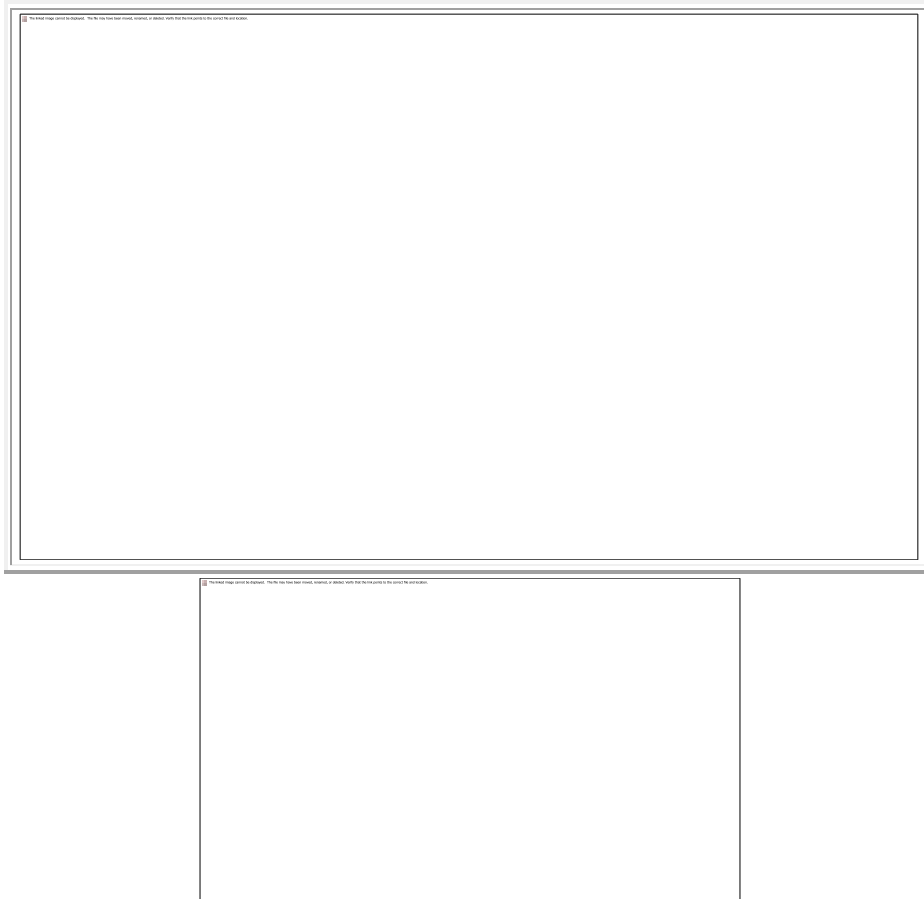


~ Swing Time ~

by [Larisa](#)



Tommy Dorsey's song I'll never smile again blasted from the boss's small cluttered office, Doris covered her ears and tried to concentrate on the outgoing invoices and just gave up. The music drove her nuts, if it wasn't the Dorsey brothers playing then it was Benny Goodman, Harry James, Les Brown or Woody Herman. She had grown up listening to the swing bands and had even gone to a ballroom or two to dance. But that was back then, now she would give up her false teeth and eat oatmeal for the rest of her life to hear Britney Spears or a Rap song. "God damn I wish I were deaf instead of half blind!" She pulled a pair of earmuffs from her desk drawer and tried to get some work done before her boss came out and ruined her day. She typed on her keyboard as if her fingers were on fire, she maybe over 50 as she told everyone and didn't care that they all knew she was really closer to the 75 mark but she could still out type and work people a quarter of her age. Now if she could only instill those traits in her boss, MacKenna would rather trade services than get paid in real money. She looked up through her thick glasses to see her strange employer in the normal attire of grey pleated trousers complete with suspenders, white button down shirt and matching grey vest. The one thing that she wished she could toss out the window was the battered fedora that never seemed to leave her boss's head; she swore that Mac slept with the damn thing on.

"Hey ya doll, I'm going to check out a tip I got, if I'm not back by closing lock up for me."

"Well this tip better bring some money in or I'll be typing on that old banger you have in the closet and doing it by flashlight!" She yelled out and swore to herself. "Damn kids I swear they all need their asses kicked for at the least 30 years, damn bills need paid but there's no money. There would be if someone would keep their trousers closed and put the hand out for green backs." She sighed and went back to work and hit the print button to print out all the invoices she had just completed. She leaned back in her computer chair, kicked her feet up on her desk and waited for the printer to finish its jobs. The office was a mixture of stuff left over from the 40's and her brand spanking new computer that she built, a printer and office furniture that she had rented from an office store. She told Mac that there was no way in Hell that she was going to try to keep up with all the work by doing as she had done back in the 40's. She had a PC at home and there was no way that she wouldn't have one at work to. However, that was years ago and every year or so, she would upgrade it. This last one she had built herself by ordering parts from a PC company. She told her grand kids and great grand kids that she wasn't dead yet and there was no reason why she couldn't learn new things. She crossed her ankles, looked down at her new cross trainers and rocked her feet back and forth. "I bet Mac doesn't come back until morning, damn tip is probably about a stripper or a damn horse that's running."

The Swing Time Ballroom was dark and smoky just like it had been more than 60 years before. Not much had changed in the place, in fact most people thought that the only thing that had changed were maybe the light bulbs. Mac blinked her eyes a few times and then walked to the middle of the long mahogany bar. She pulled out a long cigar, snipped the end off with her cutter and slid it between her lips. Searching her pockets, she pulled out her silver Zippo and burned the end before lighting it. With one eye squinted, she looked to the bartender and gave her a crooked grin. "Hey Sally gimme a bourbon neat and some pretzels if you have any." Sally pushed back her dyed red hair, eyed Mac and shook her head of long curls.

"It's awful early for you to be in here, Doris kick your ass outta the office again?"

"Nope, I gotta call from a contact, said he had a tip for me about a case I'm working on."

"I know what kind of cases you work on so that means that Victoria Secret has a new line coming out."

Mac wiggled her brows and licked her upper lip. "I all ready got a taste of that the other night, have you seen the new commercial that they have on TV?" She waved a hand in front of her face and whistled. "I damn near fell over and choked on my chocolate milk." She groaned when she saw the look on the older woman's face. "Hey I got ulcers doll, and I happen to have a weakness for C-milk."

"One way to get rid of those is to get into a different line of work." She placed the drink in front of her and then leaned on the bar with one elbow. "So what's this case you're working on?"

"Ya know the usual, husband cheats on his wife for years with some floozy and gets all bent out of shape when he finds out that she's been doing the same thing." She shrugged her shoulders and took a sip of her drink. "The guy I'm supposed to meet says he knows where the wife's boy friend is..." She winked and drained her glass in one move.

"Don't tell me you're gonna give them the heads up?"

"Nope I just wanna know where he is, it's the wife I'm going after. I'm gonna offer her the info I have on her husband for a price and if she turns me down then I get the dirt on her and go back to her husband."

Sally rolled her eyes and filled Mac's glass up. "That's kind of dirty Mac; do you always play them against each other?"

"Nope, I hate this guy with a passion and I'd love to see her take him for everything he's got. The asshole stiffed me on some work I was doing for him, so I owe him this trouble." She looked to her left when a man took the stool next to her. "OK John what have you got for me?"

John combed his beard with a small silver brush and looked at her from the corner of his brown eye. "The bum lives over on King St. in Martinsburg, it's a big puke green house with black shutters. He doesn't have a job so he'll be there until some sucker comes around with free beer or drugs."

Mac rubbed the side of her face with one hand and then propped her chin up under a closed fist. "So I'm looking at a real scum sucking bastard huh, what the Hell is the wife of a banker doing with white trash?"

"She's doing the rebellion thing; she knows he sleeps with cheap sluts so she's doing the male version." He said and took the tonic water from Sally. "Ain't that right Sally?"

"How the Hell would I know the only cheap bastard I know is the one I'm married to."

Mac smiled and dropped bills down on the bar. "Thanks John I appreciate the info, I better get over to the wife and lay out the deal and see if she'll go for it." She checked her money clip and waved it in front of him. "Gotta get the dough or Doris is gonna toss me in the river with cement shoes." She clapped John on his shoulder and left the ballroom. On her way out the door, she whistled one of the songs that had been playing in the ballroom. She stepped outside, lowered the brim of her fedora and walked over to where she had parked her Subaru Outback. The clothes may scream the 40's but her car had to be dependable and her 1948 rag top Plymouth was not and best kept at home in the garage under the car cover. She had restored it years before and now only drove it when the weather was nice. Pulling her keys from her pocket, she unlocked her car and then slid behind the wheel. No sooner had she closed the door then a knock came from the window, she looked to her left and then rolled the window down. "I told you Mr. Simson when I get something I'll call you." She looked up into his brown eyes and knew she was in deep shit.

"I want you to do something else for me, I want you to kill both of them and make it look like a

murder suicide."

She shook her head and snorted her disbelief. "Hey pal, I'm a private detective, I don't murder people."

"I'll pay you twenty thousand dollars now and another ten when they're both dead."

She shook her head, rolled up her window and pulled away. She flipped off the small tape recorder she kept in her vest pocket and placed it on the seat next to her. "What a fucking freak, I'm not going to jail for anyone and besides I hate the site of blood." She took the next street, turned down an alleyway and then parked behind the police station. "Dumb fucker, there's no way I'm getting blamed for anything if they end up dead." She grabbed the tape recorder and then went into give it to a friend of hers that worked homicide. Going through the back door, she took the stairs to the third floor and then walked to the office at the very end. She looked across the wide space at all the cluttered desks and small stations and was thankful that she gave up her job as a cop. Being a private detective suited her better anyway; she set her own hours and preferred to work into the wee hours of the morning. She spotted her friend and walked directly to her, pulling the tape recorder out, she placed it on her desk and hit it on. "Hey Salisbury I want you to keep this tape and if anything goes down on a Mrs. Simson you'll know who to go after." She watched her friend's expression turn into disbelief and then a shit eating grin blossom across it. "Can you do anything with it?"

"So this asshole comes right out and asks a former cop to off his wife and her boyfriend, how stupid is that?" She tossed her long dark hair over her shoulder and leaned back in her chair. "Ya know it's not admissible in a court of law but it would give us some leverage with the District attorney if anything happens." She took the tape, placed it in an envelope, marked the time, date and then initialed it. "Hey George initial this for me and put it in the safe." She tossed it to one of the other detectives and looked to her friend. "So tell me about this asshole." Mac gave her the complete history of the case she was working on, leaving out the possible deal making with wife and finished off with the husband approaching her outside of the ballroom. "Don't worry I'll watch your back just like when we were on the force together and if I was you, I'd steer clear of this guy."

"Ohh you don't have to tell me that, I'm keeping a wide berth of him but I'm thinking I should at least warn his wife that he wants her dead."

"Call her on the phone from your office, that way you've got the bill and you're no where in the area."

"Damn girl but you sound so damn paranoid anymore." Mac winked at her and got up from the corner of her desk. "Don't worry so much, I'll have a couple hundred alibis where I'm going and hopefully I'll have one for the rest of the night as well."

"You're a dog Mac, one of these days one of those women is going to beat your ass or steal that tiny heart you have, then what are ya gonna do?"

"Find the nearest bridge and jump off, I like being the perpetual bachelor and getting my ass kicked would be humiliating." She squeezed her old partners shoulder and gave her a short wave. "Later Terry, I got some hearts to break."

"More like spread some more wild oats, you're still like a damn guy." She leaned back in her chair and watched her long time friend's form disappear from sight. "Be safe Mac."

"Now listen to me very carefully, you have to leave, go somewhere where your husband can't find you and not your boyfriends place." Mac pulled her fedora off and ran her fingers through her sweat soaked blondish hair.

"Who are you and why am I hiding from my husband?" Mrs. Simson asked in a low whispering voice.

"Because the sick bastard tried to hire me to kill you and your boyfriend that's why, now get out before he finds someone who won't turn him down."

"My husband wouldn't do that, without me he has no money."

"Listen lady, there's such thing as life insurance, here's my number, when you're relocated call me, I have information that will help you." She gave out her phone number and hung up the phone afterwards. "Damn stubborn ass woman, she didn't even give me a chance for my deal spiel." She got out of her torn up leather office chair, cringed with the loud squeak it made and went over to where her suit jacket hung from the wooden coat tree. "I have drinks to buy and hearts to break..."

"And bills to pay so you better get some damn cases to work while you're out there," Doris said and got up from behind her desk. "And don't forget that I have my foot surgery in two days so that means that I won't be here to keep the electric company from flipping that switch." Mac closed her eyes and dropped her head; she knew that she would forget about Doris' foot surgery.

"Damn and you'll be gone for six weeks, how am I gonna keep everything running with you gone?" Doris raised a finger and pointed to the bulletin board right behind her. "You see where it says Truman Avery; she'll be here to take care of every thing. You be nice to her, she's my great grand daughter and nothing like me."

Mac grinned devilishly and pulled her suit jacket on with a flourish. "Ohh that means she's a wild woman, is she gay?"

"Back off MacKenna, I'm a wild woman compared to her. She just lost her job as an inventory clerk at the Smithsonian Museum and I have no idea if she's gay and if she is I pray that you're not her type."

Mac narrowed her eyes, shook her head and rose out a hand. "Wait a minute; she's more or less a cross between a nun and a librarian then, what kinda fun am I supposed to have with her? I've

known you my entire life, how am I supposed to work with a stranger?"

"Figure it out Mac and I wish I had tanned your rotten ass more when I could still catch you. Now go sew your wild oats or whatever the Hell it is you do with those women."

"I'll have you know that I'm a gentlemen and I don't do anything that they don't want."

"I'll believe that when you come in before noon."

After showering and putting on clean clothes, Mac stood in front of her full-length mirror and straightened her hand painted tie. Most people when they saw her thought of someone who bought their clothes from one of the many vintage stores in the area. What they didn't know was that she had her clothes made and preferred the clothes of the 40's; she even had a few zoot suits that she wore on occasion. She didn't have them in the colors that the men wore back then, she liked the dark grays and blues. There was no way she would walk around like Cab Callaway in bright yellow or mint green. Grabbing a thin black belt from her closet door, she threaded it through the belt loops of her dove grey trousers and then fixed her matching suspenders over her shoulders. "OK so what will it be, the vest and watch bob or the coat and zoot chain?" She looked at her clothes and grabbed a long Zoot jacket and then her gold triple zoot chain from her dresser. After splashing on some Obsession for men, she grabbed her fedora and went out the door of her apartment. Once on the street, she flipped a quarter and headed over to the garage where her Plymouth was stored. "It better not rain, I hate having my baby out in bad weather." She pulled the heavy cover off and stowed it in the trunk. "Hope all you ladies are ready for me." She ran her fingertips across the cherry red paint and then crawled behind the steering wheel. She pulled out on to the street and headed towards the ballroom, no one thought of it as being a place where she could pick up a woman, but she seldom left alone and those times she did were by choice.

Pulling into a handicap spot, she hung the blue and white tag from her rearview mirror and then got out, she knew what she was doing was illegal but knew that Salisbury would make the ticket disappear if she got one. Fixing her tie, coat and fedora, she walked into the ballroom and shook hands with the bouncer at the door. The dance floor was crowded with dancers and the swing music came from the live band on the large stage. She loved the music of the 30's and 40's, she grew up with it even though it was way before her time. With her great grandfather and grandfather being private detectives starting back in the late 30's and in the same office, she had grown up with the nostalgia of those time-periods. Her parents would drag her from their office kicking and screaming all the way out to their car and wouldn't calm down until they put the oldies station on the radio. They had tried to get her to live in her own time-period but found it useless, while they and the rest of the world were listening to AC DC, Tom Petty and the Heart Breakers and various other groups, she was with her grandfathers listening to swing and the big bands of the 30's and 40's. It may have been a time of war but it was a time where people cared about each other, now you would be lucky to have someone holds a door for you. She walked up to the bar and waved at Sally. "Can I have bourbon with a water chaser?"

"Water chaser, you're starting out slow aren't cha?" Mac gave her a light shrug of her shoulders and looked out over the crowd.

"Yeah well I have a meeting with a possible client and I don't wanna be stuttering drunk when she comes in."

"Not another cheating spouse thing, is that the only type of cases you take or what?"

"That's the only ones that have come to me, I'd love ta have a good mystery. Ya know a missing relative or something like my grandpa's worked on, but the gangsters nowadays are way different then back then."

Sally chuckled and nodded her head. "You don't have to tell me, remember I was married to your grandpa for a while before he met your grandma...damn I'm over the damn hill."

"No you're not, you still look good Sally." She took her drinks and went over to her favorite table, before she took her seat; a tall blonde touched her on her shoulder.

"Are you MacKenna Jones?"

"That would be a yes, how can I help you?" She looked up and pulled her eyes away from the ample bust to chocolate brown eyes lined in black.

"I'm Regina Taylor; I'm supposed to speak with you about my problem." Mac nodded her head, held out a chair for her and then took her own seat. "I've been following my partner all over town and I think she knows what I'm doing. I need pictures to keep her from causing me any problems when I petition the court for full custody of our daughter."

Mac nodded her head in understanding; she had done cases like this before. "I charge fifty bucks an hour, after eight hours it goes up to seventy five. Is there any problem with that?"

"No the price is fine with me." She looked around the ballroom and starred off into the distance until she heard Mac call her name.

"OK then, just give me a home/work address, a recent picture and how soon you need the pictures."

"I over heard a phone conversation this morning, she should be at this address in two days, they're supposed to go away for the weekend and this is where she's meeting her."

Mac took the address, stuffed it in her shirt pocket and took a sip of her bourbon. "OK, as soon as I get the pictures developed, I'll call and we'll make an appointment to meet. I expect payment at time of delivery." The woman nodded her head and then got up from the table; Mac ignored her and turned to watch the people on the dance floor.

Still wearing the same clothes that she had on from the night before, Mac tried to sneak into her outer office and tried to sneak right back out the door when she heard Doris growl her name. "MacKenna Francis Jones freeze or I'll zap your ass!"

"Ohh come on Doris, it's only ten in the morning." She turned her head and sighed when she saw a mousy looking woman sitting at the desk where Doris normally sat. "I have work to do and I have a new case to prepare for..."

"And you have to meet my replacement before you disappear into that Hell hole of an office and drive us nuts with swing music." Mac dropped her head and ran her hands across her tired face; she hadn't gotten any sleep and wanted nothing more than to fall on the couch in her office. "Don't you dare give me that look; it's your own damn fault that you're tired." She came around the desk, grabbed Mac by the back of her neck and dragged her to stand in front of the desk. "This is Truman, Truman this is your adolescent boss, make sure that she only takes on male clients. If it's a female you'll never see any money and you'll end up working in here with a flashlight."

"Hi I'm Mac, if you need anything I'll be in a coma on my couch." She walked slowly to her office shedding her coat and shoes on the way.

"What have you gotten me into and what's this about female clients?" Truman asked and looked up to her grandma from behind her dark wrap around sunglasses.

"She's a world class dog and trades her services for sex from her female clients. That's probably why she's late this morning and looks like she crawled out from under a slimy rock."

"I heard that Doris and I wasn't with a client last night." She peeked around the door jam and then disappeared.

"It was probably two female clients and not one," She went back around the desk and returned to showing Truman the reports and other duties of her new job.

Mac dropped down onto her old leather couch, adjusted her pillow and looked across to the wall behind her beat up desk. Black and white pictures from the 40's covered the wall; some of them were her great grand father with known mobsters of his day. Others were just places that he had been that figured into family history, he had done a lot of traveling and always brought back little trinkets. One of them still sat on the window ledge by her desk; it was a snow globe of New York. She remembered playing with it while sitting on the ledge watching her grandfather work on files. Her eyes closed and she fell asleep to the sound of Doris and Truman talking in the other office.

"Grandma D these finances suck, how the Hell does she pay you and keep the office open?"

"That's easy, she owns the building and I've put away enough money from her grandpa's and her work to keep everything in the green. What you're seeing there is what she sees, she doesn't know about the other accounts. Besides, I can only make so much money because of social security."

"She really sucks at this business," She ran her hands through her heat-damaged hair and pulled her sunglasses off to rub her sore eyes. "And what's with the zoot suit look, was she at a costume party or something?"

"Nope that's how she dresses every day; she's stuck in the 40's." Doris raised a gnarled hand and waved off what she knew Truman was going to say. "I know and so does she, but she grew up in this office. She has heard all the stories from those days and finds it romantic; I think this is her way of holding onto her grandpa's."

"I can understand that, they must have been very important to her."

Doris sat down next to her, pulled open a side desk drawer and showed her a picture of a three year-old Mac with her great grandfather and grandfather. "She spent most of her childhood in this office, her dad was a cop and her mom taught school. I watched her while the men went out investigating and until her mom got off work and came and got her."

Truman leaned back in the chair and grinned, she had to admit, she stepped into a strange situation." The whole background around you and the Jones' would make one Hell of an HBO series, 60 some years in the Private I business."

"And the dirty little secrets I know about certain families in this area and that includes the high and mighty politicians in Washington DC."

The next morning, Truman unlocked the door to the office, flipped the light on and went over to her desk. She sat down in the chair, flipped the computer on and looked around the outer office while it booted up. It was a bright office with the walls painted white and bright curtains at the floor to ceiling windows. Getting up from her chair, she went over to the window and looked out. The two-story building was in a strange place, when she passed by it every day it made her think that it had fallen from the sky and landed in the middle of a side street. On either side of the building were streets placing it in the center of a diamond. She looked across the street to the small coffee shop and felt her stomach growl, checking her pocket, she found a few bills and some change. "Coffee and maybe a donut..." She pulled her dark sunglasses from her pocket and put them on before going down the stairs and to the front door. Walking across the street, she pulled the door to the coffee shop open and walked in. The smell of freshly brewed coffee and pastries had her stomach growling again, she stopped at the counter and looked at the different flavors of coffee.

"Can I help you?"

"I just want a regular coffee and can I have a second cup to keep it hot, my office is kind of cold." She pulled her money from her pocket, counted out the money, and saw that she had a whole six cents left to her name.

"I saw you come out of Mac's building, are you taking over for Doris?"

Truman looked up at the older man and nodded her head. "Doris is my grandma; I'll be filling in while she's recovering from foot surgery." She handed the man the money and looked at him when he wouldn't take it.

"I've known your grandma since we were kids; I don't want your money and take this over to Mac." He gave her two huge coffees and put pastries in a paper bag for her. "I know she's suffering by now, I saw her friend leave early this morning and she was stumbling down the sidewalk."

"She had someone up there last night," She looked over her shoulder at the building and groaned. "She's a leg lifting dog." She looked back when she heard the older man chuckle.

"Ohh that she is alright, sometimes I see two women sneaking out of there in the mornings. All the young bucks around here hate her with a passion." He laughed harder when her jaw dropped open. "She likes those fancy dressing women, they wear those fancy dresses."

Truman looked down at her clothes and felt every bit the spinster that she was. "I better get over there I don't want my boss thinking that I'm late." She looked up at the second floor but couldn't see through the office windows. "I hope I never have to see the women sneaking out in the morning." Once inside the building, she placed her coffee and one donut on her desk and then stopped outside Mac's office. Taking a deep breath, she closed her eyes and walked through the door. "Mac I brought you coffee." She waited and when Mac didn't answer her she opened one eye but kept it trained on the wall across from her. "I brought some donuts to...you know to go with the coffee..." Giving up, she opened both eyes and looked around until she found her boss stretched out across the old couch. She moved folders from the corner of the crowded desk and placed the coffee and bag down. "I'll be at my desk if you need anything," She looked closer and couldn't help but stare, Mac was tangled in her suspenders and the chain at her waist. "So you're into bondage, wonder if you have handcuffs with fur inside of them." She leaned in closer and was within inches of Mac's face.

"Not here but I have them at home," She opened one eye, let out a yell and fell off the couch. "Damn woman but you scared the Hell outta me!" She got up from the floor, took one-step and flew back onto the couch. "God damn that hurt." She rubbed her hip and looked up at Truman. "Do you ever take those old lady glasses off?"

Truman touched the earpiece and shook her head. "I had eye surgery and my eyes are still sensitive, do you ever change clothes?"

"Me, you should look in the mirror. Then again you'd shatter it," She grabbed her head and

moaned from the pounding behind her eyes. "Damn librarian clothes you wear and the frizzy hair thing ya got going on there..." She gulped when a large hand grabbed the front of her shirt and jerked her up from the couch.

"You know what MacKenna; it's no wonder why you have to sleep around. After a few words from your mouth the woman high tails it away from you, you're a crude bitch and it's no wonder you wake up alone." She dropped her back on the couch and left her office.

Mac rubbed her throat and sighed; she felt bad about what she said and got up to go after her new secretary. "Damn it to Hell Mac but you're an asshole and she's right." She got up from the couch; her suspenders jerked her back and then tripped on her zoot chain. "Wait Truman come back...I'm sorry!" She tried to crawl to the door and stopped when she heard the outside door slam. "Ohh fuck," She dropped her head on the floor and pounded her fist on it. "When Doris finds out what I did I am so dead." She struggled with her chain and her suspenders until she was able to get up from the floor; she searched for her shoes and then grabbed her fedora before running from her office.

Truman walked into her bedroom and stood before her full-length mirror; she leaned close and tried to see her eyes through her dark sunglasses. "She's right, my hair is frizzy...looks like I got hit by lightning." She pulled on the front of her dirt brown sweater and looked at it from an angle, taking it off, she looked at the green sweatshirt she had on. Pulling that off, she looked at the blue flannel shirt and then got to the final barrier before her skin. The threadbare Black Sabbath T-shirt would be better for a rag instead of a shirt. "What's wrong with my clothes, they're functional, comfortable and they really suck." She went over to her single bed, dropped face first onto it, gasped for air and rolled over. "Leave it up to me to fall and land with my face on a dry cleaning bag." She balled it up and tossed it across the pale blue room. "Now I'll have to find another job or starve to death." She dropped her arms out to the side and starred up at the ceiling. "Grandma D's going to be pissed off; I get into a fight within five minutes of being alone with Mac." She got out of bed and went out to her small kitchen, after searching for a few minutes; she found salad stuff and a half a bottle of cheap wine. "I guess I qualify now as a vegetarian, its nine o'clock in the morning and I'm eating wilted lettuce." She looked at the wine closely and noticed stuff floating around inside the bottle. "Does wine go bad...", "She looked at the lid and decided to pour it out. "Only if the cap is metal and drops rust into the wine." She made her salad, got out a half-gallon jug of milk and Balsamic Vinegar dressing. After a bite of salad, she took a drink of milk and gagged. She slapped her hands over her face and swallowed with difficulty. "Ohh my fucking God that's horrible!" She coughed and wiped tears from her cheeks. "You're a mess Truman; you're so bad that Jenny Jones wouldn't give you a make over." She scrubbed her face and then tried to work her fingers through her badly damaged hair. "Maybe you should shave your head and start all over, or keep the GI Jane look forever. You'd save on shampoo and could throw out all your brushes. Sure and then you'd have plenty of money to pay for the therapy so you could find out why you talk in the second person!" While choking down her salad, she looked through the help wanted ads in the newspaper. "Ohh here's a good job, cleaning kennels at the animal shelter. Bet the animals wouldn't complain about my clothes and I'd fit right on in with the terriers and the seeing-eye dogs would think I'm blind." She searched some more and found another one. "Or I can get a job delivering port-o-potties!"

Mac pulled into Doris' driveway and dreaded what she was going to have to do; she got out of her Plymouth, waved at hand at Doris' husband Bert and went into the house through the kitchen door. As soon as she saw the older woman, she knew that Truman had told on her.

"What did you do MacKenna?" She asked and sat down at the table.

"You mean you don't know or you just want to hear me say that I was a complete asshole and I deserve to be severely beat and thrown in front of a speeding train?"

Doris gave her a small grin and waved a hand at her to sit." I'd love to hear the long version but I don't have the patience for the normal MacKenna run around that you'll give me; you will go to the florist. Notice the key word 'Florist' not the little refrigerator thing at Wal-Mart, but a real flower place. You'll get Truman some flowers and then after you go home and take a shower, you'll go over to her apartment, drop to your knees and apologize to her for being a complete ass."

Mac dropped her head and nodded, she knew that she was getting off easy." What kind of flowers... and should I get her anything else, I'm really sorry about what I said to her and I don't think she'll believe me when I do say I'm sorry." She looked up with troubled green eyes. "I could come up with a bunch of excuses but none of them would be true, she scared the Hell outta me this morning and it just declined from there."

"She told me that she was pretty close to you before you woke up, she can't see that well yet so she has to get close to stuff."

"Is she blind, like legally blind?"

"Ohh no, she had surgery to repair a detached retina. She was in a car accident and got hurt pretty bad, that's why she lost her job at the Smithsonian. Here's her address, you go over there right now." Mac took the paper and put it in her shirt pocket before getting up.

"White roses would be OK right?"

"How in the Hell do you get so many dates if you don't know anything about flowers?"

"They don't want flowers from me." She grinned and left Doris rubbing her temples.

Truman sat huddled on her couch with a cup of coffee and her binoculars held up to her eyes, she pulled them down a little and then put them back up. "Come on little bird move so I can see you." She looked out to the feeder that hung outside her window waiting for the Chickadee to move around on the feeder. Sometimes she sat for hours just watching the birds come to the feeder, she had no idea what some of birds were. She wanted one of those bird books but never

seemed to have the spare money anymore, after fifteen years of working at the Smithsonian, one car accident and her future is in the street. She was sitting in traffic on I95 when a cement truck plowed into cars behind her causing a chain reaction that left 22 cars smashed together. Besides a head injury and the torn retina, she had both legs broken and suffered a fractured hip. Her bosses let her go while she was still in x-ray at the hospital, they told her if she couldn't get around then she was not needed. She burned through what savings she had while recovering and had only been out of her casts for a week and a half before getting the job at Jones Investigations. Now with no money and no food in the apartment, she was worried about not being able to buy birdseed for her little feathered friends. "So guys while your out flying around if ya just happen to see some change laying on the ground could you bring it on by, I'm broke as hell?"

Mac brushed back her still wet hair; pulled on her fedora and jogged from her bedroom into the small kitchen where she had left the flowers she had gotten from the nearby florist. She had to admit that they smelled good and added something to her otherwise dreary little kitchen. She flipped the ceiling light on and squinted in the gloom. "I just changed that damn light bulb; I swear they last for five hours and blow up." She picked up the bouquet of flowers, grabbed her car keys and went out the door that connected her apartment to the two-car garage. She normally just walked around to the outside door to get her car but was in a hurry. Going over to her Plymouth, she got behind the wheel and a few seconds later was pulling out onto Main Street. She had no idea that Truman lived just a few blocks away from her, what was even stranger was that she had never met her before she came in to replace Doris. She thought that she knew all of the older woman's grand children but Truman was a mystery to her. What she didn't understand was why she had acted the way she had with the other woman, she usually treated everyone with respect no matter what they looked like. And if her life depended on it, she couldn't remember any details about Truman except that she wore those old people sunglasses. She watched out the window for the address that Doris have given her and stopped outside of a small tenant type house. The place fit how she envisioned a librarian type person to live in, it was a dark brown house with small windows and gave her a dreary feeling. Most of the houses along this street were over 80 years old and had the original wooden shingles covering the outsides. She parked her car and walked up to the front door with the flowers in one hand, looking to the list of four names, she saw that Truman lived in a bottom floor apartment. The house didn't look big enough for two single apartments let alone four, she wondered if they shared a hallway bathroom. She opened the outside door, took three steps inside and was up against the other wall. She looked to the numbers on either side of her and pounded on Truman's door, while she waited, she ran over what she wanted to say to her. Before she could straighten her jumbled thoughts, the door opened and she was looking directly at Truman's chest.

"I ahhh...these are...here." She handed her the flowers and stuck her hands in her pockets before looking up into her ice blue eyes. "I'm sorry...I was...you're really tall." She was five foot five in shoes and knew that Truman had to be six foot in her bare feet.

"You bought me white roses?"

"Yeah, I ahhh..."

"Would you like to come in, the place is a mess, I'm packing." She stepped back from the door and watched a flustered Mac. "I can't afford the rent here anymore and I've got a week to find someplace cheaper and a job on top of it."

"You have a job," She turned to face her and felt her face heat up. "I'm really sorry about yelling at you, it was uncalled for and I have no excuse for doing it. Will you come back to work, I..." She looked down at the toes of her black and white New Yorker wingtips and then up at Truman. "I need you to come back, please. I don't know anything about computers or what Doris does in the office." She pulled a check from her pocket and handed it to Truman. "Doris left this on my desk; I would have given it to you earlier if I had known it was there and I hadn't acted like a complete ass." She figured that Doris wanted her to know how much she was paying Truman and that's why she left it on her desk. "Is it enough, if not I can give you more?" Truman looked down at the check and back into nervous green eyes.

"This is more than enough; I've never made five hundred dollars a week before." She was at a loss as to what to do or say. "Do you want some coffee; I haven't packed it away yet."

"Sure that would be good," Mac looked around the apartment and knew that she couldn't live in the cramped area. The living room was the kitchen and bedroom, the bathroom was at the opposite end of the square room and there was only two windows in the place. An old couch sat near one window with the small single bed near the other. She didn't see a TV anywhere and the only modern appliance was a CD player. "Have you found any apartments to look at, this place is..."

"Small, cramped and I can hear everything my neighbors upstairs are doing. I was thinking of that place a couple miles away, they rent out suites by the week or month." She handed Mac a cup of coffee and leaned up against the counter. "I'd stay here but the new owner is going to tear the dividing wall down and make it a flat type apartment, he's going to charge three times the amount I'm paying now."

"If you don't mind, what's he charge for this place?" She wouldn't pay no more than fifty bucks a month for the dive; she had stayed in motel rooms that were bigger and nicer.

"Six fifty a month and that's not including utilities and grounds keeping pay."

Mac snorted and went over to look out one of the windows. "Truman the yard is maybe 6x6 if that, what do they charge you for the two blades of grass that grow in the dirt?"

"I know but it wasn't always like this here, the damn yuppies move in, raise the rent so that regular people can't afford it and then they sell to some other rich yuppies and pretty soon we're all living under tarps in Washington DC." She took a deep breath, turned and placed her hands on the counter. "Sorry I just get so pissed off over what they can do to the little people." She dropped her head and never heard Mac sliding up the window sash.

"Well, once you're out of here I can have the place closed down for a failed building inspection." She pulled out a pocketknife and dug into the window frame. "It's got a serious problem with

carpenter ants; I wouldn't be surprised if it didn't have termites as well."

"You can do that, I mean how much will this cost?" She watched Mac pull her wallet out and then took the business card from her outstretched hand. "You're a licensed building inspector?"

"Ohh sure, that's how I keep my own building from being torn down." She gave her a wide grin and winked. "Just kidding, my building is up to code and safe. Doris makes sure of that because I forget about things." She placed her coffee cup in the small stained and chipped enamel sink and leaned against the counter next to Truman. "I know of a place that's open and it won't cost that much and it's a Hell of a lot nicer than that flea bag place you were thinking of. It needs some painting done and cleaned but it's in a sturdy building and the landlords only nasty after a long night."

"Is it open and am I going to need the first and last months rent?"

Mac grinned and shook her head. "It's been open for years and don't worry about the rent just yet. If you put some shoes on I'll take you over there so you can see it."

Truman looked at the wooden dash in the Plymouth and knew that the piece of wood cost more than anything she owned. She had never replaced her car after the accident and had been walking everywhere since her casts came off. Before that, she was using her wheelchair to go to the grocery store. With working for Mac, she was only a 25-minute walk from home and wouldn't need a car. When the car slowed, she looked up and then over to Mac. "This is your building, why are we here?"

"Because this is where the apartment is," She got out and jogged around to pull the heavy door open for Truman. "No ones lived in it for years, I use it for storage, you know furniture that I don't use." Truman gave her a shake of her head and wouldn't get out of the car. "What's wrong, it's a nice big and airy place. It has AC and its own furnace thermostat."

"I've heard about the women coming and going of all hours from your building, I don't want to live where I'll have to see that."

Mac narrowed her eyes at her, grabbed her hand and pulled her from the car. "Who ever told you that needs to mind their own damn business," She struggled with her and found out that she was stronger than she looked. "Ohh come on Truman, I'll show you why there was a woman leaving here so early, actually she came here early and left an hour later."

"Why should I, Grandma D told me about your bachelor ways and trading of Investigative services for sex."

"OK so I've done that a few times but what I was doing this morning was not that." She pulled her to the front of her building, opened the door and held it for her. "I know you've not paid attention to the actual size of this building, it's very deceiving from the outside." She went over

to a door beneath the stairs, opened it and let Truman go before her. "I don't even think Doris remembers this room; or that I use it regularly." She flipped the light on and walked across the polished hard wood floor to a sound system. Flipping the switch, she closed her eyes when *Harry James* came from the speakers lining the room's walls.

"This reminds me of a dance studio," Truman said and walked in further to see one wall lined with mirrors. "Mac do you teach dance or is this for your own personal use?"

"I have a few students that I teach Swing, I have one steady partner that comes over twice a week for practice. We enter competitions when they have them and we've even won a few contests." She turned the music off and walked up to stand in front of Truman. "She's the one that was leaving here this morning; she can only make it before work because she has to pick up her kids after work and then make supper for her family."

"Is she a single parent?"

"Nope, happily married to a cop with two left feet." She walked from the room and waited for Truman to follow her. "If you want, I'll show you that apartment, it's across from mine but you'll never hear a peep from me, the walls are solid brick." She went up the stairs, turned opposite of where her office was and stopped in front of a wooden door on the left side of the hallway. "I'll warn you, it's dusty as Hell in here." She opened the door and waited for Truman to go in first. "Everything works, I had the bathroom remodeled a few years ago and Doris uses this bathroom when she's here." She gave her a grin. "She didn't want germs from the nasty clients that show up here." She leaned against the door and watched Truman wander around the large apartment, it had a full kitchen separated by a half-wall with a countertop from the living room and a bedroom at the back next to the bathroom. She knew that if she wanted, she could rent it for eight hundred dollars a month or more. She just didn't want anyone in her building with her, that was until now. Something about Truman struck her, she wondered if it had anything to do her relation to Doris. "Well will it do, I'll help you clean if you take it." Truman turned to face her and looked over the tops of her sunglasses.

She stepped closer and crossed her arms over her chest. "How much rent and how are the utilities set up?"

Mac scuffed a toe across the floor and stuffed her hands deep into her pockets. "I can't charge you rent and the utilities are set up for the whole building," She looked up and felt her heart seize in her chest when Truman took her glasses off to show narrowed eyes.

"If you're doing this out of guilt I'll stomp your ass into the floor, now how much rent?"

"There's no guilt in this Truman, I can't charge you rent because your like family...you know what I mean?" She moved so that she was in front of the open door and had an escape route. "It's because of Doris, plus she'd kill me if I charged you to live here. When she finds out, she might make me pay you to live here."

"I'll pay for the difference in the kilowatts and what about a laundry room?"

"In the hall right next to the public bathroom, there's a little closet downstairs next to the front door, if you have dry cleaning just put it in there. When it's done, you can find it in the same place."

"They pick up and deliver your dry cleaning, I couldn't even get my news paper and you get dry cleaning."

"It's easy when your family has used the same place for over 50 years; I should buy stock in the place." She looked around the apartment and saw that it wasn't as dirty as she thought. "So do you want the apartment or not?"

Truman looked around again and nodded her head. "Do you know anyone with a truck; I have my couch and bed to move?"

"I could get the paddy wagon to your place if I wanted, and cops to move your furniture. Being a former cop helps sometimes, have any really heavy stuff that needs otherwise useless men?"

"Nope, just my couch and my bed, everything else stays there." Mac rubbed her face and nodded her head.

"OK, we can handle that; it should fit in my Subaru. We can fold the seats down and just slide the couch in and if you didn't notice, there's a queen size bed in the bedroom already. The mattress and box springs are brand new and still in the plastic bags." She shrugged her shoulders and yawned. "I worked a case for a guy that owned a mattress store, that's how he paid part of his bill."

"In that case my bed can stay there, why don't you go get some sleep and I'll walk back to my apartment and finish packing along with getting a hold of my landlord."

Mac pulled out her keys and handed them to her. "My Subaru is down on the street, if you want you can use it to haul some of your stuff over, just wake me up when you come back and I'll help you carry everything up the stairs." She went across the hallway, opened her door and looked back at Truman. "I never lock my door so when you get back just come on in." She went into her apartment and closed the door quietly behind her.

"OK, so maybe she's not as bad as I thought she was. She really didn't give me a good first impression," She said to herself and went down the steps. "It was horrible actually, if not for Grandma D I would have walked out the door." She went out the door and looked for the Subaru. "You're an ass Truman; you should have asked her where it was and what color it is." She walked around the building and stopped when she saw an Outback sitting along side the building. "That has got to be her Subaru," She shook her head and walked up to it. "Only she would have a vanity license plate with 'Swing' on it."

Mac shed her clothes, draped them over a chair in the kitchen and went into her bedroom. Without pulling the blankets back, she crawled into the middle and lay down. Rolling from side to side, she sat up, pulled her t-shirt over her head and tossed it on the floor. She lay back and dropped her arms out to the side with a deep groan. A few minutes later, she rolled from her bed, went into the kitchen and grabbed a beer from the refrigerator. When she got beyond exhaustion, she couldn't sleep until she either relaxed or passed out. She turned on her TV, dropped down on the couch in just her boxers and placed her feet on her coffee table. After taking a few long drinks, she placed the beer on the table and leaned back in the soft leather cushions. After closing her eyes, she listened to the TV and fell asleep dreaming about *Thigh masters*.

After filling up the Outback, she went to the bank and cashed the check from Mac. It felt good to have money in her hand and decided the first thing she would buy was food, she smiled brightly and pulled into the Food Lion parking lot. "OK Mac, since you won't accept rent, I'll cook. Everyone has to eat and from what I've seen in two days that's one thing you don't do regularly." She went into the store and filled up the cart with enough food to last her a month, she bought things that she had not been able to afford before. Her one main weakness were chocolate Hershey's kisses, she grabbed two bags and felt a guilty pleasure. Once her shopping was finished, she drove back to her new apartment and carried the groceries up the stairs. Eight trips later, she had all the bags into her apartment and all over the kitchen counters. She pulled the refrigerator from the wall, plugged it in and then checked to make sure that it was working. "This is better than what I had in my other apartment; it has one of those ice makers." She put the perishables away and then picked one of the cupboards for the soups and staples. An hour later, she had steaks cooking, potatoes in the oven and corn cooking. After she had found the box with her few dishes and silverware, she cleared a spot on the counter and then went over to wake up Mac. Tapping on her door at first, she heard the drone of the TV and opened the door. She stepped in and looked around in total amazement; on one wall was a framed original poster of *Humphrey Bogart* and *Lauren Bacall* from *Key Largo* and then one of a scene from the movie *To have or have not*. She stepped in further and looked at the antique grandfather clock that stood against one wall and then saw Mac's feet on the coffee table. She took a deep breath and decided to bring supper over to Mac's apartment because she had a kitchen table. Turning around, she hurried back to her apartment, got their dishes and came back in. She placed the dishes on the kitchen table and then walked around the couch. Her jaw drops and she looks over the top of her sunglasses at Mac's bare breasts. "Mac...put some damn clothes on," She grabs one of her feet, picks it up and drops it to the floor. "Time to eat...I wrecked your car," She rubbed her face, looked down at her firm breasts, and grinned evilly. "There's naked women running down the street!" She gave up on waking her by talking, grabbed a throw pillow, and smacked her over the head. "I'm sure I can find someone on the street that's hungry!" She smacked her again and grinned when she threw her hands up over her head.

"Come on now I know our sex life isn't that bad." Mac mumbled and fell over on the couch to protect herself better. "It'll be better later, need more sleep."

Truman stood with one hand planted on her hip and the other still clutching the pillow, she raised it over her head and beat Mac all over her body. "Sex life, we don't and never will have a sex life

so get up and put some clothes on!" She stopped when green eyes opened and looked up at her, Mac panicked, fell off the couch and started looking for her shirt.

"Would you at least turn your back, geez Truman?"

"You can't be modest with your reputation and I've seen plenty of naked women," She watched her crawl across the floor on her hands and knees to her bedroom. "I did the entire inventory for the African Tribal exhibits, there's lots of pictures of naked women." She walked around her apartment and looked at the framed pictures on the walls; she stopped in front of one that caught her eye. It was a black and white picture taken in the 40's. "Why does she look familiar?" She asked when Mac came into the room in a t-shirt and her pants.

"Have you ever seen the movie *Casablanca* with *Humphrey Bogart*, *Edward G. Robinson* and *Ingrid Bergman*," She ran a finger across the glass and wiggled her brows at Truman. "This is Ingrid; she's one of my favorites along with Katherine Hepburn and Lauren Bacall." She looked up at Truman and then around her to the table. "You cooked for me; you didn't have to do that."

"It's the least I could do; it's probably cold by now. I didn't know that it would take a near deathly beating to wake you up."

"Yeah well normally I'm not that hard to wake up," She winked and moved over to the kitchen table. "It's easy if you know the trick, but I don't think you want to know what it is. Do you drink beer or do you want something else?"

"Beer is fine," She sat down at the table across from Mac and took the offered beer. "I guess I need to get a kitchen table, I always used my coffee table to eat off."

"Why bother unless you're going to have people over that want to eat at one, I don't know of anyone who eats at a table...except for Doris and Bert."

"Well they're old school and you don't leave the table until you're done." She took a bit of her steak, watched Mac cut her meat in small pieces, and dip each piece in the steak sauce she had poured on her plate. She found it weird that a woman whose office looked like a hurricane kept everything separated on her plate; it was almost compulsive in a way. As Mac ate, she took in the small details that made up the smaller woman. The thin lines at the corners of her emerald green eyes, the lines at the sides of her pink lips that crinkled with her crooked grin, the way her hair fell across her brow and curled above and behind her ears and then to lay against her neck. She looked up with raised brows and tilted her head to the side. "What are you doing with your food?"

"Eating why, what are you doing with yours besides watching it get cold?"

"You eat weird...that didn't make sense did it." She wiggled her fork at how Mac has separated small portions all over her plate. "What would you have done if I made stew?"

Mac looked down at her plate and grinned; she had always played with her food but never paid

attention to what she was doing with it. Doris caught her at times and yelled at her to stop playing and eat like a somewhat normal person. "Not quite sure since it's been years since I had any," She leaned forward and looked at Truman's plate and up to her. "At least I eat and if you don't I will." She wiggled her knife and fork at Truman's plate and grinned. "No left overs in this house..." She dropped her brows over her nose and gave a small shrug of one shoulder. "Maybe, because I never cook and just run across the street and get deli food." She filled her mouth with steak and chewed happily while Truman sat and watched her. Then she noticed that the table was vibrating a little bit and looked under to see that Mac had her feet wrapped around the table leg and her toes were wiggling.

After supper, with Mac's help, Truman got the rest of the Outback unloaded of boxes. Once they were stacked inside the apartment, Truman held out the keys to her. "Here's your keys, I'm going to go home and see what else I need to get done before I turn my keys over."

"You're going to walk back to your place," Mac looked at her pocket watch and shook her head. "Take my car, it maybe safe around here but I still don't want you walking all the way there at ten o'clock at night. And you don't have to be here so early in the morning; banker's hours are good for me, even though I don't get up before ten." She winked and went across the hall to her own apartment. Truman juggled the keys in her hand and then smiled; she didn't really feel like walking all the way back to her apartment and was thankful for the kind gesture. Closing her door, she went back down the steps and out through the door to the garage. She had no idea of how many doors were in the building until they had started bringing boxes upstairs. Once she was out on the road, she noticed that she had been listening to Big band music on the radio the entire time she had been using the car. Shaking her head, she turned up the volume and really listened to the music. When she got back to her apartment, the phone was ringing off the hook. She grabbed it on the run, fell onto her couch and panted into the receiver.

"Hello...I'm here."

"What are you doing that you're out of breath?" Doris asked.

"I just got home, I was moving into my new apartment. What are you doing up this late?" She stretched out on her couch and listened to her grandma yell at her grandpa for something.

"I'm ready to smack the shit outta your grandpa, he keeps throwing his damn shoes right in front of the door. If I trip over them one more time he's gonna need a proctologist because I'm gonna shove them up his ass. So where's this new apartment going to be and am I gonna have to beat up a doorman to be able to see you?"

Truman chuckled at the thought of a doorman at any of the buildings in Shepardstown, she looked down to her ole scuffed up shoes and then up to the water stained ceiling. "Would you believe that I can fall out bed and roll right to my desk?" She heard her grandma gasp and knew that she knew what she was talking about.

"You're gonna live across the hall from the problem child! Ohh you have no idea what you've gotten yourself into...what's she charging you for rent?"

"She won't take any rent but I'll pay for my share of the utilities and what ever else I can pull off. Ya know I spent hours with her today and she's really not that bad, a little flirty at times but nothing that I haven't seen with all those people I worked with in DC."

"That's funny; I thought she'd turn that off around you. You're not really her type; she goes for the glittery women."

"Thanks grandma D that 's just what I wanted to hear, does my ego wonders you know." She felt like a knife went through her chest. "It's hard not being anyone's type, not even the other geeks at work wanted anything to do with me."

"Ohh come on Truman you'll find that person who thinks you're a Goddess or they'll find you, now get some sleep, Mac will have you frazzled with in an hour's time." She hung up the phone before Truman could say another word.

"Maybe I should go find some blind people; they don't care what a person looks like." She pulled her sunglasses off, dropped them to the couch and got up to go look in the bathroom mirror. What she saw made her small ego deflate even more, her dark frizzy hair was coming out of its pony tail and split ends stuck up all around her head. Pushing her hair back from around her face, she took in her high cheekbones and strong jaw. "Shave your head and you can scare people with this face." She wiggled her dark bushy eyebrows and gave up. "The Hell with it, you'll never get anyone like Mac to look at you." She turned off the bathroom light and went to where her bed sat with no sheets or blankets, shedding her frumpy clothes; she crawled onto it and rolled to her side. "I'm no Ingrid or Lauren that's for sure." Her last thoughts were of Mac with a cigar clenched between her teeth saying Bogart's famous line from Casablanca. "Of all the gin joints in all the towns in the world, she walks into mine."

Mac was already at her desk when Truman came into the outer office; she sniffed the air and grinned widely. She could smell the cinnamon Danish and fresh coffee that Truman had gotten from across the street; she pulled another file folder from the stack on her left and dropped it in the center of her desk. It had been weeks since she had actually looked at some of the files let alone close them out, Doris never came into her office because she said it gave her a migraine. When a file was finished, she usually left it in the in box on Doris' desk. When a light tap came from the door jam, she looked up and waved Truman in. "You're early, it's not even 0830."

"I know but I had some more stuff to bring over, the only thing left in my apartment is my couch but I think I'll leave it there and just get a new one." She placed a paper bag and cup of coffee on Mac's desk. "Why won't the man at the coffee shop take my money?"

"Because my dad helped him out years ago when someone broke into his shop and robbed him, from then on, I've gotten free coffee and donuts."

"You're in here awful early; I thought you didn't come in until later?"

"I have this case tonight, I have to follow some woman and get pictures of her being unfaithful so I thought I'd get some of my desk cleared off so I have someplace to work." She dropped another file on the right side and leaned back in her chair. "I don't know what Doris did with the files so I hope so showed you."

"Ohh she did but her system scares me, it doesn't make one bit of sense to me so I don't know what to do."

"Put it the way you want it," She looked up from taking a drink of her coffee. "I think Doris is gonna retire once she gets a taste of freedom, I've been trying to get her to retire for years."

Truman sat down on the edge of the cluttered desk and nodded her head. "I think she might too, I tried to get her to quit a while ago when her knees started bothering her." She saw the look of confusion on Mac's face. "You didn't know that her knees are bad did you, she has bad arthritis in them and takes Celebrex to help with the stiffness and pain. She mentioned visiting my mom down in Alabama, maybe I can get my mom to come up and get her and take her down for a while."

"So that's why I never met you before now, you're not from here."

Truman gave her a small nod of her dark head and a crooked smile. "Now I was born in Alabama and didn't come up this way until I got the job at the Smithsonian, I worked there ten years and my asshole boss fired me when I got in that car accident."

Mac raised a finger and wiggled it. "Wait a minute; you got fired because you got in a car accident that wasn't your fault to begin with. Is that legal what he did?"

"Doesn't matter if it was or not, my asshole father is the head of antiquities and what ever he says goes. So that means he can screw anyone he wants including his only child and no one can say a word about it."

Mac knew her mouth was hanging open; she couldn't fathom a father firing his own kid after a serious car accident. "I know some shady characters; I can have him beaten up if you want."

Truman gave her a snort and then rolled her eyes behind her glasses. "He would enjoy having someone think he was that important that he warranted an ass beating. I figure the powers that be were showing me a way out of Hell, I'm an archeologist and the only job I could get was a lackey in the Smithsonian's basement." She shrugged her shoulders and took a sip of her coffee. "Now I'm free of that assholes degrading remarks and hope that he gets lost in the bowels of the place looking for his checkbook." She gave Mac a wicked grin. "I stole his checkbook a few days before the accident and hid it down in the mess where he sent me to work. He refused to get us paper masks to keep from inhaling all the dust that we kicked up moving stuff on the shelves. So I stole his personal checkbook to cause him problems."

"Remind me to never piss you off...oohh wait you already have my checkbook." She tapped the folders on her right side and looked up into the dark sunglasses. "You can file these or what ever you want to do with them," She looked at the old clock on the wall and groaned. "I've got to run; I have a client waiting on some information." She got up and grabbed a worn brown leather WWII bomber jacket. "I don't know what time I'll be back, I've got to get pictures for that other client." She grabbed a leather notepad, pulled a few pages from it and handed them to Truman. "Those are the work hours I did on some cases; I put their case numbers next to the number of hours." She grabbed her coffee and donut before going to the door. "If you need a car today use my Plymouth, the Outback blends in better when I do surveillance work." She tossed her the spare set of keys to the building, apartments and both her cars. "Keep those, there's times I lock the place up like a drum and you'll need those keys to get in."

Truman looked at the ring of keys and nodded her head. "Where's your Plymouth parked and what color is it, I don't want to wander around like an idiot?"

"Ohh you can't miss my Plymouth, it's a 1948 candy apple red ragtop. It's under that car cover in the garage, just be careful with it if you go anywhere." She went out the door whistling a Glen Miller song.

"Ohh I don't think I'll be going anywhere, there's no way I'm taking a chance on getting a single scratch on it." She dropped the keys into the pocket of her baggy pants and grabbed the folders from off the desk. "Now I have to figure out a filing system, and about the hourly charges." She went back to her desk, looked at the pieces of paper Mac had given her. "Ohh I see what you've been doing, you wait until the case is finished before billing. No more of that MacKenna, these people are going to pay as you work. Why should they get off for sometimes months without giving up a dime?" She sat down and started going through the folders to combine them with the billing hours. Once she had that done, she started doing the invoices. "Now because I'm a big bitch, I'm going to call every single one of you to let you know that you owe money and if it's late you will pay interest fees on it." After finishing the ones that Mac had given her, she went into her office and took a seat at her desk. There had to be at least twenty or more folders on her desk, she didn't think that an investigators services would be that great in such a small area. She opened one of the folders and noticed that it was from one of the nearby businesses. "Ohh I see what you do besides peek on adulterers, you do background checks on new employees. But how do you do this without the use of a computer?" She went through the paperwork and found receipts for gas stations and tollbooths. "Ohh for the Greek Gods, you go and personally speak to all their references." She closed the files and sat back in the worn chair, spinning so that she could look out the window, she thought of how she could make it easier on Mac without stepping on her old fashion ways. "Hell there isn't a way unless I drag her into our time," She grabbed one of the other files and found the notes on expenses, adding them up, she was shocked at how much it was and the amount of time Mac spent on the road. "What if I can prove that this stuff can be done quicker by computer and then she'd have more time for the more interesting cases?"

Mac knocked on the door to one of her client's houses; she had been looking for information

proving that his business partner was embezzling money from him and stashing it away in a bank account in his six-year-old daughter's name. It wasn't that difficult to follow him into the bank and eaves drop, it was getting the paperwork to back up everything. Luckily, for her client, she knew the bank teller and was able to convince her for copies of bank statements. Though not legal in any way, it was just the thing needed for her client to bring in his other business partners. She stepped back when the door opened and nodded her head at the older woman who answered. "I'm here to see Mr. Pomers, he's expecting me."

"He's in the kitchen; if you'll come with me I'll get you a cup of coffee and then you two can talk." Their conversation lasted all of a half hour, Mac turned over the bank statements and Mr. Pomers handed her a check for the completed task. They shook hands and she was on her way, the only thing she had planned that night was to follow the woman from her other client. She hoped that she could get the pictures and then head on home for the rest of the night, for some strange reason, she wanted to just sit and watch TV. Her usual thing would be to go out and get a date for the night; she just didn't feel up to entertaining anyone. Checking her pocket watch, she walked out to her car and got in. She had a few hours to kill before having to sit on stakeout; she pulled out and headed to the center of town. The video store was one of her favorite places to go and one of the places that always managed to get into her wallet.

Truman typed the person's name into the search engine of the new program she had loaded earlier that day and sat back to see what would happen. Five minutes later, the screen filled up with everything the person had ever done. She was surprised that it didn't show how many detentions they had while in school. She hit print and then typed in another name. "This private investigator stuff isn't that hard, I can do this stuff with no problem." She got up and went over to her apartment; she had some laundry to do and thought it was funny that she could do it while at work. Pulling her laundry hamper out into the hallway, she took a good look at her clothes and grumbled. "Everything I own is brown, dirt brown, mud brown, dark brown...brown!" She dumped her dark clothes into the washer and then went back to her office. "Even my shoes are brown," She remembered what Mac had on that day and wondered how she would look wearing something blue. "Who would even notice, Mac wouldn't that's for sure." She pulled the papers from the printer and put them in their respective folders and set them aside, three hours later, she had all the files done and sitting on Mac's desk. Her next task was to straighten the mess up in Mac's office; in one corner was a stack of files that had an inch of dust covering them. She looked in the filing cabinets in the outer office and found one that was completely empty except for an old telephone missing some pieces. Hours later and covered in dirt, Truman turned off her PC and the lights in the office. She decided that she would just stay in her new apartment that night and get the last of her boxes from her old apartment the next day. What she couldn't wait to do was take a nice long bath in the large tub and then sit down to a bowl of soup and crackers. "Maybe I'll buy a TV; I haven't had one in six months."

Mac sat in her car outside the address that her client had given her; she grabbed her camera with the long lens on it and got ready for a long wait. She had picked a spot where she could see

through the window and hoped that she could get a few pictures and then head on home. It was past seven o'clock and dark outside when she saw the woman walking towards the front door; she lifted the camera and then jumped when the car door opened and large hands pulled her out. "Hey wait a minute here what the Hell..." The first punch jarred her head to the side and the second snapped it back. She dropped to the ground, shook her head and then gasped when a foot connected with her side. Two pairs of hands grabbed her by her arms and dragged her into the alleyway, once in the darkness, they continued with the beating. Her head snapped from side to side from the punches, when she fell to the ground, kicks to her sides and legs kept her there. Even when she slipped into the darkness, they continued to beat her. Hours later, she woke up with a pounding in her head to rival all the hangovers she had combined. She rolled to her side and coughed painfully, the taste of blood in her mouth told her that she was in serious shape. With her sight almost gone from the beating and the darkness of night, she saw her Outback sitting at the curb. She rolled to her knees, felt the world tilt and then straighten with time. With agonizing pain, she crawled to her car and then got the door open. With every movement or breath, she felt her ribs grinding. With the last of her strength, she pulled herself into her car and passed out.

Truman rolled over and looked at the clock, it was three o'clock in the morning and someone was blowing their car horn. Rolling back over, she covered her head with her pillow and yelled. "Damn it to Hell go blow your horn up your ass!" She got out of bed, went over to the window and looked out. "Damn dumbass people, I'm trying to...fuck!" She tilted her head to the side and saw that it was Mac's Outback making all the noise and it was sitting up on the sidewalk at an angle. Running to her door, she flung it open and took the stairs two at a time. Opening the front door, she blocked it with one of her boxes and went out to Mac's car. By the time she got out to the car, the horn had stopped and Mac lay across the front seat. Opening the door was the biggest shock of her life, Mac lay in blood stained clothes and with a swollen face. "Mac...come on talk to me..." She reached in and felt for her pulse, after finding it; she pulled her hand away and saw it was covered in blood. "You need a doctor..." She searched the ignition and found the keys still in it, she was about to get in when Mac grabbed her hand.

"No hospital...questions...call Detective Salisbury." She gripped Truman's arm tighter and passed out again.

"Damn you Mac!" She reached in and pulled her over to the seat, slipping her arms under her, she lifted her out and carried her into the building. "You should be glad that I'm not a wimp and I can carry your ass, otherwise you'd be staying in your car tonight." Going to Mac's door, she struggled until she got the door open and carried her into her bedroom. When she turned the light on, she felt queasy from seeing how bad Mac looked. Her face was so bloody that she couldn't see anything except that both eyes were swollen closed and her nose was twice its normal size. "I don't care what you say, I'm calling a doctor." She knew that her grandma would tan her hide but she didn't know anyone else to call at that time of the morning. Once she calmed the older woman down, she got a phone number and called it. Little did she know that it was the detective's number and had killed two birds with one stone. While she waited for them to get there, she tried to clean some of the blood from Mac's face and got her out of her torn clothes.

The sight of her bruised and battered body made her feel sick, she had no idea how to help her and was relieved when she heard someone pounding on the door. Pulling the door open, she stepped aside when she saw a tall woman holding out a badge and then saw a smaller man behind her carrying a black gym bag.

"I'm Detective Terry Salisbury and this is my brother Jimmy, where's Mac?"

"She's in her bedroom," She walked towards the door and stopped. "I know her ribs are broken and four of her fingers on her right hand," She wiped a hand across her face and looked at Jimmy. "She should be in the hospital..."

"Don't worry about Mac; she's been in more scraps than anyone I know." He walked past her and then turned to his sister. "I'll give a yell if I need any help, get out the bottle of good stuff." He looked to the bed and groaned. "Hell break out all her booze, damn train couldn't have done this much damage." Salisbury peeked around the corner and groaned she had seen Mac beat to Hell before but nothing like this. "I need some ice and a couple towels." He opened his bag and pulled out all kinds of medical supplies while Terry went for the towels and Truman went to get ice. When she checked Mac's freezer, she cursed when she found the ice tray empty.

"I'll be back in a minute with the ice, she doesn't have any." Terry gave her a funny look when she went across the hallway and into the other apartment. When Mac woke up, she would give her the third degree about renting out her other apartment. "Here's the ice, I'll have more in a few minutes." She handed Terry the bowl of ice and went to the bedroom with everything. "Is there anything else I can do?"

"You can tell me who you are and how you happened to know to call me?"

"I'm Truman Avery, my grandma is Doris, and she gave me your number." She sat down at the kitchen table and looked up to Terry. "Mac was supposed to be taking pictures of some woman, does this happen often?"

"You mean her getting the shit beat out of her, nope. This is the worst I've ever seen her, who was this woman maybe it's connected?"

"Let me go get the file," She got up and saw that Terry was following. "I hope she has a file, in the two days that I've worked for her I've been shocked at her record keeping." She snapped her fingers and grabbed the leather notebook from where she had tossed it on the small table beside the door. "Maybe it's in here?" She handed it to Terry and took a seat on the couch where she could look through into the bedroom. "I still think she should go to the hospital..."

"Don't worry; if she needs the ER then Jimmy won't waste a minute letting us know." She looked through the notebook and found an address with the days date next to it. "If this is the address then it'll be easy to check for witnesses, I'll check it out and then have some of our friends do some sneaking around on the side." She pulled the page out and stuck it in her shirt pocket. "So you're Doris' granddaughter, one out of how many?" She chuckled at Truman's blush and sat down across from her.

"A lot of grand kids and she never warned me about stuff like this happening, she may have done it on purpose." She looked across at Terry and noticed for the first time that her eyes were an eerie golden color and that her dark hair set them off. "Should I take a CPR class or maybe become a paramedic?"

"Nah, it's not too often she gets smacked around this bad."

"Damn lucky to or she'd owe me a lot of money," Jimmy said from where he stood in the doorway. "She won't be doing anything for a while; I taped her broken ribs, set her fingers and sutured all the bad cuts. When she's able to get up and move around, she'll need to get to the dentist. I pulled one tooth out but I think the one next to it is going to cause her some pain." He took a seat next to Truman and gave her the once over. "Who are you and how did you get her up here?"

"I'm her assistant and I carried her...did I hurt her more by doing that?"

"Nope, I was just wondering. Will you be staying here with her; she'll need help and someone to keep an eye on her?"

"I live across the hallway so I can keep an eye on her, is there anything I need to do?"

"Yeah, smack the shit out of her when she wakes up," Terry said and got up from the chair. "Just kidding, when she wakes up tell her she owes us all supper." She took a card from her pocket and handed it to Truman. "That's my phone numbers, if she gets worse call 911 and then call me." Truman watched them leave and then went into Mac's bedroom to check on her. She picked up her Kevlar vest and saw that it had a few holes in it, she forgot to ask Jimmy if her having the vest on saved her some injury. She knew from the way it was designed that it had to be an older model, her ribs weren't protected. She placed it on a chair in the corner of the bedroom and then picked up the rest of her clothes. She couldn't save the shirt, the blood stains would never come out and her trousers were trashed as well. The right thigh area was torn and covered in what looked like wheel lubricant and the left knee was the same. "Where were you and how in the Hell were you able to drive home?" She carried the clothes to the kitchen, tossed them in the trash and grabbed a bottle of water. After closing both her apartment door and the front building door, she jogged up the steps, went into Mac's and headed to her bedroom. She put the water on the nightstand and sat on the edge of the bed. Using one of the wet washrags and a towel that Jimmy hadn't used, she wiped Mac's face and neck. "You are going to be one hurting puppy when you wake up." She went into the living room, sat down on the couch and turned the TV on. She had the volume down low enough so that she could hear Mac when she woke up; she searched through the channels and settled on watching *Jag*.

Mac fought her way through thick mud to the surface; she searched with her hands and knocked something over. She didn't know where she was and hoped she wasn't in a bad place, then she heard Truman's voice close to her ear. She reached over with a hand and grabbed her upper arm.

"Truman...I can't see... "

"That would be because both your eyes are swollen shut, who beat you up?" She helped her drink a little water and then wiped her face again. "Here's a better one, how did you drive all the way home?"

"I don't remember driving home," She struggled to sit up and groaned when Truman helped her. "Bathroom..."

"Just put your arms around my neck and I'll carry you there."

"I can walk, just help me up."

"And just how are you going to see where you're going, stop fighting me and hold on." She picked her up and carried her to the bathroom, placing her on her feet; she placed her hand on the sink top and then went out the door. "Yell when you're done, I'm going to get you some of the pain pills Jimmy left."

"Ohh Hell...you called Terry?"

Truman chuckled and yelled back to her. "Blame yourself and Grandma D, you asked me to call her and Grandma gave me her number. Terry brought Jimmy along when I told her what you looked like. Good thing to because I couldn't help you, it's hard to look at you right now." She shook her head when she saw Mac struggling to walk from the bathroom.

"So is my face fubared?"

"Fucked up beyond recognition...yeah, if it wasn't for you running your car up on the sidewalk and blowing the horn, I wouldn't have known it was you." She helped her back to bed, handed her the bottle of water and the pills. "No moving around too much, your ribs are broke and you look like someone used you for a soccer ball."

"Feel like it to...I don't say this too often...thank you for everything."

"You're welcome, just don't do this anymore." She pulled the blankets up to her chest and brushed her hair back from the cut at her eyebrow. "I don't like the sight of blood and seeing you like this almost did me in."

"Don't worry, this isn't a regular thing, I just wish I knew who beat me up?"

"Terry has the address where you were, I'm sure she'll find out who beat you up and then let us know. Now go to sleep it'll help with the swelling."

"You sound like a mother," She sunk into her pillows and moaned. "You want kids when you get married?"

"Me get married and have kids? Not in this life time or the next dozen, I haven't found anyone in the last 30 some odd years that likes frumpy." She flipped the bedroom light off and stood in the doorway. "I'll be on your couch, yell if you need anything."

The next morning Truman woke up with a stiff neck and an arm dead, she tried to sit up on the couch but that arm was useless. Struggling with the dead weight, she sat up and rubbed the side of her face. It felt rough under her fingers and then she saw why, she had slept on the zipper from Mac's leather jacket. She got up, went into the bathroom and saw that her hair looked like something from Bride of Frankenstein. And that was quite a feat considering her hair had started out in a pony tail, giving up on being able to do anything with it, she headed over to her own apartment. If Mac woke up and needed something she would be able to hear her if she left their doors open. After a quick shower, she started breakfast and checked on Mac in between cooking and getting the newspaper from the front door. When everything was finished, she went into her room and tried to figure out the best way to wake her without causing more bodily damage. "Mac its past ten o'clock,"

"You let me sleep that late?" She tried to sit up and let out a low moan and then a whimper. "Get my gun and shoot me, I know I'd feel better."

"How about if we try some pain pills and breakfast, I made eggs, bacon and fried potatoes. I didn't know if you wanted toast of English muffin." She grinned when Mac tried to open her eyes but all that showed were slits. "I don't think giving you a fork is a good idea; you may end up stabbing yourself."

"Probably right, help me up so I can go to the bathroom and try to brush my teeth." She held out a hand and then groaned when Truman lifted her up and put her on her feet. "You have to do everything the macho way don't you?"

"I'm not about to pull on your arm when your ribs are all taped, I'll help you to the bathroom and then you can yell when you're done. I'm going to get our breakfast so I can help you if you need it."

"Will you feed me if I miss my mouth?"

"I can put it all on toast if that'll help," She left the bathroom and tossed over her shoulder. "Or watch you eat with your fingers."

"Gee thanks as if I don't make a big enough mess normally now you want me to eat eggs with my fingers." She searched with her hand and found the toilet without sticking her hand in the water and when she was finished she tried to wash her face and then brush her teeth. She wet her hair and tried to brush it but found it hurt like Hell. "I must have huge knots on my head."

"Actually I think you have some sutures in there somewhere, believe me when I say that heavy weight boxers don't look as bad as you do." She took her arm and led her to the kitchen table. "I

had to toss your clothes out; they were all torn and covered in blood. I cleaned your jacket up but I haven't been out to your car to see how bad it is."

"With my luck I smashed the Hell out of it," She stuck a finger in her mouth and shook her head. "They knocked a tooth out?"

"Almost, Jimmy pulled it out the rest of the way. Do you have a dentist I can call, he said to have your teeth checked for any more problems."

"I think I'll wait until I can see before going to a dentist. Plus who wants to work on someone who looks as bad as you say I do." She eased her hand around her plate until Truman placed a cup of coffee in it.

"OJ is at ten o'clock, coffee is at two." She placed a fork in her hand after she put her coffee down and moved her hand over her eggs. "I just heard the downstairs door open; it's either Grandma D or Terry." She sniffed the air and moaned. "We're in trouble; she's come to check on us before her surgery." She whispered and tried to control her expression when Mac stuck her tongue out at her.

"Well this is something I never thought I'd see," Doris said and placed a box of donuts on the kitchen counter. "Mac sitting at her own table and someone cooking breakfast for her," She sat down beside her and across from Truman. "Damn Mac but you're ugly; did they use a baseball bat on your face?"

"Thanks Doris, I always love your compliments." She turned her head to where she thought Truman was. "So do I look like a baseball head?"

"I'm keeping my mouth shut on this one," She nudged her grandma's foot and gave her a narrowed look. "You always get me in trouble."

"One thing you better do is either get Mac dressed or put the closed sign on the door, then again maybe you'll get more business with her running around in her tank top and boxers."

"Ohh I'm real sure that my bony knees won't be having anyone breaking down the door. Now where's my toast or didn't you make any?"

"I was waiting to see if you wanted that or an English muffin, since you didn't say anything I figured you didn't want any," Truman replied and then got up to make her toast. "Butter or jelly?"

"Damn you would think that you two have lived together, you sound like me and Bert. And the more butter you can get on her toast the better she likes it, they'll need a jack hammer on her arteries if she keeps it up." Mac went to laugh, pressed her index finger over her bottom lip and growled. She had forgotten about the split in her lip and knew she had opened back up, before she could say anything, Truman pressed a cold rag in her hand.

"Just hold it there for a second while I get something to put on it," She saw the raised eyebrow that her grandma gave her and shrugged a shoulder. "That's fresh coffee grandma; would you fill

our cups while I get stuff for her?"

"Truman you don't have to..."

"She moves like a jack rabbit when she's on a mission; she was gone before she finished her sentence." She waved her hand in front of Mac's face and grinned. "This is cool I can make faces at you and you'd never know!"

"Maybe but I bet Truman would tell me, she likes me."

"When did I say I liked you," She tilted her head back by placing two fingers under her chin and put medication on the split in her lip. "Now be careful or your lip will split again."

"What was that stuff," She waved a hand in front of her mouth and felt tears running down her cheeks. "It burns!"

"You're a big baby, it was only medicated Vaseline. I could've put Blistex on it, now that stuff burns on an open cut." She sat down and went back to eating her breakfast. "Eat Mac or I'll eat it, remember no left overs."

Mac was asleep on the couch, her head tilted back over the arm and her pillow clutched to her chest. Truman was down stairs in Mac's music room doing stretches before she went out for her evening run, she put a CD in the player and went to the center of the room to start her stretches. *Sarah McLachlan's* voice came over the speakers that lined the room, she moved slowly into her stretches and felt her muscles pull and then relax. It had been a couple days since she had run and she was feeling it now with her stretches. Three songs later, she was pulling her sweatshirt on and heading towards the door that let out into the garage. Jogging past the Plymouth, she turned left and jogged up hill towards the High School. She used the track there a couple times a week for her main run and the made the loop at a cool down jog home, she would have to think of another route to get the same mileage in since she now lived closer to the track. She cut down the hill towards the gate that led to the football field and track, as she got closer; she saw that she would have to share the track with the boys track team. "Fucking wonderful, testosterone on the hoof, little fuckers think all that matters is their tiny dicks." She jogged slowly down to the track and stayed on the outside and away from the teenage boys; she would come earlier in the day so that she wouldn't have to listen to their crude comments about her looks.

"Look it's the Georgetown bag lady!" A kid yelled and ran past her. "Ever wash that nasty sweatshirt?"

She waited until he was ahead of her and then mumbled. "Yeah but everyone one can say that you've never washed your jock." She stayed at her pace no matter what the other runners did, some of the kids left her alone, other's threw nasty comments at her and tried to force her from the track. Her temper started to build, as the comments got nastier, she finished her last lap, jogged through the gate, and headed back home. The more she thought about it the madder she

got and the faster she ran. She was at a full sprint when she went past her building; she cut up alongside it and kept on going. When she finally stopped, she outside of the Ballroom, bent over with her hands on her knees and panting. Standing up, she wiped sweat from her face and then walked through the door. She had never been in the place before but had heard about it from her grandma, she couldn't picture her there dancing when she was younger let alone on Saturday nights. She teased her that the reason she had to have her hammer toes fixed was that grandpa stepped on her feet all night. Looking around the place, she saw the bar across the room and walked over to where she saw an older woman standing behind it. She pulled some bills from her pocket and placed them on the bar. "Can I have some water please?" She wiped her face on her sleeve and noticed for the first time that the music playing wasn't big band but a band from when she was a teenager. She looked to the bartender with a raised eyebrow. "I never expected to hear *38 Special* playing in here." She took the bottle of water from the bar and took a long drink.

"I get tired of hearing that old music," She grinned and handed Truman a bar towel. "Kinda weird since the stuff we're listening to is old to." She slapped the bar and leaned in close to Truman. "What gets me is you go in to a record store and there's all these young kids going nuts over Foreigner, Journey, Sting, REM and Reo Speedwagon thinking that they're new groups."

Truman wiped her face and nodded her head. "I have to listen to swing all day at work; my boss is kind of...eccentric? She even dresses in zoot suits." She looked up from playing with the bottle ring when the woman busted out laughing. "What you don't think that's weird?"

"Mac is one of a kind," She held out a hand to her. "I'm Sally; I've known Mac since the day she was born, Hell I was married to her grandpa for a while." She whispered low so that only Truman could hear. "I think that was a few centuries ago that I did that stupid thing and married that snake." She squeezed Truman's hand and winked at her. "And Mac's just like the men in her family, charms the panties off the women in this place and leaves 'em wanting more."

"Yeah I all ready know about my bosses doggish ways, that won't be happening anytime soon though, she got beat up the other night and she got hurt bad."

Sally leaned closer and waved off one of the servers. "Come on in the back with me and tell me what happened to her, something doesn't sound right to me." She walked from behind the bar and waited for Truman to join her; she looked up and shook her head. "I didn't think you were so damn tall." Truman gave her a crooked grin and shrugged one shoulder, Sally wasn't even as tall as Mac, and if she was five feet tall she was lucky. "Go ahead and laugh, I was as tall as you at one time, old age shrinks ya. One day you'll be my size and mistaken for one of the actors from the Wizard of Oz." She took her to the office in the back and closed the door behind them, showing her to a comfortable recliner, she dropped down onto an old couch. "Now tell me what Mac got herself into and maybe I can help." After having been brought up to date on everything that had happened and then given her thoughts on the subject, she remembered when Mac had met with someone and gave Truman a description of the woman. "So what are your plans?"

"Well I can do the back ground checks for her...after that I don't know I have no idea what she does?"

"That kid is just plain nosey, she gets in everyone's business and gets the information she's looking for."

"Well that's not me; I blend in to the nearest wall." She looked down at her dirty cross trainers and back up at Sally. "I look like a librarian and I get treated as one, if I'm not ignored then I'm terrorized."

Sally waved a hand at her and shook her head. "Ohh come on, get you into some nice clothes, get your hair fixed up and I know you could have that little dog Mac falling over her own two feet."

"Only if I tripped her would that happen...well I could do that now since her eyes are swollen closed and there's no help for me, you could put me in Armani and I'd still look like a frumpy person."

Sally got up from her couch, grabbed a card from her desk and handed it to her. "Bullshit, you call me tomorrow morning and I'll get you all fixed up. I can even give you some pointers on being a PI; remember I was married to one of the best."

"I don't think even a fairy godmother can help me...no disrespect but I'm a ship wreck...worse than the Titanic."

Mac stood bent over in the refrigerator scratching her ass and trying to figure out what things were by feel alone, she almost dropped the milk when Truman came up behind her and tapped her on the shoulder. "Geez are you trying to kill me off the rest of the way?" She put the milk back and grabbed at her chest. "I'm hungry and I can't find anything." She whined and pouted. "I woke up and you were gone, where'd ya go?"

"I run everyday, I ended up over at the Ballroom. She pulled out a plastic container and placed it on the table. "I met Sally and talked to her for a little while," She grinned at the thought of her almost being Mac's grandmother. "You have so many interesting people for friends." She pulled the lunchmeats from the container and then looked to see what Mac was doing. "You know trying to lift your eyelids isn't going to help any." She looked down at what she was doing and cursed. "Come on freak, we're going over to my kitchen. I was going to make us sandwiches but since there's no bread over here or anything else besides mustard." She grabbed Mac by her hand and led her across the hallway, sitting her down on one of the chairs that had been in the apartment; she went into the kitchen and started making their sandwiches. "Are you still trying to pry your eyes open?"

"Nope, I gave up on that." She wandered into the kitchen and stopped when she ran into Truman's side. "Has any of the swelling gone down?"

Truman looked at her face with a closed eye, tapped her on her nose and smirked when she yelped in pain. "A little but I think it's just your bottom lip that's not as big, your nose is huge and there's no bridge." She tilted her head and grinned. "Actually, you look kinda Cro-Magnon."

She ran a finger across Mac's pronounced brow and felt her fingers tingle. "You even have the gait down, all stooped over and everything."

"Glad you find my demise amusing," She jabbed her in the ribs and then patted her side. "How many layers of clothes do you have on?"

"Four why...it's cold in here, I always dress this way...thin blood." She went back to making their sandwiches and then grabbed two cans of soup from the cabinet. "Chicken and noodle or tomato soup?"

"Tomato and you're so full of shit, it's hot in here." She pulled on her t-shirt and fanned herself. "I'm running around half dressed and you're like an Eskimo."

"And I can tell you dressed yourself this morning, your boxers are on backwards."

"And you looked that close at my crotch?"

"No, it's the 'enter here' sign on your ass...that is unless it's meant to be there and tell me that you think it's not a little strange to be sitting on buttons?"

Mac reached back and tried to wiggle an eyebrow. "Wondered what that was, so what kinda sandwich are you making me?"

"Turkey on wheat with the works, including spicy mustard," She put the sandwiches on plates and set them aside until the soup was done. "Can you carry the sandwiches while I carry the soup?"

"You're no fun; I wanted to see how much soup I could keep in the bowls." She put her hands out and took the plates. "Just point me in a direction where there's no furniture and the door."

"I don't have any furniture except that chair that was here, so you should have no problem getting to the door."

"Nuns have more stuff than you do and they've taken a vow of poverty."

"I used to have stuff but I sold things to pay my rent and buy food, it's been months since I watched TV." She followed Mac into her apartment and put the soup on the table. "You know this is just plain weird, maybe I'll stop at that little flea market and see if they have some bar stools. I can get a couple to use at the bar between the kitchen and the living room, what do you think?" She took a seat across from Mac and handed her a spoon from the drawer behind her.

"I think I'm gonna make a mess over here and it'll be your fault," She blinked her eyes a few times and was able to see a little through the slits that were her eyes. "If you go down stairs and take the door opposite of where my music room is you'll find a mini weight room, against one wall is a bar with stools. Take what you need, I'm the only one in there and I never use them. Sally will be glad that someone uses them, they're from the ballroom." She searched for her soup

with her spoon and grinned when Truman grabbed her hand and moved it in the right area.
"Maybe a straw would be better for me?"

"Where would be the fun in that, I'm having a Hell of a time over here watching you." She took a bite of her sandwich and then moved Mac's hand closer to her own. "Are you sure about the bar stools, I can get some..."

"I'm sure, they've been down stairs for years and I never use 'em." She finished her sandwich and tried to eat her soup without spilling it from the spoon. "Well I did try to use one for something but that didn't work and she got really pissed and..." She looked up and tried to see Truman.
"Never mind it was just one of those...things."

"Uhh huh I can just imagine what you were doing and I'll leave it for when I need something to amuse my dreary days with." She placed her dishes in the sink and started water running to wash them; she turned and found Mac right beside her.

"I'll wash 'em; maybe the steam will help with my eyes."

"OK, well I'm going to go over to my desk and get some work done." She stopped in the doorway and looked back at Mac. "Did I tell you that I got half those background checks done?"

"How did you do that in one day, it takes me hours making all the phone calls and other stuff it takes."

"See that, if you would update your office a little you'd know that there's a PC program that does all that stuff. I signed the office up for a couple law enforcement WebPages, we can check on anyone's criminal record or see if they have one."

"How come Doris never told me about this stuff?"

"Would you have listened to her?"

Mac ran a wet soapy hand through her hair and shook her head. "I'm stubborn and think better if I write everything out on paper."

"That's all well and good, but letting tech stuff play some part in work is good to, tell ya what, you play with your notebooks and I'll do the tech stuff."

"OK I can handle that...will you still type up my notes like Doris did, I can't type?"

Truman grinned and stepped out into the hallway. "You're assuming that I can type worth a damn."

The next morning after feeding Mac, Truman called Sally and then called her grandpa to see

what time her grandma's surgery was. She checked her watch, jogged down to Mac's Outback and climbed behind the wheel. She would swing by and pick Sally up before going over to see her grandma, she knew that she would be like an animal after her surgery but had to go see her. Checking the gas gauge, she pulled into 7-11 and got out to pump the gas. She looked over her shoulder when she felt eyes boring into her back and gave the young woman a small smile.

"Well this has got to be a first; Mac never lets anyone drive her cars." She gave Truman the once over and raised a dark eyebrow. "Your looks must be deceiving, you don't look like the type that can rock Mac from her foundation." She climbed into her car and pulled away, Truman stood in total confusion until it hit her as to what the woman thought of her and Mac.

"I should either feel honored that she trusts me enough to drive her cars or like a whore for the reason people will think I'm driving her cars." She filled the tank up and then went inside to pay for the gas; she didn't miss the look the young girl gave her when she saw what car she was driving. "Has she hit every young thing in this area?" She got back in the car and pulled out in the direction of the Ballroom, she would make it there a few minutes early and hoped that it was all right. She pulled into the parking lot, stopped at the front door and saw that Sally was just coming through them. She went around to the passenger side and helped her to get in before going back to the driver's side. "Is it OK if I stop to see my grandma, she's having surgery today."

"Nope, I don't mind at all, I was talking to her yesterday about you and promised that I'd drag you over there if necessary."

"Ohh that means that Grandma D has plans for me, maybe I should throw myself in front of a truck."

"Not yet you won't, you have to give me a chance to torture you."

Mac wandered around her apartment and finally went down the stairs to her music room, after finding it painful to do anything but wander in circles she went back up stairs. Going over to Truman's, she opened her door and stepped into the apartment. Taking a deep breath, she grumbled when she couldn't smell anything. "I know she put cologne on before she left, I heard the spraying." She went into her bedroom, tilted her head back and forced her eyes to open. She spotted the bottle on her small dresser and picked it up. "*Jovan*, she wears a cheap musk?" She sprayed some on her wrist, smelled it and had to go by her memory as to how it smelled. "Smells good on Truman, wonder what she's hiding under all those layers of clothes?" She fell back on her bed and rolled until she had her head on her pillow, pulled it close around her face, she sighed and relaxed into the mattress. "There's got to be something she's hiding, people who dress like her don't want other people to see something but what is the something? I could never figure that out, is it a lack of ego or something else?" She was still pondering the causes when she drifted off to sleep.

"I think they're kind of sexy," Doris said in a raspy voice and wiggled her feet in her soft casts. "Maybe I could attract a younger man if I wore these dancing?"

"Maybe that would work if you left grandpa at home when you went out dancing," She looked to where her grandpa was sitting by the window reading a *Popular Mechanics* magazine. "Then again, you could leave him here and I don't think he would realize it for weeks."

"Men are all the same with the exception of one woman we all know and wished we could still paddle." Sally said and held up her can of Coke. "To the lesser sex, they'd be lost without us." They clinked their cans together and knew they were in trouble when Doris' doctor came in and waved a finger at them.

"Well grandma, I think we better go before your doctor kicks our asses." She gave her a kiss on her cheek and rolled her eyes when she felt an envelope pressed into her hand.

"Take that and use the damn thing," She covered Truman's mouth with her hand and looked to Sally. "Make sure she uses Mac's credit card for everything she gets today, I'd sign the deed of the building over to her just for putting up with that rotten kid."

"She's not that bad and she's always good for a laugh, she came out of the shower this morning with her boxers on inside out."

"I've seen her looking that way in the middle of the afternoon," Doris and Sally both said and gave Truman a smug look. "It'll get worse the longer you know her, she's ten times worse than some men."

Sally pulled Truman to her feet, waved at Doris and then walked from the room. "Come on, we have people to see and Mac's credit card to max out!"

"But I don't wanna use her card...it's not...right." She grumbled and mumbled all the way out to the parking lot and just gave up, she couldn't win with the older women, they knew more tricks than she did.

"Sure it is you're covering for the great PI MacKenna Jones because she was stupid. So it's right that she pay for your PI clothes and I know just the person to help." They drove towards Berryville Virginia and pulled off on a back road, with Sally giving her directions, they arrived at an old farmhouse. "This is one of my best friends; we've known each other most of our lives." She waited for Truman to help her from the car and held onto her arm on the way up to the door. Sally pulled the screen door open and then opened the inside door without knocking. "Did I mention that the reason I've known her so long is because she's my sister?" "Sophia get your lazy ass out here and make me some tea!"

"And you can either go to Hell or make it your damn self!" A younger version of Sally came into the kitchen; she waved the tip of her walking cane at her sister and snapped her dentures. "Lazy ass bitch, always wanting someone to wait on you," She looked behind her and saw an unsure

Truman trying to melt into the shadows. "Whose your friend there Sally and why hasn't Mac come for her clothes?"

"This is Doris' granddaughter Truman; she needs some clothes that make her look professional."

Sophia stepped closer and then pulled Truman further into the kitchen. "Someone your size shouldn't be shying away from two dwarves,"

"Speak for your own damn self I'm not a dwarf." Sally said and stole her sister's cane. "Take her to your workroom and I'll make us some tea and this is going on Mac's credit card so don't spare the cloth."

Sophia smiled, took Truman by her hand and pulled her along behind her. "Ohh I hear silk...lots of imported silk!" She pulled her down a long hallway and stopped outside one of the doors. "I make the best damn clothes this side of Italy, everything is handmade and that includes the labels. I've been making clothes for the Jones men since WWII," She went over to a table filled with material and grabbed a bolt of royal blue silk. "I know there's got to be blue eyes behind those sunglasses and this will make them sing." She held the material up against Truman's chest and then wiggled her fingers at the many layers of clothes. "What ever you're hiding under all those clothes is gonna be revealed in two seconds or I'll use my electric scissors."

"You better do it, her hands aren't too steady anymore, you might end up with a limp." Sally said and placed a tray with a teakettle and cups on a worktable. "Come on Truman, besides doctors, tailors are the next in line to know everyone's body secrets."

"Besides we've seen Mac in all her glory and nothing can be that shocking." She saw the look that crossed Truman's face and wondered why she was turning pale. "Wait a minute," She looked to her sister. "Sally they're not are they?"

"Not a couple nope, but they're partners in the PI business," She raised a hand to stop Truman. "You may not have a PI license but you're doing Mac's job and all the paperwork. Now get your clothes off so we can measure you." A few minutes later, both older women stood with their mouths hanging open and looking at a bashful Truman. "Sophia is that possible?"

"Apparently it is we're both seeing it," She pushed her hair back in its bun and looked at Truman. "You've been hiding this body because?"

"I always got strange looks from everyone," She looked down at the thick muscles of her thighs and then down to her bare feet. "Grandma D says it has something to do with genetics and the fact that our family can be traced back to Vikings."

"Where were we when they were handing out great big giant Viking men, we both got stuck with those shrimps?" Sophia asked and then pulled her tape measure from around her neck. "I got stuck with one of those shrimp poppers of a man, one yard of material made an entire suit for him."

"You got lucky," Sally waved a hand over the worktable until she found another tape measure. "I was married to a sea monkey, a yard of material made both him and Mac a set of clothes." Truman relaxed listening to the two old women talk about all the husbands they had and about their kids and grandkids. Soon after she was sitting in her silk boxers and tank top and drinking tea, Sophia waved a button down shirt at her and had her try it on.

"See how this fits, I may have to let out the shoulders a little." She waited until Truman had the shirt on and then checked over her work. "You know you're shoulders are wider than any of the men I make clothes for, then again they're those scrawny ass wimpy men with the narrow shoulders and child bearing hips. Men don't do hard work anymore, they sit on their asses all day and play on computers." She made a few chalk marks on the shirt and had her take it off again. "Sally's almost done with your trousers; we're making your clothes in dark blues, blacks, grays and pinstripes. All your shirts will be in different colors except green, you're not a green person like Mac."

"What is all this going to cost..."

"Nothing, Mac gets me all the silk and material I need and I make her clothes." She tapped Truman's chin and gave her a grin. "I never asked where she gets real silk from or how she can get it in every color and in full bolts."

"OK Truman try these on and let me see how my sewing is," Sally handed her a pair of black trousers and crossed her arms over her chest. "Don't know about you girls wearing boxers but at least yours aren't all baggy like Mac's."

"That's because Mac's a sea monkey and buys her shorts in the little boys department; I bet she has some with Sponge Bob on 'em." Sophia looked up at Truman and winked. "You'd tell us if she did have them wouldn't you?"

"Sure, she does have some with little stop lights on them and some with of all things *Speed Racer*." She fastened the trousers and stepped in front of the full-length mirror, she had never had tailored clothes before and liked how the trousers fit. "These are...unbelievable." She turned and looked at how they hung in the back.

"What can we say, we do excellent work," She turned Truman back around and checked the pleats in the front. "I made these like Mac's, plus, you need the extra room because of those tree trunk thighs you have." Sophie came from over at the sewing machines with a jacket. "We're not going with the zoot suit look but with something that makes Armani look like a Kmart special. Sophie held out the jacket and grinned when Truman had to bend at the knees to get her arms in the sleeves, once it was on, she smoothed down the front and looked to her sister. "Yep she's the double breasted type, fits perfectly." She watched her sister raise a finger and go over to the sewing machine she had been using.

"This is my favorite one though," she waited for Truman to take the jacket off and then helped her with a blue pinstripe. "This is my version of Dana Scully and with your wide shoulders it'll be a killer." She stepped back and took in how the jacket fit over Truman's wide shoulders and

how it hung across her hips to mid thigh. "Just perfect, Mac will be floored when she sees you." She looked to Sophie with a raised eyebrow. "Should we call the Queen?"

"All ready did, now let's get back to sewing, I think we can get four suits done today and I've already got some shirts that will fit her."

"Hold on a minute here, whose the Queen and do I really need this many suits, I do have clothes at home."

"Someone that's going to make you into a heartbreaker and yes you do, and if you're going to be working with Mac then you have to look the part."

"But I'm just her secretary..." She gave up when two sets of eyes pinned her where she stood with her pants around her ankles. "OK I'm not going to argue with you guys but what's this queen person going to do to me?"

Mac sat at her desk with her feet up on the edge, she had tried to do some work but found the perfect excuse not to when Terry showed up. She pushed back the sleeves on her sweatshirt and turned her head when Terry tapped on the doorframe. "You still look like shit; I figured the swelling would have gone down a lot in the last couple of days."

"Well I can see a little through the slits I have for eyes, I can't smell anything and I have a hell of a time taking a deep breath. The good news is I have a good cook and she makes sure that I take my pills; if I wasn't such a dog I'd ask her to marry me."

Terry dropped down in the chair in front of her desk and looked her over with a critical eye. "She's not your type Mac; you go after the flashy, brainless, uneducated women that can't make change from a nickel. Truman is not anywhere near that, she has brains. Who knows what she hides under all those clothes she wears though." She looked at the Georgetown sweatshirt and pointed. "You don't own any sweatshirts, where'd you steal that from?"

"It's Truman's, I got cold and it was laying on her bed," She pulled the neck up to her nose and tried to smell it. "It smells like her, I think this is the one she sleeps in."

"You can't smell anything with that big nose and are you listening to yourself, you sound like a love struck idiot?"

"Do not; I've only known her a couple days. But this is kinda like the feeling you get when you smell a puppy, ya know all safe and warm."

Terry busted out laughing and slapped her hand down on the desk. "I would love to see you tell her that she smells like a puppy."

"That's not what I meant...you're not gonna let me get away with it are you?"

"Hell no, I've had more laughs over your pick-up lines then watching the comedy channel. You suck at it and I still don't know how you get so many dates."

Mac gave her a wicked grin. "It's not by talking that's for sure; one woman wants to insure my tongue though."

"You did not just say that," Terry threw a piece of balled up paper at her. "You're worst than a dog, you're unfuckingbelievable."

"That's what she yelled all night long..." She shut up and leaned around Terry's shoulder. "Ohh goody my boss is here, I can't find my pills." She watched as Truman walked between their apartments with suit bags and then came into her office with a paper bag. "You had suit bags, did we have dry cleaning?"

"Nope, I picked up your clothes from Sophia. Hey Terry, find out anything on Mac's attackers?" She handed Mac the bag and sat on the edge of her desk. "That's roast beef, horse radish, onions and lettuce on Italian." She pulled a carton of milk out of her sweatshirt pouch and placed it in front of her.

"Nothing yet besides that house she was watching is empty and no one has lived in it for months. The names came up with nothing...you look different."

"Ohh I had my hair cut," she slipped her sunglasses down and eyed a happily eating Mac. "That's my sweatshirt."

"Yep it was," She wiped her mouth. "Mine now, it smells good and it's soft."

"You're deranged, I haven't washed that since I went running and that's why it was laying on the end of the bed because I was going to do our laundry." Mac shrugged her shoulders and continued eating.

"Wait a minute, you're gonna wash the little dogs clothes?" Terry kicked the front of Mac's desk and waited for her to look up at her. "She cooks for you and now she's gonna wash your clothes to...why?" She looked to Truman and knew that there was something different about her besides her hair looking different. "Where can I get a woman like you?"

"Alabama; gotta go get some work done before my boss docks me a days pay." She got off the desk and went to her own, with a backward glance; she snorted at Mac and dropped down into her chair. The small PI had horseradish all over her chin and a milk mustache to go with it, what made her comical was the huge sweatshirt.

After dropping Sally off, she had gone to see her son Serge. He cut her hair and arranged a time later that night to come over and do a hot oil treatment and some other things he deemed necessary for her successful rebirth. She didn't think she needed all of this but found it impossible to argue with anyone related to Mac or Sally. Once her PC booted, she clicked on the

shortcut for the investigating icon and typed in a name from one of the files on her desk.

Terry leaned in close to Mac, rolled her eyes at the mess her friends face was and whispered. "If you bring in some bimbo and scare Truman off you're a bigger ass than I ever thought and wipe the stuff off your face it looks gross."

"Scare her off...Terry I'd never stand a chance with a woman like her. Besides Doris would kill me if I ever made a single overture towards Truman."

"Ohh so wearing her dirty sweatshirt isn't an overture of some kind? Before I thought you were weird, now I know you're insane and maybe suffering from brain damage on top of everything else."

"You're the one with brain damage; you already said she wasn't my type now you're saying about me scaring her off with a bimbo."

"Ohh the Hell with it, let's go over to the Ballroom I need a good stiff drink and you're buying."

"I can't show my face like this," She stood up and pointed at her boxers. "And I don't have any pants on!"

"Cute boxers Mac, maybe you should have Truman dress you so that you're clothes aren't inside out." She grabbed her by her hand and pulled her out of her office. "It's not like you haven't had your face rearranged before, put some sunglasses on and pants."

Mac stopped in front of Truman's desk and searched for her sunglasses. "Where's your granny glasses, I need to hide my whole face?" She took the wrap around sunglasses from Truman, put them on and stumbled to her apartment. "I'm a real chick magnet dressed like this huh?"

"Yeah and the little horns on top of your head fit perfectly!" Truman yelled to her and snorted when Terry dropkicked Mac when she stopped in the doorway. "I put your new clothes in your closet!" She was still amazed at Sally and Sophia's talent with making clothes. The suit that Sophia had made for Mac was a dark blue pinstripe with matching vest and a hand painted light blue silk tie. She couldn't wear ties, she always felt restricted if anything was tight around her neck. She just wore her shirts open at the neck and with three or four shirts over the top. She would have to get over that very soon, after hearing three people rant about her body; it was worth giving it a shot. She typed in another name and then watched Mac and Terry come out of her apartment.

"Don't wait up, we're gonna get shit faced."

"You already look shit faced," Terry said and steered her towards the stairs. "I'll have her home early and I'll throw her in bed if she's drunk." She waved at Truman and kept Mac from falling down the stairs. An hour later all the files were finished and Truman was shutting down her PC

when Serge came skipping up the steps.

"I'm here! The Goddess of style, Princess of pimp and I've forgotten how droll this place is." Serge spun around slowly and waved a hand above his head. "This place is simply...MacKenna," he stepped over to her desk, waved a hand over the roses, and gave her a crooked smile. "So you have an admirer that sends you expensive flowers?"

"Mac gave me those; it was her way of apologizing for being an ass."

"Reverent white, somehow that doesn't fit Mac, Doris must have helped her." He primped his dyed platinum hair and looked around for Mac. "Where is the little imp, it's about time I shaved that mess she calls hair?"

"She went to the Ballroom with Terry," She shut down her PC and got out of her chair. "Let's go in her apartment and do this, she has furniture and I haven't gotten any yet." She walked into Mac's apartment and groaned when she saw the mess she had left, her clothes were all over the living room floor and dirty dishes sat on the coffee table. "Damn sea monkey is a pig," She picked up her clothes, took them to the hamper in the bathroom and then came out to get the dishes. "Wait until she gets home; I'm gonna drop kick her little ass."

"Why are you worried about her apartment, she's the one who has to live like a pig not you?" Serge remarked and started pulling stuff from a large leather bag. "I brought this for her, just pop it in the freezer and then when it's frozen put it on her face." He demonstrated the facemask with his normal exaggerated flair and then handed it to Truman. "It should take some of the swelling down and maybe slow the growth of her eyebrows."

Truman gave him a funny look and dropped down at the kitchen table. "Growth of her eyebrows, I didn't see anything wrong with them?"

"That's because you're captain of the unibrow team and she's second in command, now sit still while I get prepared for your coming out." He pulled her now below the shoulder length hair back and checked her split ends and severely damaged hair. "I feel like Michael Caine in Miss Congeniality." He set the oil treatment under hot water and then turned her so that he could see her face. "How I wish I had his team of artists, you really need all of them."

Mac grinned at Sally's cringing features; she climbed up on a barstool and made kissing faces at her. "Ohh come on Sally gimme a big old smooch."

"Go to Hell sea monkey you're ugly as Hell and now I can see why Truman's been doing all your work." She leaned in closer and tried to see her eyes. "You can't see a damn thing can you?"

"Not a whole lot but Truman takes care of me," She thought about that for a second and grinned. "Kinda weird huh, she barely knows me but she takes care of me?"

"You're a lucky woman Mac," She put drinks in front of them and handed Terry the bottle. "You

could be up there in your apartment all alone or worse if she hadn't found you."

"Yeah Mac, Jimmy would have been pissed if he couldn't fondle you and you know he did that when he was checking you out."

"Just my luck, the only one to fondle me in weeks was some guy." She took a long drink of her scotch and looked in the glass. "My last date was with some college kid who wanted to watch *Christine Aguilera* videos and drink mud slides."

Terry looked at her and then to a grinning Sally. "Could have been worse, she could have been at your place and forced to watch the *African Queen or Tora Tora.*"

Truman sat on the couch with her head wrapped in some kind of plastic, green stuff on her face and Serge doing a manicure. She tried to move her eyes and felt like her skin was going to crack. "Don't move, flinch or think too hard or the mask won't work."

"Whatz it for?" She asked without moving her lips.

"It cleans out your pores, takes off old skin and tightens up what's left." He examined her nails before moving onto the next hand. "You have hands like a dishwasher, hand cream would be good. You know that stuff that keeps your skin from drying out and falling off?"

"I never think about stuff like that, besides, I work with my hands."

"I can tell that, you have more calluses than weight lifters and steel workers combined."

"Oww what are you..." She tried to pull her hand away and jumped when he pinched her thigh.

"Hold still I'm pushing back the cuticles and you have terrible hangnails, but when I'm done with you, you'll look like a million bucks."

"With all the torture you've put me through I may sue you for that much."

"It'll all be worth it if you can catch yourself a rich man."

Truman busted up laughing and felt her facial mask crack. "I'm taking this shit off my face," She got up off the couch and went to the kitchen sink. "A man is something that I don't want but if any are attracted to the new and improved me, I'll scream bloody murder and hide in a dark corner somewhere." She scrubbed her face and used the towel hanging around her neck to wipe it dry. "Now what about this stuff in my hair, I think my heads shrinking because of this plastic bag."

"Ohh for heavens sake, you dykes give me more problems then my drag queen friends." He waved a ringed hand at her and strutted into the kitchen. "Put your head in the sink and I'll wash

the oil out, I'll warn you now that your hair is going to look a lot different than when we started."

"You didn't turn me into a ditzzy blond did you, because if you did you had better have a will made out because I'll kill you?"

Serge clucked his tongue and shook his head back and forth. "Of course not, blonde is out, natural is in. I just brought out some of your highlights and with all those nasty split ends gone..." He pulled her up from the sink and dropped the towel over her head. "You are going to be fabulous!" He pulled a hair dryer from his bag, plugged it in and then pulled the towel from her head. You need to get rid of that old nasty hairdryer you have, the only thing it's good for is defrosting your freezer." He fluffed her hair as he dried it and back brushed it every which way until she thought all her hair would fall out. After a few minutes and her head cleared, he used the brush and brushed her hair back from her face. "Now for your unveiling," He took her hand, led her over to the full-length mirror in Mac's bedroom, and stepped back. "Well what do you think?"

Truman stepped closer to the mirror and looked at her reflection, she looked back to Serge and then to the mirror. "My own grandma won't recognize me," She ran her fingers through her hair and noticed the chestnut highlights. "Am I going to have to spend hours in the bathroom to stay looking this way?"

"Of course not, use good shampoo and toss that damn hairdryer. I didn't change anything that wasn't already there; I just uncovered the real Truman. I uncovered the archeologist in the dust and debris, oohh how I wish Mac were here!"

Mac placed her glass on the bar and waved off Sally, she wasn't feeling any pain and didn't want to feel any in the morning either. "Nope that's it for me Sally; Truman will kick my ass if I'm hung over in the morning. Plus I have my dance student coming in at 5am." She looked to Terry and slapped her in the back of her head. "You stop that, she's twice your age and is liable to have a heart attack."

"So what...she might know more then me and I need all the training I can get."

"Forget it Terry, she has kids our age and her husband can kick both our asses without breaking a sweat. Stay away from the sorta straight women; they always break your heart."

"Speaking from experience there Mac, I haven't seen you ever sway away from them?"

"Dancing is one thing, sex is another and I leave that to the braver souls." She got down from her stool and waited for Terry to join her. "And right now all I want is my empty bed because it would be scary to wake up and not be able to see who it was in there with me."

Terry wrapped an arm around her shoulders and led her to the door. "Now you wouldn't be complaining any if a certain frumpy secretary was in your bed."

"I'm thinking that you have a crush on Truman and you're feeling me out on it?"

"I'm not the one who stole her dirty sweatshirt, I think you have a crush on her and you're just denying it."

"How did we get on the subject of my unattractive secretary?"

"You started it and your shallowness is showing through like a neon beer sign, what ever happened to what's on the inside counting more than the package?"

"I gave up on that when they turned out to be nut jobs, self inflictors and alien abductees. Now I go for the beautiful but bimboish, you can turn them in a circle three times and they forget they were with you."

"Solves the problem of running out of dates, or having them turn you down because of a bad one if they don't remember you, so got any left overs, I'm not picky."

"God you're desperate, buy a vibrator, they're loyal and you don't have to keep spending money on 'em."

Truman was still asleep when the music started up downstairs; it pounded the floor and had her bed vibrating. Rolling to her side, she leaned over and pounded on the floor. "I'm going to kill her, rip her arms and legs off and bury her body in the basement." She rolled from bed, found one slipper and dragged her feet all the way to her door and down the stairs to the music room door. She yanked it open, walked in and planted her hand on her hips, what she was watching was something she had never seen before. Mac moved fluidly across the floor with her dance partner to what she thought was some kind of Latin dance. "Mac there's a strange woman watching us."

"Is she really good looking and maybe interested in me?"

"Half asleep and heading towards the stereo."

"Ohh Hell, we just woke up my work partner, she's gonna kill me later."

Truman turned the stereo down and went back out the door, she hoped that she would be able to go back to sleep for a few more hours. She fell into her bed, hugged her pillow around her head and fell back to sleep.

"You didn't tell me that you had a new partner or that she was living here, what's she like?" She spun from Mac's body and then came back. "Is she like you, all buff and commanding in a tough situation?"

Mac wiggled her brows and then blinked her eyes to clear the pain. "I don't know about buff but she commands me pretty well, she's bossy just like her grandma Doris." She spun her dance partner out and back in for the final steps of the Rhumba.

"She looked pretty buff to me in those little shorts and half t-shirt." She wiped sweat from her brow and looked down into Mac's bruised and still swollen face. "You look terrible, maybe you should go back to bed."

"Ohh I will after I take some pain pills, it wouldn't be bad if the sledge hammer in my head would go away." She rubbed her temples and walked to the stereo to turn it off. "Say hello to Tom for me and tell him I could use some help finding someone."

"I'll have him call you later today; he's off from the cop shop for the first time in weeks."

"So it's busy in the missing persons division, I never thought that many people could just up and disappear."

"Ohh I wish a lot more would and that includes my boss, I can guarantee none of us would report him missing."

She gave Mac a hug and left the room with a wave over her shoulder. Mac stretched her lower back out and then went to the stairs, she was feeling the few hours of sleep she had but felt better for not getting drunk the night before. Taking the stairs slowly, she went into her apartment, grabbed the pill bottles from on top of the small table near the kitchen, and kicked her shoes across the floor. She opened the tiny slits she had for eyes and tried to read the labels. "Damn it to Hell and back, I can't read these damn tiny ass letters." She went across the hallway, went into Truman's apartment and then to her bedroom. Stopping beside her bed, she sat down on the edge and tried to see the faint line of her body under the blankets. She could hear her deep breathes and see the rise and fall of her chest, reaching out a hand; she trailed it down across her arm and stopped at her much larger hand. Giving up the idea of waking her from a peaceful sleep, she laid down and watched her until she fell asleep with her head on the pillow next to Truman's.

Truman rolled over and felt something odd beneath her; she raised her head, blinked her eyes and groaned. Curled up against her body was a snorting, drooling Mac, rolling back over, she went to get out of bed and found a hand holding onto the back of her shirt. "Come on you sea monkey let go."

"But my head hurts."

"More then your heads gonna hurt if you don't let go," She turned and watched Mac grip her forehead with one hand. "Where's your pills and I still think you should go to the hospital for a head CT."

"It's my sinuses; they feel like they're gonna fall outta my head." She tried to sniffle and felt tears come to her eyes. "I sneezed last night and thought my head blew off, even my ears hurt." She

whimpered and pulled Truman's pillow to her chest. "My pills are lost in the bed somewhere...I couldn't read the labels." She tried to see Truman and gave up with a low moan.

"You remind me of my dad when he was sick, it was like having a little two year old around." She searched through the bed until she found the pain pills and the sleeping pills that Jimmy had given Mac incase she couldn't sleep. Opening the bottle of pain pills, she placed two or them in Mac's hand and then grabbed the bottle of water she had on her nightstand. "Now take your pills while I go make breakfast and you can make my bed." She left with an evil laugh and went to the bathroom.

Mac was at her desk looking over some of the investigation reports that Truman had typed up for her, she couldn't believe that she had ignored all the time Doris had told her that it would be easier to get the information via the Internet. At this rate, she could triple the amount of background checks she did and bring in more money. Moving another report closer to her face, she read off the number and then whistled. "Have I always charged this much for a background check?"

"No, I changed the fee; this is 2003 Mac, not 1943." She grabbed the folders from her out box and dropped more papers into her in box. "You can have a seat John, I'm sure if you stare at her long enough she'll realize you're here." She pointed to a chair that John had never seen before and then went back out to her desk.

"I have a chair in here besides my desk chair?" Mac asked and then looked over to see that there were two in front of her desk. "Where'd these chairs come from?" She yelled and watched John's shape drop down into one.

Truman yelled back. "Would you believe I found them under three years worth of files, ya know that's what those cabinets are for, not your old shoes?"

John leaned in closer so that Mac could see him better, in a deep whisper he asked. "Where did you find a heart stopper like her, I almost fell down the stairs when she looked over to me?" He bit into his hand and moaned. "Do you think she'd go out with me?"

"Did you like go blind since the last time I saw you, Truman is not a heart stopper and no she won't go out with you, she's gay."

He snapped his fingers and leaned back in his chair so that he could see Truman sitting at her desk. "You are so wrong about that Mac, I know you've gone blind but even that shouldn't keep you from seeing what a heart stopper she is...or have you already...you know and it didn't work?"

"She raised a brow at him and shook her head. "That is just sick...Doris is her grandma and I ain't talking about this no more, I got in trouble over...something similar." She grabbed her hat and got up from her chair. "Come on, you can buy me and Truman lunch and tell me why you're here while we're waiting." They walked past Truman but not without John tripping over his feet and running into the back of Mac. "Keep it up John and I'll tell her what you said."

"Don't bother; I heard every word you two said." She raised a dark brow at Mac and gave her a crooked grin. "I don't do sea monkeys and I want extra horseradish, I think I'm coming down with a cold."

"Will that kill the germs or keep everyone away so they don't get sick?" John looked to each one of them and gave up on an answer. "Never mind, what kind of sandwich?"

Mac pushed him towards stairs. "Smoked turkey with provolone and the fixins, now move your ass I'm hungry." John tried to look back over his shoulder at Truman but Mac poked him in his back. "I maybe half blind but she's not and if you don't behave yourself I'll tell Doris." She scratched her jaw and grinned when she realized that she knew what kind of sandwich Truman liked. "Just too fucking weird, I can't even remember how I take my coffee but I know how she takes hers."

"And when you get your sight back, Doris will beat the Hell outta both of us dogs, not like it will hurt you; you're already a few straws short." He said and went down the steps with a loud laugh at Mac's groan. "She's a hotty Mac and if you don't think so then your taste has gotten lost somewhere."

She waited until they were outside before she said anything. "I have excellent taste, Truman's just not the kind of women I go for and you know that."

It was going on seven o'clock that night and Mac had been gone over an hour on a stakeout with Terry, looking in the full-length mirror in Mac's apartment, she checked out her clothes and then grabbed her keys from the small table. She still couldn't get over how they moved between the two apartments as if it were one residence or that she had to keep taking her sweat shirts back from a sea monkey. She jogged down the stairs, went out the front door and locked it behind her. She couldn't believe that she was actually going to the ballroom to meet an informant, she hadn't told Mac about it because she didn't want her saying that she couldn't or shouldn't be doing it. "I can do this, what's so hard about opening your eyes and ears and watching people. That's what Sally and grandma D says Mac does; I just hope this bears fruit." She got into Mac's Subaru, started it and let it warm before heading to the Ballroom. "I can't believe I'm going out in public half naked," She pulled on her suit jacket and looked down at the single button down shirt she wore. "I haven't been this naked since my shower." Pulling out onto the street, she took the next right for the shortcut.

"This really sucks Terry and why in the Hell am I sitting in a cold as car with you anyways?"

"Because you owe me and this is all for you anyways, this is the bitch that I think set you up."

"And how would you know this, I didn't give you a picture or anything."

"No but I just happened to be going past the place where you were supposed to met whoever, and this woman was going into that abandoned house. If it's not the one who talked to you then it's the other one that's involved with...Ohhh the Hell with explaining your stupid ass case to you, we're here and that's all there is to it."

"I'm just amazed that you've gotten to the rank you are and being totally clueless at the same time."

"Me clueless, you're the little dog that runs up underneath every hot womens skirt but you're ignoring Truman."

Mac turned in the seat and looked to her long time friend and confidante. "You're the second person in as many days ta call her a hotty, has everyone gone blind but me? I think you and John are just terrorizing me because I can't see to good."

Terry gave her a wide grin and winked. "That could be it or we could be telling the truth and you're gonna loose your cook because you're shallow."

"I'm not shallow; I just like what I like."

"And you use women to no end and you'll always be alone because of it." She knew she was being cruel to her best friend but someone had to, the way she was going, she would be all alone on her deathbed. "I'm not saying to jump into a serious relationship with some bimbo, just stop being a guy all the time."

Mac leaned in close and touched the side of her face to make sure that it wasn't a mask. "What's gotten into you all of a sudden, you're almost as bad as I am when it comes to women?"

"I realized that I'm working my way towards sitting at home and when I'm old and decrepted and no one will care." She shrugged her shoulder and looked out her window. "The meals on wheels driver would be the only person I would see unless you came over in your electric wheelchair."

Mac blinked and turned to look out the windshield. "God you're morbid tonight, are you PMSing or something?" The more she thought about it, the more she saw that Terry was right. "We're gonna be ancient dykes with only each other for company if we don't give up our ways." She looked back to her pensive friend and sighed. "How soon do I have to give up chasing women?"

Truman walked into the Ballroom and headed directly over to the bar to hide in one of its dark corners, she had already gotten a few whistles and crude proposition from a man near the door. She had heard some of the things that Mac said to women from her grandma but they were nowhere near as raunchy as what the man had said to her. "Hey Sally can I have a frozen Russian?"

Sally stepped closer to her and saw the disgusted look on her face. "You look like you're about to upchuck on my bar, why is that?"

"Some pig at the door grossed me out with his lack of manners; he said that I look good enough to give him fifteen minutes of lap fucking."

Sally looked towards the door and saw a table with five men sitting at it. "Which asshole said that?"

Truman looked to the door and narrowed her eyes. "The freak with the handlebar mustache and leather jacket with USA on the back, what are you going to do?"

"Take care of the filth that isn't supposed to be in here anyway, I banned his scummy ass two weeks ago for slapping one of my girls on her ass." She grabbed the phone, spoke for two seconds and then watched a short stocky woman in a black t-shirt go over to the table. "Once she gets done with him he'll wish he'd stayed home."

"Who is she; she looks like she could pick up a car?"

"A miscreant that I caught stealing food from me almost 30 some odd years ago, she just got back from London a week ago. Apparently the pubs there aren't to her liking anymore so she came home."

Truman watched the smaller woman put the man in a martial arts finger hold and march him out the front door. "Maybe she can drop kick Mac for me, I'm tired of picking up her clothes and finding her dirty dishes on my desk."

"As big as you are you should kick her ass, it'll be easier now that she can't see too good and why hasn't she gone back to a doctor about that?"

"I have no idea, I told her she needs to go see Jimmy but she's a stubborn ass and won't listen. Now any idea who this informant is that I'm supposed to meet?"

"Yep, this person knows everything and I should, I was here before God." She slapped a hand down on the bar and gave out a loud bark of a laugh. "Anyway there's this woman that comes in here and she hides out at the back table, last night she came in and her face is all bruised. One of the waiters said her husband did it because he caught her cheating." She noticed Truman's eyes go to a creepy silver color. "Her husband is the one that Mac met here right before she got the shit kicked out of her; I think he had something to do with it."

"OK, so what am I supposed to do; I have no idea what Mac does or if I can do anything that can help?"

"Ohhh it's easy, just sit at the next table and open your ears; in about ten minutes either her girlfriend or boyfriend will be in here and then she'll show up shortly after that."

"Isn't she taking a chance coming to the same place her husband does?"

"Nope, he runs a bar on the other side of Maryland; he never comes in here at night so she's safe. Now did you bring Mac's little tape recorder that she never uses?"

Truman taped her pocket and then pulled out a small microphone that went with it. "I brought this so that I can put it on the edge of the table, with the music I didn't wanna take a chance on it not picking everything up." Taking her drink, she went over to the table and sat down with her back to the wall. Looking around, she noticed that she was in complete darkness and no one could see her. After taping the small microphone to the edge of the table, she sat back and melted further into the darkness. She didn't have long to wait before a young woman showed and took a seat at the table next to her. She looked to the side and notice that the women didn't have any bruises so she wondered where she fit into the picture. A few minutes later a man showed up and sent her deeper into confusion, she was about to go back over to Sally when a badly beaten woman came over and sat down with the couple.

"What are you doing here," the woman said to the man and took a seat on the opposite side from him. "I told you it was over and to leave me alone?"

"I came because Debra asked me to, this involves me whether you like it or not."

"Bullshit, you just want in on the money so get your ass away from me before I let everyone know what you did to a certain person."

He growled and leaned across the table. "You can't prove a god damn thing and why in the Hell would I beat anyone up other than your asshole husband?"

"Because you're working for him that's why, now get the fuck away from me!"

Truman caught his mumbles and felt the hair on the back of her neck stand up; his threats were something that she would tell Terry. As soon as he was gone, she turned her attention back to the women and listened to their conversation. Mumbled at best, she couldn't hear what they were saying and hoped that the sensitive microphone picked it up. An hour later, they had left and she went back up to the bar to say good night to Sally.

"Where is she," Mac went from Truman's bedroom back over to her own living room and dropped down onto her couch. "She never goes anywhere so where is she?" She looked down at her pocket watch, cursed and got up to go out and look for her missing friend. She made it as far as the stairs when Truman stopped at the bottom and looked up at her. "Where have you been, I've been worried enough that I was going to report you missing and look for you in the gutters!"

"Ohh will you calm down, I was working a case." She came up the steps and stopped to look down at how Mac was dressed. "I would love to see you out looking for me in your boxers, the vest and watch bob are a nice touch to your weird ensemble."

Mac looked down at her bare legs and feet and then to her watch chain running across the front of her vest. "I could always say that you mugged me and stole my pants, now where were you and what case were you working on?"

"You're a nosy little sea monkey," she went into her apartment and turned back to Mac. "Give me two minutes to change and I'll tell you."

"You can change clothes in front of me...I can't see you so what's the big deal?"

"You can see good enough and that's exactly why you're not gonna watch me, no one sees my body."

Mac grabbed the tail of Truman's jacket and held on. "I heard that you had clothes made so your tailor knows what you look like and all I gotta do is ask her and she'll tell me."

"No she won't," She went to her bedroom and closed the door. "I tipped her good but you'll find that out when you get your credit card bill!"

Mac stood outside the door and grinned evilly, she didn't know why but it didn't bother her that she paid for Truman's clothes. "So did Sophia make you some skimpy silk underwear I can fondle, you know like my favorite stuff that *Victoria Secret* makes?"

Truman pulled the door open and tapped Mac on her chest. "No, go fondle one of your floozy's underwear, mine are off limits to your paws."

"Ohhh come on Truman, you get to see my underwear how come I can't see yours or play with 'em?" She ran into Truman's back when she stopped in the hallway. "I know ya wanna show me, maybe model 'em for me."

"You have brain damage, remember I'm frumpy and I could wear cotton granny underwear for all you know."

"Then how come I've been hearing that you're a hotty and I'm missing out because I can't see?"

"If you went to see Jimmy then maybe he could tell you why the swelling hasn't gone down yet and then you could see that I'm not a hotty."

"I already know why the swelling hasn't gone down, my septum was crushed and it's gonna take a while for it to heal." She ran a finger across her swollen nose and flinched. "Plus my sinuses are messed up from all of this...and I can't smell anything."

"I bet that puts a damper on your underwear fetish." Truman snorted when she saw the light blush rush over Mac's face. "Ohhh so you are a sick little fucker aren't you?"

"Like you don't have any weird habits, I'm gonna find out what they are and terrorize you."

"Have fun looking but you won't find any because I don't have any that you haven't already seen."

Mac stood in the hallway spinning her watch chain and trying to figure out what Truman was talking about. "What are you talking about and why are you in my refrigerator when you're the one with all the food?"

"You have beer and I don't cheap beer but more than what I've got." She dropped down onto Mac's couch and put her feet on the coffee table. "Now why are you running around with no pants on...never mind I don't think...I don't want to know."

Mac dropped down beside her with a beer and the ice mask on her face, she grinned when Truman choked on her beer. "Terry can't drive worth a damn and I spilt coffee in my lap, I spent all those hours watching a vacant house with her because she saw that women there that I was supposed to investigate."

"Yeah well while you were on stakeout, I not only saw all those involved with one of your cases but got it taped on top of it." She handed Mac the tape recorder and leaned back into the couch. "It didn't mean anything to me, I have to read the report you have on them."

Mac turned the tape recorder on and then looked to Truman with a wide grin. "That's the wife that was cheating on her cheating husband with a scumbag drug addict, now how did you know where they would be and where were they?"

"You're the PI you tell me..." She groaned when Mac just sat and stared at her as if she were insane. "Ohhh OK, Sally told me when they would be at the Ballroom. I would have told you but you were with Terry and you don't have a cell phone and I don't know Terry's number." She took a deep breath, played with her beer bottle and continued in a soft voice. "I went and hid in the dark at a table right next to them, good thing I'm plain and can blend into what ever I stand near."

"I felt the material that your jacket was made out of and that's nowhere near plain, that's the same stuff that my suits are made out of and I bet it was in a dark blue color?"

"Come on Mac I know you're not color blind and could see that it was a dark blue and it looks nothing like your zoot suits, so it was just a plain old suit." She drained the last of her beer and got up. "I'm going to bed."

"Ohhh can I come tuck you in?"

"Go to Hell sea monkey and if you crawl in bed with me again I'll break your legs."

"No you won't, you liked having me there." She wiggled her brows and winced from the pain in her face.

"You are so delusional, go to bed before I remember that I was given permission to kick your ass." She went from Mac's apartment and into her own; she had stopped closing her door at night

because Mac was wearing the hinges out. Once she had brushed her teeth and washed her face, she went into her bedroom and crawled into bed. She hadn't minded the morning she had woke up and found Mac curled up with her, she just didn't want Mac to know that.

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~ Swing Time ~

by Larisa

Part 2

A few days later, Mac sat reading over the transcript from when Truman had gone to the Ballroom; she felt her jaw drop when everything concerning two of her cases came together in a shocking way. "Truman what did this other woman look like?" She got up from her chair and cursed when her chair followed her into Truman's office. "Was she a blonde with huge tits," She turned and tried to untangle her zoot chain from her chair arm. "I can't remember anything else about her because I was..."

"Having fantasies about her tits," She leaned back in her chair and watched Mac give up and just drop down into her chair. "She dressed like a whore; in fact I don't think there were any buttons on her shirt at all."

Mac felt her jaw go slack and fall open, she was pissed that she missed all of this. Pulling the ice mask off, she tossed it on Truman's desk and got up to pace with her chair following. "OK, now that's the same bimbo that I was supposed to spy on her partner." She turned to look at Truman and noticed that her hair was not only shorter than before but a different color. "You do look different than before...anyway, I think that they're the ones who set it up to have me beat up. But which one and how do I find out if that's the case?"

"I think the guy did it; the wife said that he beat up a certain person and I think that's you. Plus when he was leaving he mumbled something about an asshole dyke and that could be you to." She gave her a huge smile with the last sentence.

"Yeah you could be right about that, the only problem now is I just lost out on a huge amount of money. I'll get the info and hand it over to Terry, the best we can hope for is to get evidence on them and press charges for attempted murder, assault and battery and anything else I can come

up with. They should all fry for ruining my favorite suit and taking me off the sexual circuit for months."

"Hell I think all your female victims chipped in and paid those guys to put you out of commission." She looked at Mac and noticed that more of the swelling had gone down around her eyes and that the sutures that were in her face were gone. "Tell me you didn't take out your sutures."

"Nope, I made Terry take 'em out. I'm all healed and the damn things were itching and stabbing me, am I really ugly now because of scars?"

"They're not too bad, a little vitamin E and they'll fade. Now how are we going to get this info you need?" She felt the hair on the back of her neck rise when Mac gave her a chilling grin.

"That's where you come in, since you can blend in so well, you can eaves drop on their conversations." She rolled her chair closer and leaned forward. "We'll start at the creeps bar in Maryland; we get more shit on him and then go after the other ones. I already have him on tape asking me to knock off his wife and her lover, just a little more and he's history."

Truman shook her head and pointed a finger at Mac. "Ohh the Hell I will, I'm not going into some bar and have men grab my ass or worse. I already had that happen the other night at the Ballroom and Sally had the scumbag tossed out. Why can't you just put your little ice mask on and go in as the masked idiot?"

"Haa! I tried that once at a Halloweenie party and everyone knew who I was." She looked to the door and felt a deep blush coming to her face. "Hi Doris and please don't embellish on my horrid little story..." She got to her knees and begged. "Pleeeeeease!"

"Go to Hell sea monkey," She hobbled over to her old desk, gave Truman a hug and snickered at Mac fighting with her zoot chain. "The little pervert there went to the Halloween party in black spandex, a hood and a giant black strap-on dildo." She grinned evilly at Mac's blush and continued. "She would stand in dark corners and when anyone got close; she would try and hump them. She got caught when one of her one night stands grabbed it and knew who it was."

"They beat the Hell outta me that night, I still don't know who stole my dildo or who put my picture on the front page of the newspaper?"

"Ohhh I forgot all about that," Doris turned to Truman. "I framed it, remind me to give it to you, it might come in handy for keeping her on a leash."

Mac threw her hands in the air and dragged her chair back to her office by its leash. "Ohhh great, my life is ruined and why's everybody calling me a sea monkey?"

"Because regular size shrimp are bigger than you that's why." Truman yelled back to her and then got up from her chair to offer it to her grandma. "You look good, sorry I haven't been over lately, Mac keeps me busy."

"Don't worry about it, I've heard all about your escapades from Sophia and Sally." She looked at the layered baggy clothes she wore and how she had her hair pulled back in a ponytail. "When are you going to toss the frump look and go with the new and improved you?"

"I wore my new clothes the other night, why should I dress up in here?" She sat down in a chair near her desk and looked down at her cross trainers. "Besides, Mac wouldn't get anything done if she saw me in a suit. The little dog was drooling the other night because she thought Sophia made me silk underwear."

Doris raised a dark gray eyebrow at her, now she knew why Truman was sticking with her frumpy librarian look. "You're afraid of her aren't you?"

Truman tried to chuckle but it came out as a choke. "I don't know how to handle people paying that kind of attention to me, I'm used to them ignoring me or saying nasty stuff about my looks but not sexual things..."

"For Christ sakes but you're a backward kid, didn't your mother teach you anything before she ran off with that Cajun shrimper?"

"Ohh yeah, she said I was too tall to be a southern belle and that I'd better learn something in college that would support me for the rest of my life because I would never get a rich husband and you know all about dad."

"Yeah that he can't be my kid because I didn't raise no chauvinistic prick, I think he learned all that shit from his snotty in-laws. Wonder how your mother likes that fish smell that comes in with her shrimper husband?"

"She doesn't worry about it; she divorced him and married her lawyer. After all, she got the shrimp boat, business and everything that poor chump had because of her sleazy lawyer. Now they have all kinds of money coming in, both legal and bloody."

"Just ignore the nasty stuff and use Mac for practice, she can come up with some really raunchy things to say to a woman. I blame her dad for that; he was a real Dipshit at times."

"Ohh come over here and sit on my lap," Mac said in a deep throaty voice and wiggled her fingers at the redhead. "I can show you exactly how talented my fingers are." When the woman ignored her but looked directly over her shoulder, Mac should have known she was in trouble. "Ohh Hell forget I said anything, I forgot my pills today and I..." She jumped and let out a yelp from the cold drink and ice falling down the front of her shirt. "This really sucks," She stood up, pulled her shirt from her trousers and let the ice cubes fall from inside. "Knew I should have stayed home with Truman, her abuse is at least tolerable." She went over to the other side of the bar and took up a masculine pose against the wall. "Hey baby, I can get you so hot that a soft breath will send you over the edge." The woman that she said this to slapped her so hard that she

felt her teeth rattle. "Shit have I gotten out of practice, these lines used to work."

"On teenagers that didn't know any better," A deep voice said next to her ear. "And the zoot suit screams pimp, Mac you need some leather."

Mac turned her head and grinned so wide that she felt her jaws crack. "Sydney, I thought you were in London," She pulled her short stocky friend into a tight hug and then released her. "Sally didn't say you were coming back home."

"Well I hadn't planed on it but after the Bobbies tossed me into jail a few times I figured it was cheaper to come on home and work the Ballroom floor. Grandma gave me back my old job and my room in the back but she didn't tell me that you had gotten so ugly."

"Hey it took a couple guys to do this to me, does Terry know you're back?" She wiggled her brows at her and nudged her ribs. "I know she'd fall over if you dropped into the cop shop."

"Is that before or after she handcuffed me and locked my ass up behind bars, I know she's still pissed because I never told her I was leaving."

"Syd, that was three years ago, Terry can't hold a grudge for three minutes late alone that long. Go see her, patch things up between you two."

Sydney leaned back against the wall and looked to her smaller friend. "Why are you trying to get me and Terry back together?"

"Ohh I just know that you two belong together and none of us are getting any younger; just wish I had some damn luck." She watched a young blonde come her way and pulled one of her many lines from her memory and tried again. "Hey doll, have you seen God yet tonight?" She grunted and dropped to her knees in a split second, she gasped for air and whimpered when Syd helped her to her feet and then from the bar.

"Well I guess this is a short night for you," She flipped Mac over her shoulder and carried her to her car. "Three strikes and the PI is down for the night." She placed her in the back seat, crawled behind the wheel of the Plymouth and headed back to her building. "Just remember, if you toss your cookies, it's your backseat."

Truman heard the down stairs door open and then heard a strange voice arguing with Mac, she stepped to the top of the stairs and couldn't help but grin. Mac was trying to walk with her hands between her legs and leaning against the wall for support. "I can make it...in ten years..." She whimpered and slid down to the floor. "This hurts like..."

"Well you're lucky it was just her knee and not her foot that had steel toed boots on, I've never known you to go after a butch before." She looked up to the top landing and felt her mouth go dry. "Mac you didn't tell me that someone lives with you."

"Ohh that's Truman...she works with me..." She grunted when Sydney flipped her over her shoulder and started carrying her up the stairs. "Hey Truman...this is Sydney." She waved to her as she went by and groaned when Sydney used her ass to push her door open. "Oww...Syd!"

"Shut up you retard, if you weren't such a crude asshole you wouldn't get the shit kicked out of you all the time." She put Mac on her couch and turned to see Truman coming into the apartment; she looked up and felt the floor move beneath her feet. "Lord almighty but you're gorgeous...and tall."

"OK now this is just too much for me," Mac struggled to sit up. "Syd I need you to crack my nose and reset my septum."

"What! Mac you're face is just now healing you can't..." Truman looked to Syd and just then recognized her. "You're the bouncer from the Ballroom..." She felt her face flush when it hit her as to what Sydney had said to her. "I'm not gorgeous and you're not touching Mac's nose...she looks terrible as it is." She stepped in front of her smaller friend and jumped when her ass was pinched. "Keep it up and I'll break your nose."

"Just let Syd fix my nose, the swelling will go down and my sinuses will finally drain." She tried to take a deep breath and all she made was a funny noise. "Jimmy didn't set it because there was too much swelling and I'm too chicken shit to do it myself...soooo." She closed her eyes when Sydney leaned down to her, grabbed her nose between her two hands and snapped her nose back in place. "Fuck...shit...DAMN THAT HURT!" She grabbed her nose and fell over on the couch whimpering.

"You hurt her!" Truman leaned down and helped Mac sit up at the end of the couch. "Let me get you some ice and you," she jabbed Syd in her chest. "Don't touch her or I'll rip your head off and throw it down the stairs."

Sydney watched Truman's long legs as she walked to the kitchen, the muscles were long and lean from running. She then looked to Mac and saw tears rolling down her cheeks and a wicked grin on her lips. "She likes me doesn't she otherwise she wouldn't have threatened to rip your head off."

"I think you two are made for each other, you like pain and she looks the type to enjoy inflicting it." She moved away from Mac with her hands in the air. "I won't touch her no more; you're too much woman for me." She sat down in a chair and watched how attentive Truman was to her friend. "So you run around Mac half dressed and she doesn't try to hump your leg or anything?" She looked at the muscles flexing in Truman's back and shoulders when she brushed Mac's hair from her forehead.

"No she hasn't tried to hump my leg or anything, why would she I'm not her type?" She took Mac's hand and placed it on the ice bag. "Keep that there and why in the Hell did you have to be carried up the stairs?"

"Because the smooth one there got her nuts sent home, she's lucky though because before that she got the shit slapped outta her. If I Hadn't stepped in, who knows what those women would have done to her?"

Mac grinned up at Truman and shrugged her shoulders. "Guess I already dated those three women, my lines didn't quite get the responses that they usually do."

"Mac I heard all about your lines and they never work unless the woman is drunk or plain stupid." Truman said. "I'm going to bed and you stay out of my bedroom, it's just plain freaky having you staring at me."

"I don't stare; I was trying to see in the dark, I didn't wanna fall on top of you like the last time." She snickered when Truman raised a fist and shook it at her. "Ohh how I wish you would do something with that hand."

Syd shook her head and got up from her chair. "You two do what ever, I have a lot of ass kissing and begging to do."

"Flowers Syd, get Terry some pretty flowers and not from Wal-Mart." Mac said and then winked at Truman when she saw that she was still standing in the doorway. "Doris taught me that and it works; at least it did on Truman."

A week later Truman was in Mr. Simson's bar in Maryland, she was glad that she had gone for the redneck look of a flannel shirt and faded Levis. Anything else and she would have stood out like a flamingo dancer at a Bar Mitzvah. After getting a bottle of beer at the bar, she made her way over to where Mr. Simson was sitting at one of the back tables and sat down at the table next to him. Pulling her hair back from her face, she pulled her wire rimmed pop bottle lens glasses off and placed them on the table. It was when she went to take a drink of her beer that she almost choked to death, it was Mac's idea to wear Billy Bob buckteeth to fit more into the bar patrons and she would pay dearly when she got home.

"Truman can you hear me with all that shit kicker music?"

"Yeah and you just wait until we get home." She said into the small microphone at her shirt collar. "Now what am I doing here?"

"Just put that little bug thing near his table and then leave, the thing will continue to work until the little battery dies."

"And how am I supposed to do that with all the rednecks at his table along with his nasty ass self?"

"You could go set the men's bathroom on fire, that's what I'd do."

"You have got to be kidding...I can't do that...Mac...besides I don't have a lighter."

"Truman, you're in a bar, they have matches all over the place."

"Ohh sure and I'm supposed to waltz in the men's bathroom and just torch it without being noticed?"

"They won't even notice, there's only one bathroom in the place and they're too damn drunk to notice you flipping a cigarette into the trash can."

"I don't smoke; it's a gross and disgusting habit." She looked at the table full of loud men and wished she had told Mac to go to Hell and let her come in and do this stuff. After making sure that no one was paying attention to her, she went up to the bar, bought a pack of Marlboros, and then went back to where the bathroom was. Lighting a cigarette, she tried not to choke and backed through the door. Looking around, she saw the overflowing trash can and flipped the cigarette just as a man came out of one of the stalls. Jumping from the closing door, she went back to her table and waited. Not three minutes later, dark smoke came from the small hallway and into the rest of the bar. The table next to her emptied and gave her the perfect opportunity to place the bug on the wood trim behind the table. Once done, she left the bar and jogged around to the back to Mac's car. "Never again Mac, next time you go in and go in the men's bathroom."

Mac looked to her and shivered. "Please take off those glasses and toss those teeth out the window!"

"Nope, I'm saving these for a day when you least expect a payback." She put the teeth in her shirt pocket and then removed the hearing aid and microphone. "Do you always use stuff like this on your little spy missions?"

"Nope, I got those from when I was a cop doing undercover work and that little bug is almost ten years old. From what Terry tells me, the stuff they use now is so tiny ya can't even see it." She pulled out onto the main highway and then in the opposite direction they needed to go. "I'm hungry and I want a giant steak and a baked potato with everything on it."

"So where are we going, I'm not really dressed to go anywhere fancy?" She looked down at her clothes and felt uncomfortable.

"You look fine and where were going I'm over dressed." She pulled into a parking lot filled with semi trucks and other pick-ups, after parking; she ran around and opened the door for Truman. "Let me get out of my jacket and then we can go in, at least then I won't get steak sauce all over my jacket." Truman could see Mac eating in a truck stop and enjoying the camaraderie of the men in the place; she felt out of place and walked closely behind her. What she found funny was that Mac knew everyone in the place and grabbed two menus as she went past the register. "I have a reserved table for us; in fact no one else will sit back here because it's near the kitchen." She slid into a booth and placed one of the menus on the table for Truman. "They make a two pound steak that is the best in the state, thick and juicy, and ya need a doggy bag to take what you can't eat home."

Truman wandered from her bedroom and into Mac's office; she pulled drawers open until she found a huge bottle of Roloids. Dropping into her chair, she pulled the cap off and tossed six tablets in her mouth. She didn't know if it was the fried onions or the real bacon bits that she had on her baked potato, what ever it was, it was back with a vengeance. She groaned and grabbed at her chest, the pain felt like a heart attack. Chewing the pills as fast as she could with out choking, she took deep breathes to try to ease the pain. "Never again...damn food can kill." She leaned back in Mac's chair and closed her eyes. "I hope Mac's suffering worse than I am." She closed her eyes and moaned with her pain until she felt her stomach turning, lurching from the chair; she took off towards the client bathroom. She had just dropped to her knees in front of the toilet when her stomach heaved, for what seemed hours, she clung to the toilet. As soon as her stomach quieted down, her insides started to gurgle. At that very moment she knew there was Hell on earth.

Mac came out of her apartment with a fresh cup of coffee and a cheese Danish left over from the day before. Walking into her office, she found her Roloids on her desk and the lid on the floor. Looking around she became worried when she didn't hear Truman's radio on in her apartment. Putting everything down, she ran from their offices and into Truman's apartment. She came to a sliding halt when she saw her huddled against the wall in her bathroom. "Truman what's wrong?" She stepped in and saw that she was soaked with sweat and shivering at the same time. "Ohh Hell why didn't you wake me up," She went into her bedroom and grabbed the thin blanket from the foot of her bed. "How long have you been sick?"

"Hours...I'm dying..." She groaned and crawled towards the toilet and dry heaved.

"I'll be right back, I have some stuff..." Mac ran to her own apartment, grabbed the phone and called Jimmy. On her way to her bathroom, Jimmy answered. "Thank God you're there, Truman's sick...she's throwing up and..."

"Hold on Mac my eyes aren't even open yet and you want me to think?"

"It's nine o'clock in the morning, I'm up so everyone else in the world should be up, now what's wrong with Truman?" She grabbed a bottle of Pepto Bismal and walked briskly back to Truman's apartment.

"I worked the late shift at the hospital; I only got home a few hours ago." He cleared his throat and sounded more awake. "Any idea what she had to eat or when this started?"

"We ate at the truck stop last night and I guess sometime this morning it started...Jimmy...it's worse," She stopped in the middle of the living room and turned around to go to the kitchen. "It's coming out both ends...what can I do?"

"Keep her hydrated, just water or something like Gatorade and I'll be there as soon as I find my pants." Mac hung up the phone, placed the Pepto on the counter and looked over her shoulder to Truman. She was still sitting on the toilet with the trash can dangling from one hand. Taking a deep breath, she walked towards the bathroom calling her name quietly. "Jimmy's on his way over...let me help you."

Truman looked up at her with fevered eyes and shook her head. "Go away...I don't need help, it's embarrassing." She groaned and leaned over the trash can to dry heave.

"Yeah well you've seen me at my worst and I can't let you stay here all by yourself when you're sick." She turned the shower on and adjusted it so it was warm, going back to Truman; she leaned over her, flushed the toilet and then pulled her to her feet. "I'll help you get in the shower and then I'm gonna make you some tea." At first Truman fought her when she started undressing her and then gave up when chills hit her. She was still shivering when Mac helped her into the shower and adjusted the water so that it was hotter. "I'll be right back, yell if you need help."

"I need a noose or gun to put myself out of my misery and then I'll kill you." She leaned her forehead against the shower wall and shivered with fever. "Damn food was bad..." She wrapped her arms around her body and tried not to shiver. "My luck to get food poisoning and you get nada." She couldn't even turn her head when Mac pulled the curtain back.

"It might be the flu, lots of people got it." She turned the water off and put one foot into the bathtub so that she could help her out. "I think Jimmy's here; I heard a key in the front door." She wrapped Truman's heavy robe around her and led her to her bed. "I put your tea on the nightstand, I'll be right back." She covered Truman up and ran from the apartment to meet Jimmy at the top of the stairs. "She's really sick, could it be the flu?"

Jimmy grabbed her hand and pulled her behind him to Truman's apartment. "Or food poisoning, that place you eat is worse than a greasy spoon." He handed Mac his bag and went into Truman's bedroom. "One look at you and I don't wanna go into work tonight." He gave her a soft smile and sat down on the edge of her bed. "When did it start?"

"About six hours ago," She looked to him and whimpered. "Just put me down, I think my ass fell off and some vital organs got flushed."

"Ohh now what kind of doc would I be if I killed all my patients, I've even had people offer me money to kill Mac and I haven't done it yet," He looked to her and winked. "I'm waiting for the price to go up; two bucks won't even get me a decent cup of coffee."

"I'll give ya five if you make her leave, she's seen me naked."

"And that's something that's bad, I would have thought that you see each other naked all the time...Ohhh what did I just do?" He looked from a beat red sweating Truman to a red faced looking at the ceiling Mac.

"We're even cuz you saw me half naked...Jimmy just shut up or I'll tell your sister you sold her underwear on e-bay."

"Hey I never sold her underwear..."

Mac gave him an evil grin. "I know that but who would she believe, me her old partner or you her rotten immature younger brother?" She handed him his bag and left the bedroom. "I'll make some...soup broth!"

"Well do you think you can survive food poisoning on top of the stomach flu?" Jimmy asked after taking Truman's vitals. "She can't cook worth a damn and you're run down and that's why you have the flu." He pulled a hypodermic from his bag, rolled her to her side and gave her the shot. "That will help with the nausea and diarrhea, drink plenty of clear fluids, no dairy or juice products." He wrote out a script and placed it on her nightstand. "I'll tell the useless one Mac to go get your prescription, and for the next couple days just relax and make her take care of you for once."

"I'll be alright once I don't have to run to the bathroom every three minutes," She rubbed her stomach and closed her eyes when she began to feel nauseas.

"Deep breathes and don't think about it, any problems call me." He squeezed her hand and went in search of Mac; he found her pacing the hallway and twisting the hair on top of her head with both hands. "That's very attractive; I wondered how you always had horns."

"Is she going to be OK, I'm not good with sick people..." She paced faster and came to hanging halt when Jimmy picked her up and held her up to his eyes.

"Calm down and just make sure that she keeps drinking stuff, I gave her a shot and it should be kicking in right now."

"OK, should I call Doris, maybe she'll come over...no she just got out of the hospital. Maybe I'll call Sally...no she's still sleeping."

"Mac calm down, you act like she just gave birth and you have to baby sit. She's sick that's all there is to it, make her stay in bed and watch TV."

"She doesn't have one...I can buy her one...or she can watch mine."

Jimmy put her down with a chuckle; he had never seen her so flustered when it came to a woman. "You'll drop over from rambling before you get anywhere, when she wakes up let her watch your TV. I'm going home to get some sleep, call 911 if she gets worse and her prescription is on her nightstand."

Mac stood twisting her hair into horns and trying to figure out what she was supposed to do for Truman, she turned and looked at her apartment and then looked to her own. "You can do this, you claim to be big and bad, you can take care of her, she took care of you." She dropped her

hands and shoved them into her pockets before going into Truman's apartment. Stopping outside her bedroom door, she saw that she had kicked the blankets off and was shivering. She picked the blankets up from the floor and covered her up before turning the bathroom light off and going back out and into her office. "You saw her completely naked and you don't even remember seeing anything, how weird is that?" She went into Truman's office, dropped down into her chair and tried to figure out how to turn her PC on. "You can do this, if five year olds play on these things then you should be able to figure something out." She played for a few minutes before she remembered Truman's prescription, getting up from the desk, she went back in to her apartment and then got the prescription without waking her. "I can do this, what's so hard about going down to the pharmacy and getting this filled? Ohh that's easy, you never get prescriptions filled, Doris does that for you." She jogged down the stairs and went out the door towards the pharmacy down the street.

Truman rolled over and felt Mac staring at her; she raised her head and dropped it back down into her pillows. "Why do you do that?"

"I wasn't staring honest; I just came in to put your prescription on the nightstand." She placed the bottle down along with a bottle of grape Gatorade. "I went and got it all by myself and I didn't screw up, I even stopped by 7-11 for Gatorade. I got you one of each flavor because I didn't know what kind you liked...are you OK, do you need anything?"

"For you to stop babbling like an idiot why are you so nervous?"

Mac twisted her watch chain in her fingers and looked to her shoes. "I've never taken care of anyone before so I'm afraid I'll screw up and you'll end up dead."

Truman sat up in bed and grabbed the pill bottle. "I'm not gonna die from this, I may look it and feel it but I'm not dead so just calm down." She swung her feet over the edge of the bed and tried to stand up.

"You can't get up...Jimmy said you have to stay in bed."

"I can't stay in bed, there's work to do and..." She groaned when the room started to spin and she dropped back down onto the bed. "It's too quiet in here."

"Stay right there and don't move I'll be right back." Mac ran from her apartment and came back pushing her desk chair. "Get in your chair; you can watch TV in my apartment."

"Mac I can just sit at my desk and do some work."

"Bullshit, no work today, all you're gonna do today is rest." She pushed her into her apartment and took her to her bedroom. "My sheets are clean and I have dish access on this TV." She helped Truman into her bed, handed her the remote for the small TV sitting on her dresser and then gave her the bottle of Gatorade. "If you need anything call me," She handed her the phone

and then covered her up with the blankets. "I'll be here in a split second or less." She left her bedroom and stopped when Truman called out her name.

"Where are you gonna be that I need the phone?"

Mac gave her a quick grin. "At my desk, it'll make me look professional and like I'm actually working if I answer the phone."

Truman flipped the TV on, snuggled down in Mac's bed and tried to pay attention to what she was watching. With having been sick for hours, the exhaustion won over and took her to the land of dreams.

Mac didn't know what to do, the phone kept ringing, she couldn't get the PC to work and a headache was pounding behind her tired and bloodshot eyes. When Terry and Sydney walked into Truman's office, they were surprised to see Mac fighting with the keyboard. "What are you doing and where's Truman?"

"Hey guys," She put the keyboard back on the desk and dropped her feet to the floor. "She's got the flu, didn't Jimmy tell you?" She checked her watch and then raised a finger at her friends. "I gotta check on her it's been a few hours and I haven't heard anything."

Terry looked to Sydney and then thumped her hand over her heart. "Ohh and why is she in your apartment if she's sick?" They followed her in and stood in shock when she covered her up with the blankets and turned off the TV. "Mac she's in your bed?"

"Yeah, she doesn't have a TV so she was watching mine, I need coffee and food." She went into her kitchen and pulled out the left overs from the day before. "I never knew what Truman and Doris put up with until this morning, that damn phone never stops ringing."

"You mean people actually call you for work, I thought you sat around all day and smoked cigars?" Terry said and dropped down at her table.

"I work, I just never knew that the phone rang so much...at least it never did before. It's all the places that I do the background checks for; they have more of them for me. I think it's because Truman got them done so quick that they're impressed..."

Sydney grabbed a cup of coffee and took a seat next to Terry. "Sounds like you should give Truman a raise for getting you more work and for putting up with your stupid ass. And if I was you, I'd be getting her flowers everyday to put on her desk."

Mac gave her a raised eyebrow look and pushed her fedora back on her head. "Why would I do that," She looked out into her living room and saw Truman going into the bathroom, she put her coffee down and walked to the door. "You OK, you're not sick are you?" She stepped back when the door opened and a pale Truman shook her sleep tousled hair.

"I'm OK, just really tired; I'll go back over to my own bed now."

"Nope can't let you do that, I can't watch you way over there." She turned Truman around and ushered her back to bed, she knew damn well that she could watch her if she were in her own apartment but she wanted her right where she was. After covering her up, she gave her two pills and the Gatorade. "I'll bring you some peppermint tea; it'll help with your stomach."

"How about some hemorrhoid cream?" She grinned at the dark blush that came over Mac's face. "Just kidding, I'll survive but some clothes would be good." Mac nodded her head and went out of her bedroom at a run; she ran past Terry and Sydney and missed their snickers.

"Ever see her act like this?" Sydney asked Terry and took her hand in hers.

"Nope, never knew her to know anything about flowers either but she sure taught you."

"I think those two are sweet on each other, the other night Truman got all bent outta shape when I reset Mac's nose. Brought her an ice bag and everything," They watched her run past with clothes clutched in her arms. "There she goes, damn speedy Gonzales." When Mac came back into the kitchen, they looked at her with wide grins. "Is your woman all taking care of and tucked in?"

"She's just my friend and she took care of me when I got beat up, even called to get me medical attention. Plus without her, I'd go nuts trying to run the office by myself."

Mac looked at all the new releases of DVD's on the Video Den shelves, it had been months since she rented anything and didn't know if Truman had seen any of the movies they had. She looked to Terry and wiggled her fingers at her. "Help, I'm not real sure of what Truman would like, I don't wanna torture her with old movies or anything."

"Get the new releases, the woman lives like a monk so that means she probably hasn't seen any of them." She grabbed a copy of *The Two Towers and Tomb Raider Cradle of Life*. "Do I have to do everything for you or what?" She handed a total of six DVD's to Mac and handed the ones she had to Sydney. "You're paying for everything for the next two years." She walked over to another set of shelves and grinned to herself.

"Ohh is that a painful payback idea," Mac whispered. "What if she wants a new car or house?"

"Then I'm screwed for life, it's been a few days and she's already laid down the law with me. I may have to buy a flower shop just to save money on all the roses I gotta buy."

"When you do this do I get a discount, I'm gonna be buying lots of flowers to."

Sydney raised a dark eyebrow at her and leaned in closer. "And who are these flowers for?"

"Doris, Sally, Sophia and Truman, I owe them all a lot. I was thinking a lot the last couple of days and I never knew how much each one of them did or have done for me."

Sydney pinched her on her upper arm and jumped when Mac yelled and slapped at her hand. "I was just seeing if it was really you or you got replaced by a pod person, you never cared before what anyone did or didn't do."

"Yeah well that was before I was left to fend for myself at Truman's desk, in one day, I learned a Hell of a lot about my business, the fact that I don't know shit." She walked up to the register, paid for the rentals and then waited for her friends to join her outside. "All I need now is to pick up supper; you guys wanna stay for supper and some movies?"

"Maybe some other time," Terry said. "Sydney has duties to perform tonight." She grabbed Sydney's ass, got into Mac's Plymouth and slid to the middle of the front seat.

"Duties to perform," Mac snickered. "Is that like a new name for sex slave?"

"I wish, I think she wants her living room painted. I learned a lot in the last couple of days to, don't go nowhere without telling everyone." She climbed into the car and yelped when Terry pinched her thigh for being a smartass.

"They stole me precioussssss!" Mac whined and then fell on the floor when Truman kicked her off the couch. "Kills them!"

"OK now I've lived through the Lara Croft using the back of the couch as a horse routine, complete with spinning of a rifle. But I don't think I can handle the Sméagol/Gollum voice or you creeping all over the place."

"Wanna play with me precioussssss...all sparkly and oww...guess not?" She rubbed her smashed toes and then watched Truman get up to go to the bathroom. "There's plenty of women that would love to get their hands on my precious." She spun the thick solid gold band on her ring finger and looked closer at the oak leaves engraved on it. "It's the family heirloom and everyone wants it, hundreds of years old and..."

Truman dropped back down on the couch and looked down at Mac. "Must be pretty warn out by now, might as well give up for the life of a spinster."

"What are you talking about," She sat up and leaned closer to her. "You have a dirty mind, there's nothing wrong with big Mac." She wiggled her finger at her. "I was talking about my ring you sick demented gutter snipe."

"Big Mac is it, well that name alone says a lot about that body part, sometimes big isn't better." She grinned and stretched out across the couch leaving no room for Mac.

"I'm not saying anything else except they stole me precioussssss!" She fell on the floor and kept on doing Sméagol's voice even though Truman kept trying to step on her. Hours later with the TV's screen blue, Truman was asleep on the couch with Mac sleeping on the back of it with her hand hanging down to rest on Truman's chest. She mumbled, "The Black Pearls mine!" and rolled off to land on top of Truman to sleep peacefully.

Truman walked from her office into Mac's apartment and stood beside the couch looking down at the snorting drooling little PI; she had been awake for hours and had given up on waking the Mac. With still feeling weak from the flu, she didn't feel up to sitting at her desk but she did check their e-mail and sent out a few replies. She also sat down and read the file Mac had on the case they were now working, she wrote out an outline and tried to figure out where each of the people fit in to the story. She was confused about one area and wanted Mac's input, she couldn't figure out why Mr. Simson wanted his wife and his hired hit man all killed; there had to be something else going on that she wasn't seeing. "Come on sea monkey it's already past noon, I have a headache and you're not sleeping through my pain." She reached down, pulled the hair on her toes, and was disappointed when she slept right through it. "You have hairy feet like a hobbit; you're just weird all the way around." Taking her notepad to her own apartment, she looked around and sighed. "It would be nice if I had someplace to sit besides my bed." Dropping the pad on the bar, she went back out and down the steps to the room where she knew there to be some bar stools. When she opened the door, she flipped the light on and stood with her mouth hanging open. It was a medium sized room but it was large enough to have all the needed exercise equipment to keep in top form.

She went over to an Image 10.0 treadmill and ran a hand across the handrail, although not an expensive piece of equipment, it was nice. She then went over to a Crossbow exercise machine and noticed that the seat was well worn as well as the handgrips, after looking at all the equipment; she found the stools and carried two of them from the room. "I know where I'll be when the weather gets nasty, no more freezing my ass off running in the snow and icy rain." When she got up stairs, she stood in the doorway leaning on one of the stools catching her breath.

"What are you doing, you should be in bed or sitting down somewhere, not running up and down the stairs."

"That's why I went and got these stools so I had someplace to sit, I really need some furniture."

Mac moved her over to her apartment and then put the stools by the bar; she noticed the pad of paper and grabbed that before going back across the hall. "What's wrong with my furniture, it's comfy and all broken in?"

"It's yours and I don't have anyplace to sit in my apartment unless I sit on my bed that's what's wrong with it."

"But how often are you over there, you sleep there but we eat and watch TV over here?"

"Why don't we just block off the hallway, knock the apartment walls down and make one great big loft type living area?" She knew she had made a mistake when Mac pointed a finger at her and grinned like an idiot.

"I can have that done, we'd save on heat and we could make one of the bathrooms into a Jacuzzi type spa room!" She grabbed the phone and spun around in a circle to keep Truman from taking it from her. "Stop and let me make this call, I can have it done in a weeks time!"

"Are you insane...what about your dating habits? There's no way I'm gonna watch a parade of women run in and out through one door."

"Dating habits," Mac ran a hand across her head and felt her horns. "I haven't had a date in...weeks...why is that?" She dropped down on the couch and looked to Truman. "I think I lost my mojo...charm...devilish ways...Ohh my looks!" She ran a finger across her still swollen nose and blinked her eyes a few times. "Although I can see better and not just my nose, I still can't attract a date." She looked at Truman from head to toe and wiggled an eyebrow at her. "Unless you wanna go out with me, I don't put out on the first date but I'm a sure thing on the second."

"Sorry I don't date women with horns and you don't date frumpy archeologists, now put the phone down or I'll kick your ass."

"Ohh I think I'm seeing the errors of my evil ways," She placed a hand over her thumping heart and sunk into the couch. "You're sexy ass Hell when your eyes turn that silver color and you bare your teeth." She lifted her chin and pointed to a spot on her neck. "I'm really sensitive right here."

"Yeah well it won't matter when I wrap both of my hands around your neck and squeeze, now where's my notepad?"

"I like it a little rough and I'm sitting on it, ya want it come get it?"

"Go to Hell, I don't need it to ask you questions, I have a photographic memory."

"Good then you'll remember all my sensitive spots." She grinned and then let it slide from her face when Truman raised a large hand and balled it into a fist.

Mac was standing in the alleyway to Simson's bar; she had the recording device they had left attached to the back window from when they put the microphone in the bar. She was as confused as Truman over what Simson was pulling and couldn't wait to see what was on the tape. Hopefully, one of them confessed to beating her up or at least mentioned who was involved in it. She could care less about Simson and whom he killed off, what she wanted were the assholes that

beat her up. Her face still hurt and she was putting off going to the dentist about a loose tooth. Tucking the tape in her pocket, she walked around the other side and then down the block to where she had parked her Subaru. After checking her watch, she got in her car and drove over to the Ballroom. She hadn't checked in with Sally in a few days and wanted to make sure that Sydney was still alive as well. A few minutes later, she pulled into the lot and then went into the place. Going right to the corner area of the bar, she took a seat and waited for Sally to come over.

"Hey doll got any news for me, like does any women in this state wanna date me?"

Sally brushed her hair back from her forehead and gave Mac a look from over her glasses. "What's the matter sea monkey can't get a date to save your life?" She slid a can of ginger ale to her and then climbed up onto her own stool on her side of the bar. "My Sydney's had a date every single night since she made up with Terry, what's your problem?"

"I think I've warn out my welcome with all the women around here, I got the shit slapped out of me the other night and drop kicked in the jewel. Syd carried me all over the place and all the way up my stairs with Truman watching." She took a drink of her pop and looked to Sally with raised eyebrows. "So got any info for me, or any work that I can do without getting the shit kicked outta me?"

"There is a place I need you to check out; I think a lot of my business is being stolen away by this other joint." She handed her a piece of paper with an address on it. "I've heard that the place is packed on Wednesdays, would ya check it out and let me know what they do there?"

"Sure, I can do that, maybe I'll get Truman to go with me." She tucked the paper in her pocket and looked into the mirror in front of her. "Do you know if she has a passion for anything, you know like mine for the 40's?"

"You live with her why are you asking me?"

"We don't live together...OK so we kinda share the two apartments but I don't know her, she doesn't have any personal items that tell anything about her. She has developed a smartass sense of humor where I'm concerned, it could have been me driving her nuts to." She snapped her fingers. "She does have a thing for the time period of the knights and wenches...I could take her to that restaurant where they have jousting and stuff."

"And Doris said you sucked at the PI thing, she said you should be a meter maid."

"She would say that, it's a good way to meet women though."

Truman looked over Mac's shoulder and raised an eyebrow in question to what she was doing. "You're the weirdest damn person I know, I've never seen anyone comb their eyebrows before but not touch their head with a brush."

"I wear a hat and there's not a brush or comb on this planet that can tame my horns," She slicked a thick eyebrow back with a fingertip. "Now the eyebrows are important, they gotta look good." She pulled her hat on and turned to look at Truman. "What happened to your eyebrows, they were all thick and almost one?"

"One word, Serge. Where ya going tonight, hot date or work?"

"Work, I have this place to check out, it's causing some problems for a friend of mine." She looked at Truman again and grinned. "You look different with two eyebrows, not like that actor *Richard Greco*, now his eyebrows give me the creeps." She shivered and gave Truman a quick hug before heading out of her apartment. "I gotta hug her more...she's...no words for it." She wiped the sweat from her face and jogged down the stairs.

The music blasted and thumped in the floor, Mac blinked her eyes and wiped the tears from her cheeks. The fog machine was playing Hell with her eyes and sinuses and making them run like faucets. Wiping her face with her linen handkerchief, she went over to the bar area and ordered a Coke. She looked around and knew that the place was the same size as the Ballroom but the sound system was hundred times better and the lighting made the place vibrate with color. What brought her attention to the dance floor were the yells and the way the patrons moved, the first thing that went through her mind was that there was a huge fight. Then her mind changed when everyone went back to dancing. She leaned towards the bartender and pointed to the dance floor. "What went on out there?"

"Ohh that's just everyone saying hello to a friend."

"Everyone knows this one person, that's kinda weird?"

"Ohh there are some people that just stand out in a crowd, you're one of them."

Mac gave him a crooked grin, grabbed her drink and moved closer to the dance floor. It took her a while and from being stepped on, she lost some feeling in her toes but she finally made it where she could see the entire dance floor. What caught her attention was one dancer in the midst of the others, she moved like nothing Mac had ever seen. Fluid and very sensual and no where like any of the others, she seemed to dance alone but with everyone at the same time, Mac stood spellbound and then found herself getting closer to the throng of dancers. Her heart pounded with the drumbeat, her blood raced and a primal song sang in her soul as she watched the tall woman dance. Nothing could have prepared her for this; she stepped through the people and stood on the edge of the dance floor. She waited for eye contact to be made and felt her heart stop when it did. Dark blue rimmed in silver drove right to her soul and pierced it; in a heartbeat, she was slain and saved all at once. Her lips parted and words tangled before producing one, "Truman." She stood with her feet stuck to the floor and felt her world spin when Truman stepped up to her. If not for the long fingered hand that grabbed the front of her jacket, she would have fallen to the floor. She was nothing like the frumpy person she saw everyday, her low cut

black leather pants and black tank top left nothing for her imagination. "You're...you can't be...Truman."

"And why can't I be, not everything is as you see it MacKenna." She pressed into Mac and then pulled her onto the dance floor. "Some things are better kept a secret to protect the innocent or to protect the guilty." The way she moved against Mac had the other dancers wishing it were them that she had picked. In all the years she had been coming to the bar, she never danced with anyone until now. A few of the disappointed dancers went up to the bar to complain to each other and or the bartender.

"Figures the hottest woman in the place goes for a dorky looking woman in clothes from the Salvation Army store." One man said and took the bottle of water from the bartender. "I didn't know she preferred women, I always thought she was just..."

"What not into you, no ones into you." He said and looked into the small TV that showed the dance floor. "And from what I'm seeing in front of me, Truman and the dork as you called her know each other."

"How would you know that?"

"They're over at the other end of the dance floor talking, Truman never talks to anyone so this is a first and that means she knows her."

"This is weird Truman; I'm usually the one who leads in everything."

"Did you follow me here," She pressed her up against the wall and leaned in close to her ear. "Is this the kind of game you play with women, you follow them and make it seem like a chance meeting?"

"What...no I came here to check the place out for Sally, I'm not a stalker. I see you everyday all day. We live together, why would I follow you...I didn't know you even left the building." She groaned and felt the wall biting into her back with the pressure Truman was putting on her. "That kinda hurts and why are you all bent outta shape over this?"

"Because this is the only place I can come and not be me."

"You can do that around me, you know not be you..." Mac was beyond confused over what she had just said and rolled it over in her head again. "If you're not you right now then who are you and do I know you? My head hurts from trying to figure this all out, can I go home now?"

"You really are here just to check the place out aren't you?" She leaned in closer and pulled Mac against her body. "What just stabbed me in my stomach?"

"I'd say I was happy to see you but that wouldn't work and my nipples have never gotten that

hard before that they've stabbed anyone." She watched Truman's eyes go to silver and gulped. "It's my guns; I didn't know what kinda place this was. I have to say this and then you can kick my ass or break my nose...you are a hotty." She slumped against the wall when Truman released her and stood up to her full six-foot height.

"And your shallowness is showing through, I was nothing at home but here, dressed like this, I'm hot to you."

Mac shook her head; she knew she was in deep shit. "No, I mean yes I am and you are but there's more to you than most and I should just shoot myself and get it over with." She stepped up to Truman and tilted her head back to look into her eyes. "I guess you would kill me if I asked if I could kiss you...just once..."

Truman busted out laughing, took Truman's hand and pulled her through the crowd to the front door. "Sometimes you say things that just floor me, this is totally different." She wrapped an arm around her as they went out the door. "One minute I could strangle you and the next I could kiss you."

"I'll take the later if ya don't mind, the strangling doesn't sound fun at all." She stopped them in the middle of the sidewalk and then turned them around. "I'm parked down that way, how did you get here?"

"I took a cab and I should have grabbed my coat before I left its cold as Hell out here."

"I'd offer you mine but it wouldn't fit, the only other thing is to run to my car." She hadn't finished her sentence before Truman took off at a sprint, she went after her but there was no way she could catch up unless her legs grew a few feet in length. "That's cheating!" She finally caught up and saw that Truman wasn't even breathing heavy. "You suck," she panted and tried to get her keys from her pocket. "Your legs...are longer and you're in better...shape." She fell against the fender and tried to catch her breath. "Keys...pocket..."

"Give up the cigars and the women and exercise." She pulled the keys from Mac's pocket, opened the door and pushed her in. "I'll drive or you'll pass out and wrap us around a telephone pole."

"Women are my exercise...wanna date me, get me in shape?"

"Now why would I wanna date a sea monkey, I run for exercise and besides, you wouldn't survive a date with me." She ran her tongue across her top lip and watched Mac sink further into the seat and gulp deeply. "A few minutes on the dance floor and you were dying."

"That's from shock; it's been years since a woman rubbed against me like that in public."

"Then maybe you should listen to different music and learn how to dance something other than the jitter bug?"

"You gonna teach me, rub up against me, make me all hot and bothered again?"

Truman rolled her eyes and turned down the street to their building. "Dream on sea monkey, that was a one time thing."

Mac turned off the tape recorder and growled with disappointment, the only thing she had learned from hours of tape was that Simson was a crude asshole who could compete in the Guinness Book for the longest belch. For that alone she would gladly shoot the bastard and hang his corpse from a flagpole, she couldn't understand men and their fascination with bodily functions. Tossing the tape in the trash, she got up and stood in the doorway where she could watch Truman. "So do ya love me yet?"

"No, stop staring at me and go comb your eyebrows or something." She looked out of the corner of her eye. "How in the Hell do you get those horns on top of your head?"

"Don't know, I wash my hair, it dries and they're there." She shrugged her shoulders and ran a hand through her hair. "Kinda sexy don't cha think?"

"Ohh yeah just like all the hair on top of your feet," She turned to face her and leaned back in her chair. "So what did you learn from the tape?"

"Not a damn thing, so ya think it was the wife's lover that smacked me around with the help of maybe a friend or Simson himself?"

"You did piss him off and then the same woman that was with the other two that night being the one who lured you to that house, what else could it be? Then again I can see all your old girlfriends getting together and hiring a thug or two."

"I didn't think I was that bad when it came to dates, I always paid and I opened their doors, where did I go wrong?"

"Ohh I don't know, could be treating them like they're bimbos?" She threw a wadded up piece of paper at her. "Read it, it was a message from one of your previous dates and let me tell ya she is not a happy camper."

Mac straightened out the note, read a few lines and cleared her throat. "Uuhhmm...this sounds painful, a hot poker shoved up my ass?" She wiggled her brows at Truman. "Guess she didn't like my idea of a romantic night, I thought most women liked to be wined, dined and relax by a fire afterward."

"Sounds fine to me, maybe she's a freak?"

Mac blushed and shrugged her shoulders. "Well it wasn't a fire in a fire place, it was her apartment building."

"You didn't set her apartment on fire did you?"

"Ohh no, it was a three alarm by the time we got there, so we sat and watched it burn to the ground. It was relaxing for me; I didn't have to think of an excuse to not stay the night, she's a dead fish in the sac."

Truman threw a pen at her. "You are so much like a man, the only thing that matters is what a women looks like and how good in the sac she is."

"Well that's not all there is, there's the...is there anything else...," She ticked off things mentally on her fingers and then looked to Truman with a wide grin. "Cooking, can she cook?"

"Or beat you senseless in two seconds or less and still be able to get a decent date at the last moment. Now get out of here and do some damn work or we'll be sitting in the dark!"

Mac grasped her chest and stumbled back into her office. "You sound like Doris!"

Truman and Mac sat in her Subaru outside of where Simson's thug lived, if they had the ingredients for a Molotov cocktail, they would have bombed the place already. Piled up around the front door was trash, old furniture littered the yard and the windows were so dirty that they looked as if they were painted brown. The place should be condemned and bulldozed into oblivion but that would take a miracle for the city government to do anything about it. "So what are we doing here and why did I have to come along?"

"I want this creep taken down and I want answers," She looked to Truman and winked. "You're bigger than me so you knock him down, I'll kick him a few times and then we'll ask him some questions."

"Are you going to like twist his nuts until he talks or what, I know if you kicked me I wouldn't say anything? Then again with those tiny little feet what harm could you do?"

"Ohh so you're gonna smack me around with the little person stuff, at least I don't have to duck when I go through doors, Gandalf the giant."

"That's about it Sméagol," She pointed to the dump. "There he is what do you want me to do, a flying tackle or just sucker punch him?"

"Or you could use your female wiles on me and we could forget all about him?" She moved closer to her and licked her upper lip with the tip of her tongue. "You know I like tall women, especially ones who can move like you do."

"Yeah well tough, I'm using all my moves on short and dumpy there." She got out of the car, walked up to the guy, hit him once in the face and watched him hit the ground. "All yours sea

monkey," She crossed her arms over her chest and waited for Mac. "Well come on what are ya waiting for?"

"My adoration to calm down, damn your sexy and so Amazonian!" She got out of her car and walked right up to stand in front of her. "Can I feel your muscles?" She wiggled her fingers at her and jumped when Truman raised her knee to groin her. "Hey that's not nice!"

"I never said I was nice," She reached down, grabbed the guy by the front of his jacket and picked him up. "Where do you want him?"

"Under the front wheels of my car," She shrugged her shoulders when Truman didn't move. "Ohh OK I'll settle for a less than public place, like over in that ally." She walked towards it and looked over her shoulder at Truman. "Damn but you're strong, the Hell with bimbos, I'm gonna chase you." She said to herself and waited for Truman to catch up. "So when we're done here would you be willing to spank me?"

Truman slammed the guy up against the brick wall of a building, scratched her jaw and looked down into twinkling green eyes. "Uhhmm...no, one of us would enjoy it too much." She lifted her unconscious toy up over her head and slammed him against the wall again. "And I'm not talking about you either."

"Ohh and Doris told me she was a wild woman compared to you; does she know how wrong she is?"

"Nope and I like it that way, remember what I said about secrets best kept? Now can we get on with this, my arms getting tired?"

Mac looked at the man and wondered how long they would have to wait for him to wake up. "Ohh Hell Truman, he's out cold and you smashing him into the wall ain't helping any," She pulled cuffs from her pocket and dangled them in front of Truman. "I think lock-up would be the perfect place to question him, Terry will get a kick out of what you did."

"Funny how that creep had an arrest warrant on him that will keep him off the streets for the next 20 years or so?" Truman said and groaned when Mac flopped over the back of the couch and tried to put her head in her lap. "Too bad the same couldn't be said for you, I bet you could get a date in jail."

"Tried that once, those women are too butch for me, they've got tattoos in places that give me chills." She tried again to lie in Truman's lap and found the floor a second later. "Ohh come on Truman, we've slept together and everything and you won't let me get comfy in your lap?"

"If I remember correctly, you're the one who keeps crawling into my bed or falling on me when I'm on your couch, so no, I'm not letting you get in my lap under any condition."

"What you don't trust me or something, I won't hurt you or anything?"

"No I don't trust you and it's what you'll try that'll get you hurt."

"You're just a great big tease, give me those sexy looks and then dump ice down my drawers, your loss there." She climbed up to sit on the couch but kept giving Truman sideways glances. "So I guess necking is out then, what a pity, I'm pretty good at it."

Truman rolled her eyes and then turned on the couch to look at a grinning Mac. "OK now that we know that the scum bag is one of the men that beat you up and won't give up the other name until he knows that Mrs. Simson is safe and out of her husbands clutches, what are we going to do?"

"Make sure that she's put in a safe house and then have her call scum bag and let him know that she's safe. In the meantime, we can find the floozy; find out where she fits into all of this, and why she set me up. I tried to tell Mrs. Simson about her husband but noooo, they gotta beat me up and make me ugly." She rubbed her stomach and looked towards the kitchen. "We got any food, I'm starving?"

Truman rolled over in bed, yanked on her blanket and shivered when cold air hit her feet. It hadn't been that bad when she went to bed but the temperature had dropped while she slept. Taking her blanket with her when she got up, she wandered into the living room to the thermostat and turned it up higher. When nothing happened, she turned it all the way up and waited a few seconds. "What the fuck?" She wandered across the hall and into Mac's apartment, the first thing she noticed was how cold it was. Going into her bedroom, she flipped the light on and saw a lump shivering in the center of her bed. "Mac get up and fix the furnace." She pulled the blankets from her and stood beside her bed. "Come on sea monkey I'm freezing my ass off!" She sat down on the side of the bed and pushed on her shoulder. "Ohh come on Mac, I can't sleep if I'm cold."

"It's broke... gimme my blanky." She reached around, grabbed Truman's blanket, and pulled on it.

"What do you mean it's broke... fix it I'm cold!" She wrapped Mac's blanket around her and saw the cord hanging from one corner. "This is an electric blanket, that's not plugged in!" She got up and went towards her own bedroom with Mac's blanket.

"Hey that's mine, come back with my blanky!" She stumbled from her bed, ran after Truman and jumped on her back when she caught up. "That's mine you can't have it!" She tried to take her blanket back and felt her world tipping sideways.

"Will you stop already, I'm cold, it's the middle of the night, and you didn't have it plugged in and get off my back." She dropped her head and flipped Mac off her back and to the bed. "Now be useful and plug this in and no wonder your cold, you're in your underwear." She took in Mac's

baggy boxers and the thin white tank top that showed off her firm breasts, dropping both blankets onto her bed, she peeled her look away from Mac. "Plug it in sea monkey and don't get any dirty ideas in your head." She felt her insides turn to jelly when Mac crawled across the bed and then fell to her stomach to plug the blanket in. Trying to block out her own sexual thoughts about Mac, she spread the blankets out on top of the bed and Mac and then slipped under them. "We're only doing this because there's no heat, no other reason other than that, ya got me MacKenna?"

"Not yet but I will." She grinned and rolled over to take Truman's pillow. "This is mine so that means I get the choice whether I share or...OK." She handed it back to Truman after seeing silvery eyes in the dim light. "I'll share." After Mac flopped around on the bed and came close to being tossed on the floor, they settled down for the remaining hours before morning came. Truman gritted her teeth and worked her jaw when Mac rolled over to face her and buried her face against her chest. With one arm wrapped over her side, she slipped one thigh in-between Truman's and fell asleep. "Ohh sure Mac I like to cuddle and feel smothered." She mumbled to herself and then fell asleep.

Truman moved closer to the heat and sighed when it enveloped her entire body, on and off; she had waked slightly from cold air touching her. Now that the warmth was making strange thumping noises and gurgling occasionally. She opened her eyes and looked right into one of Mac's breasts, groaning, she tried to roll away and found arms tightening around her. "Don't move, still early." Mac wrapped her limbs around her and pulled her head back to her chest. "Breathe harder."

"What?" Truman dropped her head, backed out of Mac's arms and found her arms tangled in her sweatshirt. "Sick little sea monkey," She struggled and got her arms free and then realized that she was topless and two green eyes were staring at her bare chest. What she saw in her eyes was not what she expected, there was a hunger but not like, she had seen so many times in others. "It's cold in here I'm getting dressed." She turned to her dresser and took out enough layers to keep warm until they could figure out what was wrong with the furnace.

"You're beautiful Truman, no matter what you think or have been told before, I think you're beautiful." Mac said in a soft voice from behind her and placed a kiss between Truman's shoulder blades before going back to her own apartment. She placed her fingers over her lips to savor the tingling that came from Truman's soft skin. "I'd die a thousands deaths for one sweet kiss from your lips." She sighed and skipped into her bedroom to get dressed.

Truman stood with her clothes clutched to her chest and staring out her apartment door into Mac's, she was still in shock and couldn't get her feet to move for anything. "It must be the cold that has her brain malfunctioning, I'm not beautiful and she only wants in my pants." She closed her dresser drawers and went towards the bathroom; the second her feet hit the tile floor, she shivered from cold. "I hope we can get that damn thing fixed today," She had forgotten that it

was the weekend and it would cost a small fortune to get a repairman out to look at it. "I should have taken mechanical classes or something in school." A few minutes later and dressed in more layers than usual, she went over to Mac's apartment and started coffee. She wasn't surprised when she came into the kitchen wearing her sweatshirt or a pair of her sweatpants. "I wondered what happened to those, ever think of buying your own."

"Nope, yours are already broken in and everything, I called Bert, he's coming over to look at the furnace."

"You're gonna trust my grandpa to fix the furnace are you that insane?"

"Hey he's good at it, he's been fixing it for years and he's cheap." She scrounged in her pantry and came out with a 12-year-old bottle of Laphroaig Scotch. "A bottle of booze and we'll have heat until spring."

Truman looked at the bottle and knew that it wasn't a cheap Scotch like her grandpa sipped on cold nights. "Are you sure you want to part with that?"

"Why not," she wiped it off and placed it on the kitchen table. "I'd give him a whole case if it got the furnace working, besides; I have like two or three cases down stairs in a closet. One of the perks of working cases for bar owners and I know Doris would kill me if I gave him more than one."

"How much is a case of that stuff and do we work for any car dealers?"

"Ohh I think it's about \$850.00 a case and I do know some car dealers, what kind of car do ya want?"

"That much for Scotch, good thing I don't drink Scotch and a car with four tires and an engine that runs is all I need. But it'll have to wait until I have some money saved before I start thinking about getting another car."

"Well you can use mine when ever you want," She took a cup of coffee from Truman and then went to the refrigerator. "Can we have scrambled eggs with cheese in 'em?"

Truman dropped her head and nodded, Mac could have anything she wanted when she gave her an impish grin. "Get the stuff out and I'll even make fried potatoes with onions, you know we have to go grocery shopping today?"

"After the furnace is fixed and my cartoons are done." She took her coffee and went down the steps and into the room where the furnace was.

"How is it that I always cook our meals and she gets to run off and play somewhere until the foods done?" She asked herself and started to get their breakfast made.

Doris set the Kerosene heater down in the center of Mac's apartment and waited for Truman to get some matches. She had brought it along them knowing that Mac would sit and freeze to death because she didn't remember about the heater. "So how cold did it get in here last night?"

"Cold enough that I woke up and you know if that happened then it was like Antarctica in here. And then I go in to wake up Mac, she's huddled in the middle of her bed freezing her ass off and she has an electric blanket." She lit the heater and stepped back while it sputtered to life. "She didn't have the damn thing plugged in, so I stole it."

"You left Mac to freeze her ass off?" Doris laughed and took a seat next to the heater. "Damn sea monkey has known for years that the furnace needs replaced, she's too damn lazy to call and have a new one put in."

"Well I didn't exactly leave her to freeze, she followed me and," She felt her face getting hot and knew it wasn't from the heater. "You want some coffee; I just made a fresh pot?" She hurried into the kitchen and felt her grandma right behind her.

"You're falling for the little sea monkey, you know she's really not that bad once she calms down."

"She has her moments; did you know that she combs her eyebrows and just wait until you see how she's dressed." She got coffee cups down and brought out cream and sugar. "And those horns on top of her head, I get this urge to smooth them down."

Doris leaned back in her chair and gave her granddaughter a knowing look; falling was past tense, she was gone. "So what else do you know about Mac and her habits?"

"She has hobbit feet and she spreads her toes continuously while she sleeps and then she..." She shut her mouth and dropped down into a chair across from her grandma. "I know more than I should in such a short time huh?"

"You know more than most people I'll put it that way, what surprises me is that she feels comfortable enough with you to act, like an idiot. And you're the same way, I know for a fact that you haven't been wearing layers of clothes and I know you have a pair of tight black leather pants." She grinned and clicked her false teeth when Truman choked on her coffee. "Did you really think that Sally sent Mac to that bar on a chance?"

"You people have been playing PI with my life haven't you?" She would have been pissed if this had happened at any other time in her life but because of it, Mac saw that she wasn't as straight laced as she wanted to appear. "You know she almost fell over when she saw me at the bar, she stood there and stuttered and then I gave her the third degree; I thought she was following me." She jumped from her chair when she heard a loud bang and then other smaller bangs come from the stairs; she let out the breath she had been holding when she heard Bert laugh and Mac cuss at him. She looked to her grandma and then went to the doorway to see what had happened.

"She's worse than a mother with a toddler, nervous, over protective and so damn anal." She looked to where she had set up the coffee cups in perfect alignment with their spoons beside them. "Mac's piggish ways must have her on the roof top within hours." She reached across the table and moved the spoons from where they were just to mess with her granddaughter.

Mac picked up all the tools she had dropped and put them in Bert's toolbox, she leaned over and took one-step, fell over and lay on her stomach at the bottom of the stairs. "That's it I give up, I'm staying right here and I don't care if I get stepped on!" Truman looked to the bottom of the stairs and then to her snickering grandpa before skipping down the stairs to help Mac.

"Come on sea monkey, I made coffee and grandma D brought donuts." She pulled her to her feet and looked at how dirty her face and hands were. "Did grandpa make you go in the heat ducts or something?"

"Nope, he said stand right there, don't move or you'll get in my way and then all Hell broke loose and I got covered in soot." She bent over, grabbed the toolbox and cursed when the drawers slid out and all the tools fell out again. "I'm gonna take this fucking box and toss it off the roof!" She dropped the toolbox, twisted her horns between her fingers and whined. "I'm cold, dirty and I smashed my toes with the fucking toolbox."

Truman pulled the dishtowel from her pocket and wiped at the dirt covering Mac's face. "So are we going to get a new furnace instead of wondering if we'll be frozen one night?"

Mac grabbed her hand, stopped her from wiping her face off and just stared up into her face, her heart thumped when she took in the high cheekbones slopping down to a strong jaw. The small scar just below her bottom lip and the way her lips turned up at the corners. Without thinking, she wrapped her fingers in the front of Truman's shirt and pulled her closer. She licked her upper lip and stared into ice blue eyes. "Do we have any chocolate syrup for my coffee?" She grinned when Truman blinked and slowly nodded her head. "Good, you can get that fucking toolbox." She quickly kissed her chin and ran up the stairs before Truman could do anything.

"She'll pay for that later, I'll starch her boxers." She ran her fingertips across her chin, grinned and then got the toolbox. "Does that count as a first kiss?" She asked herself and jogged up the stairs.

The next night, they sat on Mac's couch with Truman staring at her. The furnace was spitting out warm air at best and the apartments were plunging past the deep freeze line, even with the kerosene heater, they couldn't heat the entire upstairs. "On Monday I'm calling the furnace company and we're getting a new one." Truman said and put her ice-cold foot on Mac's leg. "One night of heat and then we're freezing our asses off, what did you do last year when this happened, or do I not wanna know?"

"First, can I afford a new furnace or am I gonna have to like search for a missing guinea pig from the guys childhood to be able to pull this off? And I always slept on Doris' couch when the furnace gave out, Terry's place isn't big enough and no one else wanted me...except for one reason and then they kicked me to the curb." She got up from the couch, hiked up her too big sweat pants and wandered out into the hallway. What made Truman shake her head was the zoot chain swinging down around her right knee.

"She's a freak that's all there is to it and I wouldn't want her any other way." When she got up and went to find her, she shook her head again when she found her staring at the one wall and twisting her horns. "What are you doing?"

"There's a fireplace behind this wall," She stepped closer and pointed to a seam at the ceiling. "My dad had it covered over years ago; he had this thing about the building burning because of the fireplace."

"And what good is it gonna do behind that wall?"

"We could tear it down and burn the wood to heat the upstairs tonight, drink some expensive Scotch in front of it and you can rub my feet."

Truman barked out with laughter, shut it off and shoved Mac. "You can rub your own hairy feet while you sit and look at that wall, what do I look like *Bob Villa*?"

"Can ya be Bert Villa, your grandpa built that wall, I'm surprised it's stayed up all these years." She stepped closer to the wall and found the nails sticking out of the wood paneling. "All we gotta do is pull these nails out and its right behind the paneling."

"Ohh yeah I can see it now, I pull the nails out, and the paneling falls and knocks me out. Then you give me CPR by taking off all my clothes and groping my tits."

"Damn you're good; can ya use your ESP and give me the winning lottery numbers for the pick 4?" She grinned and went into her office for the hammer she kept there, she went running back and handed it to Truman. "You're taller and can reach those nails better; I promise if ya get knocked out, I'll only grope you a little." With Truman pulling the nails out and Mac breaking up the wood after it was taken down, they had the wall down and were sitting on the floor drinking chocolate milk from the carton an hour later. "So what would you say to cuddling with me in front of the fire tonight?"

"I'd say have fun with your teddy bear because I've got the electric blanket and the kerosene heater."

Mac fell over on her back and clamped one hand over her heart. "And here I thought you were the romantic type, the brandy by the fire and some necking."

"Ohh I have nothing against romance but I'm all dirty, cold and tired, the only thing I want is a hot shower and my bed." She handed Mac the milk, got up from the floor and went into her

apartment. It hurt her that she had to turn Mac down but the way she was feeling, it would go further than just sharing the fire. Sighing, she went into her bedroom for sweats and then went to her bathroom for her shower.

It took a while and almost a whole pack of matches but Mac got the fire started and only let the hallway fill with smoke before opening the flu. With the screen closed, she went into her apartment, filled the kerosene heater and then went in for a shower. She knew that she was rushing it with Truman and that she had over stepped with the fireplace idea but she would make it up to her in the morning. That was if she wasn't frozen from lack of heat. "Maybe she won't notice if I sneak into bed with her?" She took a hot shower, dressed in sweats she stole from Truman and went out into her living room. Taking the thick blanket from the back of her couch, she wrapped it around herself and fell sideways onto the couch. After wiggling around, she got comfortable and groaned. "You're an idiot; you're comfortable and can't sleep because you left the light on."

"And you're gonna be cold as Hell if you stay here because I'm taking the heater." Truman turned the heater off and stood looking down at Mac. "Are you gonna sleep there or what?"

"Where else am I gonna sleep, the floors too hard in front of the..."

"Come on sea monkey, you got two minutes, after that you can sleep on the floor." She carried the heater across the hall, put it in the center of her apartment floor and relight it.

"How come we're staying over here and not in my apartment?"

"Because I've got the bed warm, I used a frying pan and got the sheets warm and I put more blankets on the bed, that's why."

Mac rubbed her hands together, ran into Truman's bedroom and jumped on the bed. "Since I'm first, I get ta pick my side!" She rolled from side to side and then took the side Truman always slept on. "Screw up your night, take your pillow to." She wiggled under all the blankets and then spread the one she brought out on top, by the time Truman came in she was half-asleep.

"Rotten hairy footed little twit," She dropped Mac's pillow on the bed, slipped her slippers off and crawled under all the blankets. "Steal my side and my pillow."

"Smells like you and it's softer than mine." She rolled over to face Truman, wrapped one arm around her waist and rested her wet head on her chest. A deep growling snore came from her and then whimpers that reminded Truman of a puppy.

"I don't like to cuddle." She turned her head and watched the horns appear on Mac's head. "Damn horns grow right outta your head." She wrapped her arm around her, smoothed down her horns with her other hand and drifted off to sleep.

Truman wandered up and down the stairs keeping an eye on both Mac and the furnace people that were hauling stuff in and out of the downstairs room. What had her blood pressure soaring were the looks the woman that was hauling the old furnace pieces out was giving Mac. Jealousy had never been a creature that she had dealt with before and she wasn't quite sure on how to handle it. Growling deep in her chest, she stood on the stairs and watched the butch flirt with Mac. It was below zero outside but this woman had shed her jacket and outer work shirt to strut around in her tank top. She flexed her muscles every time she walked by Mac and kept giving her lewd gestures. Truman stepped to the last step and stopped right behind an unknowing Mac, she waited for the woman to come back in before wrapping an arm around Mac's chest and pulling her back into her body. What got the woman's attention was the feline like growl, the baring of teeth and icy blue eyes narrowed beneath drawn eyebrows. Mac tilted her head back, looked at Truman and shivered; if the arm wrapped around her didn't yell 'mine' she would run screaming from the building. She turned her attention back to the show off and gave her a cocky grin before taking Truman's hand and spinning out of her personal space.

Whispering in a throaty voice, she said. "My God that is so...hot." She pulled her up the stairs and all the way into her apartment. "Was that feline display to scare off a certain furnace person because you care or because she was wasting time and you want the furnace done yesterday?" She stepped closer until she had Truman backed up against the wall. "Admit it Truman, you think I'm sexy, you want to kiss me and play with my horns." She ran her hands across Truman's stomach and slid them over to caress her hips. "You won't be disappointed."

"But you will, now get your paws off me before I let that Neanderthal down stairs have you." She slapped at her hands and finally just picked her up and moved her out of her way.

"Ohh you like me I can tell, if you didn't you wouldn't have growled at that woman down stairs." She licked her lips and wiggled her brows. "Come on Truman one little kiss and I'll leave ya alone." She opened her shirt, pulled out a red rose and handed it to her with a small bow. "One tiny little kiss and I'll leave you alone for two days."

Truman took the rose and brought it up to her nose. "You think I can be bought with just a rose?"

"It's a start right, I mean how many times have you gotten roses or a single red rose?" She wiggled her fingers at her. "Come on Truman, how many times...OK so," She backed up as far as she could before she was pinned up against the kitchen bar. "Maybe I'll get you some more roses, some chocolate candy or a what ever you want before I try this again." She wasn't prepared when Truman picked her up, put her on the bar and captured her lips in a kiss that had her falling backwards. She tried to raise her arms and wrap them around Truman's back but when her tongue slipped between her lips, she forgot everything but what was happening. Never before had anyone kissed her the way Truman was, her heart was pounding out of her chest, her ears were ringing and she was about to pass out from lack of air. Then, she was all alone and still lying on the kitchen bar.

"Ms. Jones we need to cut the power off...are you OK, you look a little flushed?" The furnace man asked and stepped further into her apartment. "Should I call someone, get you some water?"

She blinked, pressed her fingers to her tingling lips and grinned like an idiot. "Nope I'm good, just taking a little nap is all. Go ahead and turn the power off, just give me a minute to warn Truman." She gracefully got off the bar by falling off the edge and landing on the kitchen floor, she got up, limped across the hall, and then heard Truman yell her name. She limped into her office and felt her lips stretch into a wide grin. "I lied I'm not gonna leave you alone and they're turning the power off." She tried to strut over to her desk but stopped when Truman busted out laughing and fell from her chair. "What, I'm trying to be cool here and I can't because I got this damn chain tangled around me." She limped over to the chair in front of Truman's desk, tripped, fell into it, and then untangled herself from the chain. "You know this is all your fault and how long have you been in here?" She bent over and looked under the desk to see Truman laying there with her eyes closed. "Ohh what a perfect opportunity," She crawled under the desk and on top of Truman. "What happened to me in the kitchen, I don't remember anything?" She pried one of Truman's eyes open and leaned in closer. "Can we do that again?"

Truman opened both eyes and shoved Mac off onto the floor. "Don't try and pull that, you know damn well what went on in the kitchen." When she was trying to get up, her foot went into Mac's zoot chain, she fell forward and landed with her face in Mac's crotch.

"What no foreplay?" Mac groaned and lifted her hips in the air. "I can handle that even though it's not even our second date."

Truman rolled off her, untangled her ankle and slapped Mac in her stomach. "And there won't be a first date either, now get up before I lose control and beat the shit outta you." She straightened her layers of clothes and ran her fingers through her hair. "I should have never kissed you...I must have unleashed the little Chihuahua in you or something." She fell backwards when her chair hit her behind the knees; she tilted her head back and looked at Mac. "That was cruel and heart stopping."

"I'm gonna pester you forever, and I'll give you heart stopping." She pulled Truman's head back and teased her lips with her own. Slowly she moved their lips against each other and then licked at Truman's bottom lip, when she parted her lips a little, Mac slipped her tongue in and kissed her passionately.

"Ohh sure, I haul my ass over here for a late dance practice, I stand down in the room for ten minutes and you're up here sucking face with some woman." Mac's dance partner Trudy said and then cleared her throat. "Hellooo MAC YOU PIG!"

Mac lifted her head up but kept her eyes closed, what started out as her kissing Truman turned into a battle of wills. She could still hear the whistles in her ears and feel the burning of her lungs from their kiss. "Damn but you could kill me; I've never heard bells and whistles before." She dropped her head down to rest forehead on her shoulder and opened one eye when she heard a throat clearing and a tapping foot. "Uuhhhh, we're caught." She left her head where it was and enjoyed the scent of Truman's hair and what was just her. "And if I don't move, you're gonna

kick my ass and do other mean and nasty things huh?" She jumped when Truman growled. "Will you use the ruler on me later?"

"Get off me, I don't do cuddling."

"Yes you do, you can't get close enough ta me at night."

"Hellooo, remember me the one who caught you and is gonna blab to every cop I see? And what's this about cuddling; no one ever sticks around long enough to cuddle with Mac."

"That's apparent, she latches on and won't let go." Truman got out of her chair and slapped at Mac's groping hands. "Knock it off or I'll call that Neanderthal up here, damn rotten little sea monkey, go down stairs and dance until you fall over."

Mac wiggled an eyebrow at her and then walked over to Trudy. "I'll be up in a while and we can neck some more and maybe do some petting." She lurched from the room by Trudy yanking on her zoot chain.

"In your dreams and my worst nightmares, I'd rather kiss...any one but you!" She yelled and then dropped her head into her hands, she was trying to even out her breathing and calm her dancing nerves. "Damn you Truman what in the Hell are you doing?" She leaned back in her chair and ran a hand across her face. "Can you handle the little PI when it comes to more than just a kiss...that just about blew you fucking head off?" She spun back and forth in her chair with the stupidest grin on her face. "What could happen, she gets me off and I fall into a coma for the rest of my life?"

Truman had been out wandering around trying to get the feel for the case Mac was working on, she had been over at the ballroom and over to her grandma's to ask questions about Simson and his wife and any one else that he was close to. Her last stop was at the police station; she walked into the detective's area and saw Terry coming from one of the back offices. She checked her clothes and felt half-naked without her layer upon layer look. She looked up from checking to make sure that her shoes were on the right feet to see every male detective in the room ogling her. She looked back down to check her fly and then felt her face heating up from unease. She would have turned tail and ran if not for Terry's hand grabbing her elbow. "Ignore the assholes, the only woman they ever see is me and you got me beat 100 to one." She led her to her desk and gave each one of her men an evil glare. "Ya'll got work to do or what, damn men are useless as Hell when a gorgeous woman walks by." She dropped down in her chair and gave Truman a cocky grin. "So what brings you to my part of town?"

"I need some help with the Simson case."

"Where's Mac the fastest lips in West by God?"

Truman felt her face heating up again and looked to a point over Terry's right shoulder. "She's at

the office interviewing a possible case," She crossed her ankles and leaned back in her chair. "I think this is a missing spouse case, and why are you giving me a feline grin?"

"Ohh because I heard all about you and Mac, so does she hog the bed and is she as good a kisser and lay as I've heard?"

"Ohh Jesus Christ, Trudy ran her mouth like she said she was and I'm taking the fifth on everything me and Mac have done...fuck me I have a big mouth." She covered her face with one hand and waved a finger at Terry. "We haven't done anything sexual so just stop thinking that way," She dropped her hand and saw that Terry was still grinning. "Ohh come on what now?"

"Ohh nothing besides that I've never known my old partner to pursue any woman, you're her first. Trudy told me she tried to set her up on a date and she turned her down flat, that's not Mac. She usually jumps at the chance for meaningless sex with any woman that catches her eye."

"So all she wants with me is sex, how unlike her."

"Ohhh no that's not it at all where you're concerned."

"So I'm a trophy, she can't have me so she'll do anything to win me?" She was getting madder by the second.

"Nope you're wrong again," She leaned across her desk and held pale blue eyes. "Just mentioning your name makes her swoon; she grins like a love sick pup and has to wipe her sweaty palms off. She's in love with you and there's nothing you can do about it."

"More like lust than anything, in my frumpy clothes I'm nothing, dressed like this I'm her fantasy."

"How blind can one woman be, how often are you dressed like you are right now and how does she treat you when you look your absolute worst?"

Truman had to think all of one second for the answer to her question, it didn't matter what she looked like with Mac. Even after waking up, with her face still puffy and her hair everywhere, Mac clung to her. She nodded her head and look sheepishly to Terry. "You're right but I still think it's because I'm like forbidden fruit to her..." She sighed and shook her head, no matter how she tried to think of Mac as the selfish sex crazed fiend it didn't work where she was concerned. Since their kiss in the office, Mac had been the perfect gentleman where she was concerned. She even had fresh flowers sent to her for her desk and brought her lunch from one of the better restaurants in town. After that, she had gone on her own quest for information while Mac interviewed the walk-in. "It's just hard for me to accept all the attention she gives me; it's strange and never happened before."

"I had a hard time accepting the change in Mac, I've always known her to be a womanizing little dog. But my spies out there tell me that she's been off the trail since she met you, even my Syd says that Mac is a lost cause." She grinned wider and wiggled her brows at Truman. "Now that

woman has an unstoppable libido, I'm talking nonstop for hours every night!" She fell back in her chair and closed her eyes.

"Hours...you two do it for hours?" She shook her head and took a deep breath. "I came here to get pointers on PI work, not sex or be reminded that I haven't had any in years." She knew she had said too much when Terry's eyes popped open and her mouth along with them. "Can you shoot me before I give up anymore damning personal information?"

"Nah then I'd have a shit load of cops to pay off, your body to hide and a lot of explaining to Mac what happened to you. Now how can I help you with this case and what exactly is it that you need?"

"I need to know if any of the involved have warrants on them or past records, I tried pulling it up but I was locked out on Mrs. Simson for some reason."

Terry nodded and turned to her own PC; she typed for a few minutes and then looked to Truman. "She's under witness protection, that's why you couldn't pull anything up on her and why you were locked out. I'm surprised that this hasn't come up before, I mean with as many times as Mac has worked for the creep ya would have thought that she would know."

"Mac doesn't even know what a filing cabinet is used for and you want her to touch a PC and find out that she was locked out of a file? I do all her background checks now because she was so far behind that some of the companies had forgotten about them, I'm surprised that she's lasted as a PI at all."

"She lost interest after all these years, when she first started the PI thing, she was busy as Hell. Now it has gotten old and she's tired, not to mention people around here don't need PI's as much. I've tried to get her to retire and just do background checks or security consulting for extra money."

"So she just does this because she's bored and hasn't anything else to do?"

"Nope, she didn't want Doris to be without a job." She shrugged her shoulders and looked down at her desk. "She may seem like she doesn't care about anyone or thing but she's good at hiding it, maybe you can change her mind?"

"My grandma has been working because she didn't want Mac to be alone, ain't this screwed up?" She shook her head. "Those two dumbbells would keep on working until they were both in wheelchairs because of the other."

"Wouldn't that be something to see?" Terry took the print out from one of her officers and handed it across to Truman. "That's what I found out on Simson and his groupies, if you need anything else let me know and I'll help you."

Truman looked at the paper and smiled, it was more than she had hoped for. "Interesting, two of the four are in the witness protection. That leaves the boy toy and Simson, what are the chances

that Mrs. and the slut are related some how?"

Terry felt her heart stop; the expression that came over Truman's features scared the Hell out of her. "Has anyone ever told you how scary you are?"

"No one that counts and Mac thinks it's sexy as hell." She got up, waved to Terry and walked from the room with every eye in the place following her.

"How come I get to be your muscle and I don't get paid?" Syd asked right before she kicked a door down. "Fucking sucks Mac, I want paid and in way of a huge ass steak dinner." She pulled her .9mm and dropped down beside the wall while Mac pulled both her pistols and crept passed her to peek around the corner and into the dark garage.

"OK sounds like something I can afford," She grinned and crept closer to the dark garage where they knew to be a door in the floor that led to a secret passage. "Truman will cook for ya." Without being blown up, they had to do was make it through the passage; it reminded Mac of a video game so often played. "If my client is wrong about this I'm turning Truman loose on her if I survive."

"You've said her name more times than I can count and I'm ready to strangle you because of it." She crawled across the floor and kept an eye on the door leading out to the backyard. "You act like you're in love with her or something."

"Ohh great we're talking about stuff like this and it may very well be the last thing we talk about, so let's talk about... hot sex!"

"Ohh that's gonna be a one sided conversation, I get some and you don't. What else ya wanna talk about besides Trumantrumantruman?"

"How about that I can't lift this door up because your fat ass is on it?"

"And that's a problem how?" She grinned and moved off the door, a second later, they were in the dim passage and looking for the trip wires that were supposed to be there. "This sucks Mac," she whispered. "How many wires are there?"

"Six and then just the lock I have to pick to get the girl out."

"Why is this kid down here," She sniped a wire and tossed it to Mac to coil up. "What's so great about her that they would go through this much trouble to kidnap and keep her down here?" She cut another wire and moved forward.

"She's the daughter of a public official and the client is the kidnapper's girlfriend, she's keeping him busy until we get out of here."

"How come we're down here and not the cops or the FBI?"

"Because I'm greedy and wanted all the glory for myself," She coiled the last wire and looked to the steel door with a heavy padlock on it. "He would have one of those new fangled heavy duty a mortar round won't break me lock on the damn door."

"Please tell me that you're not gonna use those old bent lock picks that belonged to a guy that broke out of some prison in 02 BC?"

"I got new ones; these are from a guy who broke out of prison in 03 BC." She pulled her lock picks out and then sighed when Syd handed her a new set of lock jiggers. "This takes all the fun out of it." She quickly opened the lock and then Syd pulled the door back to reveal a young woman in her early twenties handcuffed to a chain. "Ready to get out of this rat hole?" Once out of the garage, the three of them ran to where Syd had hidden her truck. Before Syd and Mac could get in, bullets ricocheted off the building and around them. "Fuck this shit!" Mac pulled both pistols and fired at the three men running towards them, when she was empty; she jumped in and yelled when the door hit her in her legs. "Did you make the back-up call?" She grunted and pulled herself up onto the seat.

"Yep the boys in blue should be there in a few seconds," She pulled the distributor cap from their car off the dashboard and tossed it out the window. "They can't go anywhere and with all that shooting the neighbors had to call 911." As they rounded a corner, three police cars blew past them. "As usual they're late." She grinned and looked over to the dirty frightened woman next to her. "Are ya hungry, Mac's treating?"

Truman looked up from her PC and gave Mac a glare that told her exactly what she felt at that moment. Terry had called her and told her what Mac and Sydney had done and to tell her lover that she was in deep shit. "You had better lock yourself in your apartment for the next 20 or 30 years and you!" She pointed to Sydney. "Are in even deeper shit than the sea monkey!" She got up from her desk and saw the dirty under-nourished woman with them. "Ohh for fuck sakes Mac," She grabbed her by her pistol harness and pulled her up close to her body. "What is wrong with you, she should be at the hospital."

"She didn't want to go and besides I promised them food and said you'd cook it." She ran her hands up Truman's stomach to stop right over her breasts. "You'll do that for us won't you?" She ran her thumbs across her hardening nipples and watched her eyes go to silver.

"Then I'm going to kill your rotten little ass, I can't believe you got in a gun fight." She held back the moan that was fighting to come forth and moved away from Mac's wandering hands. "Why didn't you leave me a note saying where you were going?"

"I wasn't sure that we were gonna be doing anything," She limped behind Truman and slapped at a snickering Sydney. "It was all Syd's idea to get in that gunfight; if she hadn't parked ten miles away we wouldn't have had that problem."

"Ohh sure blame it all on me," She waited for the young woman to go before her and then asked her name. "Who are you anyway?"

"Lynne Holmes and thanks for getting me out of that place, my dad will pay you guys the ransom money."

Syd looked from Lynne to Mac and pointed a finger at her. "You didn't say anything about a ransom!"

"Ohh because I didn't know anything about a ransom that's why," She grabbed Truman's ass on her way to her bedroom and yelped when she was kicked in her ass. "Ohh that makes me even hotter for ya Truman!"

"She's gonna pay later that's for damn sure." Truman mumbled to herself and took a deep breath to calm her raging hormones.

Mac leaned back in her office chair and looked at the check in her hand, never in her life had she seen that many zeros on a check with her name on it. She brought it to her lips and gave it a big kiss, when it was pulled from her fingers she whimpered. "Do you want me to burn a copy and have it framed?" Truman asked as she stuffed it in a zippered moneybag with the rest of the checks that had come in that week. "I'm going to the bank to make the deposits and then to the grocery store for food, is there anything you want or need?"

Mac licked her lips and gave her the predatory look that she used on so many women. "Yeah you ta sit on my face." She would have wiggled her eyebrows but didn't have the chance when she found herself falling backwards and landing so that she could look up at the ceiling. "Hey I was kidding... Truman... I'm sorry!" She yelled after her and struggled to get off the floor. "Damn it," She fell to her stomach and slapped the floor. "I fucked up again." She crawled across the floor and out to Truman's desk, getting into her chair, she picked up the phone and hit speed dial. "Hey it's me again; I need two dozen long stem roses, one red and the other what ever color says I'm sorry." She thought for a minute and asked for something else. "Do ya have anything with a stuffed animal; you know a bear or something?" She listened to her options and ordered one of each kind. "How long before it's all delivered?" She hung up with a long sigh and then went into her apartment. "You have a lot of ass kissing to do MacKenna."

"I can't believe she said that, the little pig!" Truman ranted to thin air. "She's worse than any man I know and I could just pommel her when she opens her mouth and that shit comes out!" She slammed a hand on the steering wheel and yelled at the car in front of her. "Move it asshole I'm pissed and in the mood to kill innocent bystanders!" She pulled into the banks parking lot and then tromped in mumbling under her breath. "Rip her tongue out...no it's useful for other things...don't go there Truman." She stepped up to one of the tellers and pulled all the checks

from the bag. She couldn't help but grin when she came to the check for two hundred and fifty thousand dollars. "Mac won the lottery." She took the receipt and the two hundred dollars in cash that would go for their food and left the bank feeling calmer than before. An hour later and with the car full of groceries, she pulled into the garage and got out. She went over to the intercom that Mac had put in and buzzed her apartment. "Get your ass down here and help me!"

Mac ran around Truman's apartment getting last minute details done before she ran down the stairs to the garage. Huffing and puffing, she jogged over to her car and dropped her eyes when Truman turned to look at her. "I'm sorry for before, that was uncalled for and I'm sorry." She moved past her and took four of the bags from the back before heading back to the stairs. "Whose apartment do these go to?"

"Yours that's where we eat isn't it?" She grabbed her own share of bags and followed. "She's up to something and it can't be good."

Mac put the bags on the kitchen table and ran for the stairs and past Truman who was almost to the top. She jumped down the last three steps and pushed through the door to the garage. After grabbing four more bags, she ran to the door and stopped to get her breath. "I may not last for supper; I think I'm having a heart attack." She took deep breathes and looked up when she heard footsteps coming down the stairs.

"What are you doing?" Truman asked and then saw how flushed she was and the sweat pouring down her face. "Mac put the bags down," She ran down the steps, took the bags from her hand, and made her sit down. "Breathe Mac, take deep breathes." She caught her when she grabbed her chest and fell over. "Don't do this to me Mac!" She picked her up and carried her over to the car. After getting her inside, she ran around and got behind the wheel. "Hold on Mac, were going to the hospital."

"I'm OK...happens some times." She panted, fell over on the seat and grabbed at her chest. "It hurts..." She grabbed onto Truman's leg to keep from falling off the seat when she tore out of the garage at breakneck speed. "Don't kill us on the way."

Truman paced the floor in the hospitals waiting room and ignored the looks she was getting from the other people. It had been two hours and even threatening the lives of several nurses and two doctors couldn't get her any answers. Finally, she called Terry at home and asked her to come over and use her badge to get through the doors. It had been fifteen minutes since Terry had passed into the 'doctor's only territory' and it was killing her not knowing what was going on. With the whoosh of the doors, she spun and saw that it was Terry pushing Mac in a wheelchair. Her smaller friend looked terrible, her skin was pale and she looked exhausted. "Ohh God Mac what did they say?" She took the papers from her hand and looked to Terry.

"She'll be OK, it's happened before and it's one of the reason's she quit the force. She gets stressed out and ends up with a panic attack; she needs to stay in bed for a few days and rest."

"And I can talk for myself ya know, I'm not dead yet." She looked up into tear-filled blue eyes and felt bad for scaring Truman. "Sorry for scaring you and all the other stupid ass things I did today, can we go home now since super cop sprung me from this prison?"

"Glad I could help," She messed up Mac's hair more than it already was and handed Truman the discharge papers. "And I want to thank both of you for giving Syd that money; she paid off all her bills and paid the taxes on the Ballroom for the next three years."

"She helped me so I paid her, no thank you needed." Mac said and looked up at Truman. "Are all the groceries ruined because of having to be here?"

"Nope, the frozen stuff is still in the car and its cold enough out there to keep them that way. The rest were just staples, cereal, soup and some other stuff." She saw that Terry was standing with her mouth hanging open. "I do all the cooking so I do the grocery shopping to."

"God you two are like a married couple, what else do you do?"

Mac grinned and wiggled her brows. "Lots of stuff, she even cleans and washes clothes. But she doesn't want precious for some odd reason." She waved her ring in front of Truman and tilted her head to the side. "What about now though, I'm rich, I own my building, kinda good looking and I can say I'm sorry when I'm wrong?"

"Keep on dreaming there sea monkey, just because you have money doesn't make you a good catch." She helped her into her car and then gave Terry a tight hug. "Thank you for coming, I don't know what I'd do if anything happened to her." She let go and wiped tears from her eyes. "Can you guys come over for supper tomorrow night?"

"Sure, we'll be there. Anything we can bring, like beer or wine?"

"Nope we have everything; around seven o'clock would be good."

Terry looked at the passenger window and raised an eyebrow. "You better get her home; she's acting weirder than usual when she's on drugs."

Truman turned her head and rolled her eyes, Mac had her face smashed against the window with her tongue hanging out. "This should be fun tonight; I may have to tie her in bed." She blushed when she thought of what she could do to the restrained PI and Terry laughed. "I better get her home before she does something to get us arrested." She gave Terry a quick hug and cursed when she saw that Mac was stripping out of her clothes.

"OOHHH NO YOU DON'T!" Truman yelled at Mac and spun her back towards the couch. "Sit your ass down or I tie you up, you need to rest or I take you back to the hospital."

"Under one condition, you sit here with me, I'm tired of being in here alone."

"How many years have you lived alone Mac and I'm just at my desk."

Too many years and I can sit out there just as well as I can in here," She gave her puppy dog eyes and grinned when Truman held out her hand. "Someone's coming up the stairs," She looked to the door and knew she was in deep shit. "Ohh Hell where's my guns?" She jumped from the couch and ran for her bedroom.

"I'm looking for a Truman Avery." The flower shop deliveryman asked after looking at his clipboard.

"I'm Truman and from the way Mac took off out of here I know the flowers are from her." She took the boxes he held, signed the paperwork and handed him some bills from her pocket. "Thanks for coming all the way up here."

"I have more stuff down in my van, where do you want it?"

Truman looked at him and then cleared her throat. "More flowers...how many more?"

"I'm not real sure, it's all boxed." He went down the stairs and out to his van. When he was finished, Truman stood in her apartment looking at all the arrangements he had brought up.

"Ohh is she in trouble, some flowers are fine but buying out the place is way over board." She ran her fingers across the petals of the red roses she was carrying and then took in the scent. She placed them on her desk and then went over to chew Mac out; when she got to her bedroom door, she changed her mind. "She might get chest pains again or drop from a stroke." She tapped on the door and when she didn't hear anything, she opened it up. "You know that poor man has a hernia now, why did you get me so many arrangements?" She pulled the blanket off Mac and chuckled when she tried to hide under her pillow.

"Uuhhhh because I'm a cad and saying I'm sorry just wasn't enough?" She peeked out and saw the small smile on Truman's face.

"You know my apartment looks like a hospital room and the flowers scent is so strong that I can't breathe?"

"Sorry, you can always sleep here or bring the flowers over, your choice." She rolled to her side and gave her a wicked grin. "Did I do OK though?" She watched as Truman moved further onto the bed and towards her.

"Yeah you did OK just don't do that anymore, it's too much." She leaned down and placed a gentle kiss to her lips. "One rose is fine, a couple hundred flowers is over board." She kissed her again only longer this time, when she pulled back, Mac wrapped an arm around her neck and pulled her back down.

"One more and I'll behave myself." She captured her lips in a steamy kiss that had them sinking

into the mattress with deep moans. Truman straddled her hips and ran her hands across her tight stomach until she could get her hands under the t-shirt she wore. The feel of warm silky skin sent tingles to her center and what Mac was doing with her tongue had her juices flowing. She shivered from her wetness and broke the kiss when her lungs began to burn.

"We shouldn't be doing this, you just got out of the hospital yesterday and Terry and Syd will be here in 30 minutes or so." She looked down into emerald green eyes and wished for the first time that circumstances were different. She wanted nothing more than to fall into her and feel for the first time in years. "You need to take your medicine and unlock the door downstairs."

"They have their own keys and I already took my pill, lot a good it'll do me." She sighed when Truman got up and held out a hand to her.

"I'm gonna go shower, keep an eye on the roast and make sure it has water in the roaster."

"You don't need a shower; you're not dirty or anything."

Truman narrowed her eyes. "I need a shower now watch supper until I'm done." She walked quickly to her own apartment and started stripping before she got to her bedroom. "I need a cold shower after what we were doing." She grabbed clean clothes and headed to the shower, turning the water to mostly cold; she climbed in and pulled the curtain closed. She shivered and yelled out when the cold water hit her chest. "Fuck this shit, I can't take cold showers." She adjusted the water and heard Mac calling her name. "Now what did she do?"

"Nothing that I haven't thought of or done before," She pulled the curtain back and grinned from ear to ear. "I turned the oven off and pulled the roast out." She climbed in behind Truman and pressed into her back. "I decided that I'm as dirty as you are."

"Do you enjoy pain because I'm about to cause you a great deal of it?" She shivered and moaned when small hands ran across her body and up to her breasts.

"Depends on what kind of pain, a little is good." She pressed tighter against her back and caressed her breasts until she felt her sinking to her knees. "But we don't have time for that," She pulled her earlobe in to her mouth and sucked gently before nipping it. "Maybe later we can explore the possibilities of you inflicting pain on me?" She got out of the shower, ran back to her own apartment and to her bedroom to get dressed. "I'll wear you down until you fall for me." She dressed quickly and went into the kitchen to set the table.

"She's gonna kill me one way or another," Truman whimpered and placed her hand between her thighs. "Can't believe she's got me to this point." She ran her fingers through her wetness and then rubbed her throbbing clit until she climaxed with a loud breath and a whimper. With her knees still weak, she climbed from the shower and went into her bedroom with her clean clothes hanging from one hand. A couple minutes later, she was dressed and heading over to Mac's. When she walked in, her face turned red when she saw Terry and Syd sitting at the kitchen table. Ignoring their looks and Mac's wide grin, she went over to the roasting pan and pulled the roast out to cut.

"So Mac's been telling us that you've kept her a couch prisoner all day," Terry said and saw that her face became a deeper shade. "Or was that a sex prisoner?"

"You're a dead women Mac, as soon as we're alone I'm reading you the riot act and killing you."

"Hey I didn't say anything about sex, that's all Terry and her evil over sexed mind, not that I haven't been thinking about it for a while now, but I didn't say anything, I'm trying to be good." She pointed a finger at her friends. "Stop it or I'll kick your asses and enjoy it." She took the serving plate from Truman and then helped her with the rest of the food; Terry tapped Syd's foot and nodded to where the other two women were working in the kitchen.

"That is just too weird; they know what the other wants before she knows it."

"I know what you want, does that count?"

Curled up on her side Truman was looking out her bedroom window, it was almost light outside and her alarm clock would be ringing in a few moments. She had flipped and flopped all night long and felt like she had a hang over from no sleep. She was about to crawl from bed when she felt a warm body snuggle up against her back, she looked over her shoulder and saw sleepy green eyes looking at her. "What are you doing in here?"

"I missed you last night; I can't sleep with out that snorting growling noise you make in your sleep."

"That's not me making all those weird noises that's you, now what are you doing in here."

"I'm hungry and wanted ta know if you'd make me some French toast, I've tried to make it before but I end up with this soggy bread and..." She buried her face in the back of Truman's neck and took a deep breath. "It can wait; I just wanna lay here for a while." She wrapped her arms around her tighter, brought her leg up over Truman's hip, and fell over onto her stomach when Truman got out of bed.

"You stay there and cuddle with my pillow, I don't cuddle and I don't do sex so just forget it." She grabbed her robe and pulled it on.

"Jeez and I've been told that I'm not a morning person, what made you so mean and celibate?" She jumped when a low growl came from Truman; she got out of bed and followed behind her. "How about if I make you some coffee, maybe rub your shoulders...massage your feet?" She jogged behind her and tried to come up with something else to do for her.

"Mac will you stop following me like a puppy, I don't enjoy sex and cuddling makes me claustrophobic so just drop it and get the eggs and milk out."

Mac grabbed her chest and fell on to the kitchen counter. "But sex is everything, its exciting and bonding, its mind blowing!" She threw her hands in the air and tilted her head back. "It's orgasmic and exhausting in a good way!"

"It sucks and that's why I don't have it anymore, now get the stuff out or go hungry." She dropped her head down and took a deep breath. "Son of a bitch," She turned and took in Mac's sleep rumpled self and sighed. "Listen, I'm sorry for snapping at you, I didn't sleep and my back hurts. Just get the stuff out and I'll make breakfast as soon as I get out of the bathroom." She walked towards the bathroom and felt green eyes watching her, she had no idea why she acted so mean towards the small PI. "It's my parents fault, has to be, who else's could it be?"

Mac got everything out that Truman would need for their breakfast, she knew Truman didn't mean anything by snapping at her but she did have her curious as to the not having sex part. "I'll change her mind, may take me the rest of our lives but I'll change it. Hell with what we've done so far there ain't much further to go." She grinned from the idea blossoming in her mind. "I can be Rhett Butler to her Scarlet O'Hara, already kinda dress like him." She hiked up the too big sweats she was wearing and tried to smooth down her horns. "Finesse, charisma, and a lot of understanding and patience will work." She groaned and twisted her hair into tight horns. "I may be taking a lot of cold showers and crying on Terry's shoulder." She looked up when she felt Truman trying to smooth her horns down.

"Those things will never disappear will they?" She smoothed them down again to watch them pop back up.

"I've always had 'em, my ma used to say that it was my true personality showing through, pop said it was his genes showing." She looked into pale blue eyes and saw years of pain and suffering come forth and knew that it came from her parents. "You busy today," She changed the subject hoping to change Truman's mood. "I'm going over to see Mrs. Simson while asshole is at his bar, maybe find out more of what's going on with that dysfunctional family?"

"Nope, I finished all the background checks and since you and Syd did your Kamikaze stunt the other night, no ones called."

"OK, now do you know how to shoot a gun?"

"Mac I'm from Alabama what do you think?" She stepped around her with a wicked grin on her face and started their breakfast. "You make the coffee and only put three scoops in there not six, I was jittery all day yesterday from that crude oil you made."

Truman came out of her bedroom dressed in black trousers, shirt and carrying her jacket over her arm, she rolled her eyes at Mac and went over to her desk. "Put your hat on your horns have hard-on's." She grabbed a switchblade from her desk drawer and saw that Mac noticed.

"You have a switch blade and my horns only get that way around you," She held out a worn

double pistol harness and a wooden box. "These were my pops, I've kept the guns oiled and sighted in."

"Do you really think it's going to be that bad that I need to carry and besides, if I put that harness on then I'm carrying without a license?"

"Nope, you have one of those; good thing I give concealed permits huh?" She handed her a laminated concealment license and a leather wallet. "That's your PI badge, you're my partner now."

"As far as I know I have to take some kind of test to be a PI or did I already do that and don't remember?" She put the holster on and then opened the wooden box to see two nickel plated Colt .38 Super pistols in a bed of red velvet. "Mac I can't carry these..."

"Ohh yes you can, I have my favorites right here." She tapped the butts of her .9mm pistols. "I just cleaned those yesterday and the clips are full, they hold nine bullets to the normal seven that other Colts have." She felt her pulse pound when Truman pulled on a long black leather trench coat and then slipped on a pair of dark aviator sunglasses. "Damn but you're hot." She mumbled, walked slowly up to her and ran her fingers across the smooth warm leather. "As hard as you've made it and as hard as I tried not to, I've still fallen in love with you, now let's go bust some ass."

Truman's mouth dropped open; she spun and watched Mac jog down the stairs. "You can't say that!" She took off after her and ended up jumping down the stairs to catch up. "You can't say that to me and you can't be in love with me...there's a law against it!" She jumped into the passenger seat of the Outback and grabbed Mac by the front of her brown leather bomber jacket. "Take it back, take it all back."

Mac turned her head and blew her a kiss. "Nope can't do that so gimme some sugar and I'll leave you alone until we get home." When Truman just glared at her, she shrugged her shoulders. "OK how about some heavy petting...or maybe we should get this case over with and then talk about our 'partnership' later."

"You're out of your mind and I will never give you anymore sugar and I told you I don't do sex." She straightened her coat and turned to stare out of the windshield. "It's ho hum, boring, a waste of time and,"

"You were with the wrong person; she must have really been bad."

"Him it was a man and it was horrible, disgusting..." She looked to Mac and back to the road ahead. "I was...confused and trying to live the life my parents wanted, you know the southern lady, husband, two point five kids, dinner parties and the charity functions. Funny thing is that my parents are divorced, my father lives in DC with some slut and mother is still in Alabama trying to convince herself and everyone else that he's coming back." She looked over to Mac and sighed. "Needless to say that I'm more of a disappointment than the long list of sluts my father has."

"The Hell with what they want and think it's your life, live it the way you want." She now knew more about Truman than she did before and if given half the chance, she would kick her parent's asses for all the shit they tried to force on her. "Stick with me doll and I'll show you the world."

"That's what scares the Hell outta me," She leaned back into the seat and closed her eyes. "Wake me when we get there." 40 minutes later Mac was parking the car across from Simson's huge house. It showed exactly how much money he made or stole whichever way you wanted to look at it. She looked over to Truman's profile and felt her heart thump in her chest, she was the most beautiful woman she had ever seen and she loved her more than anything. "This is a first for you MacKenna; you've never been in love before and you've never said that L word to a woman either." She reached out and trailed her fingers down Truman's cheek to her soft lips, leaning to her side; she kissed the side of her neck and waited for her to wake up. "Come on Truman we're here," She lifted her lips to her ear and whispered. "This will only take a few minutes and then we can go home." She moaned when Truman turned her head and pressed their lips together, her hat hit the floor and she fell back into her seat. "It can wait." She tangled her fingers into silky hair and pulled Truman down on top of her. They acted like teenagers in the front seat, hands roamed under clothes; they moaned deeply and grunted as they tried to get closer to each other.

"Well I never expected to see this," Terry stood looking inside the Outback. "Should I or shouldn't I give you all a ticket for indecent exposure and Mac, when did you get your nipples pierced?" She chuckled as she watched them try to straighten their clothes and calm down. "I'm supposed to be your back-up but I'm not into group sex and besides, Syd wears me out every night."

"Shut up Terry and don't you dare say a word about this," Mac looked over to Truman and blushed. "Just don't say anything."

Terry felt her jaw drop when Truman got out of the car. "Damn Mac but you sure can pick 'em, you better marry her." She whispered out of the corner of her mouth and then gave a glaring Truman a bright smile. "I love that coat, do they make them smaller for us regular sized peoples?"

Mac threw her hands in the air and walked away from Mrs. Simson, she had been trying to convince her to go into police protection for the last half hour with no luck. She looked to Truman, dropped her head and shook it. "Why don't you give it a try, I've done everything I can and Terry's given up?"

"Like I'm a convincing person, I can't even convince you that I don't like making out with you..." She covered her face and shook her head. "Forget I said that, I can't even convince myself of that anymore. God I'm such a loser when it comes to you." She went into the living room, looked at Terry and marched straight over to Mrs. Simson. "Listen lady, either you tell me what I wanna know or I go tell everyone in your husbands bar that he's a queen and jerks himself off to bathroom recordings he gets from the men's room." She leaned towards the woman and looked at her over the tops of her sunglasses. "And that this information came right from you,

just think of what he'll do to you when he gets home."

"You wouldn't do that; no one in their right mind would wish a beating on a woman!" She looked to Terry and then to Truman. "What is wrong with you people?"

"I never said I was in my right mind and to prove it I'm going over to your husbands bar and cause hate and discontent."

"Why are you doing this, please I'll tell you anything you want just don't cause problems with that asshole."

"Who beat up Mac," She grabbed the front of her shirt and picked her up out of her chair. "If you lie I'll know and then I'll make one phone call." She growled deeply and felt Mrs. Simson shiver.

"It was the bartender at my husbands bar, he owed him." She started to cry when Truman didn't release her. "I swear on my daughter's life it was him."

Terry nodded her head to Truman and then used her radio to call in a few cars to arrest the bartender and Mr. Simson. "OK Truman you can let her go now," She laid a hand on her arm and gave it a small shake. "Let go and go check on Mac." She shivered when silvery eyes turned her way and held her, she swore that the room's temperature dropped twenty degrees and was glad when Mac came into the room. "Mac can you do something?"

She ran her hands across her shoulders and whispered in her ear. "Come on Truman you're getting me all hot and bothered here, let Mrs. Simson go and we'll go home and I'll share my Victoria's Secret catalog with ya." When Truman let her go, she turned to Mac, grabbed her hand and pulled her from the house.

"I'm filing for police brutality, do you hear me!"

"Go ahead but she's not a cop," Terry said and then led her out the front door to one of the waiting police cars. "She should be though; she's damn good with interrogation."

Mac jogged up the stairs beside Truman, she kept glancing at her profile and hoped that her heart held out for what she hoped was to come that night. The whole way home, Truman had been staring at her with an intensity to set her blood on fire. "Are you OK, you're awful quiet?"

"Ask me again later," She grabbed Mac's hand and pulled her into her apartment, she kicked the door closed and then stalked her all the way to her bedroom. "You're in desperate trouble; I can't believe what I did. I threatened that woman, had her squirming in my hand." She dropped her coat on the floor and pinned Mac against the wall. "The power I had over her, that's what I've always wanted. That's what I always fantasized about doing to my asshole father," She slipped her hands under Mac's jacket and up her ribs. "Grab him by his throat and bounce him off a wall a couple times." She nipped her chin and then grabbed her earlobe between her teeth. "Is it

always like this, the adrenaline rush?"

Mac shivered and closed her eyes, her body was screaming with excitement. "Ohh it can be better than that I guarantee it," She pressed her hips into Truman and moaned deeply. "Let me show you." She pulled Truman's head down and kissed her with everything that she was feeling and what was in her heart. Wrapping her arms around her neck, she lifted her legs up to wrap around her waist. When their kiss ended, Mac looked into dark blue eyes and saw her future. "I love you Truman and I want you." Truman walked towards her bed with Mac still wrapped around her body; she couldn't fight what she was feeling anymore.

"Do you mean it?" She asked as she stopped in front of her bed. "Don't lie to me just to get in my pants, 'cuz if you are, I'll throw you out the window."

"I would never lie about that, trust me." She kissed her gently and pulled back. "Just trust me Truman." She held on as Truman lowered her to her bed and let her arms fall to the side. "You know I'm really good at this?"

"You're pushing it Mac," She took off the pistol holster, slowly unbuttoned her shirt and slipped it from her shoulders. "I don't want what you gave others." She leaned down and then crawled onto the bed to straddle Mac's hips.

"I've never loved anyone else Truman, you're my first and last if you'll have me?"

"Mac offering me your ring is a bit premature." She pulled her up so that she could get her coat and shirt off. "This could go really wrong, we could end up hating each other and..." She looked towards her apartment door; someone was pounding on it hard enough to make the wall shake. "See, the fates have jumped in and interrupted us, it has to be a sign of some kind."

Mac cursed and got up from the bed when Truman did. "Yeah that I'm going to prison for committing murder." She went to the door, yanked it open and growled. "You suck!" She tried to slam the door on Terry and found out that it wouldn't budge. "Move your foot!"

"My feet aren't anywhere near the door, hi ya Truman, I hated coming over here. I tried calling but when you guys didn't answer," She saw that their shirts were missing and knew why Mac said she sucked. "Ohhh Hell, I'm sorry guys. It's Simson, he threw a fit at the station, I'm suspended and the DA is looking for you." She tapped Mac on her head. "They want your license because we fucked up a case that Internal Affairs has been working on for the last two years."

"Wait a minute, I was finding the assholes who beat me up it had nothing to do with the IAD."

"Mac didn't do anything it was me; I forced Mrs. Simson for the information." Truman handed Mac her shirt and pulled her own on. "Who do I talk to, you guys aren't to blame for any of this and why was he throwing such a fit?"

"It won't matter who you talk to, they're all pissed and assholes pissed because she wasn't home when he got there and then someone from the cop shop called and let him know that she was put

in to protection."

Mac rolled her eyes and thumped her head against the door. "The cop that called Simson is the one that IAD is investigating; he thinks that the wife has spilled her guts about what's going on."

"And he's gone clean as holy water and passed it on to who ever else was involved on the take."

"Just fucking great and I'm to blame because they're slow and didn't get the evidence they needed to bust these assholes before?"

Truman held up a hand to interrupt them. "Wait a minute, this just ain't right. They're using us for scapegoats, so that's telling me that there's a problem in the IAD. So what is it and how can we find out?"

Terry looked from Truman to Mac and shrugged her shoulders. "No idea, that's like an entirely different creature all in its own. Those cops are supposed to bust bad cops so they look at all cops as being bad. They really hate Mac; she's been a thorn in their side for years."

"Why doesn't that surprise me, it seems that she has that special talent of getting under everyone's skin like a splinter." She picked Mac up under her arm and carried her across the hall to her apartment. "I need coffee, I can't think without caffeine."

"Could you put me down, I feel like a sack of tators?" Mac hung under her arm and covered her head when Truman walked too close to the door jam. "I can't think if I'm in a coma from a head injury."

"Like we'd be able to tell one way or another where you're concerned." Terry said and smacked her on her ass before going to the kitchen table and taking a chair.

Mac looked across the desk at the police Captain and then over to Terry, they had decided to spend a few hours with Terry's boss as both an alibi and maybe figure out what was going on with the IAD officers. "Now Captain you know damn well that Simson paid those guys to beat the Hell outta me because I wouldn't kill his wife and one of the guys he paid to beat me up. Now that has me confused beyond belief, he wants me to kill the guy but turns around and pays him to attack me. I had no idea that IAD was working on Simson so why do they want to slap me around and take my PI license?"

"Now you know as well as I do that IAD are a bunch of up tight assholes that can't find their own dicks with both hands, they're pissed and what better way to cover up their fuck up then to blame you." Captain Morris said and tossed her a cigar from his desk drawer. "And to top it all off, you solve a high profile case before we even knew there was one. The Mayor was fucking pissed about that one," He winked and tossed her his cigar lighter. "Come to think of it, he's hated you since the day you were born."

Mac grinned and gave Terry a wink. "He was doing the kiss the baby thing and I wasn't pleased about it so I threw up on him." She polished her nails on her shirt front and grinned wider.

"Figures, even as a baby you were evil; I just hope you never have kids. Does Truman wants kids; I can see her with kids?"

"I don't know we never talked about stuff like that..." She looked to the Captain when he cleared his throat. "Never mind, we'll talk later. Anyway boss man, how can we get me out of trouble?"

The Captain looked at his watch and counted on his fingers how much time had passed. "It all depends on how long of an alibi you two needed for what ever it was that you planed?"

Terry covered her eyes with one hand and kicked Mac in her shin. "We never pull that off, why is that?"

"Because you look at you watch every few minutes and Mac twitches each time a door opens, that's how I know when you two are playing around. So who's doing your dirty work and will they be in lock-up later?"

"They better not end up there or someone's gonna be hurting and it ain't us, Syd doesn't play well with others and Truman..."

Mac kicked her back and pointed a finger at her. "Will kill me the first second she gets if she's arrested and get you to, remember what you interrupted today?" She wiggled her brows and cleared her throat when Captain Morris snickered.

"Like you won't get a hold of it later tonight," He said and then saw how red Mac's face was. "Ohhh so this isn't one of your floozies, what's happened to you?"

"She's finally growing up after 30 some years, she might even live to have another birthday."

"You know we could have just had a nice little chat but you just had to call me a bitch," Truman shook her left hand and grinned wickedly when the man screamed. "Why is it that men always think that women are bitches," She looked over to Syd. "Do they call their mothers bitches because they're women?"

"If they had any kind of parents, they wouldn't have teeth left in their heads. My ma busted my ass the first time I swore in her presence, watcha say we drop this fucker and go have some supper?" She loosened her grip on the screaming man's ankle and let out a loud howl. "Scream like a bitch!"

"Alright I'll tell ya just pull me up!" They pulled him up and dropped him on the roof top, just so that he didn't change his mind; Syd dangled a noose in front of him. "There's a dozen cops on the take, I'm just one of 'em and I'm not telling ya who the others are. They'll kill me and it'll

compare to nothing that you could ever envision."

Truman placed the toe of her boot on his crotch and pressed down. "Don't be to sure about that little man, I've got a whole bunch of bodies hidden that think I did just fine. Now who's the man in charge of all this and we'll forget all about you pissing yourself?"

"He's a public official...the case Mac solved, it's her father. It was all a set up to get him to give up the money, he was ripping us off."

"Ohh I get it now, the bad cops were pissed because they weren't getting a fair percentage from the crooked politician! Well fuck you all!" Syd grabbed him by the front of his shirt, picked him up and tossed him off the roof.

"I bet he shit himself with that one," Truman slapped hands with her, walked to the edge, and looked four feet down to where the cop was weeping on an old filthy mattress. "Fucking pussy, you need to go turn yourself in, and you suck because if you were any kind of cop, you'd know about the secondary roof on your own building!"

Syd placed a hand on her shoulder and squeezed. "So do ya think Mac would make me a PI, I can be the muscle?"

"That all depends, can you use a PC?"

She rolled her eyes and snorted. "Who can't, it's a part of living...oohh so Mac still won't touch the things, damn wimp." She scratched her jaw and looked at Truman's profile. "About those bodies, did you...ya know?"

"Ohh hundreds of them back in Alabama, my cousin was pissed when I buried all his little green army guys."

Mac stood at the edge of the door to the IAD offices, she was trying to eaves drop on any conversation that she could. She had a bad feeling about them and knew that they just had to be involved in the case more than anyone knew. All she could hear were mumbles and air blowing in her ear. "You're loosing your touch Mac; a blind person would know you're hiding out here."

"You suck Terry and I wasn't hiding, I was...lurking in the shadows. Did you find out anything from the garage mechanic?"

"He said that three of the plain cars were checked out by IAD the day before the kidnapping and turned in three days later. He said they were full of fast food wrappers and other garbage, you know like a stakeout car."

"So they were staking out either Simson and his morons or..."

"They were watching the crooked asshole politician," She pulled her towards a stairwell and held the door open. "But where does all of this connect and where in the Hell are our women?"

Truman wiped at the BBQ sauce running down her chin and handed Syd another baby back rib from the bag. Using her hip to open the police station door, she waved a hand at the desk sergeant and headed towards the stairwell with Syd following. When they reached the desired floor, Syd kicked the door open and yelled when it came back and hit her square in the face. She fell back into Truman and sent them to the floor in an instant. "What the fuck Terry," Mac said and pushed the door open. "Why'd you do that?" She looked at the bodies on the floor and cursed. "Ohh you are in so much trouble and I'm not helping you!" She reached down, pulled Syd to her feet and then Truman. "That's gonna be a nasty lump later," She touched the lump on Syd's forehead and flinched when she yelled. "For once I can't be blamed."

Terry pulled Syd in to her arms and kissed the lump on her forehead, she apologized before she noticed all the BBQ sauce that was being smeared all over her shirt front. "Sorry baby I thought it was crooked cops trying to sneak up on our eaves dropping."

"That's OK we're even now," She wiped the last of the sauce from her hands and blew her lover a kiss. "Good thing that's not your favorite shirt, 'cuz this stuff is gonna leave a ... Ohhh Hell you've got my shirt on!"

Truman shook her head at a whimpering Syd and looked up at Truman's face. "Got any more ribs left, I'm starving. Terry's just like my pop; if he wasn't hungry then no one else was either." She took a rib from the bag and moaned from the tanginess that assaulted her taste buds. She rolled her eyes and placed a hand on Truman's chest. "I'll be your slave forever if you tell me where you got these."

"Got them from a little restaurant in Falling Waters, cheap as Hell, ten pounds for twenty bucks, we got the slaw and rolls out in the truck." She used her thumb to wipe sauce from Mac's chin and then licked the remaining sauce from her fingers. "So did you two find out anything?" She grinned at Syd and saw that Terry was looking at the floor. "Ohh so you guys came up empty, you guys owe us then 'cuz we hit a gold mine." She handed Mac the bag, led her from the stairwell back to the lower floor and told them all the information that she and Syd had gotten from the cop.

Mac paced the floor of Truman's office and kept shooting her glances, she couldn't believe the stunt she and Syd had pulled. She covered her face and kept on pacing even though Truman warned her about walking into something. "What were you two thinking?" She threw her hands in the air, dropped them on to her hips and glared at Truman. "What if he presses charges for assault, attempted murder or worse?"

Truman rolled her eyes and leaned back in her chair. "Get real, what man in his macho mind would admit to having two women chase him down, carry him to the roof, dangle him from his ankles and then toss him off?" She tossed a wad of paper at Mac to get her to stop glaring. "Who was it that pulled off a kidnap rescue with the same muscle head?"

"But that was different, there weren't any cops involved in that...OK so there might be cops involved but we didn't...OK so I popped off some shots at 'em when we were leaving."

"Some shots was it, I remember you telling me it was two full clips." She got out of her chair and stalked Mac until she was pinned up against the wall. "And now we know that it was cops involved in that kidnapping but which cops, IAD or street cops?"

Mac looked at Truman's chest and all the way up to the hollow of her throat and felt her heart thump. She reached out and wrapped her arms around Truman's waist and pulled her closer. "How would you like to assault a retired cop that will proudly scream from the rooftop what you did ta her?"

Truman dropped her mouth close to Mac's ear and whispered in a hoarse voice. "That's bragging sea monkey and for some reason I think you've done a lot of it, probably more than any man." She wiggled from her arms, took her hand and pulled her towards her apartment. "We'll see who gets bragging rights tonight." She had half of Mac's clothes off before they got to the bedroom, pulling her own shirt off; she tossed it to the floor and then pushed Mac back onto the unmade bed. "You're a pig Mac."

"Everyone knows that, let me show you what some people don't know." Truman knew that there couldn't be too much not known about Mac, so she ignored her and crawled on top of her.

"Mac find something better to do with your mouth besides try and impress me with your studliness." Dropping her head down, she licked between Mac's breasts and up to her neck. Leaning down across her half-naked body, she pressed into her warm skin and growled. "Any time you wanna show me here, I'm kinda at a loss and..."

Mac rolled her over to her back and looked down into her eyes. "Relax Truman; I don't like to rush anything in the bedroom." She pushed her shoes off, got to her knees and they slowly removed the rest of each other's clothes. Mac tangled her fingers in Truman's hair and pulled her face down closer; she bit her bottom lip and flicked it with her tongue until she opened her mouth. Their kiss was long and deep, soft moans, ragged breathing and then gasps for air when they parted. Mac caressed Truman's bottom lip with a fingertip, groaned when it was nipped by white teeth and then sucked between wet lips. She shivered and felt her center twitch each time Truman's warm wet tongue circled the tip of her finger. She pressed herself down into Truman and felt her wetness paint her tight stomach. Rolling her hips back, she stopped over a thin strip of short coarse dark hair and whimpered from the feeling it caused when it touched her clit. She arched her back, dropped her head down, licked a trail from her lover's throat to the tops of her firm breasts and continued to roll her center against her. She lightly nipped at the tanned flesh and felt Truman arch her back, long fingers tangled in her hair and pushed her towards a hardened nipple. Taking it between her lips, she sucked slowly and nipped gently; Truman

moaned and let her hands drop from her hair. Mac lifted her head and saw that Truman's lips were parted, her eyes were lidded and the veins in her neck throbbed with each beat of her heart.

Truman felt small shock waves travel throughout her body each time Mac bit her nipple, her center throbbed and she needed to press up into her body. With only having one other sexual experience, she didn't have anything to compare these feelings to. All she knew was that she never wanted it to end and needed Mac to touch more of her. She raised her knees, planted her feet and thrust upward into her lover's wetness. "You're so wet." She mumbled and ran her hands up her lover's thighs and stopped at her hips. Mac lifted her head and nipped at her neck, she moaned when Truman licked at her lips and then captured her in a heated kiss. They rocked into each other while they kissed deeply, Mac was the first to break the kiss and move away from her lover's body, she ran a finger across her lips and shook her head.

"I'm not going anywhere...trust me." She kissed and licked her way down Truman's body until she came to her six pack abs. She traced each muscle with the tip of her tongue and became aroused further with the scent of their combined arousals. Her juices ran down the insides of her thighs with each thump of her center, she moved down Truman's body and moaned deeply at the sight before her. Her lover's outer lips were shaved smooth, deep red and swollen with arousal. She ran a fingertip across the soft skin and watched as they twitched and exposed her swollen clit. She pushed her sheath back and licked the very tip of the bundle of nerves. A small grin came to her face when Truman bucked and hissed out a breath. She licked each lip and then teased around her fluttering center to stop just short of her clit, when Truman swore and grabbed a handful of her hair; she pierced her center with her tongue. While moving her tongue in and out, she ran her thumb across her clit and held on with her other arm. The sounds that Truman were making made no sense until the word "STOP" echoed in the room. Mac raised her head and looked at her lover, she wondered if she had done something wrong.

"Come up here, I wanna look in your eyes when it happens." She held out her hand and pulled Mac up so that she was straddling her hips and their clits were touching. She looked down and moaned from what she saw; Mac's soaking wet curls barely hid her clit. Her own was swollen but was nowhere near as large as Mac's, she ran a fingertip across it and watched it twitch.

"Stop or it'll be all over for me," She grumbled behind clenched teeth. "Can't hold on much longer."

"Trust me Mac, I know." She pulled her in for a kiss that had Mac falling into her body; she raised her hips, rolled them and then broke their kiss. She gazed into Mac's eyes as long as she could before she fell over the edge with a gasp and deep guttural grunting and thrust her hips with each spasm. "Ohh Gods...Mac..." She arched her back and yelled out Mac's name when another orgasm tore through her.

Mac was stroking her G-spot with two fingers and grinding her clit against her at the same time. She bucked against her, threw her head back, yelled out her release and shook as her juices spurted from her center. She fell forward as far as she could and took deep breathes; whimpering, she raised her head. "My arm is going numb...help?" She panted and tried not to move with the waves from her orgasm.

"Why's it going...," She looked to Mac with a raised eyebrow. "You're stuck." Truman said and then felt around with one hand, she was surprised to find that Mac's hand was behind her back and between her legs. She moved down towards her lover's hand and moaned when her slickness covered her stomach, when her fingers slipped free of her center, Truman moaned from the loss. Her center was still throbbing with after shocks and juices were still flowing from inside her. "What did you do to me...I'm still..."

Mac lay down on top of her and nuzzled the side of her neck. "That's what happens sometimes with G-Spot orgasms..." She kissed the side of her neck, wrapped her arms around her and mumbled before she fell asleep. "So tired...love you Truman."

Truman wrapped her arms around her, rolled them to their sides and tried to smooth down her lover's horns. Placing a soft kiss to her forehead, she closed her eyes and whispered. "I love you to MacKenna, hard as it is to believe, I love you."

"I knew you did," Mac whispered and pulled back away from her lover. "It's hard not to, I mean I am adorable, rich, good looking, did I mention I'm adorable and good looking?"

"Did I mention that I'm vengeful and..." Mac captured her lips and never let her say anything except for her name until the early hours of the next morning.

Truman sat leaning back in her office chair, her head tipped back, mouth hanging open and the most horrifying noise coming from her. She twitched, wiped at the drool running down her chin but never woke. Doris shook her head and was about to go into Mac's office when she noticed that her granddaughter was dressed in just a button down shirt, boxers and socks. She stepped closer and saw red blotches down the side of her neck and good sized bruises above her breasts. "So you do have tits, all these years it was hard to tell." She went into Mac's office and stood looking down at her. "Why is Truman half naked and sleeping at her desk?" She waited until green eyes looked up to her before leaning down closer. "Come on little dog what did you do to my granddaughter, if you took advantage of her, I'll..."

"Ohh she took total advantage of me," Mac pulled her shirt front to the side to show a huge hickey over her left breast. "You're not the wild woman of the family no more; she did this while we were eating breakfast." She winked and leaned back in her old chair. "How do ya know what kinda shape she's in, unless you went in my...she's at her desk?" She got up and stumbled her way out to Truman's desk and stopped behind her chair, she ran her hands down Truman's chest and remembered that Doris was right beside her. Buttoning her shirt, she tried to smooth down her wild hair and rested her head back against her chest. "I told her to stay in bed," She kissed her crown and looked up at a grinning Doris. "Am I gonna get the riot act read to me and then thrown out the nearest window?"

"Nope, I just had to come over and see if the rumors were true." She snorted when Mac pushed

the chair with Truman in it from the office, over to her apartment and into her bedroom. She stopped when she saw the fireplace with a couch in front of it. "You finally took the wall down after all these years, what a waste covering that up. Or was it a romance thing to get in Truman's pants?"

"We took the wall down because we were freezing our asses off up here," She leaned down and spoke in her lover's ear. "Come on Truman get in bed and get some more sleep." She helped her out of the chair and into bed with Doris making snickering noises behind her. After covering her up, she placed a soft kiss to her lips, brushed her hair back from her forehead and whispered. "I love you Truman."

"So the rumors are all true about you two, I thought I'd never live to see the day when MacKenna Jones fell in love." She pulled her into a tight hug and kissed the side of her head. "You take good care of her or I'll have you tossed off the roof."

"Don't worry if I screw up, Truman will do it herself." She crept from the bedroom and then headed to her kitchen. "You want some coffee, I know how ta make it now." She grinned at Doris. "Truman taught me, that's after she sat and shook for a few hours after just one cup of the sludge I made."

"OK, but why is Truman wiped out and you're not, I've never seen her in such bad shape?" Doris asked and pulled the can of coffee from Mac's hand. "I still don't trust your coffee making capabilities."

"Ohh that's an easy one," Mac shined her nails on her shirt and did crude gestures behind Doris. "I'm in better shape than she is, I took naps." She yelped and shuffled across the floor from her horns being pulled. "OK so I was unconscious a few more times that Truman, she's a dangerous woman and I got muscles that scream when I move too fast. Why ya got me by the horns?"

"Because you rotten hairy footed little sea monkey, I know you were doing hip thrusts behind my back."

"Yep and now my back hurts again, I need some of those Therma thingies; ya know that ya wrap around your back and they heat the muscles up for eight hours."

"Or to stop thinking your 20 years old and thinking you can still do the sexual Olympics like you did back then." She hugged Mac to her side and kissed her head. "Forget the coffee and go get some sleep, you look terrible."

"Yeah and I feel that way to," She hiked up her sweat pants and let Doris lead her to her bedroom. "Ya know I wanna marry Truman but she keeps turning me down, why is that?"

"Give her time Mac, she doesn't really have any faith in the whole marriage thing and your history doesn't help any."

"But 99.8% of its all lies, I'm not that bad...damn me and my mouth."

Doris laughed, gave her another hug and left her outside her bedroom door. "Get some rest Mac and take some time off for a change, you both need it." She was gone before Mac could say another word.

"I'm not that bad, I just like to brag too much." She crawled into bed next to Truman, cuddled against her side and rested her head on her shoulder. "I'm not that bad, Terry will tell ya." She whispered and fell asleep in a matter of seconds.

Terry pulled all the files from her in box out, dropped them into her briefcase and then headed out of her office. She had an uneasy feeling and wanted nothing more than to go home, crawl into bed with Syd and hide until morning. There had been nothing but whispering in the building all day and that was not a good thing as far as she was concerned. Usually, that meant that all Hell was going to break loose and heads were going to roll. She didn't want her head to be one of them, so being a chickenshit, she was going home sick. And going by way of the back staircase and door to the parking lot, she wasn't taking any chances. Once she was in her car, she pulled out onto the road and took the most direct route home. She was a mile from home when a dark blue car pulled up along side her and the passenger opened fire and shot out her windows. She fell across the seat and let the car go where ever it wanted. She just hoped that whoever it that was shooting at her thought they had hit her and would leave. She braced herself as best she could and cringed with the impact, she lay on the floor for minutes before she took the chance to look up. What she saw made her heart slam in her chest, a telephone pole was suspended by only wires; if it fell, and it would crush her car. She looked around and saw not one person coming to see if she was alive. "Well this really sucks, glad that so many people care!" She pulled her cell phone out called Syd and then crawled from the passenger window where she lay on the ground waiting for more gunshots. When nothing happened, she got up and jogged to a hiding place beside someone's garage. "I wish I had a ticket book, I'd give everyone of you fucker's tickets for ignoring a car accident."

Mac and Truman were sitting in the living room eating supper and watching TV when the door opened and Terry and Syd came in, they closed the door quickly and then ran to look out the windows showing the street. "What in the Hell are you two doing?" Mac asked and watched Terry spin and stutter.

"Someone...cops...can we hide here?"

Syd pulled Terry into her arms and held onto her shaking body. "Someone shot the Hell outta her car this afternoon after she left the cop shop; we've been driving around for the last six hours to make sure no one tailed us. The weird thing is that her cars still sitting where it stopped and no ones even called it in!"

Truman got up from the couch and waved to them. "Come in the kitchen, are ya guys hungry, we

have beef stew and fresh bread?" She turned the heat on under the pot and got the bread out that she had baked a few hours before. "Any ideas why someone would shoot at you?"

"I have an idea; I think it's all this bullshit with IAD." She sat down at the table and kept looking at the door. "I had a bad feeling at work so I was leaving early," She looked to Mac and looked at her feet with a raised eyebrow. "What's wrong with your feet?"

Mac looked down and shrugged her shoulders. "Nothing why and don't change the subject." She hid her feet when Syd looked down at them and then pointed a finger at Truman. "Did you get them ta do this, ya know make comments about my feet?"

"Why would I do that, besides I figured they already knew that you had Hobbit feet; now go on with your story Terry while I get you guys something to eat."

"I left early because my instinct was screaming, I was almost at home when a car pulled alongside me and the passenger started shooting at me. My car has this telephone pole dangling over it and a couple hundred bullet holes in the driver's side. No one came to see if I was OK and no one has called it in to the station or anywhere else for that matter."

Mac ran a hand across her horns, raised an eyebrow and went over to the refrigerator for milk. "How did they pull that off, I mean people had to see it; did they kill everyone off on your street or something?"

"Ohh don't say that," Terry shook her head and rubbed her arms. "They could pull that off and blame it all on some serial killer and then arrest some derelict for the crimes."

"Come on baby you're starting to get me spooked about all of this," Syd said and moved her chair closer to her lovers'. "They can't pull something off like that, there's got to be an explanation for no one checking out your accident."

Truman filled bowls with stew, placed buttered bread in the center of the table and then went into the living room to turn the volume up on the TV. She stopped and turned back when she heard something about an abandoned car found under a telephone pole. She yelled for Mac and their friends and took a seat on the couch to listen.

"Earlier this afternoon, the city closed down this section of town when a business proprietor smelled natural gas in his basement. The city inspectors and the fire department searched each building but found no leak; it is thought to be a seepage problem with the manhole covers near the building. After the inspection was complete, firefighters found a shot up car beneath a telephone pole. The police were unable to determine what happened and are investigating a possible car theft ring involving area gangs."

"See now tell me they can't cover shit up and make a whole town disappear!" Terry pointed to the TV and paced behind the couch. "Now I'll get tossed off the force for being involved with gangs, drug running and car thefts!"

Mac stood up and paced right beside her old partner, she was being to wonder if the whole police department wasn't crooked with the exception of a handful. "I was thinking that maybe you should call the chief but I have this bad feeling that he may be in on everything that's going on. If he was clean, he would've called you the minute your car was found, which brings us to the fact that the other cops didn't say it was your car."

Truman leaned her head back and watched them pace. "Maybe they wanted to keep that out of the papers, you know so they could build a phony case against Terry?" They threw ideas back and forth, Truman yawned and felt her jaw pop, she looked to Terry and pointed to her apartment. "You guys can use my apartment, there's clean sheets on the bed and the heat works now." Taking Mac's hand, she let her pull her up from the couch and then they went to bed. No sooner had they laid down then they were both wrapped around each other and sleeping.

Mac laid spread across the bed with only a sheet draped across her hip, her mouth hung open and drool ran from the corner of her mouth. Truman looked around the door jam and grinned wickedly, she had finally been able to wear her lover out. It had taken a while but she figured out her secret, it was naps; she made sure that Mac didn't get any this morning and now she was history. Grabbing a bottle of water from the pantry, she headed for the stairs and went into the weight room. It had been a while and she needed to run, it was a blizzard outside and the treadmill looked real good this morning. After looking at the controls, she started it up and was running at 5.0mph. Sweat pore down her face from the exertion, she wiped at it with her forearm and kept on running. 25 minutes later, she hit the button to slow it down and used five minutes as her cool down. She wasn't concerned about how far she ran it was how fast she was going that counted to her. On the regular track, she never knew how fast she was running so this was like a game to her. Getting off the treadmill, she bent over at the waist and stretched out her hamstrings, she knew if she didn't do some stretching, she'd be sore in the morning. Finding a brand new yoga mat leaning against the wall in its box, she pulled it out and stretched it across the floor. Stretching out on the mat, she went into some light stretches and then went into a short Pilate's routine and finished up with yoga stretches. She looked up from one of her stretches and groaned; Mac was standing a few feet apart with her jaw hanging open.

"Baby I didn't know you could do that," She walked closer and wiped drool from her chin. "After last night and this morning I thought I knew everything about you."

"Well I thought I knew everything about you to but I never knew you could get a hard on that big." She looked at the front of her lovers boxers and raised an eyebrow. "And don't you dare tell me that's from a clit pump, it's impossible to..." She fell back on her elbows when Mac stepped so that she had a foot on each side of her hips. "Only you MacKenna would wander around in a strap-on when we have guests upstairs." She moaned when the end of the ultra skin dildo peaked from the leg of her white boxers.

"They're busy doing the wild thing in your bed; I forgot how noisy those two are." She ran her fingers through her lover's hair and let her head drop back when she ran her hands up her thighs. "The screams...grunts...oohh God baby!" She looked down and thrust her hips when Truman pulled the dildo through the fly of her boxers. "What are you...oohh you're not..." She thrust her

hips again when Truman licked the tip and then circled her tongue around it. "I've never had...OHHH GOD!" Never before had she ever had a blow job, the feeling wasn't there it was her imagination that had her blood racing, heart pounding and is what sent her over the edge yelling her lover's name. She sunk to her knees, fell into Truman's arms and let her lay her on her back. Her hips kept thrusting with aftershocks and her center clenched around the small end of the double headed dildo.

"You better hope that your nap gave you enough energy for what I want." Truman said as she stripped Mac of her boxers and then tossed her own with them. She straddled her lover's hips, leaned down and kissed her until they were both gasping for air. Rising up on her hands, she looked down into sea green eyes and lowered herself down onto the dildo. When it was all the way in, she rolled her hips and moaned from the fullness. "Feels so different," She rolled her hips and grinned when Mac's eyes rolled back in her head.

"Then what, feels different...than what?" Mac moaned and lifted her hips up to push into her lover, she had to admit, it did feel different to her as well. She opened her eyes, ran her hands up to cup her lover's breasts and rolled her nipples between her fingers. It then hit her as to what Truman was talking about, she knew for a fact that men didn't give a damn and when they were finished, it was over for the female as well. "I want you to get pleasure from this...don't stop until you do." She grunted when Truman moved down into her and felt her juices start to flow freely from her center. "I'm gonna die..." She held onto her lover's hips and let her do what ever she wanted.

Truman felt her insides tense and then tingle with her oncoming orgasm; she leaned forward and thrust faster and harder. Her chin dropped to her chest, she took a deep ragged breath and let her head go back with the eruption that started in her center and roared through to every fiber of her body. She shuddered and shook until she fell on top of Mac to ride out the last tremors. She wasn't expecting her lover to roll her to her back and capture her lips in a loving kiss or the slow thrusting that took her back to the edge of the abyss. She slipped her hands under Mac's shirt, cupped her breasts and pinched her nipples. She locked onto sea green eyes and watched them change colors; she knew her lover was close. "Don't wait for me..." Her back arched with what Mac did to her, she tried to take a breath and couldn't. All she heard was Mac yelling out her name and then the feeling of being burned alive. A few minutes later, she opened her eyes and looked over to where Mac was lying beside her on her back. She moaned and then chuckled at the site of her lover with a dick. She reached over with one hand, unbuckled the leather straps and watched the dildo fall slightly between her thighs.

"I lost my woody," Mac mumbled and turned her head to the side. "But someone else has its little head wiggling," She eased the dildo out, rolled to her side and looked downward. "And no clit pump this time." She crawled over to lie on top of Truman and adjusted their bodies so that her enlarged clit was between Truman's nether lips. She moaned against Truman's neck and nipped at her sweaty skin. "Wish it was bigger."

"Mac it doesn't need to be...over an inch is big enough...Ohhh Hell," She bucked when Mac's clit rubbed against her own. "Just fine...this way..." She wrapped her arms around Mac and ground against her, a few minutes later; they were gasping and riding out the tremors from their

climaxes. "No more Mac..." She was speaking to deaf ears, Mac was already sleeping. She ran her fingers through her damp hair and tried to smooth down her horns. "I love you and I still out lasted you." She kissed her crown and lay back on the floor, it wasn't the most comfortable that she had ever been but she was too tired and sore to move.

"You find her and you take her out, I don't care how many die with her, no witnesses do you hear me?" The chief of IAD said and pointed to six of his best cops. "Get that damn Jones to, she's the reason all of this went to shit." He looked to the police chief and waited for him to say something, he knew that both Jones and Detective Salisbury were his friends but it came a time when friends were dispensable. Especially when they caused too many problems and got in the way of a business mans wallet. "I want there faces on the damn news as casualties, burn down Jones' building if you have to!" He threw stuff from his desk at the scampering cops and then turned to the chief. "And you are staying with me, I don't need you calling Jones and warning her or telling her to warn Salisbury." He pulled out a taser, fired it into the chief's chest and watched him hit the floor. "That should keep you quiet for a few hours." Signaling to Simson's bartender, he stepped back and let him pick the chief up and put him in a small closet at the far side of his office. "If he makes one peep, you zap him again, can't have him ruining my plans." He walked from his office and pointed to certain IAD cops to follow him on his way out the door.

"Where are they, I checked her apartment and there's no one there?" Syd said and then crawled into bed beside Terry. "Truman needs some furniture, she lives like a nun."

"Syd, most of the time she's across the hall, why does she need furniture?"

"I don't know, I still think they're both a little weird." She wrapped her arms around her lover and buried her face between her breasts. "I smell smoke."

"Well my tits aren't on fire so it must be in your head." She sniffed the air and then saw smoke drifting through the open apartment door. "Ohh fuck, I think the buildings on fire!" They jumped from bed, searched for their clothes and ran from the apartment yelling their friend's names. When they got to the stairs, they saw Mac and Truman using wet towels on the fire. The flames seemed to jump when they tried to beat them out, and then Terry groaned and ran down the stairs. "Its gasoline...we need extinguishers!"

"Call 911 and we'll take care of this!" Truman yelled and ran to the door that led out to the garage, she remembered seeing an old bag of potting soil along the wall and knew that it would put the fire out. Tossing the bag over her shoulder, she jogged back to where Mac was and dropped the bag on the floor. The flames were eating the door and part of the stairs, she moved when Terry and Syd jumped over the flames and started helping them try and put them out. With two of them beating at the flames with wet towels and a blanket, the other two threw dirt on the floor to absorb the gasoline and smother the flames. They were sitting in the garage half dressed and covered in black dirt and soot when the firefighters came tearing into the building. "Nice

timing guys but we put the fire out already."

"You're TOO SLOW!" Syd yelled and threw her dirty t-shirt at one of them. "Now go make sure its out, I don't wanna do that again." She got up and helped Terry to her feet.

"Where's your Chief, I need him to do something out of the ordinary?" She said and looked to Mac and Truman. "Guys we're all dead, we got burned up or suffered smoke inhalation, because this is all too neat to be a random thing."

Truman covered her face and fell sideways into Mac. "We have ta call my grandma, she'll go ballistic when this hits the news." She looked up at all the firefighters' running back and forth through the building and realized that she and Mac were sitting there in only their boxers. "Let's go take showers and get dressed, I have a feeling that we're about to be put out on the street once Terry gets done."

"You're sure that's what the fire chief said, that they pulled four bodies from Jones' building and they've been identified as Salisbury, Jones, Avery and Irving?" The IAD Chief said and looked at the paper that one of his cops handed him.

"I was outside the building and saw them carry the four body bags out, once they were gone, me and my partner went inside and didn't find anyone. Chief, we used ten gallons of gas in the downstairs foyer; we splashed the stairs and everything. We saw the flames from the side of the building and took off when smoke and flames started coming from under the garage door." He watched his chief stick the paper in his desk drawer and then dismisses him as if he were a servant.

"Wait, I almost forgot. The Chief of detectives is in my closet, get his body out of here." He dropped down into his chair and acted as if his closet held dead body's everyday.

"Hello Truman is there any brain activity in there?" Syd asked and waved a hand in front of unblinking blue eyes. "Ya act like you've never seen Mac's ass before."

"Huh...not in Levis I haven't, faded holey and worn in all the right places." She sighed and rested her chin on her fist. "I'm hiding all her trousers and buying her Levis."

"You are so hopeless and I never took you as an ass woman."

"Never was an ass before Mac," She blinked and shook her head. "Did I just call myself an ass?" She felt her mouth water when Mac leaned over the bar and gave her a clear shot of her ass in tight faded Levis.

"Ohh that's it, Mac get your ass down before Truman has a heart attack or starts humping the

table leg!" When Terry leaned over the bar right next to Mac, Syd got up ran over and ran her hands all over her.

"And she yells at me for looking and she's groping in public!" She looked around the kitchen and realized that they were the only ones there. "Hell I'd take Mac right there on the bar if I could so what the Hell am I talking about?" She got up and went over to see what her lover was staring at through the one way mirror that looked out into the Ballroom bar area. She had asked if it was wise to go out in public and to their normal hangout but once she found out that there was a tunnel system from their garage halfway there and then another tunnel system into the Ballrooms basement, she felt better. She never thought of the mirror behind the bar as being one like they had in the cop shop either, now she had a reason to be paranoid in bars. "What are ya doing over here?"

"Watching two IAD cops try not to announce to the whole place that they're cops," Mac said and snorted. "Notice the freshly shined badges on their belts and the humongous bulge under their arms. Not to forget the humongous hand that is between my legs...a little to your left." She snickered at Terry's groan and nudged her with her shoulder. "So are they good cops or bad cops?"

"I think those are bad cops, I always see those two sneaking around my chiefs door...why hasn't he tried to get a hold of anyone about our deaths?"

Truman rested her chin on her lovers back and looked over to Terry. "I have this bad feeling where your boss is concerned, first, you get shoot at, and you abandon your car and he never calls. Now we're dead from smoke inhalation and he still doesn't make an appearance, not even on TV when the news people were outside the station, why?"

Syd raised her hand and waved it in the air like an idiot on a game show. "Ohh pick me pick me! He's in dumpster number two!"

"Not funny Syd," Terry said and smacked at her hand. "That could have been us tonight, if Mac and Truman hadn't been downstairs, what were you guys doing down there half-naked?"

"Exercising in the weight room...Ohhh fuck, I forgot the you know what on the floor." She slapped a hand over her face. "I wonder how many firefighters saw it?"

"I doubt if any of them will say anything about it, it's bigger than anything they got, besides, who doesn't know you're gay?" Truman said and looked to the door when it opened.

"All right you horn dogs," Sally said and pointed to the small TV across the room. "You're on TV again and they found the Chief of Detectives in a flop house handcuffed to the bed post."

Mac snorted and flipped the TV on. "What did some reporter bust in on him or something?"

"More like the maid found his cold body when she went into clean." Sally said and handed everyone a can of Coke. "His wife was taken away in an ambulance after she collapsed at some

women's meeting at church. If I was you four, I'd hide for a while and let this cool down."

"Can't do that Sally," Mac rubbed her temples and looked to her lover. "We have to find out what the Hell is going on and whose behind it, they tried to kill us by burning my building."

"Two of us can look into this; me and Syd aren't known by face. We can grab that cop again and see what else he can tell us, he really likes to cooperate."

Not thinking that it was safe to return to Mac's building or to go to Terry's, they stayed at the Ballroom and in Syd's room. It wasn't a very large living area but would do for a night or so, what Truman found funny was the bunk beds in the bedroom. "Will you two stop already; I swear this is like a sleep over nightmare." Mac rolled over and covered her face with one of the pillows.

"But its fun and it annoys you that's why we're doing it." Truman said and shined her flashlight under Mac's pillow. "I can imagine the type of sleep overs you had as a kid, taking your grandpas skin magazines and looking at the nekkid women all night."

"I had my own subscription to Penthouse, didn't have ta take his. Terry's the only one who slept over because she wasn't afraid of me jumping her; now turn out that flashlight before I kick you and Syd." She reached over the side of the bunk bed, grabbed a shoe and threw it up on the top bunk. She snickered when she heard a yelp and the flashlight hit the floor. "Now go ta sleep I'm tired and my body hurts."

"My little baby sea monkey overworked herself," Truman whispered and placed a soft kiss to the back of her neck. "We'll behave for the rest of the night."

"More like someone overworked me," She rolled to face Truman. "My clit is killing me." She whispered in her ear and then snuggled into her body. "Love you Truman."

"I love you too and we'll sleep in tomorrow morning."

"No ya won't, I'm waking your asses up every hour!" Syd yelled and then was silent except for muffled grunts.

"I'll kill her if she does that." Terry said in a thick voice and then all was quiet for the rest of the night.

Truman and Syd walked into the county morgue, they had a feeling that Terry's boss died by strange circumstances and the only way to find out was to pose as cops and get a copy of the autopsy report. Truman looked over the top of her dark sunglasses and grinned, the assistant ME was the only one in the morgue and he didn't look like he shaved yet. She unbuttoned her shirt

until the bottom of her bra showed and rolled her eyes when Syd stared right at her cleavage. "Come on Syd before I get happy and slap the shit outta you." She walked up to the young man, flashed a seductive smile at him and showed him Mac's old badge. "I'm Detective Julie Andrews, I need the autopsy report on the former Chief of Detectives. I was told that it would be waiting for me when I got here?" She leaned over further until his eyes came to rest on her breasts. "Can I have the report now?"

"Uuhhmm...sure, just let me uhhmm look for it." He stepped back from the counter, tripped over his chair and stumbled over to the other desk. After flipping through numerous papers, he came back with what she wanted. "It was just finished a little while ago; if you need anything and I mean anything call me."

"What I need you can't give me but my bull mastiff can and does regularly." She waved the report at him and walked with a snickering Syd beside her. "Like I'd be that desperate to want anything to do with a pencil necked, needle dicked little twerp who plays with dead bodies." She read through the report and whistled under her breath. "He was murdered, says here that the cause of death was a severe heart attack caused by high voltage." She pointed to the sketch of a human body and to the areas marked. "He was hit in the chest by one of those taser things, ya know the one where it shots those dart things into you and zaps your ass?"

"Nice guys, the only ones that I know who carry those are cops, we'll ask Terry to make sure though. Now where are we off to and can we stop and get some food I'm hungry?" She looked around Truman's arm and at her chest. "I didn't think it was that cold in here is it that nippy?"

"Is that even a word and stop looking at my tits?" She buttoned up her shirt and pulled her coat closed. "As bad as Mac, OK so the four of us are all pervs must mean something."

She rubbed her growling stomach. "Yeah we're all pervs now where we gonna eat Julie Andrews...that didn't come out right."

"You're giving me shivers over here," She said and slapped Syd in the back of her head. "Now I got that damn song about deer in my head and pictures of Mac skipping through fields full of flowers."

"This fucking sucks," Mac grunted from where she was on her back with her feet stuck over her head. "How the Hell does Truman do it?" She flailed her arms and gave up when nothing happened. "Terry...help me?"

"I was hoping you'd help me, my feet are stuck on top of my knees." She tried to move and ended up rolling onto her back. "We're so screwed until our women get home."

"Ohh to have a camera right now," Truman said from the bedroom doorway and walked over to look down at Mac's red face. "Not as easy as it looks huh sea monkey?" She helped her up and then helped Terry as well. "Chief Morris was murdered, from what the report says his body was

moved to the flophouse. Ya know with lividity and all that other medical mumbo jumbo stuff." She pulled it from her pocket and handed it to Mac. "What else do we need to bust this case open, I wanna go home?"

Mac wrapped her arms around her and pressed her face into her breasts. "So do I but we have to get those assholes first." She looked up and held Truman with an intense look. "We have to trap them and that means that the dead have to rise, can you use the pc to get some dirt on the IAD cops and the ones we think are in with 'em, ya know like public record stuff?"

"You mean like houses, cars and anything else a cop can't afford but they all have?" She grinned and gave Mac a tight hug. "Does Sally have a PC here that I can use?"

"Ohh we have better, I've got a brand new Dell laptop that's got everything ya need." Syd handed it to her and dropped down onto her old couch. "It's one of the things I bought with that ransom money...ignore the background picture...it's shocking."

Truman gave her a raised eyebrow look and waited for the laptop to boot, when it was finished, she looked up from under her drawn brows at Syd. "Shocking is not the word I would use for this, horrifying, nightmarish or down right scary is more like it." She looked to Mac and shook a finger at her. "I'm making a copy of this picture, framing it and putting it on the mantle at home." She snickered and the busted out laughing at the picture of Mac in a pink tutu complete with little wings and her horns pointing up along side a silver halo.

"Ohh Syd are you a dead woman, I thought I saw the last of that damn picture." She looked over her lover's shoulder and groaned. "I lost a bet OK and that's what I had ta do."

"And walk up and down Main Street doing little leaps and everything." Mac tossed in and then Terry finished the story.

"I had to bail her out of the nut ward that day, one of the businesses got tired of watching her go jumping past their windows."

"They still cringe when I walk by, now let's get some dirt on other people and leave me alone."

"Ohh I'll get you later," Truman whispered to her and grabbed her ass. "I wanna hear all about this bet you lost." For three hours, she did background and financial checks on the names that Terry and Mac gave her. Some of them came up clean, while others came up with more money than all of them put together had. "OK guys now I need some help here, the cop kind of help." She laid out all the reports that had extreme amounts of money spent and bulging bank accounts on the long table in the Ballrooms kitchen. "These are all the dirt bag cops, more money than they're supposed to have for married or single cops along with the fancy houses, cars and other activities. The ones on the left are IAD, the right is regular cops. Chief Morris is no use now that he's cold so who do we go to for help?"

Terry looked through the reports and groaned, she knew all the cops that were there and had trusted some of them with her life. "We can't go out of house for help because we won't know if

they're bad, I can pull some of my guys and maybe get some from other departments. Now you have to remember that the blue code runs deep with cops but if I can show that Morris was killed by IAD then they might just step up to the line."

"But he was as crooked as the other ones," Syd remarked and looked through the files. "What about us, they tried to make us all crispy, you're the boss of some of them, just get them and we'll help."

Mac nodded her head at Terry and took Truman's hand. "All we need are a couple of cops for back up and we can handle the rest, I say we grab the politician first."

"Nope," Truman shook her head. "We need his files before we can do anything, once we have those; we turn copies over to the District Attorney. Once we have the files we have his ass in a sling plus we have all the names and can get them all at once. Ya never know who's involved; we do know that Simson, his bartender, and the dork that's in lock-up, and the Simson women."

"OK so how do we get his files and how do we know where to look for 'em to begin with?" Mac asked and grinned when Truman wiggled her left brow. "You know where he has his files?"

"He's got a deposit box at the bank and I just happen to know the bank manager, good thing about having relatives in the same town." She picked up the phone and called her aunt at home, a few minutes later she hung up. "We can go by there before they open and she'll let us look in the box."

Terry raised a hand and shook her head. "That's illegal; we need a search warrant to look in that box."

"Not if we just happen to get that box by accident." She winked and leaned back in her chair. "That bank only has one key per safety deposit box, so that means that the bank president and vice president have master keys that open all the boxes. We're going in to get one and it will just happen to be one that's all ready taken."

Terry clapped her hands over her ears and paced the floor; she kept glancing at the other three grinning women and gave up. "Ohh just fuck it, I'm dead already might as well break some more laws while I'm at it."

Truman handed the files from the safety deposit box to Terry on their way into the county court house, she had pulled everything from the box and wasn't sure what was there. When Terry stopped and cussed under her breath, she stopped and looked back. "Tell me we have something and that I didn't just risk my freedom for nothing?"

"Ohh you got something here, too bad we have to give these copies anonymously." She handed one of the pages to her with a wicked smile. "He really fucked himself by putting all his eggs in one box, the city council will be cleaned up along with law enforcement."

"Hell they'll have to build another jail just to hold these assholes, they can't use this stuff in court so what good is it?"

"They can't use this stuff but they can get search warrants because of it and then it's all over for these assholes." She took the paper back, slipped it into the plain folder with the district attorney's name on it and went through the fire door that was just down the hallway from where the DA's office was. She ran down the hallway, slipped it under the closed door and ran back to where Truman was waiting. "Let's get out of here before we're seen."

"Now what do we do, and can we go home?"

"Can't see why not, I mean as soon as the DA takes a look at that file, she's gonna be taken heads off. The first one she's gonna grab is the chief of IAD and the dirty cops, just make sure that Mac doesn't play hero and go out to wrangle bad guys by herself." She leaned in and whispered. "She really sucks at it; she's kinda like *Magnum PI* always getting her ass kicked."

"I'll keep her busy, besides if anyone comes in the place they'll be facing two women with loaded pistols." She tapped her sides and grinned at Terry. "I'm even legal carrying 'em and a better shot than Mac will ever be, she's too short and can only take out knee caps."

Two men dressed in dark clothes crept through the garage and stopped right outside the door to the foyer, they looked to each other and then one went through the doorway. They had been alerted by someone inside the police department that all Hell was going to break loose and that the four women they thought dead weren't. And if they wanted to survive themselves, they were to kill them. They had been watching the building for a couple days and were happy when the four women snuck into the building by way of the side door. Once they were taking care of, then the others involved would find their lives shortened as well.

Mac kept looking out between the blinds in her office, she felt safe in her own building but was still a little uneasy about being back there so soon. Even with the alarm system turned on for the first time in ages, she was still jumpy. "We should have stayed in a motel or something." She mumbled and then sighed when strong arms wrapped around her from behind.

"And you'd be complaining about not being at home and having ta sleep in some strange hard ass bed." She kissed the side of her neck and then rested her chin on her shoulder. "Plus we have two body guards here with us and two undercover cops wandering around the outside of the building, what more could we need?"

"A nice warm beach, palm trees, wimpy drinks with fruit floatin in 'em and the sun settin over the sea. I'm tired of the cold and I've never had a vacation," She tilted her head to the side and looked into pale blue eyes. "Can we do that when this is all over; go to Aruba or some other little

island for a vacation?"

"You just wanna see me in a thong and no bikini top."

"And that's a problem because?" She wiggled her brows and licked her upper lip and canine tooth. "You could model 'em for me here so I can practice not jumping you and humping your leg."

"Ohh after all the trouble I've gone through ta get you to do it the right way now you're gonna try and break that habit, I don't even think so sea monkey." She nuzzled Mac's neck and pulled away quickly when she heard a creak at the stairs, she knew that Terry and Syd were watching TV. In a whisper she asked close to her lover's ear and turned them towards the office door. "Are we expecting anyone?"

"Nope, I called Doris and Sally and told them ta lay low until one of us called, why?"

"Because I heard that step creak, you know the third one from the bottom?"

"Ohh come on Truman it's your imagination plus the alarm didn't go off."

"Because they probably cut the damn thing from outside, call Terry on her cell phone while I sneak out to my desk for something." Just then her cell phone vibrated on her hip, she answered it in a whisper and froze in her steps. "OK send someone now." She dropped to her knees and crawled out to her desk, she opened the bottom drawer and pulled out two flash bang grenades that Syd had given her earlier that day, she didn't know where she got them and didn't care. She saw Syd and Terry crawling from the apartment's doorway towards her; she turned her head and saw the top of a man's head coming up the steps. Looking closer, she didn't recognize him and tossed one of the flash bangs towards him. When it went off, her ears rung and it felt like a hammer hit her between her eyes. She fell to the floor, wrapped her arms around her aching head and then yelled when a sharp pain lanced her left shoulder. She rolled and came up to fall backwards into Mac's office with one of her pistols drawn, she shook her head to clear it and then stood beside the door next to a wide eyed Mac.

"What the Hell was that?" Mac yelled to deaf ears. "You're hit...and bleeding!" She pulled her pistols, charged out into Truman's office and started shooting towards the stairs. When her clips were empty, she slapped two more in and ran all the way down the stairs and started checking all the rooms until she was punched in the side of her face. She hit the floor, blinked and then cursed when she looked up to see Syd's dark wild hair sticking up all over and her golden eyes looking down at her.

"Ya all right, I didn't know it was you and were you shooting at us?" She yelled and then squinted when Mac yelled back at her. "I can't hear ya and I don't read lips, we got two stiffs in the garage!" She helped her up and then saw Truman stumbling down the stairs towards them; she ran over to her and made her sit on the stairs while Mac opened the front door for the District Attorney and her cops. "The bad guys are in the garage!" She yelled and shrugged her shoulders when the DA and her two cops covered their ears.

"Why is everyone yelling around here?" She asked and moved out of the way when paramedics came into the foyer.

"I threw one of those grenade things!" Truman yelled and slapped at Mac's searching hands. "Stop it or I'll smack you hard!" She pointed to where the spent flash bang lay on the floor and then fell back into Mac's arms. "I don't feel so good, the rooms getting kinda dark..."

Days later, Truman sat on the couch drinking coffee and watching Mac try and fold their clean clothes, she had gotten out of it by struggling with the bed sheets. With her left arm in a sling, she had trouble doing most things, cooking was one thing she would struggle with, Mac's idea of cooking was instant oatmeal. "So what's gonna happen with Terry and Syd killing those two cops?"

"Not a thing, after knocking out the two undercover cops outside, they broke in here, shot you and were gonna take out the rest of us so it's self defense. Terry's back to work, Syd's getting our groceries and the stuff we need to fix all the bullet holes." She dropped all the socks back in the laundry basket and looked to her lover. "I hate folding clothes, the socks...there's too many!" She whimpered and crawled across the couch to lie in Truman's lap; she looked up at her with watery eyes and blinked. "I'm retiring, no more cops and robbers; you got shot because of all of this shit..." She wiped at her eyes and wrapped an arm around Truman's thigh. "I can't loose you or anyone else because of the scum out there; if I hadn't been dealing with Simson then none of this would've happened."

"And the bad guys would still be out there killing, stealing and all the other things that they were doing with a badge to shield them. 32 bad guys Mac, we got 32 bad guys off the street and they're being charged under the RICO law. You saw the list they had of all the people they wanted dead for one reason or another, now they're safe."

"Yeah but you still got shot and it could have been worse..." She sniffled and wiped at her eyes. "I know what you're saying it's...I feel guilty about everything, I worked with some of those guys and then my old boss was in on all of it and I never knew."

Truman rocked her and tried to smooth down her horns. "Terry worked with him every day and didn't know, they were good at staying hidden Mac, running a bookie business out of Simson's bar, getting kickbacks from the casino at the racetrack. The cops charging certain businesses for protection from Simson's thugs and then giving him a percentage of that money and all of this under the direction of a city councilman and paying off lawyers and judges to keep certain people from going to jail." She moved down on the couch so that they were both lying down and were more comfortable. "It's just amazing that know one knew about it in this small town."

"Ya know how ya look the other way when I do something stupid, that's what everyone does when there's crimes' being committed by cops and when someone saw them they died because of it. Then it's easy to get the word around when an examples been made, what makes me sick is I

took blood money from both Simson and the councilman."

"You earned that money and no matter what, you and Syd saved that man's daughter. Mac we did good and that's all that counts, we still have the background check contracts and we're not hurting for money so we retire and go to Aruba for a month or so."

"And whose gonna take care of the building when we're gone..." She stopped when a long finger pressed over her lips.

"Who did I loose my apartment to," She whispered and licked at Mac's ear. "Whose been fixing all the stuff that's broke around here, she even fixed the electric garage door opener?"

"Ohh I gotcha...what would ya say to letting Syd take over the PI business when we get back and we lay around all day and practice all the positions in my sex book?"

"I hope you have them memorized, Terry took it the other day and the last I saw, some of the pages were marked with energy bar wrappers and smudged with strawberry jelly."

"That's OK; I got a bigger book under our bed. Whatcha say we go snuggle in bed and watch TV, my jaw hurts from Syd punching me?"

"I'd say ya got lucky, you could have been as close as I was to that damn grenade." She rubbed her ear and looked down at a smirking Mac. "Are we still yelling like before 'cuz I can't tell?"

"For Christ sakes I can hear you guys all the way out on the other side of the street," Syd walked past them with her arms full off grocery bags. "Ya gonna help me or do ya want me ta put the stuff away as well and why did I do your grocery shopping anyway?"

"Because you're the greatest thing in the world...and I don't trust Mac, Fritos, cheese whiz and peanut butter are not things you eat for supper." She got out from under a snickering Mac and went to help Syd put the groceries away. "We're going on vacation so you guys will have the building to yourself, no orgies in our bedroom."

"Aaahhh damn and I had it all planed out to, I was thinking a torture rack in the corner and maybe filling the bedroom with those wedge pillows." She stopped what she was doing and looked at Truman. "When are ya going and do I get ta play PI?"

Truman looked to where Mac was trying to put their socks into pairs and grinned. "I'm thinking maybe in the next few days, I need a break and Mac's coming undone."

"Ohhh yeah...I'm loosing it 'cuz we got an uneven number of socks!" She tossed them in the air and fell back on the couch. "We're leaving in a few days and you're in charge of the office, ya can even wear my hat!"

"Like I wanna wear that nasty old hat, I think that's what makes them little horns grow on your head. Old nasty evil possessed by the devil hat is what it is, eyes turnin red and shit and hair

growin all over your body!" Truman backed away from her and looked over at Mac. "That's why ya gots hairy hobbit feet's, it's the devil hat! You're possessed by the devil and Truman's your evil kinky pitch fork carrin stab me in my ass demon!" She jumped at a wide eyed Truman, ran across the room and jumped on Mac. "Can I wear your zoot chain to?"

"OK so we managed to get the beach to ourselves and scared off the kid that was bringing us fruity drinks, now what do we do?" Truman asked and tilted her head to the side to look at Mac's profile; they had been in Aruba for one day and already made a huge impression on the Hotel staff. They second they came out of their room, everyone ran and hid. She felt her lips pulling into a wide grin when Mac's eyebrow raised and she tilted her head to the side. She loved her more than anything and wanted nothing more than to spend the rest of their lives together.

"Guess we have to get everything ourselves," She looked around the beach and didn't even see a bird. "What did we do anyway, I was being nice?"

"I think it's our yelling we should have waited until the humming in our ears was gone before coming here and will you take off that stupid hat!" She grabbed Mac's fedora and tossed it under her chair. "I finally get you out of zoot suits and into shorts and you won't leave the hat in our room."

"It was either my chain or hat, you hid my chain so." She lifted her hands and gave Truman a wicked grin.

"I didn't hide your zoot chain, you used it last night to chain me to the headboard and that's where it still is." She pulled her sunglasses down, dropped her lounge chair to the reclining position and looked over at Mac. "Come on Mac I know you wanna so get over here and play out your fantasy."

"Yes my Queen and it's not my fantasy," She got up from her chase lounge, grabbed the bag of grapes and kneeled beside Truman. "This is your fantasy; we should've brought Terry and Syd along so they could fan you with those big Cleopatra fans." She placed a grape in Truman's mouth and moaned when her fingers were sucked on. "OK so it is my fantasy," She pressed her hips into Truman's thigh. "And ya know what I want!" She fell back into the sand when Truman got up and jogged away, she looked down at her hand and saw that her ring was gone. She lay there for a few seconds before she got up and chased after Truman and yelled. "You took my ring...you stoles preciousssss...does that make me your concubine?!"

The end.

Swing Time

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