a piece of twine from inside her shirt and opened the lock. When inside the small room, Rhapsody looked at the one wall that had an assortment of bridles hanging from pegs and racks with different saddles sitting on them. In one glance, she had taken in the entire room. At that moment she wished her brother was still alive so that she could give him a very painful death. Her father's dogs lived better than Ray did.

Ray sat on the edge of her bed and clutched Turner's bridle to her chest. Her head dropped as sobs tore through her. Rhapsody moved across the small room to sit close beside the groom, wrapping her arms around her, she pulled her against her chest and rocked her back and forth. She didn't know what else to do but try and give comfort. Looking at the small cot, Rhapsody eased them back so that she could lean against the wall. Long minutes went by with Ray sobbing into her chest and then finally she heard the deep breathes of sleep. Releasing her arms from around Ray, she crawled over her and tried to get off the bed without waking her. One strong arm wrapped around her waist and pulled her back against Ray's chest. Looking down she saw that Ray's eyes were still closed and she was still sleeping, try as she might she could not get the arm from around her waist. Giving up she lay down next to the groom and planned on leaving her to sleep when she let go of her. Those plans went out the window when exhaustion hit and she drifted off to sleep.

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Rhapsody rolled to her side her eyes peeked open in the darkened room. With the light from the bathroom door being open, she could see that she was alone. A strong smell came to her nose; she looked down to see that she still had her filthy cloths on along with her boots. She rolled off the bed and rubbed her face, she felt the grittiness of dirt scratch her skin.

"I feel so gross, I need to go home and get a shower." Looking around the room, she wondered where Ray was and how long she had been asleep. She felt her face burn with her memories. "My Gods! I slept with her." Panic set in then dissipated with the realization that she had been holding Ray when she fell asleep. "Just great, I wonder how Ray felt when she woke up to find me in her bed?"

Crossing the room, she noticed a pile of clothes with a clean towel; a note lay on top with her name written in bold script.

My shower is yours, clean clothes and towels for you.

Ray

"She even writes with single words." Picking up the clothes and towel, she went across the room to the small bathroom. Shedding her dirty clothes, she dropped them on the floor and stepped into the shower. She sighed as the hot water washed the dirt and grime from her body. Using Ray's suave shampoo and conditioner she washed her hair and then used her liquid body soap on the rest of her. When she stepped from the shower, she felt a little sleepy but a whole lot better than before. A low chuckle came from her when she pulled on Ray's Levis and flannel shirt. They were both two sizes to big, the only thing that fit were the tube socks. Walking to the door she saw a much bucket filled with dirty clothes, tossing hers in, she dragged it out the door and put it on the passenger seat of her car. She didn't know what Ray would think when she found all her clothes gone but she didn't much care. She didn't want to see the groom dragging the muck bucket across the road to the laundry mat. As she went around to the driver's side of her car she saw a dark shape out in the field, walking closer to the edge of the road that ran beside the barn, she could see a copper colored horse with flaxen mane and tail in the moonlight. Then another smaller shape jump on to its back. What she then saw took her breath away. Ray took the horse through the gliding moves; it looked like the horse was doing dance steps. She was further shocked when it rolled back on its haunches and hopped across the ground on its rear legs. Moving closer she was able to see that the horse wore no tack of any kind. Dropping back on to all four feet, Ray moved it into a four beat canter that made it look like a rocking horse. For an hour, she stood watching Ray under a full moon and felt her heart almost ready to burst. Her breath was taken away when Ray turned towards her and silvery blue eyes captured and held her in place. A clicking noise reached her ears and she watched as the horse went into an exaggerated high stepping slow trot and came to stand before her with its neck arched. The next instant the horse dropped in to a deep bow and stayed there until Ray slipped from its back.

"Sleep well?"

Rhapsody took a deep shuttering breath when Ray came before her. "Uuhhmm...yeah. Thanks for the clean clothes and letting me use your shower." She reached out and softly touched the nose of the horse. "What's his name?"

"Turner's little Katy."

She repeated the name, and then looked to a misty-eyed Ray. "Is this?"

"Turner's foal, yeah. And the mare that the bitch wants back." Ray patted the mare on her shoulder and told her to go play. Rhapsody watched the horse bolt away and go running across the field, kicking up her rear feet and bucking.

"She's beautiful, she's not a purebred TB is she?"

"No, Dad is a Paso Fino."

"That explains the way she moves." She looked up into the sad blue eyes; placing a hand on Ray's forearm; she asked if she was OK.

"Yeah, it's just hard to accept."

Rhapsody wrapped her arms around the groom's waist and gave her a comforting hug. "Are you hungry? I'm starving to death."

"Yeah, I am."

She stopped in her tracks and turned back to Ray. "What about your mare?"

"She'll go back in her stall when she's done playing."

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They walked to Denny's restaurant and found a booth in the back. When the waitress came over to them, she ignored Rhapsody and was all smiles for Ray. She leaned her hip against the table and beamed down at her with so much intensity that Rhapsody thought Ray's clothes were going to burst up in flames. Ray ordered her food then looked directly at Rhapsody.

"Have you decided yet?"

Rhapsody nodded her head; an evil glare came to her eyes as she glanced up at the waitress who was of yet to stop staring at Ray. A wicked grin broke out on her face and she winked at Ray. Ray had a bad feeling in the pit of her stomach; she didn't like the look on her bosses face and knew for some strange unexplainable reason that the small blonde was going to play mean.

"Let's see..." She closed the menu, leaned across the table and took Ray's larger hand in hers. "When we get home, I want you to slowly strip off your cloths, lay across the table in the breakfast nook and let me lick my desert off your belly."

Ray's eyebrows rose over startled blue eyes, almost reaching her hairline. A mischievous grin crossed her face, in a deep purring voice that sent tingles through Rhapsody's body.

"Hot fudge Sunday with strawberries?"

"And whipped cream."

They both stifled a laugh when the waitress spun around and glared at Rhapsody.

"What do you want?"

"Besides you keeping your eyes off my girlfriend, I'll have two grand slams and coffee." She snorted when the waitress huffed at her and stomped away. "Bitch." She mumbled under her breath then joined a laughing Ray. "I hate when people ignore me." The real reason was that she felt the little green monster rising up in her and had to do something or beat the hell out of the woman. She wiped the tears from her eyes and looked at a smiling Ray. "I hope that didn't bother you, you know the little scene I came up with."

"No, I was trying to figure out what kind of person comes up with something like that off the top of their head."

"An author." Rhapsody answered.

"Huh?"

"I'm an author, I write historical romances under a pen name." She wiggled her eyebrows. "I stole a scene from one of my books."

An eyebrow cocked over an amused blue eye. "A pen name, why?"

"Simple really, my parents don't like the idea of me working for a living and if they read some of the sex scenes I've written, they would have me locked up for the rest of my life and then some."

"So the book self destructs when the reader gets to that part of the story?"

Chuckling at the thought of her book engulfed in flames, she shook her head. "If that's the case, the readers are paying too much for so little of a book and I've wasted a lot of time on the plot." She looked up when a different waitress brought them their coffee. A smirk came over her face. "This is too funny!" She nodded her head towards where the former waitress was giving them cold looks.

"What's the title of one of them?"

"Savage Pride." She watched as Ray's mouth dropped open and her face turned a deep red. "What's wrong?" She gave her a concerned look.

"I...ahh...read that one."

A look of shock registered on Rhapsody's face. "You read historical romances?"

"Not usually...Sally...left it in the office." She dropped her head, when she looked back up into smiling green eye's, she had a bashful look on her face. "Lots of cold showers."

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After Rhapsody ate both meals and stole Ray's English muffin, they went back to the barn. Rhapsody gave Ray a hug then walked to her car.

"I'll see you in the morning. Before I forget, Sally won't be working here anymore. I gave him his wish and broke the contract he had with Roger." She gave Ray a wave then drove off leaving a smirking groom standing in the shadows.

"She's quite a faceted little thing."

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Rhapsody was wrapped around the pillow on her bed, she groaned when she felt the covers yanked off of her body.

"I have a bone to pick with you girlfriend!" Larry barked in his all out Queen way. "I can't believe what you did to Sally!"

One green eye opened to a slit, her voice still rough with sleep.

"What about Sally?"

He dropped down on the bed beside her and kissed her cheek. "I want to thank you from the bottom of my frilly little heart. With Sally working full time with me, I have more free time."

Rhapsody rolled over to give him a smile. "You're welcome, he wasn't happy at the track so I did the right thing."

"You have a heart of gold little Princess." He kissed her cheek again. "And I was going to do some laundry and I found something very strange in the washer." He held up a pair of men's BVDs. "Do you have a man hidden in here somewhere and if so is he buff?"

She chuckled at the way he was looking around the room. "No, those are Rays."

"Rays? What are you doing with Rays drawers? And what is Ray wearing right now?"

"I stole her dirty clothes last night. And I don't want to think of her running around with no underwear on."

Larry rolled off the bed and noticed the Levis on the floor; he picked them up and held them in front of himself. "These have got to be hers." He gave Rhapsody a crooked smirk. "You stole her clothes and now you're wearing them to?"

"Let me explain."

She went on to tell him all of what happened the night before, including the part where she fell asleep while holding the tall dark groom.

"Do I see a change coming on?"

"What are you saying?"

"Just a while ago you were scared to death to be near her and now you are sharing a bed with her and breakfast afterwards."

"I know, it's strange. But I feel this...strong connection to her for some reason."

"Uuhh huh, well, I have some interesting laundry to finish." He walked from Rhapsody's room with a huge smile on his face. "In time Princess you will see why you feel such a strong connection." He said as he thought that neither one of them had a damn clue.

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Ray rolled out of bed later than she had in a while, she really didn't care one way or another since it was Sunday and the track wasn't open for training. She had not entered any horses for the races, simply because she thought they needed time off just as she did. Picking up her clothes from where she had dropped them early that morning, she went to throw them in to the muck bucket. She looked around her room but couldn't find it.

"Have I lost my mind and moved it and I don't remember?" Grumbling she looked in the bathroom and still found nothing. Scratching her head, she tossed them on the floor where the bucket used to be.

"I'll be damned, someone stole my dirty clothes." Going over to a steamer trunk, she opened it to find a pair of socks and nothing else. "Damn, damn!" She turned when she heard a knock on her door, walking over to it, she placed her bare foot at the bottom and pulled it open enough to look out. A pair of green eyes looked up at her and a wide grin split the small blonde's face.

"Morning, I have something for you." She held up a MacDonald's bag and a cup of coffee."

"You're a savior, just what I needed." She pulled the door open and watched Rhapsody sway in the doorway, she reached out and grabbed her arm to steady her.

Rhapsody felt her breath stolen away, her heart stop and drop down around her feet. She never expected to have Ray answer her door completely naked. From the first look of the golden flesh, she felt the floor shift beneath her feet. If Ray had not grabbed her she knew, she would have fallen on her face. Ray led her into her room and closed the door completely unfazed by her lack of clothing.

"Someone stole all my dirty clothes." She stood with her hands on her hips looking around her small room. "Gonna be a real bitch cleaning stalls like this." She held her arms out and watched as Rhapsody's face flushed. "You OK?"

"Uuuhhmm..." She pointed to the door. "Clothes." She took two stumbling steps to Ray's bed and collapsed.

"Clothes? My clothes?" She saw Rhapsody nod her head and gulp. "What are they doing out there?" She opened the door and walked out into the shed row. Rhapsody fell backwards on her bed and pulled Ray's pillow over her face to stifle the deep moan. "Hey wait a minute, they're all clean!" She pulled the muck bucket in to the room. A low chuckle burst from her throat when she saw that Rhapsody was hiding her face. She leaned over, pulled the pillow from her and grinned. "You stole my clothes and washed them?"

Rhapsody covered her eyes with her hands so she wouldn't see the firm breasts so close to her face. "I stole them and Larry washed and folded."

"Why?"

She rambled with all sorts of excuses until Ray dropped the pillow back over her face. "Thanks, tell Larry he's a real lady." She sat down on the edge of the bed and went through the muck bucket looking for clothes to put on. Rhapsody peeked from under the pillow to see wide shoulders and back very close to her. Watching the muscles play beneath the golden skin was doing things to her body that had never happened before. Her fingers ached to reach out and run down the fine hair that ran down Ray's spine. Ray stood up to pull on a pair of her BVDs, Rhapsody almost passed out when the muscles in Ray's rear flexed when she bent over to slip a foot into the opening. A crooked grin broke across Ray's face when she heard the rough breathing coming from under her pillow. She placed a large hand on Rhapsody's stomach and rubbed the hard muscles.

"Easy RJ, before you hyperventilate on me." She shook her head when the small body jerked at the touch of her hand. "Just like a skittish filly." She said to herself. "I know how to solve this problem." Removing her hand she waited until Rhapsody had stopped squirming from her touch and then pounced on her, she tickled her unmercifully until her pillow was being brought down repeatedly over her head.

"Ray! Stop or else!" She screamed and wiggled all over the small bed trying to get away from the strong fingers.

"Or else what?" A deep voice said next to her ear.

"I'll wet your bed!"

"Ohh is that all?" With one last tickle she released Rhapsody and busted up laughing when the small blonde bolted from the bed and ran to the bathroom. Ray leaned over on the bed and watched Rhapsody struggle with her Levis. A burning started in her chest and flowed down to settle in her center. "Now you're being a big pervert Ray." She continued to watch Rhapsody as she relieved herself with a long sigh. When she came back into the room, she saw that Ray was sprawled across her bed with just her BVDs on. She tried to look away but her eyes had a mind of their own and traveled up the rock hard abs to firm breasts and finally to a pair of dark blue eyes that had watched her do her examination. The hunger she saw in those eyes scared the hell out of her one moment and then next had her knees ready to buckle. No one had ever looked at

her that way before, she had witnessed that look when it was aimed at her friends but never experienced it herself. She didn't know what to do, so she just stood there taking in the beautiful woman before her.

Ray felt like the world had just fell and rolled over the top of her, the second Rhapsody came from the bathroom. The conflicting emotions that ran across emerald eyes as they traveled up her body to connect finally with her own, to show a dark passion was enough that if Ray wasn't frozen in place she would have acted on it. Taking a deep ragged breath she pushed herself up on the bed and grabbed a flannel shirt, pulling it on she left it hang open while she slipped into her worn Levis.

"What did you get me for breakfast?" She smiled when Rhapsody was jerked from her self-induced trance by her question.

"Huh?" She asked with a bewildered look.

"What's in the bag?"

Rhapsody turned to the bag and cup of what was now ice-cold coffee. "Oohh...I forgot about that. I got you a bacon, egg and cheese biscuit."

"Perfect." A bright smile came to her lips. She leaned past Rhapsody and took the bag, her shirt hanging open allowed full view of her body.

If not for the table behind her, Rhapsody knew she would have been on her ass the second Ray had pulled the flannel shirt on and left it hang open. For some reason, she found it breath taking, Ray was far sexier dressed like that then completely naked as before. Rhapsody could have sworn her heart stopped the second Ray leaned towards her. She wanted to lean into the woman's body to adsorb all the heat she knew was there.

A little voice in her head was laughing at her and yelling. *"Closet case!"* Repeatedly. "I am not! It's just been a very long time since I...and she's..." The little voice calmed down a bit. *"Ok if you're not a baby dyke, then how come she's got you so wet?"* She thought for a second. "Good question, why does she have me practically panting and so wet?"

Ray took a bite of her biscuit and licked the dripping grease from her fingers. Watching fiery green eyes follow her every move. She deliberately ran her tongue up her finger and then licked her lips to see what Rhapsody would do. She was not disappointed to see a bright red creep up her neck to color her cheeks and a sharp intake of breath. "There's my answer!" She said to herself and mentally patted herself on the back for a job well done in teasing.

"Hey RJ, you gonna clean stalls with me today?" She asked around a mouthful of food.

"Aahh...yeah." She gulped when a tongue snaked out to lick pink lips.

"Let's get going then. Lots to do."

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Rhapsody walked stiffly from the room behind Ray, she didn't know what was wrong with her libido, and it had never reacted like this towards a woman. "I have to talk with Larry, that's weird, me talking to a gay man about why I'm feeling lustful emotions towards my beautiful groom!" She continued to hold a conversation with herself until she saw a hand waving in front of her face.

"RJ. Fork, shovel shit." She waved a fork in front of her boss. "I'll put the horses on the walker and you clean their stalls."

Green eyes focused then looked into sparkling blue. "Some how I get the feeling that I'm getting the short end of the stall fork."

"We can trade?"

Rhapsody thought about having to walk one of the huge beasts and shook her head. "Nope, shovel shit."

She had cleaned three stalls and was bending over to pick up a feed bucket when something brushed against her ass. Jumping up she spun on her heel ready to yell at Ray. Two cat shaped looking pupils looked at her, then a long drawn out maaaaaaaaa and a headbutt to her hip dropped her into the sawdust.

"Just great, I'm molested by a goat."

"Who else would you like to molest you?" Ray purred from the doorway.

"Something preferably without a set of horns." She stood up and brushed off her Levis. Pointing at the goat she warned. "I know a Greek family that would love to meet you!"

"Uuhh oohh Buck, you better run!" Ray snorted as Buck ran past her and out to the field yelling the entire way. "I cleaned the other ones, the only thing left to do is feed them and we're done until supper time."

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"I am so glad you let me drive instead of us walking all the way here." Rhapsody groaned from where she was laying back on the bank of the Shenandoah river. "You would have had to carry me after the first mile." She turned her head to see Ray's relaxed profile, even with the metal nose brace she was beautiful. Her eyes were closed and she had a piece of grass between her teeth.

"It's not far, I do it every Sunday."

"Have I told you that you're insane?"

"Nope."

"Well you are. Why don't you have a car?"

"No driver's license."

"You don't know how to drive?" She asked shocked at the information.

"Never said that. You yanks drive on the wrong side anyway."

"That's right you're from Kiwi land." She closed her eyes and thought of what it must be like to leave such a beautiful country and end up in boring Charlestown West Virginia. She was about to ask Ray a question when the sun that was caressing her face disappeared. Cracking one eye she saw a tall man standing in front of them. "Can I help you?" She asked not really wanting her free time disrupted.

"I'll give ya twenty bucks ta watch ya suck your girlfriends tits."

Green eyes shot wide at the mans proposal. "Why I..." Ray reached over and held a finger to her lips.

"Easy Sparky, I'll take care of this." Green eyes narrowed at the name Ray had called her. "I gotta better deal for ya mate. You give me the twenty and I'll let you suck my left tit." She had to completely cover Rhapsody's mouth to stop her objections. The man grinned at her, showing uneven rotten teeth in his mouth. He handed her a folded twenty and stepped closer. "Hold it right there mate, let me unbutton my shirt first." With slow fingers, she unfastened her shirt and spread it open much to the amazement of Rhapsody. "All right, just bend down a little in front of me, I'll tell ya when to stop." She sat part way up towards the man and had him stop when he was within three foot of her chest. With a quick movement, she pushed her booted foot out, caught him in his groin and shoved him backwards into the river. Before he could react to being in the water she jumped up, grabbed Rhapsody's hand and pulled her to the car. Shoving her into the passenger side she ran around and jumped behind the wheel and tore out of the pull off area.

"I'd say he got twenty bucks worth wouldn't you?" Ray turned her head and locked smiling blue eyes on unbelieving green.

"I can't believe you did that! I can't believe he fell for it!" She shook her head and couldn't help but notice that Ray's shirt was being blown open by the wind coming through the window. A dark brow raised when Ray noticed where Rhapsody was looking. She knew her nipples were hard from the cool air, but the heat of Rhapsody's gaze was setting her on fire.

"Ya got a choice RJ, either button my shirt or take the wheel."

Darkened blue eyes met green, Rhapsody looked at the curving road and knew if she took the

wheel they would end up in a ditch. She wanted so badly to play with fire. She gave Ray a crooked grin and leaned closer to her and slowly buttoned her shirt up, making sure that her fingers brushed the warm skin. She held back a grin when Ray sucked in a shuttering breath with each touch.

"I'm a sick pervert and lightning is going to strike me!" She told herself.

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"Lrrrrrrrrrry!" Rhapsody whined as she staggered through the house looking for her roommate. She wandered to his section of the huge house and found him reclining in his easy chair watching his VCR tape of *Funny Girl*. "I need help!" She dropped onto his flowered couch and continued to whine.

"You know I think you should be saying, 'Oohh Raaaay!' Instead of singing my name, I can't do a thing for you."

"Oohh stop, I'm in serious trouble here." She rolled onto her side and looked at him. "What am I doing?"

"Whining?" He chuckled when her brows dipped down over her nose. "OK, tell me what your problem is."

She told him the entire day in detail from the point of Ray answering her door naked right up until she buttoned up her shirt while the groom was driving.

"Kiss her."

Rhapsody fell off the couch with a loud thump. "What?"

"Just kiss her, if it feels like you just grabbed on to a 220 line, and your knees feel weak, then you belong with tall dark and gorgeous." Looking down into wide green eyes he continued. "You two flirt entirely too much for it not to be a mutual attraction, so don't worry about her reaction."

Rhapsody went to bed, she lay there staring up at the ceiling and thinking about what Larry had said to her. "Just kiss her! Right, just go up to her, put her in a lip lock and hope she doesn't toss you in to the muck bucket." A low groan came from the bottom of her chest. "Could I really be a lesbian? I've dated men for years and now all of a sudden I'm fantasizing about a woman. I haven't dated in a very long time, maybe I need to go out with a man and see if my attraction for Ray goes away?" She ran the thought through her mind numerous times thinking of all the men she had dated and tried to picture them in her mind's eye. The problem was that she couldn't remember what any of them looked like and kept seeing ice blue eyes looking back at her. The vision had so much clarity that she could swear that Ray was right in front of her. "Can I kiss her? Will she let me?" She rolled on to her side and pulled the covers over her head. "I am really screwed in the head!" Was mumbled before she was claimed by Morpheus.

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Ray pulled the wooden box from under her bed and rooted around until she came up with what she was looking for. Flipping the book over she read the last page that told about the author. All it said was that she lived in Boston and had another novel coming out in the spring. Turning it over she looked at the cover to see a blonde haired woman dressed in the period clothes of the 1800's, she was being held in the arms of a tall Indian Brave with long raven colored hair wearing nothing but a breech cloth.

"Could be us on the cover RJ." She ran a long finger across the picture and wished that what she was seeing could be real. "In my wildest fantasy's maybe, no one wants a low life groom for a partner. Especially one who makes a whole \$400.00 a month. She then remembered that RJ had given her an envelope with her paycheck in it later that day, she pulled it from her front pocket and opened it to see the amount. "This has got to be wrong." She looked again to see that the amount was for \$800.00. Looking in the envelope she found a note.

Ray

I've given you a much needed pay raise, you will get this amount per week. I'm sorry about my cheap asshole of a brother taking advantage of your long hours and hard work.

RJ.

"Well I'll be!" She kissed the check and tucked it back in to the envelope. "Off to the bank tomorrow, and the grocery store." Striping out of her clothes she dropped down on her bed and fell asleep to dream of a little blonde covered in the makings for a hot fudge Sunday with whipped cream.

The sun was yet to rise when Ray stepped from her room, she had a busy day today and wanted to get a head start on it before her boss would show up. She quickly feed the horses and started picking through their stalls and getting the needed tack for the ones who would go to the track for their laps. On the way back from the track , she would need to stop at the pay phone and arrange for a truck and trailer to meet her at the farm that she used for the horses that needed a rest from racing. She had a total of six horses out at the moment and would be bringing a three-year-old maiden back to the track to start her racing career. It hurt that she had lost her favorite Mare Turner Over, she felt a rawness inside that would take a long time to heal. What bothered her, the most, was that RJ had been there with her when she broke down. No one had ever seen her vulnerable before and she felt embarrassed that her boss being a total stranger had seen her weakness. She was thankful to the small blonde that she never mentioned anything about that night. Chose to comfort her when it was needed but never expected.

Tacking up one of the geldings, she led him from his stall and swung up on to his back. The moment she moved, a sharp blinding pain shot through her head right behind her eyes. She stayed motionless for a few moments until her vision cleared.

"Damn broken nose. Sinus's all screwed up." She rubbed the area between her eyes hoping it

would help with the throbbing pain.

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RJ pulled up to the barn and saw that the walker was full of horses; she had hoped to get to the barn early so that she could help Ray. And she would have if her alarm clock were capable of waking her up. Sometimes she wondered if a church bell in her room would help. She had never been one for getting up early and was thankful that her job being an author didn't depend on her being awake at the crack of dawn. Getting out of her car she saw Ray coming in to the shed row on one of their horses, she walked up and held its head while Ray slipped to the ground with a loud groan.

"You OK?" She asked with concern in both her voice and eyes.

"Heads killing me."

"Then why are you galloping today, why not get someone else to do it for a while?"

Blue eyes flashed then calmed when Ray realized that RJ didn't know all her qualms about others touching the horses. Taking a deep breath, she looked into the startled green eyes and gave a small smile.

"Don't trust these heavy handed thugs; they can ruin a horse's mouth in two seconds." She saw the confused look on RJ's face. "A horse's mouth is very tender; they don't need a lot of force put on their mouth to get them to work. Some of the thugs around here yank on the reins and it makes the horses mouth tough. I've seen horses with the corners of their mouths bloody from some asshole being too rough with them."

RJ's mouth dropped open; she pointed a finger at her tall groom and stuttered. "That was...more than...two words!" She ducked behind the gelding to avoid the crop in Ray's hand.

"Bite me RJ." She reached over the geldings back and tapped RJ on her head with the crop.

After all the horses had been taken care of, they sat on the hay bales outside of the shed row and let the sun warm their faces as they drank strong coffee. RJ was about to say something when a huge diesel pick-up truck with a gooseneck trailer came towards them.

"Ray, what's he doing coming this direction?" Green eyes squinted up at the driver. The road wasn't wide enough for a truck and trailer that size, not to mention he was going the wrong way.

"Come to pick me up, I have a filly to bring back to the track. She's to replace..."

RJ placed a hand on her arm and gave her a small squeeze. "You don't have to explain." She turned when the man called to Ray and pointed to the back of the truck.

"Hop on in. I ain't got all day."

Ray went to jump in the back of the truck, but was halted by a strong hand holding onto the back of her Levis.

"Hold on there Kiwi, you are not riding in the back of the truck!"

Ray turned to see narrowed green eyes with gold flecked through them. RJ turned to the driver with an evil glare. "We will follow you to the farm." Turning back to Ray, she pointed at her car. "You drive, since you know where the place is."

"But I don't..." Ray stammered.

"I will take you to get your drivers license, but for now I'm not worried about it."

RJ watched Ray shrug her shoulders and grin at her, they followed the man to the farm that was outside of Charlestown near Kearneysville. She pulled the Mercedes sports car down a long driveway and turned down another road that branched off from where the house was to go towards a huge barn. Ray stopped the car under a huge oak tree and waited for the man to back the trailer up to the barn door.

"She's an easy one to haul, trained her myself." Ray said with a small amount of pride.

"Why is she here?" RJ asked.

"I don't like to race them two young, in fact I really don't want to race her yet but there's a race coming up that I think she can win."

Green eyes kept steady contact with Ray's, she could see the underlying pain and she knew it was because of the other night.

"If you don't want to race her, the leave her here. We can do with the horses we have."

Ray dropped her arm across RJ's shoulders and gave her a gentle hug. "Thank you; I know what you're doing. This race will be a very important race for the stables as well as the filly."

"What can be so important?" She tilted her head up to look into sparkling blue.

"A two hundred and fifty thousand dollar Belmont stake race." She was glad that she still had a hold of RJ, because when she heard the last of the sentence her knees gave out. "Let's go get my baby girl."

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RJ's breath caught in her throat when Ray brought out the filly, she was a tall sleek animal with a copper colored coat, white stockings on all four legs, dark mane and tail, what surprised RJ the most was the bald face markings.

"She's beautiful Ray, what's her name?"

"Spark of lapis. Look at her eyes." She stepped aside so that RJ could get a closer look; a small gasp came from her lips. The filly's eyes were a pale blue color, almost the same shade as Ray's. "It's a rare thing with horses, mostly paint's and pintos have the blue eyes."

"Now your name makes sense." RJ whispered to the filly as she stroked her nose.

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Leading the filly into Turner's old stall, Ray closed the bottom door, hung a hay bag and then turned off the light.

"Can I ask you why that man wanted you to get in the back of the truck?" RJ was both curious and pissed beyond belief.

"I always have to ride either in the back of the bed or the trailer it's self. Sometimes they use a horse van and I'm back there with eight horses at one time."

"Why can't you ride in the truck with them?"

"They don't want low life grooms in their trucks, if you were to go then you would be up front and I'd be sharing a horse trailer with the horses."

"That's not right, not to mention it's against the law in every state that I know of." She came to stand close to the tall groom, with her index finger she placed it against her chest and looked up with narrowed eyes. "From now on, you are to ride in the cab of the truck with them."

Ray raised her arms out to the sides and shrugged her shoulders. "Won't work, as soon as we get down the road they kick me out and make me get in the back."

RJ shook her head at her and chuckled. "I don't understand any of this, you can intimidate the hell out of any one you want, but you let them make you ride in the back?"

"I would rather ride in the back then have to walk all the way back here. Or worse put up with all the horse shit that they would pull around here if I caused problems."

"Have you done that before?"

"Nope, but others have. Or they've been left at other racetracks and had to find a way back."

"Who are these people?" Her temper was flaring, she had never heard of such asinine behavior before.

"One word RJ, Mafia."

RJ's face paled, she dropped down on to a hay bale behind her. "I should have known." She became quiet for a little while, a small smile developed on her face. "I have an idea, let's go in the office and I tell you."

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They sat side by side behind the desk with a legal pad on the desk covered with notes. RJ tapped the pen against the paper; she scribbled a few figures down and then pushed the pad over to Ray.

"We can do this, if we cut back on certain things that aren't needed. One of which was my brothers \$150.00 haircuts that he was spending every other week. Who did he think he was Bill Clinton?" Ray chuckled at her and added another figure.

"The goat does not wear loafers made in Italy, eat them maybe." She looked over at RJ who had her brows buried in her hairline.

"Roger wore expensive shoes here? And charged them to the stable account?" She ran a hand across tired eyes and groaned.

"I remember someone else who wore a silk Channel suit here and threw their Italian leather pump in the muck container."

"Don't remind me what a snob I was." A small grin came to her lips. "You know I looked over the figures before and they added up, so I didn't think anything of it, you know the items the money was being spent on. I had no idea what there were." Stretching her back muscles, she got up from the desk and patted Ray on the shoulder. "I'm going to head home, we'll go look for a truck and trailer tomorrow and I'll ask Larry and Sally tonight if they know of anyone needing a job." She leaned down and placed a soft kiss on Ray's crown. "Don't stay up to long."

Ray stood up and pulled the small woman into her arms for a gentle hug. Leaning down close to her ear, she whispered. "Thank you for everything." Before placing a kiss on her cheek. When she released RJ, they stared into each others eyes for long moments before the spell was broke by a knock on the door.

Ray moved to the door and pulled it open to see a racetrack guard standing there.

"I was just wondering whose car that was sitting there."

"That's mine; I was just about to leave."

"OK, ma'am. Have a good night."

RJ turned to Ray and gave her one last hug before she walked out into the night."

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Ray looked over the new blue Dodge truck and four-horse gooseneck trailer that RJ had just paid cash for. The woman was amazing, she talked the dealers in both places down thousands of dollars and was relentless when they kept trying to add all kinds of fees that didn't apply to what she was getting. Ray did her best not to laugh when the five foot nothing blonde went toe to toe with the truck salesman and told him he could shove the truck up his ass if he thought she was going to pay to have gas put in it when it all ready had a full tank.

"Well, what do ya think Kiwi, did I do good?" RJ held out her arms and acted like a game show bimbo.

"I'm still in shock to answer; I've never seen any one haggle like you."

"Wouldn't think I was filthy rich huh?" She beamed.

Ray's mouth dropped open. "Filthy rich?"

"Hey being a famous author pays well. Come on lets get out of here and get something to eat, I'm starving." She climbed up into the driver's seat and tried to look over the steering wheel. "Small problem here." She looked to Ray.

Ray chuckled. "Yeah your feet don't reach the peddles."

"Bite me Kiwi."

"You mark the spot and I'll oblige."

"You would wouldn't you." She cocked an eyebrow. "Here, swap me places." She moved towards Ray and crawled over her. "She stopped halfway across and looked into the blue eyes that were within inches of her. "I can't help that I'm vertically challenged."

"I'd say you're just the right height." Ray winked at her and left her sentence open to possibilities as to what RJ was right for.

Pulling the truck next to RJ's car in the lot behind the barn, Ray turned the engine off, jumped out and ran around to the other side to help RJ.

"Chivalry isn't dead." RJ whispered as she took Ray's offered hand.

"I was raised to be a gentleman; Ma would kick my ass if I didn't do this for her or open a door." Closing the door behind RJ, she took her hand and led her to her room. "Just let me grab my money and then we can go get some steaks to grill."

"We could have done that before we came back here ya know."

Ray grinned and pointed a finger at her chest. "I'm buying supper and cooking it. Actually the only thing I can do is grill steaks; everything else comes out charred lump."

RJ sat down on the small cot and noticed the worn paperback book lying near the pillow. Picking it up she saw that it was one of hers from a few years ago. Flipping through the pages, she noticed that certain ones were bent over at the top. Scanning the page, she saw that it was one of the many sex scenes. A wicked smile came to her face, starting to read aloud, she looked up when Ray gasped. A dark head turned her way and in lighting speed, she was across the room and snatching the book from RJ's fingers. She soon found out that RJ did not need the book to finish off the scene.

"I take it that the scene is one of your favorites?" She dodged the book that was to come down on top of her head.

"No...I have only...read it...oohh sod it!" Her face a dark red as she looked to the ceiling. "So I've read it a few hundred times, I get bored here at night."

"Uhh huh. You know TV's are most entertaining, you should get one."

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Wal-Mart was barren of people, RJ and Ray had the store all to themselves except for a hand full of people milling around the isles. Ray grabbed a cart and started pushing it towards the food isles; she looked over her shoulder and found RJ missing. Shrugging her shoulder's she continued on her way. She was just about done getting everything she needed when the hair on the back of her neck stood up and then RJ appeared out of no where to hang off the front of the cart.

"I was going to have your picture put on a milk carton in another few minutes, where've you been?"

"Oohh so you missed me?" Ray almost hit the floor from the smile RJ gave her, she found it very endearing when the small blonde would smile and her nose would wrinkle at the sides. "I was looking at some stuff for the truck; you know air fresheners and cup holders."

"Did you find anything?"

"Yep, all ready in the truck. You done?"

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Ray gave RJ an amused look at all the bags in the back of the truck, shaking her head she just mumbled under her breathe.

"What was that Kiwi? I heard you mumbling."

"Nothing, just talking to myself."

"Or the little voices in your head." RJ smacked her on the ass before she crawled into the truck, leaving a stunned groom standing with the empty cart.

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They made repeated trips from the truck to the office and Ray's room, on the last trip Ray finally noticed two boxes in the king cab area.

"RJ what's these boxes back here?"

"Those are for your room." She stepped beside Ray and leaned against her to look in at the boxes. "I carried them out so you can carry them in."

When Ray put the boxes on the floor in her room she saw that one was, a VCR and the other a TV set. She was at a loss for words; she turned misty eyes to a smiling RJ. "You bought these for me?"

"Yep, do you like them?"

Ray walked towards her and took her in to her arms, she pulled back to look down into smiling green eyes.

"You didn't have to do that, but thank you."

They held each other's stare, searching for any sign they could find of what to do next. RJ ran a hand up behind Ray's neck and pulled her head down to her. Mere inches separated them; slowly RJ rose up and softly touched her lips to Ray's. Pulling back, she felt her lips tingling and a heat crawling up her face.

"Sorry." She whispered as she pulled further away.

"I'm not." Ray moved in and placed a lingering kiss on soft lips. When she broke the kiss, she gazed down into closed eyes. "Come on Princess, I have steaks to grill and you have a TV and VCR to set up."

With the steaks done and all the trimmings on paper plates, Ray and RJ sat on her bed leaning back against the wall watching the movie *Entrapment with Sean Connery and Kathryn Zeta Jones*.

"Last time I take you to the store, you're like a little kid that sneaks things into the cart when Moms not watching."

"But Ray, you would have noticed if I put a huge box in the cart." She knocked shoulders with her. "Admit it, its better than sitting here looking at the walls or reading sex scenes."

"Now I can rent dirty movies and watch sex scenes!"

RJ choked on her food at the mention of dirty movies, she cleared her throat and looked over to see a wicked grin covering Ray's face.

"Pervert."

"Nah, seen some once, no plot, ran it backwards and laughed my ass off."

Their plates thrown away and now lying on the bed side by side watching the movie, they drifted off to sleep. Ray woke in the early morning hours to see an info commercial playing. Using the remote, she turned the TV off, wrapped her body around RJ and drifted off to sleep.

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Ray woke to a soft snore and mumble near her ear, turning her head to the side; she saw a peaceful face still asleep. Pressing a kiss to her forehead, she watched as RJ pushed her face against her neck and wrapped her arm around her waist tighter. She smiled at the possessive way that RJ held on to her. "You are so precious." She whispered. She lay for long moments enjoying the warm body pressed up against her until RJ started talking complete nonsense into her neck. Losing her composure, she busted out laughing and waking RJ at the same time.

"What's so funny?" She mumbled with a rough voice.

"You talk in your sleep."

"Not. Snore yes, talk no."

"Yes you do on both accounts." She rolled to her side dislodging the clinging RJ. "I think it's...hilarious!" She crawled over RJ to head to the bathroom, shedding clothes on the way. RJ rolled over and opened sleepy eyes to see a firm ass before it disappeared through the bathroom door.

"Gods, she's going to give me a coronary." She rolled back over and hugged the pillow to her chest. She was woken what seemed only seconds later by water dripping on her face. "Hole in the roof."

"Nope, time to get up Princess. We have lots to do."

"Like what? Besides me sleeping for another hour." She rolled over and groaned when she came up against Ray's breasts. "On second thought I think a cold shower would feel real good right now." She pulled back and covered her eyes. "Do you always run around naked?"

"Nope, tried working that way once but I got a rash all over my body from the hay."

RJ's mouth fell open and her hand fell away from her eyes.

"Just kidding, go take a shower while I feed the kids."

Ray had removed the nose guard and felt like she had just taken a pair of blinders off, for the last couple of days she could see the thing and felt like her nose was two foot long. She still had slight pressure from the swelling but it was not as bad as before. She stretched out before she climbed on to Sparks back, grabbing hold of the reins and surcingal, she eased the young filly down the shed row. RJ crossed her fingers that the filly would not toss Ray off. She followed behind her as she took the filly up to the track and stood at the opening to watch Ray do her magic.

Ray took her around the track at a slow walk to get her used to the noises and other horses running past her. She wanted her to get over any of her fears before she would start her off to a gallop. The filly didn't flinch once as she went around, so Ray eased her into a slow canter and then to a quicker pace for her third time around. When she was finished, the filly was lathered and blowing hard. Patting her shoulder she whispered to her as they made their way back to RJ. Sliding down she looped the reins over the back of the exercise saddle and walked away. RJ gave her a funny look when the filly just stood there all alone.

"Kiwi aren't you forgetting someone."

"Nope, you're right next to me."

"Not me you big dummy, the filly!"

"Ohh she'll come along when she figures out that we're leaving her behind."

Before Ray could finish her sentence, Spark gave out a loud whinny and came trotting after them. Ray looked down at RJ and grinned.

"Told you, she knows who feeds her candy."

"Candy, you feed the horses candy?" She slugged her in the shoulder. "Here I thought you were a horse whisperer."

"Nope, horse briber. Works every time." She pulled a piece of peppermint from her pocket and rattled the plastic wrapper. A wet nose came over her shoulder and lipped for the candy.

After putting all the horses in their stalls, RJ came up to Ray with a lowered head. She tilted her head to the side and gave her a sidelong bashful glance.

"Kiwi, would you help me do something today?"

"Anything, just name it."

"I ahh...have new furniture being delivered today and I need help moving some of the other stuff into Larry's part of the house."

"You feed me and it's a deal." She wrapped an arm around her shoulders and started walking them to the truck; she stopped suddenly and turned to face RJ. "You can cook can't you?"

"Well, it's been awhile since I burned water and I haven't suffered from food poisoning in years if that counts as being able to cook edible stuff."

"Sounds perfect, let's go."

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Ray had one end of the couch while RJ had the other; they were staggering through the room as Larry directed them as to where he wanted it to go.

"Oohh nononoooo, that will not work there, move over to the left about ten foot and let me see what it looks like."

Two heads turned to glare at him accompanied by growls. His eyes widened and he started to stutter.

"Right there is perfect!" He jumped back when they dropped the couch. "Great, now for the entertainment center!" He clapped his hands, froze in mid clap and took off running through his living room with RJ right behind him. Ray busted up laughing and fell on to the couch exhausted. Leaning her head back, she sighed and closed her eyes, with in minutes she was snoring softly from between parted lips.

RJ had Larry cornered in the kitchen, he picked up a wooden spoon and waved at her.

"Ever been spanked with a wooden spoon?"

"Nope, I was a good kid, didn't need spanked." She gave him a toothy grin.

"Shame, you don't know what you missed."

"You're sick!" She shot around the table and took the spoon from him. "We're taking a break you slave driver!" She waved the spoon at his nose.

"Where's your girlfriend?" He taunted.

"She's not my girlfriend." A light blush covered her face. "I'm not sure what she is to me."

"Well, you had better go get her, because, if she's not here when you sit down to eat then she'll starve to death."

"Wise ass!" She handed him the spoon and went in search of Ray. Walking into Larry's living room, she was just about to say something when she saw Ray still sleeping. Moving slowly to

the couch, she stopped at the edge of the cushion and stood between Ray's legs. Leaning forward she placed a soft kiss on parted lips, before she could move back, a large hand went to the back of her head, she felt a warm tongue lick at her lips asking for entrance. Opening her mouth, Ray deepened the kiss and moaned when their tongues meet. RJ felt like lightning had struck her, she moaned into Ray's mouth and wrapped her arms around her neck and pressed her body into the taller woman's. Tangling her fingers in long silky hair, she pulled Ray closer and slipped her tongue into her mouth to explore every area. Ray's hands traveled across a strong back to stop at RJ's trim waist, moving her thighs so that she was straddling her legs, they were able to press closer yet. Soft moans escaped from them as flames rose up and settled in nether regions. When the kiss broke, they gasped for air for seconds before Ray started to kiss the side of RJ's neck.

"Uuhh huh! Just as I thought!" Larry said from where he was standing in the doorway.

RJ would have fallen backwards off the couch if not for Ray holding onto her. RJ groaned and dropped her head down to bury her face against a grinning Ray's neck.

"If you two are at all interested, supper is done and on the table." He turned mumbling under his breath about horny dykes humping on his couch. What he didn't know was that Ray heard him.

"We weren't humping on his couch...yet."

RJ pulled back and looked at Ray with wide eyes.

"What?"

"Larry said we were horny dykes humping on his couch, and I said not yet." Winking at a blushing blonde, she lifted her off her lap and smacked her on the ass before she headed for the kitchen. "I better get in there before you do."

"And what are you trying to say Kiwi?" She ran and leapt onto Ray's back and wrapped her legs around her waist.

"That you eat more than a handful of ship wrecked survivors that have been stranded in a lifeboat for six months on the high seas."

"Yeah? Well, you snore louder than a train going 90 mph, while blowing its whistle through a tunnel."

With RJ still riding on her back, Ray stepped into the kitchen under the watchful eye of a smirking Larry.

"True love, so young and new. Now sit your asses down before the pot roast gets cold."

"Isn't he soo romantic?" RJ remarked before she nipped Ray's neck and slid to the floor.

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After supper, Ray and RJ cleaned up and went to her section of the house to collapse onto her new leather couch, they lay spooned together softly moaning from eating too much and aches and pains from moving furniture all day.

"Roger's furniture really sucked." Ray whispered into RJ's hair. "I'm glad you got rid of it."

"You like my stuff better?" RJ asked as she turned her face to come cheek to cheek with Ray.

"Much, I love the smell of leather." She pulled back and kissed RJ softly before pulling back. "As much as I would love to lay here and cuddle with you, I really need to get back to the track and feed and water the horses." She heard RJ groan; she hugged her closer to her and breathed in her soft scent.

"We need automatic feeders and watering systems." RJ mumbled.

"Or better timing." Ray crawled over RJ and helped her up from the couch; pulling her into her arms, she dipped her head for a long passionate kiss that left them both breathless. "I'll see you in the morning; I'll come pick you up after I feed, OK?"

"Does that mean I get to sleep in?" Pleading green eyes looked up. "Please...I'll clean all the stalls."

"OK, I'll make sure I walk really slow, when I go down the shed row." She leaned down for one last kiss.

"Be careful, I...lo...ath worrying."

Ray gave her a smile, cupped her cheek in her calloused hand and gave her a kiss then left a troubled blonde with her eyes still closed. RJ didn't open her eyes until she heard the front door close. Grabbing her chest, she moaned and fell back on to the couch. Pushing herself back to her feet, she went to whine to Larry.

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"Well do you?" He asked with as much control as he could.

"I think so...Gods I don't know." She covered her eyes. "I've never been in love before. I can't believe I almost told her."

"I hate to tell you this but, no matter what you said, she still knows what you meant to say." He tossed a pillow at her head and waited for her to say something. "She's not dumb you know."

"I know that, it's just so soon!"

Larry chuckled and snorted at her. "And the fact that you're not a lesbian!"

"Ohh bite me!" She got up and walked to the door. "I'm going to bed; Kiwi's coming to get me in the morning."

"You even have a pet name for her, that's so sweet Princess."

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It was 7am when Ray knocked on the front door of RJ's house. While she waited for someone to answer; she let her mind wander to the other times she had been here, the sterile coldness while Roger lived here was gone, there was now laughter and warmth that enveloped you the second you walked into a room. The bantering that went on between Larry and RJ in its self was warming to a lonely soul like her. She found it humorous that they had turned the large home into two separate living areas but still ran back and forth into each other's. Raising her hand to knock again, the door opened to reveal Larry with cold cream all over his face and a garish silk robe covering his body.

"Ray, come in, I'm sorry I didn't get here sooner. I was indisposed."

"It's OK, is RJ awake?"

"Haaa! You have got to be kidding; the house could fall in to a sinkhole and not disturb her sleep. Do you know where her bedroom is?"

"Nope, you could loose an Eagle scout troop in this place."

"Oohh don't get me excited, all those sexy little shorts on the scout masters!" He waved a hand in front of his face and swooned. "Where was I?"

"RJ's bedroom?" Holding her hands out to the sides asking which way.

"You know after she started moving stuff around and changing the layout of the house I needed a map to find my own bedroom! Roger is rolling in the grave!" Taking Ray's hand, he led her past RJ's living room to another hallway that ran behind it. He pointed to a solid wood door.

"That used to be the main dinning room, Lady "lets destroy the house" Beaumont turned it in to her office/pouting room. If you go through there, you will find another door that goes right into the Beaumont bat cave."

Ray's eyebrows rose to her hairline. "Bat cave?"

"That's what it reminds me of, she redecorated the room and it's all done in blacks, silvers and blues. Most horrid place, not a pink or mauve to be found."

Ray chuckled at the thought of RJ changing the place around and throwing out everything that was queenified.

"OK, I'll throw her out of bed."

Larry took her by the arm and leaned in close to her ear to whisper. "What she needs is for you to throw yourself in her bed and..." The last words communicated with the wiggle of his perfectly arched brows. "Toodles."

Ray opened the door and looked around; the walls were floor to ceiling shelves covered with books and manuscripts. In the center of the room was an oriental rug that had a Celtic design in the center surrounded by blues and silvers in intricate interweaving designs. A large wooden desk sat in front of French doors covered with a computer and all it's added on items. Continuing to the next door, she opened it slowly and squinted her eyes in the darkness, seeing a large bed centered on the far wall she stepped quietly to it and sat on the edge to look down into the peaceful face of RJ. Trailing a finger down the small nose, she pulled her hand back when RJ's hand came up to cover her face. Finding a small ear, she outlined its curves with her fingers waiting to see what would happen. Just as she thought, RJ moved her hand to cover her ear. Holding back a chuckle, she trailed her fingertips across a firm breast; a low moan came from parted lips along with a mumble of nonsense. A small hand captured the larger and pressed it against her breast. Ray could feel the heat penetrating into her hand, as well as other places that caught fire. A low moan came from her when she felt RJ's nipple harden against her palm. Her silvery blue eyes half closed to slits with all the emotions that were flying through her mind and body. More so as a small hand ran up her arm to loop around her neck and pull her head down to rest against RJ's chest. She whispered groggily.

"You've been terrorizing me."

"Uhh huh." Was mumbled against her breast. Pushing her boots off, Ray moved up onto the bed and snuggled against RJ's warm body.

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Hours later the phone that sat on RJ's nightstand rang, blurry green eyes looked at the offending object and tried to block out the interrupting noise. RJ reached across the body that was pressed up against her, and grabbed the phone.

"What!" Was growled over the phone.

"Rise and shine Princess! Or I'll come in and sing every song from the Wizard of Oz!" Larry hung up before RJ could slam the phone in his ear.

RJ threw a leg up over Ray's hip and hugged her tightly, burying her face against a warm neck she sighed. Deep in her soul, this is how she wanted to wake up every morning but her mind kept telling her that it was wrong. She came to a decision right then, she could care less what her mind thought, and it could go to hell and keep Roger company. She gave her heart and soul to the woman that held her in strong arms.

Five minutes later Larry burst through the door, his blonde hair done up in pigtails out the sides of his head, a basket in his arms he skipped to the foot of RJ's bed and sang.

Somewhere under the drawbridge, RJ sleeps.
Until I comes along and becomes a creep.

He reached into the basket, pulled out a handful of ice chips and dropped them all over RJ and Ray's heads. Two seconds later a set of blue eyes opened wide. She rolled off the bed and brushed the ice from her cheek and neck.

"What the hell!" She yelled and then saw a grinning Larry.

"Morning Ray." He pointed to RJ who was searching the vacant spot next to her with a scowl on her face. "See what I mean."

Ray pointed at his basket. "Let me have some of that." Taking a handful, she grinned wickedly before she ran a hand up under RJ's shirt and pressed her hand with the ice chips in it against a nipple. Green eyes shot open, RJ struggled with the blankets trying to get free of the ice-cold hand on her breast.

"Kiwiiiiii...oohh...my....get...AAAHHH!" She broke free and fell off the bed.

She looked up to see the original culprit smiling at her.

"Morning Princess ice-cube."

RJ crawled towards him growling, lunging at his ankles she missed when he jumped out of her reach.

"You little troll!" He screamed, and then skipped from her bedroom.

"You are not any better Kiwi. But what you did has some possibilities."

Pale blue eyes twinkled. "Is that so, I can think of quite a few thing to do with ice cubes."

RJ grinned wickedly. "What time did you get here?"

Ray's face blushed; dropping her eyes, she scuffed her bare foot across the floor. "7am or so, I was trying to wake you up...but." She shrugged her shoulders.

RJ got up and made her way over to the tall groom, wrapping her arms around her neck she pulled her down for a soft kiss. "I remember pulling you into bed with me, you can wake me up every morning like the way you did." Giving her one last kiss she pulled away to head for her bathroom. "I'm going to take a shower; Larry should have breakfast ready if you're hungry. I'll be done in ten minutes or so."

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Breakfast was a hysterical affair for Larry, he could not believe that the stoic groom who had scared the shit out of Roger, let RJ take food from her plate. More than once RJ drank Ray's orange juice and just grinned at her afterwards. They acted as if they had known each other their entire lives instead of just months. When he finished his breakfast, he placed a kiss on RJ's cheek, cocked an eyebrow at Ray and quickly did the same to her.

"Later girls. Don't do anything that I wouldn't do."

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It was second call for the sixth race; RJ was a nervous wreck. She had agreed to walk the gelding up to the paddock, while Ray went to make sure that the jockey had the new silks she had made and to give further instructions on how to handle the horse. RJ stood in the stall running her hands down the geldings shoulder and murmuring to him. She didn't know if it did any good but it calmed her and gave her something else to think about besides having a huge beast next to her. The third call came, she released the cross ties from his halter and led him from his stall.

"Please don't step on me or make me look like an ass." She whispered up to him as she led him from the shed row. Half way to the track she felt a weight come down on her shoulder, she looked to the side to see the horses head resting there.

"You're just a big baby aren't you?" She rubbed his nose and continued up to the track.

In the paddock, Ray was waiting for her; she gave RJ a smile when she came around the corner.

"Any problems with Reaper?"

"Only if you count him using me as a leaning post."

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They stood at the wall and watched as a pony took the gelding around the track. RJ looked up at intense blue eyes.

"Why does he need a pony, he fell asleep while you were saddling him."

The corners of Ray's lips turned up. "You'll see in about two seconds." She turned back to the track and searched the backside for their horse. "In about two seconds that Jockey will be in a world of hurt."

Reaper started tossing his head, cow kicking and striking out with his front feet. The jockey hung on for dear life as 1500lbs of horse threw a fit.

"What is he doing out there?" RJ asked as she tried to lift herself up higher on the wall. Ray took

her around her waist, in one fluid movement she put her up on her shoulders. "This is much better!" She squealed with delight, placing her hands on the sides of Ray's head for balance she leaned down and placed a kiss on her crown. Ray on the other hand was thinking of how much fun she could have if RJ was facing the other way. She was brought from her thoughts at the sound of the announcer saying "And they're off!"

Reaper was on the outside slot, he broke from the gate with a burst of energy. His head low near his chest he fought the jockey for his head. The jockey was giving everything he had to hold the horse back.

"Kiwi, why is the jock holding him back, why not let him go?"

"Reaper takes off fast and if he's not held back he runs himself out to soon. The Jockey will give him his head on the straight away."

Watching the horses come past them, RJ could see the strain in the small man's face as he fought Reaper. Going to the backstretch, she saw Reaper regain some of his head and pass two horses leaving him in fourth position. He held that spot until they came around the last turn, the jock dropped down close and gave Reaper his head. What she saw was pure heart coming from Reaper as his head went up and he over took the other three horses in a burst of speed that amazed her. He came across the finish line a full length ahead of the other placers. She slipped down Ray's back, spun her around and jumped into her arms. Kissing her soundly on the lips, she pulled back, threw an arm in the air and gave out a war cry that broke Ray's eardrums.

RJ cupped Ray's face between her hands. "Tell me you have win tickets!" Ray pulled tickets and waved them at her. "YES! You're buying supper."

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RJ stood next to Reaper's head holding the reins, she reached over and took Ray's hand in hers and held on until the win picture was taken. Parting ways, RJ took Reaper to the test barn while Ray went to cash in their tickets. She stopped at the photographer's office and picked up all the win pictures she had ordered and then headed to the test barn.

Reaper dragged his front feet through the sawdust in the test barn shed row, his head hanging and swinging from side to side, reminded RJ of an old plow horse. She couldn't believe that it was the same maniac from just a short while ago tearing up the track. She rounded the corner to face the woman that had hit on Ray the day they were in the kitchen. Looking up into brown eyes, she shivered inside.

"I saw you kiss Ray after Reaper won." She stepped chest to chest with RJ. "You will never have her, she belongs to me! If you don't leave her alone I will make sure that I ruin you!" She shoved RJ in her chest and walked away.

Ray came around the corner of the test barn and ran right into the crazy blonde who then grabbed her breast. Pushing her away, she growled.

"Get away from me and stay away from my stables."

"Come on Ray, you don't really want that now do you?" She ran a hand down Ray's chest and fondled a breast. Ray slapped her hand away and stepped back, fire danced in her eyes as her temper raised its ugly head. "I see that you and your boss have become quite close, she's a cute little thing shame she won't be around anymore." She taunted.

"Lay one hand on her and I'll kill you with my bare hands!" Ray shoved her against the side of the barn and went to find RJ, her temper was about to explode and she knew if they didn't get away from the track that she would most likely kill someone. She shoved past a drunk who was standing in the doorway on her way in.

RJ breathed a sigh of relief when Ray walked towards her; she saw the stiffness in Ray's walk and the internal fight going on inside and knew that there was trouble brewing.

Ray looked into the stall to see the test barn attendant finishing up with Reaper. Clenching her fists, she barked a command at her horse took RJ's hand and left the barn. RJ kept trying to get Ray's attention to find out what the problem was but came up empty. She did something that she knew may get her punched out, she leapt on Ray's back and covered her eyes with her hands.

"Now stop right where you are or I'll let you walk into a wall!"

"Rhapsody! I am not playing around, now get off my back!"

"Neither am I so stop acting like an ass and talk to me!"

RJ felt her relax under her; she slipped to the ground and turned Ray to look at her. Cupping her face with her small hands, she leveled a determined look at fiery blue eyes.

"What the hell is going on?"

"Nothing that you need to concern yourself with, it's my problem."

RJ's temper flared up and took over her level headedness.

"Bull fucking shit! Who the fuck is that blonde bitch! I want her head on a fucking platter!"

Ray's eyebrows rose to bury them selves in her hairline, a small grin graced her lips from the fire that burned in the small woman before her.

"To think I let that mouth kiss me."

"Don't try to change the subject on me, I want to know or I'll go find her and beat the fucking shit out of her!"

"All right, let's go back to the barn and I'll tell you."

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Ray pulled a bottle of blackberry brandy from the desk drawer and took a long drink; she handed the bottle to RJ and watched her take a small drink and grimace.

"Her name is Sandra Pierson, I told you about her abusing the mare I have. What I didn't tell you was that I had her put in prison for 40 counts of animal abuse to not only horses but also the guard dogs she had chained inside her barn. The Jockey Club took her license away from her and the racetrack authorities banned her for two years of racing. That went away with her five year prison sentence, so when she got out she went right back to her former business."

"I can not believe they let people like her do a short sentence and let them out to go back to what they were convicted for!" RJ stomped around the small office with her hands on her hips, she stopped ran one hand through her short hair and growled. "Let her try and ruin me! I'll have her hide nailed to a wall!"

"RJ, she's part of the mafia."

"So am I!"

Ray's eyes widened with disbelief, her jaw dropped and worked a few times before her words came out.

"What! You're part of the mafia?"

RJ took a chair and moved it in front of Ray. She sat so that their knees were touching, reaching out she took Ray's hands in hers and ran her fingers across her knuckles. She started speaking while she looked at their joined hands.

"I'm from a family that has been shrouded in lies for years, my father was born into the family and later on married my mother who is also part of the family, but refuses to acknowledge that fact even though all my fathers' clients carry guns. My father's illustrious law firm keeps the mafia kind of legal in their business dealings. You see, names can be changed but the blood can't. I researched my family tree after I found some papers in a family bible in the attic with names that didn't make sense to me. I spent a better part of two years checking out Ellis Island, immigration and every other census department known to man. I came up with a direct link to some of the bloodiest criminals from the prohibition. My great grand fathers were with Al Capon, one of them changed his name to Beaumont, which was his wives maiden name so that he could avoid a prison sentence. Over the years, some family members stayed with the mafia while others escaped. I am one who escaped, but I still have connections through my father." She slowly looked up into blue eyes that had so many emotions passing through them that she was afraid that Ray would bolt from the room.

"So it's true that the mafia killed Roger."

"Yes, he was caught stealing from them. Had been for years, that's one of the reasons I was leery at first about being named half owner of the stables. But the silent owner is a lawful person who ever he is and kept everything legal where the stables is concerned." She brought their joined hands to her lips and kissed Ray's knuckles. Dropping all the walls to her soul, she hoped that Ray could see that she was about to tell her the truth.

"I have never in my life had any dealings with the mafia; I have never been arrested or accused of any crime because I chose to stay away from that side of my fathers dealings. I was sent away to private schools at the age of six until the day I graduated from high school. The money I have is from my books, nothing I own has been bought with money from the family nor will it ever. Do you believe me?" Her green eyes pleaded with blue.

"Yes." She pulled RJ into her arms and held her tightly against her, she felt the small body start to shudder and then small sobs came to her ears.

"RJ what's wrong?"

In between her sobs, she answered. "I was afraid that you would leave me."

"I'm not afraid of the mafia, they should be afraid of me."

RJ pulled back and wiped her tears, looking into narrowed blue eyes.

"Huh?"

"I happened to have a very mean family myself. Ever heard of the woman's Australian soccer team?"

"What has that got to do with the mafia?"

"Ever seen what a striker can do to someone's gonads with one kick? Well, let me tell you about my fearsome cousins."

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Ray hung up the pay phone, and then turned to RJ. "They'll be here in twenty minutes; we'll meet them at the barn and fill them in on everything."

Twenty minutes? I thought they were in Australia or New Zealand."

"Nope, Kearneysville. They take care of the farm where Spark was."

"Ohh, so do you have any other secrets that you want to tell me?"

"Nope, I'm an open book. Let's get back so we can get this over with, I'm exhausted and would

just like to lay down and sleep for a week."

They sat on the tailgate of the truck and waited for Ray's cousin's to show up. A set of headlights shown across them as a Dodge Viper stopped next to the truck. Two women got out of the car and approached Ray with stoic expressions.

"RJ, these are my cousins S&M." She gave RJ a crooked smile.

"You're kidding right Kiwi?"

"Nope, that's Sydney on the left." She pointed to a stocky brunette with ice blue eyes like her own. "And that's Mallory." Who had long blonde curly hair and hazel colored eyes. "This is Rhapsody J. Beaumont, half owner of the stables.

Sydney gave RJ the once over and gave her a toothy grin.

"Ya always did go for the blonde Sheila's, Ray."

Ray stepped forward and gave her a bear hug. "Look who's talking Syd." She released Sydney to pull Mallory into a hug. "How do you put up with such a dog?"

"Easy, horse tranquilizer in her coffee." She looked to RJ and smiled as she held out her hand. "I hear you two need some strikers to protect the horses?"

RJ looked at Ray with confusion. "The horses?"

"If Sandra wants to ruin you, what better way than going after the horses. She can slip them drugs while I'm at the track, fix a piss test result etc..."

"I never thought of that, shit! Are we going to have to live like this until she gives up?"

Ray wrapped an arm around her shoulders and gave her a tight hug. "Nope, she'll screw up and then we'll have her. In the meantime, S&M will be here and I'll stay with you just in case she decides to strike there."

"What, don't you think Larry could protect me?" She snickered at the rolling blue eyes.

"Only if they died from seeing him with pigtails and that god awful silk robe!" She pulled her key from around her neck and handed it to Sydney. "That's for my room and the office door, and I'll have you know that there is now a TV and VCR in my room so you can't complain."

Sydney grabbed her chest and fell into Mallory. "Gods have mercy, Ray's joined the couch potato brigade! Any dirty movies?"

"No, you know I hate those things. RJ's phone number is on the bed, if anything happens you call no matter what time it is."

"All righty then, I guess we'll see you in the morning." Mallory took the keys from Sydney.

"Come on you pervert. I can't believe I've put up with you all these years!" She grabbed Sydney by her ear and dragged her off.

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[Continued In Part 2](#)

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~ Rhapsody's Silver Lining ~

by Larisa

Disclaimer; Ya'll know who they resemble, no infringement meant on anything that's not mine in the story. The normal stuff is here, sex between women, bad language, violence and everything else that I can toss in. If you're not old enough or it's one of those stupid laws about it being illegal. Grow up and move the hell to another state! Thanks to Lesia and Ri for being my sounding boards.

Rhapsody's Silver Lining
By Larisa
Hecate3366@frontiernet.net

Part 2

RJ sat sideways up against the passenger door watching Ray drive, she couldn't get over how beautiful she was. Ray turned her head toward her and stuck her tongue out.

"Tell me about your cousins or I'll tell you what you can do with your tongue."

"You're a wicked woman RJ, if I show you what I can do with my tongue, we'll end up in a ditch." Giving RJ a sample of how she can move her tongue brought a deep moan from her.

"Stop that!" She covered her darkening face with her hands. Just the thought of what Ray could do with her tongue sent fire southward. She could feel her nether lips start to throb just from her thoughts alone.

Ray shook her head at RJ and held back a chuckle, she knew where her thoughts were headed and knew for a fact that both of their minds were in the same place. "About my cousins, actually

my one real cousin."

"One real cousin, what's the other one fake?" RJ asked with a snort.

"Smart ass. No, she's not fake; Sydney's my cousin by marriage."

"OK, so if she's married where's her husband?"

Ray busted up laughing, she looked over at RJ with tears flowing down her cheeks.

"What's so damn funny, you said she was married so?"

"To Mallory."

RJ looked confused, it then hit her like a brick wall. "To Mal...Ohh! OK, I gotcha now."

"Not yet you haven't."

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Larry opened the door when he heard the truck pull into the drive, he stepped out and waved at them.

"About time you two got home. Princess, your mother has been driving me up the wall for the past four hours!"

A worried look came over her face. "Is everything all right?"

"Don't worry, she said that she just needed to discuss something with you. She refused to give me any details, just to have you call her when you got home."

"For the love of Gods that woman drives me insane! The last time she wanted to know if pansies and African violets would grow together in the flower garden!"

Larry and Ray both shrugged their shoulders and headed into the house behind RJ. She headed towards her office to use the phone and tossed over her shoulder for Larry to behave himself.

"Why did she say that?" He asked with wide eyes.

RJ yelled from her office. "Because you're an instigator!"

"I prefer queen matchmaker, come on Ray lets go in the kitchen and you can tell me all about Sparky."

Ray's eyes lit up at the mention of the name she had called RJ one night. Larry noticed and snickered.

"Ohh girlfriend, she tells me every single thing!"

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"Mother, I will not get in the middle of this mess between you and father." She rubbed her temple trying to ease the beginning of a headache.

"Why don't you go to Jersey and visit Aunt Bella? Stay for a week or two until father calms down?" She dropped down into her office chair and pulled the phone away from her ear.

"Mother, please no that is not a good idea; I work 16 hours a day." She hung up the phone after her mother had all ready done so on her end. Dropping her head down onto the top of her desk. A low howl escaped her throat from pent up anger. Ray came charging into the room to see if RJ was all right.

"Princess?" She stopped to kneel beside the office chair. "What's wrong?" RJ picked up her head, looked at Ray and then fell into her strong arms.

"My mother is coming next week to live with me."

"I take it that this does not thrill you to the bone?"

She mumbled from where her face was buried against Ray's neck. "Can I share Sparks stall with her? I promise not to take up much room."

"She's a bed hog, but I'm not." She lifted RJ up into her arms and carried her to her room, laying her down in the middle of the bed, she laid down on her side to watch RJ pout. With one fingertip, she traced a pouting bottom lip. "You look so adorable when you pout." She tried to pull her finger back but found a set of white teeth holding it. She moaned when a warm tongue flicked the very tip before releasing it. RJ took her hand and ran her tongue up her index finger then put the digit into her mouth and sucked slowly while watching Ray's eyes.

Ray's breathe caught in her chest the second RJ's tongue touched her finger, once she sucked on it her heart stopped and fell to her feet. Her insides were turning to Jell-O, embers flared in her center to lick at nerve endings all from what RJ was doing to her hand. She closed her eyes and felt a warm tongue lick the palm of her hand and continue to her wrist where a pair of soft lips placed open mouth kisses.

Ray said with a soft voice. "You're playing with fire."

RJ pushed Ray onto her back and straddled her hips. "I know and I plan on getting burned to a crisp." She dropped her head down to capture a bottom lip between her teeth, sucking lightly until Ray's tongue touched her top lip. Their kiss was one of hunger, teeth gnashing as they fought. The need for air brought them apart to take great gulps of air. Ray cupped RJ's face in her hands and brought her down for a softer kiss, letting their lips linger together until she deepened

it to a slow dueling of tongues that brought moans from deep in their chests. Gentle hands ran through blond hair and down her back to come up under her shirt to caress soft warm flesh. With the flick of two fingers, Ray released her bra strap and moved it to the side so she could feel more flesh beneath her fingers. Working the shirt up RJ's body, she pulled it over her head to drop it and her bra on the floor.

RJ's breath caught in her throat when large hands came around her ribcage to cup her breasts. She felt her nerve endings tingle when calloused thumbs brushed her nipples bringing them to hard peaks. Breaking their kiss, she arched her back offering more of herself to Ray. On instinct, her hips rolled down into Ray bringing a moan from her as her hips thrust up for contact. Ray rolled them over to straddle RJ's hips, pulling her shirt up over her head, she tossed it to the floor and then laid down on top of RJ letting their breasts press together.

Ray looked into passion darkened green eyes. "Is this what you want?" Her voice deep with want.

"More than anything." RJ answered.

They kissed deeply as their hands roamed, memorizing planes and contours of each other's torsos. RJ's fingers moved to Ray's lower back to slip beneath the waist band of her Levis, squeezing the firm flesh in her hands she pulled her hips down closer to her for more contact.

"I want them off." She growled against Ray's lips.

"So demanding, makes me hot." Ray growled back.

She lifted her body up and let RJ unfasten her Levis and push them down her hips, small feet came up and worked them all the way down until Ray kicked them free.

"No BVD's?"

"No one stole my dirty clothes this week." She lowered her head to place kisses down RJ's upper chest until she came to the top of each breast, pulling the soft skin between her lips, she sucked until RJ took in a ragged breath. Moving over she did the same to it's twin, looking down she saw the two dark bruises forming on the pale skin. Placing a soft kiss on each one she brought her tongue over each one and then down to circle a hardened nipple.

"My Gods Kiwi!" She wrapped her hands in dark hair and pulled Ray's head down to her aching nipple. "Suck it!"

Ray could feel her wetness coating the insides of her thighs, each small moan from RJ made her center throb with her heartbeat. Now with her becoming demanding it got worse. Sucking the nipple into her mouth, she grazed the tip with her teeth and heard a ragged breath come from RJ. After treating the other the same, she abandoned them to work her way down the faint hairline on her hard abs to the waistline of her Levis. Unbuttoning her fly, she kissed the exposed flesh until RJ was squirming beneath her.

"Kiwi, I'm dying here!"

Ray grinned up from where her chin was resting on RJ's lower abdomen. Getting to her knees she pulled RJ's Levis off and tossed them on the floor, she left her silk panties just to be mean and planed on teasing her mercilessly until she begged. Hovering near the skin on the insides of her thighs, she licked and sucked making RJ squirm. She felt fingers tangle in her hair and try to push her head down. She bit the inside of one thigh close to her apex and felt hips rise upward.

"Sparky, calm down." She blew warm air on the wet spot between RJ's legs and chuckled when she heard a low rumbling growl. Moving up a glistening body, she held herself over her soon to be lover, looking deeply into her eyes she showed her all that was in her heart before. Claiming her lips in a slow passionate kiss.

"I like to take my time." She whispered against wet lips. Moving a hand downward, she used one finger and brought it across swollen nether lips, RJ's hips thrust upward looking for more contact that would never come.

"I can feel how wet you are." She nipped a soft area on the side of her neck. Taking one of RJ's small hands, she brought it down to her own center and pushed her fingers against her to show her that she was the same. "You do that to me with a single kiss." She pushed her hips against the small hand and moaned deeply before she backed off and continued her torturous travels. Stopping at the waistband of silk panties, she used her teeth to pull them slowly down, holding them down with her chin, she snaked her tongue out to lick closely trimmed hair.

RJ's hands were gripping the bed covers till her knuckles turned white, every nerve ending in her body was singing. Her stomach muscles clenched and rolled with each of Ray's touches. Lifting her hips for Ray so that she could remove her panties. Once they were gone, she spread her legs and welcomed the feeling of warm breath caressing her burning center.

Her voice was rough. "I need you Kiwi...Please."

Ray took her first taste of her lover's juices and moaned deeply. Looking up into heavy lidded green eyes, she kept contact with them as she took another taste and continued to slip her tongue between swollen throbbing lips until her lover's head fell back onto the pillow. Slipping her tongue into her center, she had to squeeze her own thighs tightly together to keep her climax in check because of the deep moan that came from RJ. Curling the sides of her tongue up, she moved her tongue in and out of her lover until she was panting and thrusting her hips into her.

"What...are...you doing...to me!" She let go of the blankets to wrap her fingers into dark hair.

Ray could feel her inner muscles throbbing around her tongue, using her thumb she rubbed it across a swollen clit and felt her center clamp down on her tongue.

"Ohh gods!!! Kiwi...I'm..."

All Ray heard were unintelligible sounds coming from her lover when her climax over took her. With her lover's juices flowing over her tongue and chin, her own climax over powered her and tore through her body. When her body calmed to just small tremors, her head was resting on her lover's thigh. Crawling up to lay beside RJ, she pulled her into her arms and kissed her deeply, letting her taste herself on her lips.

"Kiwi, no ones ever done that to me before." She dropped her head down on her lover's shoulder and let her tears flow from her eyes.

"What Sparky?"

She heard a mumble then sniffing. She sighed and pulled her closer to her. "No ones ever been down there before me?" She felt a head nod.

"Not doing what you did." She slipped her hand between her lover's thighs and felt the wetness coating her short-cropped hair and nether lips. Sliding a finger between, she felt her engorged clit and her hips jerk forward. Adding pressure, she soon had her lover's hips thrusting harder.

Ray wrapped an arm around RJ's hips and moved her so that she was riding her thigh, she lifted her leg and made contact and felt RJ's wetness coat her skin. They moved together, pushing each other higher towards the pinnacle. RJ pushed two fingers inside of her lover and whispered to her.

"Come for me."

Ray's center clutched at her fingers, a scream tore from her throat when her body released. RJ followed seconds later with her own climax, she saw nothing but bright light as her breath was stolen from her shuddering body. With the last of the spasms dying down, they fell against each other gasping for air. RJ pushed sweat soaked bangs back from her lovers forehead, leaning forward she placed soft kisses at the corners of her lips.

"Are we dead?" Ray asked when she was able to speak.

"Hope not, wouldn't be able to do that any more if we were."

Ray cupped her lover's cheek in her hand, looked into her sleepy green eyes and sighed. "You are the most precious thing in my life, I love you RJ."

RJ placed a soft kiss to her lips, wiping a tear from a blue eye before she whispered in a choked voice.

"I love you to Kiwi."

She wrapped her arms around Ray and snuggled close to her body, laying her head on her shoulder, she placed a kiss against her neck.

"Sleep now baby." Ray whispered as her own eyes fluttered closed.

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Balancing two coffee cups and a plate with bagels on top, RJ walked slowly back to her bedroom. Just before she got to the door she heard a cat call, turning her head she saw Larry leaning up against the wall.

"Nice legs Princess." He came towards her and opened the door to her office. "I can't believe you're up before your Kiwi lover." He snorted when her face turned a deep red. "Did you wear her out last night?"

"Larry!" She said between gritted teeth.

"Just as I thought. So what did your mother want if you don't mind my asking?"

"We are all going to hell! She's coming next week to live with us!"

His jaw dropped to his knees. "You're serious?"

She gave him a mischievous smirk. "Yep, so you know what that means?"

"No, tell me before I burst from curiosity."

"You get to pull out all your gowns and pretty dresses and play drag queen! And I'm going to be the most uncouth, foulmouthed heiress this side of the Mississippi."

A huge smile lit up his face; he clapped his hands and danced in a circle. "Judy Garland move over!" He sobered and looked at her with a serious expression. "What about Ray?"

"What better way to send my mother back to Boston."

He placed a hand on her shoulder and looked deeply into her eyes. "You didn't sleep with her because of your mother did you?"

"No Larry I didn't. I love her more than anything and I would never do anything to hurt her."

He kissed her temple and smacked her on her ass. "Better get in there before she comes looking for her shirt, but I must say you do look awful sexy in it."

Ray was still asleep, she lay on her stomach with RJ's pillow clutched in her arms, and soft snores came from parted lips. RJ put the coffee and bagels on the nightstand and crawled onto the bed to kneel beside Ray, pushing long dark hair back from her neck; she kissed the soft skin and worked her way down to each shoulder. Leaning back, she trailed a finger down Ray's spine until she came to her rear. Cupping a firm glut in her small hand, she squeezed it gently. A soft moan came from Ray; she rolled over onto her side.

"You terrorizing me?"

"Yep, problem with that?"

"Nope, come here."

Rolling them over, Ray hovered over her lover, placing a soft kiss on her neck she buried her face and sighed.

She whined. "I don't wanna go to work."

"Would S&M take care of the horses for a few hours?"

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Exhausted but sated, they came from RJ's bedroom. Tilting her head sideways RJ noticed that the house was silent.

"Damn, Larry went to work all ready."

"He's supposed to be at work, it's past noon."

Sticking her bottom lip out she, whined. "But I'm hungry and he does all the cooking."

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Mallory gave her wife a dirty look, she was about to throw something at her when Ray's truck pulled up to the barn. She pointed a finger at Sydney and told her to get down before she got her ass kicked.

"But I'm having fun!" She whined from where she was hanging from one of the arms on the walking machine.

Mallory grinned at her when she heard Ray's deep voice. "Now you've done it!"

RJ and Ray stopped beside Mallory and looked to see Sydney going in circles.

A low snicker burst from Ray's parted lips. "I see you're using the multi-purpose babysitter."

"Haa never thought of using that before, I always use a dog harness but she's gotten good at wiggling out of it."

RJ gave them both funny looks, shaking her head she mumbled. "I won't even go there. I'm going to get something to eat, anybody want anything?"

Ray pulled money from her wallet and stuffed it into her lover's pocket. "Get enough food so that we have some by the time you get back."

RJ crossed her arms over her chest, raising an eyebrow at her lover.

"Are you insinuating that I'll eat it all before I get back?"

"No insinuating about it." Ray leaned forward and gave her a lingering kiss, then grabbed her ass. "Better get going before I find something else for lunch."

RJ went to the racetrack kitchen leaving the cousins to whisper among themselves; she looked back over her shoulder to see her lover's face a bright red. "Uhh huh, they know!" She smiled the entire way to the kitchen.

"Ooohh I know that look Ray!" Mallory slapped her in her shoulder. "Little RJ knocked you on your ass!"

"I'm not saying a word." She dropped her eyes to her booted feet.

"Don't have to, it shows all over the place, including the sucker bite on your neck!" She jabbed the bruise with her finger and watched her cousin flinch.

"What'd I miss what'd I miss!" Sydney yelled from where she was hanging upside down from the walker.

"NOTHING!" They both yelled in unison.

"So what's it been four, five years?"

Ray's face turned half a dozen colors; she looked to the ceiling hoping to see a UFO that would abduct her on the spot. "Six, but I wasn't counting."

"Not counting what?" RJ asked from behind them. "I got our food, and yes I did leave some so there!"

Not much was accomplished that day at the stables; the cousins took that time to drill RJ on her life and her expectations for their embarrassed cousin. RJ could tell that they cared about the stoic groom and only wanted the best for her.

The week was drawing closer to what RJ had named hell day, with her and Ray's blossoming new relationship she hoped that her mother would not cause any harm with her homophobic thinking. She had to laugh at her self, not to long ago she had been the same way. What one beautiful soul could do to someone was amazing. Her body warmed with just one thought of her Kiwi lover, her heart began to beat faster and with one look from those impossible blue eyes made her knees weak. That is exactly what happened the second Ray came from the shower, her hair wet and slicked back on her head, showing off her high cheekbones, flashing blue eyes set

off by a deep tan. Her heart stilled, breath caught in her chest as her lover came towards her wrapped only in a towel.

"Sparky are you all right?" Ray asked from not two foot in front of her lover.

Her voice had a breathless quality to it. "You steal my breath away with one look." Ray gave her a small smile and took her into her arms for a deep soul-searing kiss. Lifting her up into her arms she carried her to their bed and laid her down gently. They expressed their love for each other on and off for hours until they fell asleep in each other's arms.

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With the stereo on low, Larry danced around the kitchen making his late night snack of cheese and crackers. He sang at the top of his lungs to the *Dixie chicks*. A loud knock came from the front door interrupting his solo part, stomping to the door in his fuzzy slippers and silk robe he jerked it open and was about to bark out a greeting, until a small woman with blonde hair streaked with gray gazed up at him with disgust showing in her green eyes. She shoved past him and pointed to her many huge suitcases.

"I want those put in Rhapsody's bedroom immediately, where is my daughter!" She demanded in a strong Bostonian accent.

All Larry could do was stand with his jaw hanging.

"Well just don't stand there who ever you are, get my bags in here and take me to my daughter!"

Finding a voice that was octaves higher than his own was; he stuttered.

"Ma'am it's late and Lady Rhapsody is...indisposed."

"I don't care what time it is, I have flown for hours to get here and the only thing on my mind right now is to retire!" She threw her mink coat at him, looked around her and stomped down the hall flinging doors open on her search. When she came to RJ's office she knew she was close, looking around her, she huffed at the cluttered shelves and desktop.

"Very obvious that she needs to fire that servant!" Pushing the bedroom door open she felt along the wall for the light switch. Flipping it on she immediately walked to the bed and threw the blankets off the bed.

"Rhapsody Beau...Ohh my God!"

Green eyes shot open, RJ rolled over onto Ray's chest to hide their naked bodies. She was in total shock and at a loss for words.

Ray leaned close to her ear and whispered. "Your mother's here."

"Mother what in the hell are you doing in my room?"

"What are you doing in bed with a woman! Who is she? I don't really care at this point but she is leaving this house right now!" She pointed a finger at Ray then swung her arm back towards the door.

"Get out NOW!"

Larry came running into the room, grabbing up the blankets he recovered them and stood guard.

"I am so sorry, I tried to stop her RJ. Really I did but she just..."

Her eyes narrowed at her mother. "It's OK Larry, my mother has no manners!"

Pulling a blanket around her body, she got up from the bed and pointed to her office. "Out Mother!"

"Not until that what ever she is gets out of this room!"

Ray got out of the bed and came to her full height in front of the older woman. Glaring down at Mrs. Beaumont, she spoke to RJ. "I'll get dressed and be in the kitchen." She walked past the small group, picked up her clothes from where she had left them in a chair and left the room with a terrified Larry behind her.

"Why was there a woman in your bed?" Mrs. Beaumont asked as she backed RJ up against her bed. "I will not put up with another abomination in the family!"

RJ's temper flared, her green eyes narrowed as she drilled them in to eyes so much like her own.

"Is that what Roger was, an abomination? Well, you know what mother I could care less what you think of my late brother or me! My lover and I will give you this room and I will stay with her. Makes no difference to me as long as I'm with her!"

"You can not be serious."

"I am most serious, I will not change my life for you or anyone. You will not brow beat me like you to do everyone else." Grabbing up her clothes she walked into the bathroom to change.

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Ray was quiet on the way to the Cliffside motel, she kept glancing over to her lover to see how she was handling the situation. Tear's flowed from green eyes to drip from her chin, she held onto Ray's hand for life.

After getting their room, Ray carried RJ from the truck. She continued to hold her in her arms when she sat on the edge of the bed.

"Sparky, we'll get passed this. I love you and nothing will ever change that." She kissed her lovers cheek and wiped the tears from her face. "Let's get some sleep and in the morning we'll figure out what to do."

"I really hate how she acts, that was one of the reasons I never returned home after college." Soft sobs racked her body, she buried her face against Ray's chest and cried until she fell asleep.

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Larry was ready to throw himself into the nearest river. The older Beaumont was treating him as a lowly servant. She had burst into his bedroom and ordered him to change the sheets on RJ's bed and to remove those other women's clothes from the dresser and closet. Now with a garbage bag filled with not only Ray's clothes but RJ's as well he stumbled to his room.

"I hope you girls know what you're doing." He groaned and dropped into his Queen Ann chair. "I can't do this by myself." He became pensive for a few moments. "Whether you know it or not Sally, you're going to help us." He turned in and slept for a few hours before he would have to go in to work.

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Ray and RJ dragged in to the stables the next morning from a restless sleep in a strange place. Eyes bloodshot and aching bodies they opened the door to Ray's room and woke S&M. They told them what happened the night before. And that they could go back home, that they would be staying at the track from now on.

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Mrs. Beaumont looked through the drawers in RJ's desk, she pulled out folders and binders. Looking through them she tossed them into a cardboard box at her feet, pulling the center drawer out she came across employment applications for the stables. She noticed that there was only one bearing the name Ray Rawlings. Checking each area a grin came to her face, she knew it had to be her daughter's lover. The address for next of kin was in New Zealand and the woman had an accent. Placing to the side she continued to search the drawer. Pulling out a manila envelope she opened it and pulled out win pictures from the racetrack. Each one had Rhapsody and the tall groom in them, holding hands and smiling for the camera.

"This can not continue, you will go back to Boston and forget this foolishness!" She threw the pictures into the box and closed the drawer. Taking the many boxes one at a time she put them out to the road, she intended to get the house in order so that it could be put on the market.

"She will not need a house once she comes back home to live, that is after she's released from the therapy program I will have set up for her."

Larry came home early from work, as he pulled into the drive he noticed the boxes sitting at the road. With one look at the win pictures on top he knew what the older Beaumont had done. Pilling the boxes in the trunk, he headed out again to go to the racetrack to find RJ.

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"I don't fucking believe her!" RJ screamed at the top of her lungs.

Ray pulled her into her arms, resting her head on top of hers she spoke quietly. "Easy Sparky, I know she's over stepped here. There's nothing we can do about it now. Do you want to go over there and talk to her?"

"Absolutely...not. I would just end up screaming and yelling at her."

Larry rubbed her back, placing a kiss on her temple he told her that he had their clothes in his car.

"Our clothes?" Ray asked with an odd expression on her face.

"Yeah, after you two left, I became slave labor. She had me change the sheets, clean the room and take all of your clothes out of the room. Well as I was doing that, I took all of RJ's work clothes to." He lowered his head before continuing. "I hate to say this RJ, I hate that woman!" He smiled when he heard a soft chuckle come from RJ. "I was going to do the drag queen thing but I don't think that will do anything but have her throw me out. Who knows, I may go home and find my stuff at the road."

RJ turned her face towards him. "If that happens you call the police and then call us."

"I feel like I'm in the middle of a soap opera!" He snickered. Giving them hugs he walked away.

"What are we going to do Kiwi?" Sad green eyes looked into troubled blue. "On top of that psycho bitch here, now we have the Boston bitch in our home." She broke down into sobs.

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Instead of staying at the track, they went out to the farm and stayed with Sydney and Mallory. They needed a safe haven away from all the problems that had popped up in less than 48 hours. Mallory had given them one of the large guest rooms to stay in and helped them bring in all their stuff. She didn't know what either her or Sydney could do to help them, but she knew what ever they needed she and her wife would do. Retiring to the room she shared with her wife, Mallory found her going through the binders for the stables.

"Whatcha doing baby?"

Tired blue eyes looked up at her. "Making sure that the Bostonian bitch can't take the stables from RJ."

"What about the big boss?" Mallory asked as she dropped down onto their bed and leaned into her wives side.

"Unless she wants to go up against every barrister in New Zealand, I think she'll leave the boss alone."

"Good, now all we have to do is take care of these two and ride out the storm."

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Mrs. Beaumont had made dozens of phone calls, she had just dialed a number and was waiting for the other party to pick up.

"Hello Dr. Giovanni, this is Mrs. Beaumont. I have a problem with my daughter Rhapsody, she's had a terrible break-up with her intended. Can you perhaps fax a prescription here to West Virginia for an injectable sedative." Pause. "You know Rhapsody and her taking any kind of pills. Thank you and I will see you when we return to Boston, say hello to your family."

Everything was set for their return to Boston. Now all she had to do was wait until the others got there, and then get Rhapsody to the house.

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The phone rang early the next morning waking Mallory from a deep sleep, rolling over her wife she answered the phone. Not bothering to hang it up she ran from the room and headed to Ray and RJ's. Flinging the door open she ran to the bed and shook her cousin awake.

"Ray wake up." A pair of blurry blue eyes looked up at her.

"What's wrong?"

"We have to get over to the track. Someone turned all the horses loose!"

The four of them piled into the truck and took off at break neck speed to the track, as they pulled close to the gate they saw a guard running towards them.

"Ray, one of your horses is on the road outside the fence, they can't catch her."

Ray's eyes grew wide, she looked to the others, and before she knew it RJ was shoving on her.

"Go get her Ray, you're the only one. We'll get the others."

She jumped from the truck and took off running towards the road where their horse was running loose. She came around the corner and her heart stopped. Running towards on coming traffic was Spark of Lapis. She took a deep breath and whistled. She watched as the filly hesitated a brief

second before she jumped the car that had stopped to avoid hitting her. Ray turned and took off back to the gate, she knew that she would not be able to catch Spark on foot, she slid in the gravel at the corner of the fence; she righted herself and yelled for Katy. Seconds later she heard her whinny back and then the mare came trotting up to her. Swinging up onto her back she stopped at the guard shack and got a rope they kept there for emergencies. Katy took off at a full out run down the grassy area beside the fence, Ray could hear horns blowing and tires screeching up on Rt. 340, then the lights of police cars going through the intersection. Taking Katy up the embankment, they went across the road and up the side to Rt. 340.

She could see cars stopping all over the place and hoped that she could get the filly before she was killed.

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Mallory swung up onto one of the horses and took off after two of the horses that were on the opposite side of the racetrack grounds. Grabbing two shanks from the wall on her way she yelled back to RJ to check the stalls to see who was missing. They had been able to get three of the horses rather quickly since they were right outside of the stalls, she could see seven of them grazing out in the field with the goat. She counted a total of eleven that she knew of, that left five for them to get back including the one that was on the road. She prayed that Ray could catch her. Taking a shank from the wall, she was headed out into the field to help Sydney catch their horses. A sound of hooves on pavement made her turn her head, Ray flew past her on the other side of the fence on Katy.

"Oohh shit! SYDNEY!" She screamed as she ran to where Ray's cousin was at the other end of the field coming her way with one of the horses.

Grabbing the stocky woman's arm she pointed to where Ray had gone.
"Ray just went down the road on Katy! What horses are still missing?"

Sydney looked out in the field and then named the missing ones.

"We don't know which ones Mallory went to get. I'm sure that some of the other grooms are helping catch them to."

RJ was scared to death for her lover and the horse running loose down the road, she wanted so bad to get in the truck and go after her but she knew that Ray would want her here taking care of the other horses. Walking towards the nearest one she snapped the shank onto it's halter and led it back to it's stall. When she came out Mallory was coming back with one in tow, along with a man who had the other. He put the horse in the stall and walked away not allowing RJ to thank him. He stuffed the shank in his back pocket and disappeared into the early morning. At the sound of a grunt she turned to see Sally being pushed all over the shed row by Reaper.

"You big bone head horse! Stay off my silk shirt!" He pushed the slobbering face away from him with disgust. "Of all the ones I catch it had to be you!" He pointed to the horses stall and ordered him in.

"Hi girls, I must say that I am not enjoying myself!" He wiped his hands on his pant legs and grinned. "How is the Amazon nation going?" He asked Sydney.

"Not good, still missing one horse. Ray went after it on Katy." She looked over her shoulder to RJ with questioning eyes. "Which one is missing?" RJ walked the shed row looking into each stall, they had not gotten them all back into the correct ones so she went by recognition alone. She gasped when she came to the last stall, tears formed in her eyes.

"It's Spark!"

Three sets of eyes turned to her, Sydney nodded to Sally.

"Take her down the road, see if you can find Ray."

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Katy slipped on the hard pavement, sparks flying from her shoes as Ray took her off the side of the road to run in the tall grass. She could just see Spark ahead of her as she weaved in and out of traffic. The police had stopped all traffic both ways on Rt. 340 and had set up barricades using their cars hoping that the filly would stop. What they didn't realize was that the filly could jump a good six foot without a problem. She saw the filly turn and roll back on her hindquarters when someone approached her. She spun and turned and headed back towards Ray, the only thing she could do was hope that she could get along side of her and rope her. Turning Katy so that they were pointing in the same direction the filly was headed she set off at a low gallop. At the last second Spark turned and went over a fence and out into an open field, Ray followed. Katy was getting tired and she hoped that Spark was to, this would be her last chance to catch the filly, and she knew that another busy road lay on the other side of the field. Laying down over Katy's shoulder she kicked her forward at a ground-eating run. She was gaining on the tiring filly, raising up she swung the rope over her head and let it fly, it grazed the side of her shoulders and hit the ground. Now riding at a full run, sitting up and trying to bring the rope back in was a suicide mission. Trying once again, she threw the rope just as Spark was about to go up the incline onto the other road. She felt the bite of the rope tear into her hands as it tightened on Spark's neck. Wrapping it around her upper arm she squeezed her legs, Katy reacted immediately and backed up. Spark reared up into the air when the rope tightened. Falling back onto her haunches she sat down and fell to her side. Ray slid from Katy's back and ran to the filly, kneeling down near her head, she looked into the filly's tired eyes. Dropping her face down onto the sweaty neck she cried. Minutes later she ran her hands down the now calm horse's neck.

"Come on Spark, lets go home." She stood up and then tapped the filly on her side and watched as she struggled to her feet. Checking her legs for injuries, she found that the right front shoe was split down the middle.

"Guess we all get to walk home." Tying the rope to Sparks halter she led her while Katy walked behind.

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RJ was going ballistic, she was standing in the middle of the road trying to get the direction that Ray had gone. The officer shook his shoulders and pointed down the road.

"We just came from there and they said she came this way!" She wiped the tears from her face, she turned in defeat and headed back to the truck and trailer. She didn't know what to do, she and Sally had spent over an hour driving up and down Rt. 340 trying to find Ray. She wondered if Ray had not all ready caught Spark and was now back at the barn or if she was still chasing her. Suddenly, the hair on the back of her neck stood up, she turned towards an empty field and saw three figures off in the distance. Her heart beat rapidly in her chest, she knew that was her lover out there. Running back to the truck she told Sally and then ran towards the fence. Climbing over she took off at a sprint until she was winded to much to run. Moving at a slow jog she came to a distance that she could make out her lovers features. Fresh tears came to her eyes and flowed down her cheeks.

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Ray was exhausted, she walked slowly with her horses beside her, she knew that they had miles to go yet and with the way the three of them felt it would be hours before they got back to the track. She looked up from the ground to see someone running towards her, she knew without a doubt that it was RJ. Her heart filled with emotion, tears filled her eyes at the thought of her lover coming to find her. She picked up the pace until she could make out RJ's features. She could see the relief on the small woman's face and knew that everything was going to be OK.

RJ threw herself into her lover's arms, they fell to the ground at the horse's feet and tears of happiness clouded their eyes.

"I've been searching hours for you."

"Sorry Sparky, we decided to go for a little bit of exercise." She pulled RJ down for a long deep kiss, when it broke she pulled her head down and buried her face in her hair. "Let's go home." She mumbled.

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They loaded the horses into the trailer and took them back to the track, they were greeted by S&M and Larry who had seen all the commotion from the window of his shop. After checking all the horses, Ray rubbed down Katy and Spark. Painting their legs and applying thick wraps, she turned of their lights and went to find her lover. She was beginning to feel every muscle in her body screaming from the over exertion. She wanted nothing more than to take a long hot shower and fall into bed with her lover.

RJ was lying on the bed in only a flannel shirt, her eyes closed making it appear that she was asleep. As soon as the door opened, she looked up.

"Kiwi?"

"Yeah, go back to sleep. I'm going to take a shower."

RJ got up from the bed and followed her lover into the bathroom, she helped her remove her clothes and turned the water on. Dropping her flannel shirt on the floor she stepped into the shower and pulled Ray in with her. With gentle hands she washed her lover's hair and then every inch of her body, when she was finished she led to their bed.

"Lay on your stomach for me." Tired blue eyes looked at her, she leaned up and placed a soft kiss on her lips. "You're moving like your ninety, I'm going to give you a back rub." She pushed Ray down onto the bed and rolled her on to her stomach. Straddling her hips she started at her shoulders with strong fingers and worked the tight muscles loose, low moans and groans came from Ray as her body relaxed. Ray rolled over without dislodging her lover, she pulled RJ down to her and kissed her passionately. With slow gentle hands she explored every inch of RJ's body until she had her writhing against her. Bending her knees she slid RJ down until their centers were grinding against each other.

RJ leaned back and ground harder, pushing them higher. She felt warm fingers pinch and roll her nipples, shockwaves shot through her body to stop at her center. Moving one hand between them she entered her lover quickly and felt the muscles throb around her fingers. Pushing one last time she sent them both over the edge screaming out each other's names.

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Larry walked up to the front door late that night and tried his key, when the door didn't unlock he checked to make sure it was the right one. Trying again he got the same result.

"What the hell is going on here?" He walked around to the back door and found that his key didn't work there either. He looked into the windows to see not lights on, he continued to walk around the house to his bedroom window. Pushing up on the pane he slid it up and crawled through.

"Can not fucking believe this, here I am breaking in to my own home in the middle of the damn night." He dropped to the floor and fell over what he could only assume was a cardboard box since it crushed with his weight. "Now what!" Crawling across the floor he came to the wall, flipped the light on and almost passed out. His entire room was empty except for a few cardboard boxes that contained his clothes. He opened the door and came face to face with a county sheriff.

"What is going on here?" He asked the sheriff.

"That's him!" Mrs. Beaumont said from the hallway. "I want him arrested for burglary, trespassing and breaking and entering!"

Larry's eyes grew large, his jaw dropped. "I live here! You can't do this!" He was pushed up against the wall and handcuffed. "Sir, that woman is insane! I've lived here for the past seven

years! My names on the house deed!"

"Shut up, I don't want to hear it."

The sheriff read him his rights and pushed him into the back seat of the cruiser that had been hidden on the opposite side of the house.

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Ray walked to the office door and opened it to come face to face with a Charlestown police officer. She backed up when he put a hand on her shoulder to push her back into the room.

"Can I help you with something Sir?"

"I'm looking for Ray Rawlings and Rhapsody Beaumont."

"I'm Rawlings." Ray looked over her shoulder at her confused lover.

"I'm Rhapsody Beaumont, what's this about?"

The officer produced a leather shank and held it out to Ray. "Can you identify this?" Ray turned it over in her hands and nodded. She pointed out the brand that she herself had burned into the leather. "It's belongs to the stables. We must have lost it yesterday when we were catching the horses. Is that what this is about?"

"In a way ma'am." He took the shank away to both of their amazements. He motioned behind him and a filthy man came into the room and looked at Ray and RJ. "Do you recognize them?"

"That's them all right, saw them real good."

"You can go now, but don't leave the area." He waved his hand and another officer stepped into the room. "Ray Rawlings and Rhapsody Beaumont, you are both under arrest for the murder of Sandra Pierson." He and the other officer handcuffed them, read them their rights and then took them to the two cruisers parked outside of the barn. Before they were put into the cruiser, S&M pulled into the parking lot.

"Ray what's going on?" Mallory asked as she came towards her. She was kept back by the officer and was not allowed to talk to Ray. "Call Da and tell him I've been arrested for murder." Ray yelled to her as the officer was shoving her into the backseat.

"What the hell is going on with this damn place!?" Sydney yelled but was shoved forcefully back as she tried to get to RJ. She heard RJ yell Larry's name and knew what she wanted her to do.

"Mallory we have to find out what the hell happened."

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Sally was waiting at the front desk of the police station; Larry had called him at home and told him what had happened. He came straight over to get his friend out on bail. Which was a war in it's self with the charges that had been brought against him. He had been waiting three hours for the paper work to be done, and was on his last gay nerve when he saw Larry being brought from the back. As soon as Larry was un-cuffed, they left the station. When they got to the parking lot, Sally stopped Larry and asked him to tell him everything.

"That woman is insane! I can't believe I've been charged with all that shit! We have to go talk to RJ and Ray. RJ should have the deed for the house."

"We'll go right now; I know they stayed at the track last night."

Sally got into the car; he was waiting for Larry who seemed to be staring off into the distance.

"Sally? We don't need to go to the track."

"Why not?"

"Because both of them are being taken into the police station right now."

"What? You are kidding right?"

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They ran to the front door of the police station and entered right behind the sheriff deputies. Larry tried to get to RJ but was pushed back from her.

"What the fuck!" He turned to Ray but she was pushed in an opposite direction than RJ. "Sally has the whole town gone insane?"

Sally ran his hands down his face in frustration. "I don't know but someone is going to tell us something or I'm going to tear this place apart with my bare hands!" He grabbed Larry by his hand, pulling him out the door he ran across the street to the barbershop.

"Sally what are we doing in here?"

"I'll be right back." He went into the back room and came out shortly followed by an old man. "Larry this is my uncle John." The old man held out an arthritic hand to him.

"Heard from Sally here that all hell has broken loose."

"You can definitely say that." Larry dropped into a barber chair and shook his head.

"Well, ladies I can tell ya this much about your two friends. They got busted for murdering some woman at the racetrack."

Two jaws dropped open, Larry and Sally looked at each other and then shook their heads.

"I don't believe that." Larry replied. "Neither one of them would kill anybody."

Rheumy blue eyes looked at Larry. "I heard on the scanner that you were arrested last night."

"Yeah, for going into my own house at that!"

"I may be able to help you and your friends, I know all the cops and I also know which ones you can trust." He wrote a name on a scrap of paper and handed it to Sally. "Call her; you can trust her to get to the bottom of all this horseshit."

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Mallory called Ray's father and then made a call to RJ's house, she couldn't reach him but got her mother instead. She argued with the woman to find out where Larry was but Mrs. Beaumont kept yelling back that she wanted to speak with her daughter.

"She's not here god damn it! She's in jail!" Before she could say another word, the phone was slammed down in her ear.

"Fucking bitch!" She slammed the receiver into the cradle. "She doesn't know where Larry is."

"She should, the fucking cunt had me arrested last night!" He said from behind them.

The four of them sat in the office and told their stories, and tried to figure out what the hell was going on. They decided to call the police officer that Sally's uncle had told them about and see if she could in fact help.

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Ray was cuffed to a metal chair in a small room, she had been there for hours, her shoulders were sore and she was getting madder by the minute when they refused to tell her where RJ was.

"Why did you kill Sandra Pierson?"

She had been asked this question none stop for hours and she kept giving them the same answer.

"I didn't kill any one! I told you that before."

"We find that hard to believe when we have an eyewitness and a shank that belongs to you as the murder weapon." The officer slapped the table in front of her. "You admit that you killed her and we'll let you see your friend."

"Go to hell!"

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The officer walked back and forth in front of a frightened RJ.

"Miss. Beaumont, we have all the proof we need to convict you and your friend for murder. We can make a deal with you and have your charges reduced if not dismissed if you tell us that Rawlings killed Pierson."

"Do you people think that I'm stupid? Neither one of us killed anyone! So you can shove your deal up your ass, I'll rot in prison!" She knew that this had to have been a set up, to much had happened in the last two days for it to be just bad luck.

They were removed from the interrogation rooms and saw each other for seconds before they were locked into different holding cells. Ray was ready to kill; she was tired of being accused for something she didn't do. She knew that they were trying to play her and RJ against each other and prayed that RJ didn't fall for it. She hoped that Mallory was able to get a hold of her father because he was the only one who could help her now.

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Mrs. Beaumont came through the front door of the police station followed by three men in dark suits. She approached the desk sergeant, motioned to one of the men who came forward and handed the sergeant some papers.

"That is an order from the judge releasing Miss. Beaumont into my custody."

The sergeant narrowed his eyes at him.

"I can read." He looked down at the papers and then told them to wait while he had someone bring RJ from lock-up. He didn't like the looks of them and made sure that he memorized what they looked like. Using the phone, he called back to the holding area. Stuffing the paper's into the in box. He pulled out similar ones and handed then to the man.

"She'll be out in five minutes, you can wait over there."

RJ jumped when the cell door was opened and an officer motioned her forward.

"You're being released, come with me."

She followed him to the front, expecting to see Larry, her face paled when she saw her mother and the three men. She turned to the officer.

"Who arranged this?" He went over to the desk sergeant and came back seconds later and told her. "I won't go with them, take me back to lock-up."

"Sorry miss can't do that." Before she could run for the door, her mother grabbed her by her arm and propelled her into the arms of two of the men. She started screaming for someone to help her and fighting the two men for all she was worth. When they got her outside, one of the men injected her in her hip; she collapsed and was carried to a dark car. The desk sergeant watched from the front window, as soon as they pulled past he took down the license plate number and went to make a phone call.

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One of the officers that had been questioning Ray came to her cell with a huge smile on his face.

"Well, your friend just pinned you with the murder."

"Fuck you, she wouldn't do that." Ray felt her world crumble around her, her heart shattered into millions of pieces; she wished that she could die right on the spot. She couldn't believe that her lover would do that knowing that she was innocent. She watched as the officer stood there with a smug look on his face; she wondered if she attacked him if he would shot her dead. She got up slowly from the concrete bench; she was halfway across the cell when he spoke.

"Afraid so, in fact her mother just got her released."

She froze where she stood, with those words she knew he had lied about what RJ had done. RJ would never call her mother for help.

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The desk sergeant pulled the release papers from the in box; he signaled to one of the other officers and told him he was going to lunch and to watch the desk. Going down the hall, he went towards the stairs that led to the basement where the detectives had their offices. Checking as he walked, he wanted to make sure that no one seen what he was doing. Going to the last office on the right he stepped in and closed the door.

"Denny, I have something for you." He handed the papers to a blonde woman in her late thirties; her dark green eyes looked at the papers and then up to him.

"What is it?" She asked with a Smokey voice.

"I had some strange people come in a while ago and have Rhapsody Beaumont released into their custody. I got a bad feeling from it, so I swapped the papers. When Beaumont came out front, she went nuts, was screaming and fighting them, when they got her outside she collapsed. This is the license plate number of the car.

Denny stood up from her desk and took the scrap of paper from him. Looking at it, she stuck it into her shirt pocket.

"Why was Beaumont here?"

He went on to explain the arrest and to tell her that Ray was down in lock-up for the same thing.

"I'll look in to it, thanks Frank."

After the sergeant left, Denny looked at the papers closer. Picking up the phone, she called the court clerk and questioned him about the release forms. A smile came to her face when she hung the phone up. Searching her filing cabinet, she pulled out a thick file and started leafing through it. She came to a certain page, read it and then put the file in the safe she had set in her floor and locked it.

"Big mistake, huge mistake!" She got up from her desk and went in search of the other accused. Before she could get half way down the hall, her cell phone rang.

"Detective Denzel." She listened for a few minutes, throwing in a huhs and OK's in. "Give me an hour and I'll meet you there." Then hung up. "This is getting really complicated."

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"OK, she said to give her an hour and she'll meet us here." Sally leaned up against the wall and sighed.

Sydney pulled her wife into her arms and rested her head on her shoulder. "What do we do until then?"

"Cry." Larry said from where he sat looking out the office door. "This is all so overwhelming. I hope Ray hasn't killed someone in lock-up."

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Denny stood outside of lock-up and watched Ray pace back and forth in her small cell, she recognized the tall groom from the racetrack and knew of the case from years ago. She walked forward slowly until Ray stopped and looked at her.

Ray saw the woman watching her, she kept pacing anyway, and she had to do something or go crazy. When the blonde came towards her, she noticed that she had a bad limp and the rough no nonsense way about her. She turned at the smoky voice, her expression blank.

"Rawlings, I'm detective Denzel. I'd like to ask you some questions."

"I've answered enough questions, I told those assholes I didn't kill no one and neither did RJ."

As the detective got closer, Ray noticed that she had a long scar that ran from the corner of her left eye to the bottom of her jaw. And another one near her jugular vein that disappeared beneath the collar of her T-shirt.

"I have had one phone from a friend of yours and Beaumont's and then the desk sergeant coming to me for the same thing." She leaned against the bars, looked right at Ray with her darkened green eyes narrowed. "Trouble seems to follow the Beaumont name." She saw the flames erupt in blue eyes and held up one hand. "Hold on there now, just hear me out. I know Roger was a mafia hit, I also know that his sister has never been in any kind of trouble. So when I hear that she's been arrested for murder, red flags go up all over the place."

Ray stepped up to the bars, stared into the green eyes searching for the truth.

"What do you want?"

"I want to close out a murder case and see the ones who killed Roger go to jail."

"What has that got to do with me and RJ?"

"First tell me what your relationship is with Beaumont." She watched blue eyes darken. "I gotcha, Beaumont was released to an older woman and three men."

She went on to tell Ray what the desk sergeant had told her, and that their descriptions matched ones of witnesses that had seen the same men with Roger before he had the cement accident. Upon hearing this, Ray's knees buckled, she slipped to her knees and leaned her head against the bars. Tears filled her eyes but she refused to let them flow down her face.

"They're going to kill her because of me. She told me that the mafia killed Roger for stealing but I think it's because he was gay."

Denzel sunk to her knees with difficulty; she came eye to eye with Ray and saw the pain showing in her eyes. "Why do you say that?" Ray told her how Mrs. Beaumont had acted when she caught them in bed and all that had happened since.

"Ray, do you think they had something to do with Pierson's murder?"

"I don't know I do know that the guy who identified us worked for her." She told her about the horses being left out of their stalls and all that had happened that day with getting them all caught. "Talk to my cousin's Mallory and Sydney, they were there at the stables."

"I've talked to Salvatore; I'm to meet everyone at the track. Do me a favor, if anyone comes in here and starts asking you questions, refuse to answer. Is anyone getting you a lawyer?"

"Mallory was going to call my father."

"OK. As soon as I learn something I'll let you know." She took a few steps away and turned back. "For what it's worth, I think you two were framed."

She pulled her cell phone from her pocket, hit speed dial and waited.

"This is Denzel, I need an APB on a dark Cadillac sedan, smoked windows, Boston plates, number MQB1941. When you find the car just follow it, I want to know where it goes, what the five occupants do. I have reason to believe that one of the occupant's life is in danger." She paused. "If they drop off a young blond, stay with her and get someone else to follow the others. She paused once again, her voice gruff she answered. "On my order! I take full responsibility." She closed her phone and cursed under her breath. "Asshole men."

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Sally opened the office door after the second knock, he looked with suspicion at the rough woman standing there. "Can I help you?"

"I'm looking for Salvatore, I'm Detective Denzel."

"I'm Salvatore or Sally, please come in."

He introduced her to everyone in the room and then offered her a chair.

"My uncle John gave me your number, can you help us?"

"I think I might be able to, I've spoken with Ray. I also know that Beaumont was released from jail. Does she live at her brother's house?"

Larry closed his eyes and groaned. "Ohh shit! Detective Denzel."

"Just call me Denny, what's the ohh shit about?"

Larry told her of his arrest and of finding all the records for the stables and personal files that Mrs. Beaumont had put out for the trash.

"Where are these files now?"

"At our house, we put them in our office." Sydney told her. "I checked them to make that the deed for the house and partnership records were there, I wanted to make sure that the Bostonian bitch couldn't take the stables from RJ or the other owner."

"Who's the other owner?"

Sydney looked to Mallory and saw her nod her head.

"Raylin Xavier Rawlings."

Denny wrote the name down in a notebook she pulled from her pocket.

"Where can I find this Raylin...Ohh shit!" She rubbed her forehead. "Ray's the other owner."

Larry and Sally's jaws dropped in shock. "Ray owns the stables!" They said in unison. Larry jumped up and kissed Sydney soundly on the lips. "I love you Syd!" Sydney looked at him as if he was nuts. "My name is on that deed for the house! I can get the charges dropped against me!"

Sally went over to one of the shelves and pulled out a binder, looking at the pages he swore under his breath. "That sneaky Kiwi! Look at this." He handed the binder to Mallory. "Is that Ray's signature?"

"Yep, she signs all the stable checks Xavier Rawlings. What's the problem?"

"I used to get one check a month for a lump sum and then another check every week for my wages. And it was signed SM Rawlings"

Sydney and Mallory laughed at him. "We gave you the weekly and Ray gave you the monthly."

"You're all nuts, damn confusing Kiwi's" Sally closed binder.

"OK, lets get on with this." Denzel said after she took everything in. "I need you guys to act as back-up for me, I need to find the guy that identified Ray and RJ. Ray said he worked for Pierson and maybe he was here yesterday when you were all catching the horses."

Sydney shook her head. "I was out in the field catching them, what about you Mallory?"

Mallory shook her head. "Nope, I don't remember any...wait there was this guy that brought one of the horses back. He took off as soon as he put the horse away."

Denzel nodded her head at her. "Good, remember what he looks like?"

"Ohh yeah. No problem there, lets go find this bastard. What do you need us to do?"

"If we find him, he's going to take off like a damn jack rabbit. I have a bad leg and I can't move to quick anymore so." She watched a huge grin come across S&M's faces.

"Striker time!" They slapped hands and then jumped up. "Let's go!"

Denzel looked at Sally. "Striker time?"

"Let's just say that the Aussie soccer team can't find their team captains."

"Ohh, hey just don't kill him! I need to ask him some questions!" She limped after S&M, a crooked grin covered her face at their antics. Mallory was riding on Sydney's back and singing the Australian national anthem.

"Don't mind them, they're happiest when they can kick the shit out of something." Sally ran a

hand down Denzel's sleeve. "Nice, Armani?"

"Of course, got it cheap at the police auction."

He skipped off after Larry. "We have a new place to shop, queenie!"

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Ray sat on the edge of her concrete bunk, her head in her hands she tried to think of how all this shit had happened. Did it tie into Pierson's murder or was the other stuff just a coincidence? All she knew was that she needed to get out and find RJ and then clear their names. Her head came up with the click of high heels coming towards her. A tall sandy haired woman with blue eyes motioned for the officer to open the cell. She then stepped in and told the officer to leave them. As soon as he was gone, the woman gave Ray a hug and kissed her cheek.

"What the Hell is going on here? I get a call from Da, saying that Mallory and Sydney called him saying that you had been arrested for murder. Why didn't you just call me?"

"I didn't think Sam, I mean one minute I'm with my lover and the next thing we're both being hauled in for murder."

"OK, I need you to start at the beginning and tell me everything that has happened and where to find the two amazon strikers so I can kick their sorry asses!"

After telling her sister everything that had happened, three hours had passed her by. She was more worried now that she hadn't heard anything from RJ. She expressed her concern to Sam and asked her to find out something before she pulled the first jailbreak in Charlestown history.

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Denzel and her little army of misfits walked the shed rows looking for the witness. They had checked all the other places that he would be and didn't think he would be back at the barn where the murder took place. Denzel smacked her forehead.

"You dumbass! Where's Pierson's barn?"

"It's number seventeen, back the way we came. I thought you said..."

Mallory never finished her sentence, she knew what Denzel was thinking. "How did she die, I mean we know she's dead but know one has said how?"

"Lets just say she was found swinging."

Sydney's eyebrow rose. "By Ray's shank."

They came around the backside of the stables that housed Pierson's horses, a handful of men

milled around talking and drinking beer. The five of them walked towards them with searching eyes, Mallory stopped and waited until Denzel caught up. She pointed to one man who was standing at the very end of the shed row. The minute he saw them he took off running. Sydney shot through the gap while Mallory took off after him. The other three watched as grooms jumped out of Mallory's way when she let out a war cry.

Sally tapped Denzel on her shoulder. "After they catch him they'll take him back to Ray's stables."

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RJ's eyes fluttered open to see only darkness, blinking them numerous times she began to adapt to the dark. She tried to roll from where she was lying but found that her hands and feet were being held down somehow. Lifting her head as far as she could she looked across from her to see a small bit of light coming around a small what she thought was a window. Straining her ears she could hear noises coming from somewhere but they were muted almost foggy in a way. Opening her mouth she tried to speak and only a gurgling sound came out, she could feel slobber running down her neck but couldn't feel her tongue, lips or chin. Her mind reeled at what had happened to her, she remembered her mother and her thugs dragging her from the police station and that was all. Terror struck her, they had done this to her, her own mother had taken her away from her lover. Tears flowed down her face, she tried to sob but her body refused to act. Dropping her head back down she screamed from within her mind. She had to escape, she had to help Ray.

Hearing a click of a lock she turned her head when a bright light flooded the room. Footfalls thudded on the floor, with the light she could see that the walls were padded with thick soundproof material. A cold hand turned her head back in the former direction. Her eyes widened at the sight of the syringe in the man's hand.

"Your shot should be wearing off by now, can't have you screaming for help." He gave her an evil laugh. "Not like anyone around here would notice with all the screaming the insane do anyway." He jabbed the needle into the front of her neck, she felt a little bit of a burn and then the top part of her chest went numb along with the rest of her face. She lay with her eyes unblinking, drool trailing from the corners of her mouth. She now knew what hell was.

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A dark car sat in the parking lot to the private hospital, two men smoked near the trunk of the car as they waited for Mrs. Beaumont and the other man to come back out. Neither one spoke but looked off into the distance. They both knew that the less they knew the longer they would live, especially when The Mafia Queen was running things. They turned at the sound of heels clicking across the pavement, they got into the car and waited. The look on Mrs. Beaumont's face could make a grown man piss himself. They knew that she was insane, she had to be to place her daughter in a private insane asylum. They all knew Rhapsody and she was far from being insane.

"Now that she's taken care of, all of the family's problems are over." She said to the man walking

beside her. "Except for one. When Rawlings goes into the prison, I want her killed before she can say hello to her cellmate."

The tall man acknowledge her orders. "It will be done on the bus to the prison. She'll never make it inside."

"Good now take me home, I must check on my bed ridden husband."

The mans body shuddered inside, he knew the family was in deep shit, this woman had gone off the rocker and was taking out her entire family one by one and any one who got in her way. He himself had gone to the Don, but was turned away being told it was not his place to discuss such matters. He knew he had to get out now before he himself had an accident like a few of the others had. He looked over the older woman's head to the other men and nodded his head.

After climbing in to the car, he directed them to go out the back way of the parking lot and take a different route home. He didn't want to take any chances on being seen. As they pulled out onto the road he continuously watched the traffic.

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A short woman dressed in a nurse's uniform roamed the halls, she carried a clipboard under one arm and a blood kit in the other. She looked into each doorway at the patients. So far she hadn't found the young blonde that she had been told was brought in earlier that morning. She came upon an older doctor with wild gray hair, bushy eyebrows and dark almost black eyes. The hair on the back of her neck stood up when he looked her in the eye.

In a thick Italian accent he told her that she was not to be on that floor, that all the patients were too dangerous for a nurse to be by herself. Dropping her head she nodded and went towards the nearest stairwell.

She thought to herself for a second. "OK, would they put her with the dangerous patients or somewhere else? I all ready checked the computer and she's not listed. So where the hell did they put her?" Taking the stairs she went up one level and began her search anew. "Just my fucking luck to have to search an eight floor hospital for one little blonde."

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Sydney burst through the gap and saw the man running towards the racetrack stadium, she knew if he got there he would be able to get outside of the fence and be able to disappear into the town its self. She cut back and went around the opposite way that he had gone, hoping that she could cut him off and that Mallory would be right behind him.

Mallory slipped in the sawdust as she tried to get around one of the men mulling around, she knew that it had cost her vital seconds. If it was not such a dire circumstance she would have stopped to kick the shit out of the drunken asshole. She caught site of the man she was chasing as he went out the door and around the corner. She knew where he was headed and decided to take

another direction. Finding a dumpster, she climbed up on to it and got to the roof of the barn. Running along the top she kept an eye on the man. She looked to the other barn beside her saw her wife running along the roof. She made a chirping sound and watched Sydney raise a hand at her and then point down.

Winded, the man decided that he had lost the women who were chasing him. He had always been quick on his feet, he had to be in his line of work. Being a thief and being slow didn't mesh to well. He slowed to a walk and then stood at the end of the last barns. Just ahead of him was his freedom, he would be able to take the ramp up to the grandstands and out of the track.

On silent feet both women edged to the end of the roofs, eyes connected for a brief second before turning back to their prey. They jumped the seven foot downward with war cries piercing the air. The man looked up, eyes bulged from what was coming at him. Before he could blink a shocked eye he was being smashed to the ground by two bodies. He lay spread eagle in the dirt, gasping for air and wondering if a truck running him over would have hurt less.

He mumbled from gasping lips. "Psycho's!"

Sydney looked down at him and growled. "Nah, Amazon's. Now get your stupid ass up before we play soccer with your head!"

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Denzel and the two queens sat in the shed row waiting for S&M to get back. Out of the corner of her eye she saw the two women coming towards her but no one else. Her heart sunk at the thought that the man had gotten away. Then her spirits rose when she saw arms bouncing along the ground.

"What have they done to him?" She mumbled to Larry and Sally.

Sydney had a huge toothy grin on her dirt covered face, with every step they took a cloud of dust hovered around them.

"We got him! Had to jump off the barn roof but we got him!"

Dropping the man's feet to the ground caused him to let out a loud groan. "Dragged his sorry ass all the way from the near the grandstand."

Mallory tossed her a rope and smirked at Denzel. Denzel didn't know if she wanted to see what they were going to do with the rope. It could mean her job.

"Baby, how many little things does a noose have on it?" Sydney asked while flipping the end of the rope over it's self, she bent down and measured the mans neck with one end and gave him an evil grin. "Your necks scrawny, we won't need a whole lot of rope to hang you."

He scrambled to his hands and knees, looking around him he stopped when he came to a pair of

dark green eyes.

"Denzel, you can't let them do this! It's...murder!" He started whimpering and looking for a place to run. He felt a foot in the center of his back and then pressure as the foot pushed him to the ground. The rope slipped over his head and tightened around his neck. Another piece was cut and used to tie his wrists together, the last thing done was his ankles.

"I remember who you are, did you have fun behind bars last time you were in?" She gave him a raised eyebrow. "You know I think it's only right Myers, you were the one who turned the horses loose and you killed Pierson and blamed it on Rawlings and Beaumont."

"I didn't do anything!" He cried. "I can't believe you're letting them do this!"

"Why not? I don't see a problem with family standing up for family." She grinned when his eyes widened as the rope was thrown up over a beam. Mallory started pulling on the rope while Sydney held to the other end attached to his neck. He felt it pull against his skin, his face paled with fright. Mallory whistled and called for Buck who came trotting over looking for the candy she always fed him. She tied the rope to his collar and backed up with him following her. The rope tightened some more, panic set into Myers, he started to struggle against the rope.

"Come on Myers, you know it only takes a little bit of pressure and the windpipe gets destroyed, the carotids collapse and then your dust."

Sydney pulled tighter on the rope, he was now up on his knees and praying to someone. Mallory walked Buck further away from Myers, the rope pulled him to his feet and had him on his tiptoes.

"Come on Myers, another inch or two and you'll be swinging like Pierson."

He started to gasp, shaking his head he fought the pressure of the rope, the front of his pants darkened, tears poured from his eyes as the rope pulled him off his feet.

"All right I did it! I did everything! That bitch was taking 80% of what I stole!"

"So you turned the horses loose, took a shank from Ray's stables and then killed Pierson with it knowing Ray and RJ would be arrested for the murder. Not to mention that you seemed to be the only witness, you thought you had it all locked up?"

"YES! Now let me down!"

Denzel winked at Mallory and told her to take Buck for a run. Myers eyes grew wide, he started screaming bloody murder when Mallory and Buck ran off down the shed row. The rope pulled across the beam dropping dirt on top of them the fell to the shed row and was dragged behind Buck.

"Thank the Gods." Sydney sighed as she let go of her end of the rope. "My arms were going

numb."

Myers looked at her as she walked away and the rope around his neck eased up.

"OK boys take this piece of shit out of here and book him for premeditated murder, endangerment, and anything else you can think of."

Two officers stepped from the stall beside Myers and took him away. They could hear the officers mumbling about putting him in the trunk so he wouldn't make their cruiser reek.

Sally stepped up next to Denzel, he placed a hand on her shoulder and looked into her dark green eyes.

"How did you know he did it?"

Giving him a toothy grin and a wink. "Witnesses don't run from the police." She walked next to Sally with the other's following. "He has a mile long record for numerous things, the last time we caught him he was stealing equine pharmaceuticals and selling them on the black market. One of them was pure testosterone or equipoise."

"OK, but why did he kill Pierson?"

"She spent five years in prison, not only for animal abuse but for using illegal drugs on them. She was probably getting the stuff from him and taking more than he liked when she sold it."

Mallory came back down the shed row with Ray's sister, the tall woman looked as formidable as Ray. She was pissed and it showed in every step she took. Her blue eyes narrowed at the small group in front of her.

Sally took a step behind Denzel and grabbed a hold of Larry's arm. His voice squeaky he asked Larry who the blonde was. Larry tried to hide behind Sally and pretty soon both men were trying to find a place to run. Denzel stood her ground and just narrowed her eyes.

"Are you the one in charge here?" She asked with a low throaty voice. She stopped and crossed her arms over her chest and glared down at Denzel.

Denzel cocked an eyebrow at her and lifted one side of her mouth in a roguish grin. "You can say that, what's the problem?"

"I just talked to the officers, and the way you got that man to admit to the crime was the most unprofessional means I have ever heard of!"

"It worked and that's all that matters, what are you his lawyer?" She heard Sydney and Mallory both snort and roll their eyes.

"No, I'm not. I'm Samantha Rawlings, Ray's sister and her attorney. She stepped closer to

Denzel, her voice low and purring. "Can I buy you a drink after we get Ray released?"

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Ray was pacing her cell again when Sam and Denzel walked down the hall towards her. She turned at the clicking of heels, her eyes narrowed at the chatting women.

"Nice to see you two are all happy and I'm going to spend my life locked up with a bunch of psychopaths!"

"As far as I know S&M won't be in there with you." Samantha slipped in and then gave her sister a big smile. "We have some good news for you." She stood there and said absolutely nothing, which got on Rays nerves.

"You had better tell me or I swear I will rip these bars down and kick your ass!" Ray rushed the bars and reached through them trying to grab Sam.

"Oohh all right, go ahead Denny, let the Amazon out before she hurts herself." Ray looked at the way the detective and her sister were looking at each other and all she could think was "Oohh Noooo!"

"I'm free? You got the judge to give me bail?"

"Better." Denzel replied as she unlocked the cell door. "All charges have been dismissed. The guy who identified you admitted to killing Pierson."

Ray jumped through the doorway, she started off at a jog down the hall. "I have to find RJ!"

"SHIT!" Denny said as she took off after her with a limping gait. "Damn it Ray! Hold on!"

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"OK. Where is this place?" Denzel wrote down the address and handed it to Sam. "Has she been found yet? OK, we'll be there in a couple of hours." She rubbed her tired eyes and looked to the two sisters. "They checked her into a private psychiatric hospital up in Pennsylvania. I have one person in there looking for her but she's having trouble finding her. The damn place has eight floors and she can't get past the guards to get to the basement."

"I'm going and I will get in the basement if I have to kill every single person who gets in my way!" Ray burst threw the door and ran for the stairs.

"Is she always like this?" Denny asked Sam as they took off after her.

"Pretty much!"

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RJ turned her head to the side, she looked to the small window and watched as a flashlight shown through and into her eyes. She tried to blink but her face was still numb from the shot. She wished if they were going to kill her they would do it all ready. Tears flowed down her cheeks, she felt her heart break for Ray. She didn't care about herself only how Ray would survive in prison if that's where she was to end up.

"Nah, she ain't dead." A voice said from outside the window. "Just looks that way, how much stuff did you give her anyway?"

"How am I supposed to know, I'm not a doctor or anything."

The window closed leaving RJ in total darkness again. She tried to move her hands and was only able to turn them in the restraints a little bit, she moved her legs and was able to pull her legs up so that her knees were bent. "What am I going to do if I get my legs free?" She thought to herself. "Not much good if I can't use my toes to undo the damn straps!" Her temper got the best of her she started rocking her body back and forth with as much force as she could. The straps cutting into her wrists and ankles, sharp pains shot through her limbs, pissing her off even further. She kept doing this until she wore herself out. Resting for she had no idea how long, she started rocking again, she could feel a slickness around her wrists, pulling on her arms she could feel the straps move up to her thumbs. Folding her thumbs in, she felt the straps move more. Using all her strength she yanked on one arm and felt her hand slip through the strap. Collapsing from exhaustion, she lay there gasping for air. She knew she had to get all the straps off before they came to give her another shot. She could feel sensation coming back to her face and neck and knew it wouldn't be long before they came back and she would be ready for them.

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Everyone was packed in the Dodge truck, Ray was making sure that the sound barrier was something of the past. Denzel was riding in the back next to Sam and Mallory. The unlucky soul riding shotgun was whooping up a storm every time Ray took a sharp turn or downgrade. Denzel prayed that they didn't get pulled over by a PA Trooper, she didn't know if she would be able to get Ray out of the ticket. Mallory tapped her on her leg and leaned close to her ear.

"Did you know that Ray doesn't have a driver's license?"

Dark green eyes rolled, a hand came up and covered her mouth to hold back the loud scream. Glancing over she saw a truly wicked grin on Sam and Mallory's face. Her mind screamed at her. "You are all dead women!"

Ray flew past semi trucks like they were standing still, cars were nothing as she wove in and out of the traffic. She figured that they had another hour before they would hit Norristown and then another half an hour to forty-five minutes before they reached the hospital. Her nerves were just about shot, she wished they had just flown in to Philly and taken a rental to the hospital. It would have been quicker but getting seats on a tiny little jet would be almost impossible, not to mention she hated flying.

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The nurse crept into a storage room, looking around she found a pair of janitor's coveralls. Pulling them on, she opened the door slowly and looked both ways. She had to get to the basement no matter what, pushing out a cart with cleaning supplies on it, she made her way to the elevator. Pushing the button did nothing, then she saw where a badge was needed to be able to operate the elevator.

"Fuck! Now what?" Looking around she saw a door marked stairs, leaving the cart she tried the door and found it locked. "Unfucking real!" Just then she felt her cell phone vibrate against her hip. Pulling it free she answered in a low voice.

"This is Jenny, go ahead."

"Have you found her yet?" Denny asked.

"No ma'am, I've tried everything! Can't we just get a court order and search the place?"

"Sorry, we have to get her out without the hospital alerting her mother. We should be there in about fifteen minutes. Meet us at the loading dock out back."

"OK, I'll head there right now and wait." Shutting her phone off she went back to the storage room and took the coveralls off. She hated missions like this where she was all alone and against sucky odds.

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Denny leaned over the front seat to see where they were at, they had been following signs to the hospital so she knew they had to be close. She heard Ray mumbling something under her breath about being on the wrong side of the street. She watched her put her arm across her cousin's chest and then all hell broke loose when she spun the wheel and jumped the center median strip and spun the truck back into the other direction. Denny ended up laying on her back across Mallory and Sam's laps.

"Now I know why she doesn't have a driver's license!"

Between Sydney's WAAA WHOOS and the screeching of tires she was close to having a nervous breakdown. The others acted like it was a leisurely Sunday drive in the country. She decided that she would just stay down on the floor where she had ended up with the last driving stunt. It seemed saner not to see what Ray was doing. She let out a huge sigh of relief when the truck came to a screeching halt and was turned off.

"Are we there yet?" Sydney asked and received a smack in her head. "Hey I was just wondering? Big meany!"

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"Denny I don't know how the hell we can get into the basement, I've tried everything!" She told her how the inside was set up and what obstacles were keeping her from getting in the basement where she thought RJ was being kept. She told her that at opposite ends of the lower floor there were locked doors to the stairwells. Maybe if they split up, one group may get lucky and get a door open. Denny split them into two groups, she would take Sam and Jenny with her. While Ray, Mallory and Sydney would try the other end. She handed Ray her cell phone.

"Speed dial three to get Jenny, if either one of us finds RJ we call the other, and then we meet at the truck and get the hell out of this place."

Mallory looked at each one of them, then started shaking her head.

"We may have a slight problem, you three look professional and we look like bums."

Sam raised an eyebrow at her and then grinned.

"What better way to look like you fit then to act nuts?"

Ray's eyes grew huge. "Aaahh uuuhh! I can't act nuts!" She jumped when her ass was grabbed. Spinning on her heel, she grabbed Sydney by her ear. "But you are! So you get to be your stupid ignorant self and we get to be your visitors."

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Sydney messed her hair up and turned her shirt inside out and put it on backwards. Taking one boot off she handed it to Mallory and then put her sock on her hand and began talking to it. Ray looked at her and shook her head.

"She does that at home to, except she draws a face on it first."

Ray groaned. "Gods help us."

They followed Sydney as she skipped down the hall talking to her sock, when she wasn't doing that she was running into rooms and barking at the other patients. She came running out of one room with a baby doll and had the patient screaming bloody murder. Mallory wrestled her on the floor to get the baby doll back so the patient would stop screaming.

"Mal, she is entirely too good at this." Ray mumbled to her when she got close enough.

"Scary ain't it? But have you noticed that no one has paid any attention to us?"

"You're right." She reached out and pulled Sydney close to her lips. "Look for a nurse's station, see if you can find some keys or a badge." Sydney said something in a strange language and took off galloping down the hall.

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Denny and Sam followed Jenny down the hall, they pretended that they were looking the place over for a possible place to bring a relative. Sam chatted up the other nurses and doctors while Denny looked for someway to get in the basement. They weren't having any luck so far, when questioned about the floors they received no information. It seemed that the employees on the ground floor only took care of that one and didn't have access to the basement. Some of them didn't even know it was there. Denny pulled Jenny to the side and spoke lowly.

"Are you sure she's not on one of the upper floors?"

"Positive. I searched every room, some of the floors have people that are bedridden in them and some are assigned by sex. I can't see them putting her with the men, that would be disastrous to the environment here."

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Sydney tossed a look over her shoulder at Ray then bunny hopped into a glass-enclosed room. Ray smirked at Mallory and shook her head, when they stepped to the edge of the wall they peeked into see Sydney sitting on the lap of an older black nurse. She had her face buried against the woman's humongous breasts and she kept calling her mommy. Ray gave Mallory a hand motion and then stepped into the room.

"There you are Bunny, I've been looking every where for you." She looked at the nurse. "I'm sorry if she has bothered you, my sister gets a little excited when I come to visit." She took Sydney by her hand and pulled her off the nurse's lap.

"That's OK Miss, she's a lovable thing isn't she?"

"Ohh very lovable." Sydney jumped into her arms and wrapped around her like a monkey. "See what I mean, good day to you Ma'am." When she walked from the room Sydney decided it was a good time to sing at the top of her lungs.

"Key to your heaaaaart, gots the key to your heaaaaart!"

Sliding to the floor she took Ray's hand and pulled her down the hallway. Mallory took off at a slow jog to catch up with them and then ducked into a storage room right next to the door that led to the basement.

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She could hear the man outside the door fumbling with his keys, laying perfectly still, she waited until he came into the room. This time he did not flip the lights on but used a small pen light to shine over her face. She squinted her eyes and tried to speak but nothing came out.

"I think it's time to have a little fun with you, it's not often we get good looking woman down here to fuck."

She tried her hardest not to make a sound or jump from the table. Taking shaky breath, she waited until he got closer to her.

"After I give you your shot, I'm going to fuck your brains out."

He raised his hand with the syringe in it, when he put it close to her neck, she brought up her hand and punched him in the side of his face. His head jerked to his left with the blow, while he was still shocked she grabbed the hand with the syringe in it with both hands and brought to her mouth and bit him. He howled and dropped the syringe, she scrambled from under him, dropped to her hands and knees and searched the floor where she thought she heard it drop.

"You fucking crazy bitch!"

He dropped over her back and tried to flip her over, she kept kicking back and hitting his shins and ankles with her bare feet.

"I love it when a woman fights me, gets me all hard!" He grabbed her around her chest and flipped her over. Looming over her he grabbed the front of her gown and ripped it down the front. When he reached for her breasts, she brought up her hand and shoved the syringe into his chest. A shriek erupted from his mouth as he tried to pull the syringe out. Pushing on him he fell to the side, his feet kicked and then stilled.

Crawling across the floor she pulled the door open a ways and looked out. The place was dimly lit and the only sounds she heard were mechanical. Pulling her torn gown together in the front, she crept from the room and jogged down the hall towards a door that had some lights showing from it. Stopping at the edge, she peeked in to find that it was the laundry room and that it was empty. Quickly she found a white uniform that would fit and left the room to find a way out. She ran down the hall and came to a door, she pulled on it and found it locked. She knew that her assailant had keys, she ran back to the room she had been in and searched his body for the keys. That's when she realized that she had killed him, tears came to her eyes. She had become something that she never wanted to be, part of the very family that she hated.

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The cell phone vibrated in Ray's pocket she pulled it out and answered.

"Ray, we got nothing at this end." Jenny said.

"Momma she's crazy. But she has the key to my heart."

"Gotcha, see you outside." She turned to Denny and nodded her head. They went back the way they had come and left the building.

"I hope to Gods they find her." Sam said as she got into the truck.

"Lets go Syd, we need to find RJ and get the hell out of here."

Sydney skipped over to the door, looked around and pretended to have a conversation with her sock. Leaning back she slipped a key into the lock and came up empty. Fumbling around a few more times, she got the door opened. Checking to make sure no one was watching she pulled the door open and motioned for Ray and Mallory. They slipped through the door and waited on the steps for Sydney. She came through and made sure the door relocked it's self.

"Don't need no nutcases down here with us."

"You alone is quite enough." Ray whispered.

They took the steps two at a time until they came to another door, Sydney pulled the keys out and tried all of them until she came to the last one. With a sigh of relief she opened the door quietly and slipped through and then motioned for the others to follow. With all the noise down there, they took off at a jog and began looking into rooms. Mallory gave a chirping noise and pointed to the room she just came out of.

"A dead guy's in there."

Ray's heart slammed into her chest, she took off at a sprint towards the other end of the room searching as she went. She came to the laundry room and found RJ's torn gown on the floor. Stepping out into the hall she tilted her head trying to separate the sounds. She picked up the jingle of keys coming from the direction she was headed. Breaking into a full out run she came around a corner to see a small body dressed in white.

"Sparky?" She half whispered.

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RJ could hear running feet and voices, she was afraid that someone had come down to check on why the guy had not returned after giving her the shot. She was getting frustrated that she couldn't find the right key to the door. She spun around when she heard a deep voice say something, she would kill all of them if she had to.

She froze as the dark shadow came towards her, her heart slamming in her chest from the adrenaline pumping through her veins.

"Sparky!" Ray ran to her and caught her before she fell to the floor. She held her now sobbing lover to her chest as her own tears flowed. "I thought I'd never find you!" She buried her face against RJ's neck."

"Thank the Gods!" Mallory said from behind them. "Come on we have to find a way out of here. Turning at the sound of her wife calling her, she read her hand signals and then pulled Ray and RJ to their feet. "Come on Syd found a way out through the laundry room."

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"Where the hell are they?" Denny slapped the steering wheel. "They should have found her by now." They had moved the truck to the corner of the building, they didn't know which way they would be coming out of the building. Out of the corner of her eye Sam saw a cellar door pushed up near where they had meet Jenny.

"We got movement over here, looks like a cellar door being pushed up." She continued to watch as both doors burst upward and a chain went flying through the air. "That's them! It's got to be!" Denny shifted the truck into reverse and pulled right along side the doors. Sydney was the first out followed by Ray carrying RJ in her arms. Mallory being the last, closed the doors and picked up a large rock and dropped it on top. They took off out of the parking lot and drove a little ways to where Jenny had hid her car in a copse of trees. Ray being worried about them getting out didn't look to closely at her lover, until after Jenny had gotten into her car and was leading them to a safe place to recuperate. Her face paled when she looked down at the small hand gripping the front of her shirt, she saw the raw torn flesh and dried blood. Pushing her sleeve up, she saw the bruises around her upper arms.

"RJ, let me see your other wrist." A grumbled voice came from RJ, she lifted her chin up to see the slackness of her lovers face. One side of her mouth was slightly swollen and drooped. "My Gods what did they do to you?" Tears filled her blue eyes and trailed down her cheeks. She ran her fingertips with feather like gentleness down RJ's face. The pain in her blue eyes brought more tears to RJ's bloodshot green eyes. Ray watched a small hand brush against her neck, she saw ugly bruising and a spot where a needle had been stuck into her skin.

"We have to get her to a hospital!" She yelled from where she sat in the king cab area with RJ on her lap.

Denny looked in the rear view mirror and nodded her head no. "We have a doctor waiting for us at the safe house, he'll check her over when we get there."

"Safe house? You mean like the FBI uses?" A toothy grin graced Sydney's face. "This is so cool, we break in to the hospital, rescue RJ and now we're going to a safe house!" She bounced in the passenger seat until Mallory smacked her in her head.

"We can take you back and you can sit on your mama's lap!"

On the ride to the safe house, Mallory and Sydney filled the others in on their adventure in wacko land. Denny couldn't help but laugh at some of the stuff Sydney had done so that they could get in the basement. Sydney told Denny about finding the dead man in one of the rooms and it set RJ off instantly into deep racking sobs. Ray held her tightly, she asked her what happened but RJ still couldn't talk.

"Did you kill him?" She felt RJ nod her head against her. "It's OK, you were defending yourself."

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The safe house was out in the middle of nowhere; trees lined the long driveway and shrouded the house from unwanted attention. It was an older house, very nondescript and lacking in any kind of feelings of it being a home. Denny pulled the truck around to the back of the house and took everyone through a door that led into a simple kitchen. Two men sat at the table drinking coffee and reading over papers from numerous file folders that were covering the tabletop. Nodding her head at them, she took Ray and RJ to one of the three bedrooms in the back of the house, making sure that everything was all right so told them that she would send in the doctor to take care of RJ's wounds. Ray laid her lover down on the bed and sat next to her. Running her hand across her forehead, she pushed back dirty blonde hair. Giving her a gentle kiss on her lips, she looked down into misty eyes.

"It's OK. I won't let anything happen to you."

A man came into the room carrying a black duffel bag, giving them both a smile he laid the bag on the end of the bed.

"I'm Dr. James, Denny told me that you have some nasty cuts and bruises on you and that your face is numb." He placed a gentle hand on RJ's shoulder. Let me get those wrists and ankles clean and bandaged and then I'll see why your face is numb."

"She said they gave her a shot in her neck."

His eyes narrowed, lifting her chin he saw the numerous needle marks. "Looks like they used a nail gun." He smirked at them. "Sorry, my bedside manner is a little off. Anyway, what I think they gave you is a nerve block and most likely it was mixed with Novocain. The same stuff some dentists use. It should wear off in a few hours." He ran his fingertips along her jaw and cheeks. "Can you feel anything in these areas?" She shook her head and then pointed to her nose and mouth. "Those are still numb huh? Have you tried talking at all since you were rescued?" She made some sounds, mostly a gruff noise. "Just give it time, I know you didn't want to hear that." He smiled down at her and patted her shoulder.

After the doctor was finished, Ray helped her take a bath, she washed her hair and the rest of her with gentle hands. After she was finished and the water had turned cold, she helped her out and wrapped her in a large soft towel and carried her to the bed.

"RJ, I'm going to take a quick shower. When I'm done I'll see about getting us something to eat OK?"

Misty green eyes looked up at her. In a soft whisper she spoke. "Not hungry."

"Ahh no you don't Sparky, I eat, you eat." She bent down and placed a lingering kiss on her soft lips. "I love you RJ and don't you forget that."

RJ lay on her side softly crying while Ray was in the shower. Her thoughts running right to the

moment she had killed the man in the room she had been kept in. She didn't know how Ray could still love her after she had killed someone. She didn't know how she was going to live with herself for taking another humans life. Terror filled her heart with the knowledge that she could go to prison for her crime, even though he had tried to rape her, it was still murder. When Ray came out she tried to hide her tears and the fear that squeezed her heart.

Ray knew the second that she stepped into the room that RJ had been thinking about what happened. She laid down on the bed and pulled her lover into her arms.

"RJ, if I had killed someone would you still love me?"

RJ rolled in her arms to face her, green eyes locked with blue.

"Yes." She whispered.

"I know this is tearing you up inside, you have to think of it as an act of survival. He was trying to kill you, you fought back and won. No court would convict you of murder."

RJ started to sob, she hoarsely whispered the words, tried and rape. A rage tore at Rays insides with those words, she never thought that RJ would have been in danger of rape. Tears flowed down her cheeks to drip off her chin.

"Did he hurt you?"

RJ nodded her head no and buried her face against Ray's neck. Ray would make sure that someone paid for all her lover's pain.

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Denny and Sam sat side by side at the computer in a small room; she was on a direct link to her computer in her office in Charlestown. Scanning the file folder's she found the one she was looking for an opened it.

"This is the investigation on Roger's murder, look at the descriptions of the men last seen with him and the license plate number of their car. And here is the information that the desk sergeant gave me when RJ was taken from the police station."

Sam leaned in close and compared the information. "They're the same, if you had all this with Roger's murder, why didn't you go after the men?"

"We tried, but every move we made was stonewalled. Our witnesses ended up either dead or missing and the judges refused to give us warrants."

"OK, so now what do we do about what happened to RJ? We have to get the people who did this to her."

Denny leaned back in her chair, her dark eyes flashing as a small evil grin came across her face showing just the tips of her white teeth.

"Oh we'll get them, the whole damn lot of them but we need RJ's help."

Sam's blue eyes were wide. "Oohh shit! You don't mean..."

"Yep, we're going to Boston."

"What about jurisdictions? We can't go in there and arrest them."

"Ooh yes we can, after her mother rats her self out. Not to mention I have some heavy connections with the FBI. They just love to bust Mafia connections."

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Ray and RJ had fallen asleep in each other's arms and had been sleeping for hours before Sam came into the room and woke her sister. Blue met blue for a brief second before Sam motioned to the door. Ray nodded her head and then got up leaving RJ to pull her pillow to her chest and continue to sleep. Once dressed, she joined the others in the kitchen, she noticed that her cousin's, Sam and Denny had all taken showers and wore clean clothes. Denny explained to them what she wanted to do, she saw the silvery blue eyes of the tall groom come to life and flash with something she knew she never wanted to be on the receiving end of. The minute she mentioned flying, the blue eyes darkened to almost black.

"I hate flying! Can't we drive there?" Ray said with whininess to her voice.

"Come on you big bad wimp." Sydney shoved her in her shoulder. "You flew over here and that was how many hours in the air?"

"That was different and that was years ago!" She ran her fingers across her face to look over the tips of her fingers. "How many hours?"

Sam rolled her eyes at her sister. "Can you handle three hours at the most? This is for RJ does it really matter?" Sam knew her sister's weakness and knew saying the small blonde's name would settle all problems.

"For her I would hang from the landing gear the whole way there. When do we leave?"

Denny smiled at her. "First thing in the morning, we have a chopper out back that will take us to a remote field. I've arranged to have cars there and the FBI to take those scumbags in." She dropped her eyes to the table and took a deep breath. "Do you think RJ will do this? It is her mother."

"I'll talk to her when she wakes up." Ray didn't know how RJ was going to take this. She knew that she had cut all ties from her family but this was different. Her mother would go to prison

along with others for the murder of Roger and her abduction and possible attempted murder. This brought her to another big problem. "Denny, that guy RJ killed. It's really messed her up, she has never been involved in any of the family business because of the way they just kill whomever they want. She's afraid that she's going to prison because of it. Can you help her?"

Denny looked over her shoulder to one of the FBI agents and asked him if anything had come across the radio about finding a mans body at the hospital. He answered no and added that one of their people who was still on the inside had called and said that someone removed the body and it was put into a dark sedan outside the loading docks.

"There's your answer Ray, tell her he was mafia and sent to kill her. That should help ease her mind knowing that he wasn't an innocent person but someone who was sent by her mother."

Mallory and Sydney shook their heads and looked around the table at their friends. "This is getting complicated, what do you need us to do?" Mallory asked as she made eye contact with Denny.

"When we get there, I want you two to guard our car. If anyone and I mean if a squirrel gets near the car, you kick the living shit out of it."

"No problem." Sydney grinned at her. "I love kicking the shit out of...everything!"

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Ray sat on the edge of the bed running her fingers through RJ's hair; she loved the feel of the short silky strains as they brushed across her fingers. She knew that she would do anything for her lover including killing anyone who tried to take her away from her. She was not looking forward to this conversation but knew she had to be the one to do it. Because it deemed how they would live for the rest of their lives. Leaning down she placed a kiss on soft parted lips, when a soft mumble came from RJ, she smiled until a small hand found her breast and gave it a gentle squeeze.

"How long have you been up?" RJ asked her with a gravelly voice.

"Few hours, how are you feeling?"

"Like a stampede of horses ran me over and then made sure they did it right." Green eyes opened to look around the room in confusion. "I thought I was dreaming but now I know I'm in the middle of a nightmare."

Ray lay down beside her and pulled her into her arms. "It's almost over though, we have just one more thing to do and we can go home."

RJ loved that word. 'Home.' She had never really had one until Ray came into her life. "What needs done?"

Ray told her everything that she and the others had discussed, and what they had planned once they got to her mother's house in Boston. Tears formed in green eyes and trailed down pale cheeks.

"Is Denny sure of all this? I mean that mother had Roger killed and was planning the same thing for me?"

"She has it all in her files and the FBI is convinced."

RJ pushed herself up onto one elbow and looked down into her lover's eyes. After kissing her until they broke for need of air, she looked determined green eyes with blue and nodded her head.

"I want her to pay. She may have given birth to me but she was never my mother. Roger may have been a huge asshole but he didn't deserve to die because of it. When do we leave?"

A brilliant smile came to Ray's face, at that moment she loved RJ more than she thought possible. The inner strength that the small woman had in her was astounding.

"Tomorrow morning."

"Well, we have some time before we go and I want to use every second of it worshipping your body."

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As they rode in the helicopter on the way to the Philadelphia airport, Ray had her eyes closed so tightly that RJ didn't know if she would ever be able to open them. Nor did RJ think that her hand would ever be functional after it was held in a vise like grip until she had no feeling clear to the elbow. Never in her wildest dreams would she take her lover as one who was terrified to fly, she did her best to give her comfort and hoped that this was as bad as Ray got. Once they landed in the field where the FBI had cars waiting for them, Ray finally let go of her hand. She thought Ray was going to fall to her knees and kiss the ground. Denny moved off to the side to speak with whom RJ thought to be the senior agent. All she could make out of what they were saying was that her family were all in the mansion and they were ready to move when she was. She could feel her hands start to sweat from nervous tension, she didn't know what her mother was going to do when she walked through the door. She knew that she could handle anything as long as her lover was with her.

Ray pulled her back against her chest and rested her chin atop her head.

In a deep purring voice, she asked. "You OK with this?"

"I'm scared shitless." She rubbed her hands across Ray's strong forearms, feeling the soft downy hair graze her palms. "Will you be going in there with me?"

"I wouldn't have it any other way." She leaned her head down and placed soft kisses on her lover's neck. "I'll always be by your side no matter what."

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Three cars pulled down near the entrance to the long driveway of the Beaumont Mansion, RJ looked up to where she knew the Mansion was hidden behind old trees. It had been years since she had been here and the old feelings of despair squeezed her heart. A cold shiver ran the length of her spine, making her move closer to her lover to chase away the cold with her warm body.

"I hate this place with a passion." She said between gritted teeth.

Ray wrapped her arms around her and held her close. "It'll be over soon then we can all go home and forget about this."

With RJ and Ray in the lead, they walked up the long drive and noticed two dark sedans parked close to the front door. Ray covered her ear to hear what Denny was saying over the receiver that she had given her before they had left the car. Watching as two agents ran to the cars and disabled them in seconds, they were given the go ahead to enter the mansion. RJ opened the door and took a hesitant step into the marbled foyer. Looking to each side of the long hallway before them, she decided to check the library first for her mother and father. She felt Ray take her hand and give it a small squeeze to reassure her that she was not alone. Opening the large wooden door to the library, she poked her head in to find it empty.

Speaking to Ray in a low whisper, she said. "They might be in my father's office, if not there then maybe in the sitting room in the back."

Before they could get close to the door, she heard her mother's voice raised in anger. She shuddered at the crazed sound of her mother's voice. Ray turned her around in her arms and placed a soft kiss to her lips, when she pulled back she looked into terrified green eyes. "I'm here and I will not let her hurt you ever again." RJ wiped an errant tear from her cheek and nodded her head.

"Let's do this." She took a deep breath and pushed the door open.

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Sydney and Mallory were standing next to the cars. They were told by Denny to take out anyone who was not the FBI. Sydney's brows dropped over her nose when she saw a figure walking down the sidewalk towards them. Before she could attack the person, Mallory grabbed the back of her belt.

"Denny didn't mean to beat up old ladies with canes."

"But baby!"

"I said NO!" She cuffed her wife on the side of her head. "Now behave and look for bad guys."

"Never get ta have any fun." She mumbled under her breath. "Ya'll mean ta me."

Mallory wrapped her arms around her from behind. "You are such a big baby."

"Look what we have here? Two of those Australian Dundee's." A tall man said to the man who was standing beside him. "What do you think they're doing in our country?"

Sydney turned her head and looked over her shoulder. "Mal, They don't fit the old lady category."

Mal took a look and closed her eyes. "Nope, they don't. I think we should kick their asses just for calling us Aussies." She let go of her wife and turned to face the men. "You have a problem mate?"

"You could say that we don't like your kind." He said with a growling voice.

Sydney stepped closer to them. "And what type would that be?"

"Dykes. So that means you'll just have to disappear." They pulled a Glocks from their shoulder holsters and were about to point them at the women when all hell broke loose on them. Two sets of feet connected with their hands sending the pistols into the air. Sydney spun on one foot and connected her toe with the man's chin. He flipped over backwards to land on his stomach unconscious.

"Wimp ass!" She yelled as she dropkicked him in his ribs. She turned to watch her wife do a spinning back kick to the other mans head and then a front kick to his chest. With in a minute both thugs were on the ground taking a nap.

"That was fun! Can we look for some more?" Sydney asked as she pulled the mans wallet from his pocket and took all his cash. "He just bought us supper at a verrrrry expensive restaurant."

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Denny and an agent walked up behind Ray and RJ, they gave them the go-ahead and let them know that they would be right outside the door if there were any trouble. Before Ray moved forward to open the door Denny handed her a small voice activated tape recorder and motioned for her to put it in her pocket. "It's back-up." She whispered to the tall groom. As she reached for the door, RJ put her hand over hers and raised a finger in the air. Her mother was closer to the door, her voice clear as she yelled.

"What do you mean she's not there? How could she have escaped the hospital?"

"She killed Tony and got out through the cellar door." A mans voice replied. "We searched the

area but she hasn't been found yet."

"I want her found and killed on sight! Do you hear me!?"

"Yes Ma'am."

RJ's entire body tightened at her mother's words, her teeth ground together and a low rumbling growl came to her lips. She flung the door open making it slam against the wall startling the room's occupants.

"Your search is over mother!" She came to stand toe to toe with the older woman. "What kind of mother are you that you would have your own children killed?"

Crazed green eyes looked into RJ's fiery orbs. The woman was obviously nuts.

"I am riding this world of abominations! You are not fit to live among us!" She pointed over her daughter's shoulder at a snarling Ray. "You are to blame for this! You will die a very painful death right beside Rhapsody!" She motioned over her shoulder to the man behind her. "Kill the tall bitch first and then Rhapsody so she can see her lover die before her evil eyes!"

Rhapsody backed up against Ray's chest to protect her.

"FUCK YOU MOTHER!"

As the man pulled his pistol from its holster, a shot rang out and he dropped to the floor. Mrs. Beaumont spun on her heel and dropped to the floor to grab his pistol. Ray and RJ jumped forward, RJ jumped on her mother's back while Ray grabbed the pistol and tossed it to Denny. Using all her strength, RJ flipped her mother over and punched her in the jaw. "You fucking bitch! All these years I thought father was the evil one and it was you!" Her green eyes vibrated with anger as she looked down at the woman who had brought her into the world. "Now it's over! I hope you rot in prison!"

Denny came forward with three FBI agents, she touched RJ on the shoulder and then helped her up. Looking down on the stunned older woman, she raised an eyebrow.

"Looks like you lose this time Beaumont."

Beaumont's face paled, she looked like she was looking at a ghost.

"But you're dead! I saw you blow up in your car!"

Denny laughed at her. "Your eyesight is the first to go with old age you old bitch!" She limped over to stand above her. "Your man was an amateur, you never put an explosive charge under the driver's seat when you want the passenger dead. He killed my partner and as you can see I'm very much alive." She motioned to one of the agents. "Get this bitch out of my sight before I shoot her just for the hell of it!"

One of the other agents pointed to the dead thug on the floor. "Special Agent Denzel, you want us to call the ME for this one or have one of our units take him?"

Two sets of eyes looked at Denny with shock. "Special Agent Denzel?" Ray asked and received a huge grin and a shrug of shoulders. "I was going to tell you later after I debriefed you all."

"Too late!" Sam said from the doorway, ice blue eyes drilled into dark green. "We are going to have a very long talk later."

Mrs. Beaumont was read her rights and taken into custody by the FBI. They would take her to their headquarters and hold her for interrogation into other murders that seemed to be connected to the Beaumont name. When they were all about to leave the mansion, one of the agents reported that Mr. Beaumont was found in his bed and was deceased. RJ took a deep breath and shook her head before leaving the house. She was the last of the family and felt no pain for the loss of her father, who never loved her to begin with. As she stepped outside the front door, she realized that at that moment she was a free woman, never to have to worry about what anyone in her family would think of the way she would live her life from that day on. She took Ray's hand and brought it to her lips. Kissing her palm, she looked into clear blue eyes. "Let's go home."

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The entire drive home RJ said not a word, but looked out the passenger side window at the scenery that was flying by. Ray as well as the others cast sideways glances at her; no one knew what to say to her. After hours on the road, Sydney and Mallory feel asleep leaning against each other. Sam was lying with her head resting on Denny's chest, her one arm wrapped around her waist, while Denny had both arms wrapped around her. Ray looked to her right to see her lover sound asleep with her head bouncing off the window; she reached out with her right hand and pulled her over on the seat. She moved her gently so that her head was resting in her lap. Running her fingers through her short blonde hair, calmed her and claimed the tension she had been feeling since they had left Boston. She glanced in the rearview mirror and saw her sister and Denny holding onto each other, a smile came to her face when she thought of her out going sister and the stoic FBI agent. It was so much like Sydney and Mallory and her and RJ. Things just work out the strangest ways.

RJ came awake when the truck came to a stop, sitting up she looked around at where they were.

Her voice still groggy she asked. "Ray are we home?"

"Yeah baby, come on lets wake the others and go in to bed."

After helping Sam and the others from the truck, Ray picked RJ up and carried her into the farmhouse and to their room. Laying her on their bed, she pulled RJ's shoes off and then her Levis. Before she could cover her up, she was sound asleep and snoring softly. Striping out of her clothes, Ray got into bed beside her and spooned against her back, within minutes, she was snoring softly. Hours later Ray woke to the thrashing and moaning of her lover, RJ struggled

with the blankets and the body lying next to her. She kept kicking her lover and mumbling until a loud scream tore from her chest.

RJ kept seeing repeatedly, the man ripping at her clothes, his putrid breath assaulting her face with each breath. His hands grabbing at her breasts and she could do nothing but struggle against straps holding her down. Then pictures changed to her stabbing him in the chest with the needle repeatedly. Blood covering her hands and arms, her legs where it poured from his body like a river until she, was completely covered in it. Her screams echoing in her head, running down a long hall that never ended. The sound of footsteps behind her getting closer as the ray of light at the end of the hallway was getting smaller. A deep voice kept invading her mind, calling to her; she tried to block them out with her screams. She felt herself being thrown onto her back and a heavy weight holding her down, warm breath caressing her ear as the deep voice spoke. The last words spoken to her pushed away the fog of her nightmare.

Ray rolled over on top of her and pinned her to the bed, whispering into her ear until. "It's OK baby, I'm here." She continued to whisper into her ear. "No one is going to hurt you anymore." She calmed and green eyes opened to see concerned blue looking down at her. Light sobs turned in to racking ones that had the small blonde clutching Ray in a breath-stealing hug. RJ wept into her lover's chest until sleep claimed her once more.

Ray felt small hands drawing circles on her chest, with one eye she gazed down to see a fingertip circling her hardened nipple. It always amazed her that her body betrayed her while she slept. Gods only knew what RJ would do to her if she slept any sounder than she did. Red-rimmed green eyes gazed up at her, a lazy smile crossed pink lips when RJ crawled up her body. Kissing her until she saw stars float before her eyes from lack of oxygen, she finally broke the kiss. She had tasted something on her lover's lips that surprised her.

"What have you been doing Sparky?" Her left eyebrow rose to her hairline.

RJ rested her chin on her folded hands that lay between Ray's breasts. "I'll tell ya if you tell me why you call me Sparky."

"'Cuz you get these little sparks in your eyes when you look at me. Now what were you doing?"

A wicked grin crossed RJ's face. "I won't tell you but I'll show you." She eased her body down Ray's, dragging her breasts down her stomach made Ray moan deep in her chest. A warm wet tongue dipped into her naval then trailed down to her soft curls. Ray's hips jerked upward when she felt a warm tongue slip between her nether lips. Spreading her legs further apart for her lover, she looked down with lidded eyes.

"You are...evil...Sparky!" Her hips thrust upward and ground against her lovers face. Every nerve ending in her body sang out to her, muscles tightened as her climax drew closer. She cried out when a warm wet tongue entered her and sent her over the edge. Her body convulsed against a warm mouth as RJ licked her juices from her. When her body calmed, she felt her swollen clit taken between her lovers lips and sucked until she was thrown to the heavens once again.

"Oohh Gods!" She screamed out as her body was rocked with another climax. RJ kept sending her over the edge before her body could relax; she grabbed her lover by her ears and pulled her up her trembling body.

"Please Sparky...I can't...Godssssssss!" She moaned when she felt her lover's wetness cover her all ready wet curls.

"Bet you can?" RJ growled against her breast. "Bet I can make you cum again?"

Ray threw her head back into the pillow; a deep growl came to her lips when she felt RJ press her sex down against her heated skin. Reaching forward she took her lovers breasts into her hands and rolled her nipples between her fingers. A hissing noise came from between RJ's teeth, rolling her hips forward she thrust against Ray with a hunger she only felt with her. Ray raised her hips and matched her lover's rhythm, she watched as RJ threw her head back and screamed her name out with her climax. RJ's juices poured out to cover her and run down between her throbbing lips, she arched her back and screamed as her orgasm tore threw her, then left her limp and panting. She couldn't move, she had never been so sated or exhausted in her life. A soft chuckle came to her lips when she thought of what a little blonde had done to her.

RJ's voice deep and raspy vibrated against her breast where she had collapsed. "What's so funny?"

"Ohh that you were teasing the hell outta me while I was sleeping." She ran a finger across swollen pink lips. Her expression became somber with memories of the night before. "Are you all right?"

Green eyes filled with tears, she crawled so that she was able to bury her head against her lover's neck. "I am now, don't ever leave me."

"Never, I will always be next to you."

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Six-exhausted woman sat at the large kitchen table eating the breakfast that RJ and Ray had cooked. Ray looked over at her beaming sister and shook her head. She knew that Sam had slept with men but she had no idea that she had any interest in women, but from the looks, she was giving Denny proved that Ray didn't really know her younger sister at all. She was caught with a smirk on her face by eyes that matched her own.

"Problem Kiwi?" Sam asked with a grin on her face. "You know you two could bring down the roof."

Ray wiggled her brows at her while RJ turned a deep red and mumbled. "Not the only ones."

Sydney threw a muffin at RJ and then gave her cousin an evil glare that lasted all of two seconds

when she broke into a toothy grin.

"So Ray, when we all leaving for Belmont? Gotta get everything set ahead of time. You know like getting sound proof rooms and such?"

The stake race was in a week and Ray always liked to get there early so that the horse could get used to its surroundings and she could get rest from the long drive. This year it would be easier since they now had their own truck and trailer. All the other times she had to find someone to take her horses up the road, which wasn't all that often. That was one of the reasons she had never bought the truck and trailer before.

"Is the big Kiwi boss gonna be there this year?" Mallory asked with her eyes still looking down at her food. She didn't want to look up because she knew her eyes would give away Ray's secret. She heard Sam start to say something so she kicked her under the table and gave her a glare.

Sam jumped and made a soft sound that she covered up with clearing her voice. "Yeah is big X going to be present this year or hide away like all the other times?"

RJ kept looking back and forth between everyone, she knew something was up but had no idea what.

"OK, what the hell are you guys talking about?" She pinched Ray on her ass. "Who's this Big X person?"

"Your...ahh silent partner. X has never come out of hiding for any of the races."

RJ's brow raised at her, a slow grin came to her face. "Is that so, well what makes you guys think that he'll show up this time?"

Sam cleared her throat and looked at RJ. "Simply because if X doesn't show up, I'm going to kick some ass! That's why."

RJ missed the stiffening of Ray's back and the paled complexion on her face. "And she will to!" She whispered hoarsely.

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With Denny and Sam in Sam's Mercedes following the truck with the others in it, they made go time to the Belmont racetrack. They would spend two days terrorizing the surrounding area and then be at the racetrack to see Spark run for the stake race. Ray was a nervous wreck for the first time in ages; she would be letting the racetrack world know who she really was not to mention her lover. She prayed that RJ wouldn't be too upset at her revealing the truth.

RJ was sitting on the bed waiting for her lover to come out of the bathroom, she was kind of confused over the fact that Ray was dressing in there since they always did that together in the same room. She straightened the pale grey Channel suit jacket and checked to make sure that her

trousers cresses were straight. She had learned after many mishaps that skirts and horses did not mix. She looked up with expectant green eyes as the bathroom door opened. Her breath caught in her chest when Ray stepped into the room, clutching her chest she stared slack jawed at her lover. Never had she seen Ray look the way she did right now. Her tall muscular body was covered by a dark gray Armani suit that fit perfectly across her broad shoulders, a light blue silk dress shirt beneath the jacket brought out the color of her eyes making them a silvery blue. Her dark hair hanging loosely around her shoulders shone with blue highlights from it's inky blackness. RJ did all she could, not to pass out on the spot when a cocky smile came to Ray's lips.

"You ready to go?" Her voice low and purring in her sexiest tone sent shivers to run down RJ's back. Her body caught fire, tendrils licked at her center with a hunger only Ray could bring out in her.

Wide green eyes looked up at her; RJ moaned and reached out to take the offered hand. "Come yes, go? Wish we didn't have to."

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The six of the stood at the railing that was above the racetrack its self, they watched as Spark of Lapis trotted with the pony in front of them. RJ smiled at the checkered hindquarters of the young filly, she knew that Syd and Mallory had groomed her for the race. Syd always used a toothbrush on the hindquarters to back-brush the hair to look like a checkered pattern. The jockey wore a new set of silks in a royal blue with silver sleeves and a silver X in the center of the chest and back. She had never before seen the pattern and asked Ray about it.

"I thought it was about time that the stables insignia was displayed."

"And that would be?" RJ asked with a raised brow.

"Xavier Racing Stables of New Zealand."

RJ gave her a funny look. "Xavier? Who's that?"

"The big boss, the one with alllll the money." Ray winked down at her. "And believe me, filthy rich is no where close to what Xavier is."

"When do I get to me this mysterious Mr. X?"

Ray took her small hand in hers and gave it a small squeeze. "In the win circle."

Shaking her head, RJ chuckled. "Sure are sure of Spark aren't you?"

"I trained her, so of course I'm sure." She leaned down and placed a kiss on RJ's soft lips. "I'm the best there is."

"Arrogant to."

They watched, as the horses were loaded into the gates for the last race, all of them taking deep breaths with the exception of Ray who just leaned forward over the rail. The horses burst from the gates, all eight horses held nose to nose until they came to the first turn in the seven and a half furlong race. As they came towards the front stretch, horses dropped back leaving four fighting for first thru third place. Spark was running nose to nose with the second horse, gaining and then loosing ground. RJ was ready to fall over from the stressful race, she wanted the young filly to win, not because of the money but because her lover would be happy. They were seven strides from the finish line when RJ heard Ray whisper the word "Now." Spark was given her head, she dropped her nose to her chest and broke away from the other horse and was gaining on the leader. RJ started jumping up and down beside Ray, her yells making Ray flinch and give her a grin. At the finish line, two horses crossed at the same time, RJ looked to the scoreboard and saw the words "Picture finish." Flash across the top. Her nerves were about to drop her to her knees, grabbing Ray's hand, she squeezed so hard that Ray let out a gasp.

"Sorry Kiwi, I'm dying here! Who won?"

"Who do you think?" She asked with a bright smile on her face. "She turned her lover back to the boards and pointed a finger as the winners boxes lit up and the announcer called out the winners.

"In first place is Spark of Lapis of the Xavier Racing Stable, second goes to Might be home and third goes to Tripped up tight."

RJ's mouth fell open, she threw her head back and gave out a war cry that was drowned out by the ones that her friends were doing. She jumped into Ray's arms and planted a bruising kiss on her lips.

"I love you Kiwi!" She yelled loud enough to bring down the grandstands.

"I love you to, but after you meet Xavier you may toss me to the side." She leaned in for another kiss and then whispered into her lover's ear. "I hear she's hot!"

A bright blush covered RJ's face. "Is she younger than you?" She smiled. She never got to hear the answer as they were rushed to the winners circle by the officials. They all stood next to Spark, with Ray at the filly's head and RJ next to her holding onto her lover's hand. A tall man walked forward carrying a large trophy and a check in his hands. He handed them to Sydney and then offered his hand to Ray.

"Congratulations Xavier, I wondered when I would see you back here." He offered his hand to a shocked RJ and to all the others. RJ turned her wide eyes to her lover, her mouth worked a couple times but never had a word come forth. Ray turned to face her with a huge smile.

"You...you're...my partner?" She forced out.

"Told you she was hot." She dropped down to one knee before her wide eyed lover, taking her

left hand in hers she placed a kiss on each of her knuckles before looking up into darkening green eyes. Taking a gold ring from her pinky, she held it up to RJ to see. "I'm asking you in front of all these people. Will you marry me?"

RJ narrowed her eyes at her, taking her outstretched hand in hers she made her stand up. Coming toe to toe with her lover, she jabbed her in her chest with her finger.

Ray's heart stopped beating; she thought RJ loved her enough to want to be with her forever. She felt like she was about to die right on the spot in front of all the people watching. If RJ said no, she would be on the next plane back to New Zealand.

"I don't want the half owner of the stables!" RJ growled at her and jabbed her in her chest again making Ray flinch from pain. "I want the filthy, non-speaking, stoic, bull headed groom I feel in love with!"

A bright smile came to Ray's face, her dark eyebrow raised over a squinted left eye as she looked down her straight nose.

"Didn't shower before changing." She held out the ring between her two fingers and watched as RJ slipped her finger through the hole. She looked at the thick gold monogram ring with the X in the center surrounded by diamonds and sapphires.

RJ looked up at her lover with tears flowing down her cheeks, her voice tight with emotion she looked deeply into silvery blue eyes.

"I love you with all my heart; my life has always been shrouded by a dark cloud of family secrets. When I met you, all those clouds went away. You my Kiwi lover are my silver lining."

Ray's eyes filled with tears from the sweet words spoken to her, she picked her lover up and kissed her deeply until the sound of the crowd around them deafened her.

"You are the most important thing in my life and I will always chase away the darkness. I love you Rhapsody J. Beaumont."

"Rawlings, the last name is Rawlings, Kiwi."

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The living room of the farmhouse was crowded with lounging woman, Ray and RJ moved in permanently with Sydney and Mallory. RJ signed her house over to an ecstatic Larry who now had Sally for a housemate. Denny and Sam had been dating for a while and spent a lot of time at the farm during their off hours. Everyone was just waiting to see who would pop the question between them. Even with Ray and RJ being two of the wealthy people in the entire area, they still went into the track everyday and cleaned stalls and worked the horses. They were happy with the way things were before and didn't want one single change. Except for one little thing, RJ went back to writing her novels for a lesbian audience and Ray was her inspiration for every

scene.

The End

Rhapsody's Silver Lining

By Larisa

Hecate3366@frontiernet.net

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