

~ Diera's Lyric ~

by Lucien St Clare

Disclaimer & Copyright: This story deals with Adult content like, graphic scenes of sex (between two women), bad language and mild violence(ok murder but nothing graphic) These characters are my creation and so is the story any resemblance to any other story is strictly coincidental. Feedback is always appreciated Lucienstclare@yahoo.com.

This story is dedicated to my Uncle Lucian who crossed the Styx on Friday 1st August 2008, may his soul rest in Peace. This is a sequel to the Rage of Eden but can be read as a stand-alone. It is meant to be a Romance between two of the most stubborn characters I have ever had the misfortune of writing about and I rather liken the entire painful 2 year process of creating this work to giving birth.

Synopsis

A chance meeting on the London underground brings two people together, reunited once more by coincidence this time in the fabled city of dreams Ravendale, USA. Lyric is an arrogant aristocratic lawyer who believes she can have anyone and anything she wants. Diera is her beautiful P.A. who is proving to be more than a challenge to her charm and seduction skills, in between there's a murder, a slave auction, family secrets and the mayhem caused by interfering parents. I hope you like this.

Chapter 1

"Where shall I begin, please your Majesty?" asked the White Rabbit.

"Begin at the beginning," the King said gravely, "and go on till you come to the end: then stop."

Lewis Carroll: Alice's Adventures in Wonderland

The platform was crowded, the wait interminable, the crush unbearable everyone was standing around anxiously waiting for the train. It was summer in Regents Park and the weather had been beautiful. The sun was high in a blue sky without a cloud in sight and this was British Summer time at its best. It was hot yet there was a crisp breeze, the smell of freshly cut grass mixed in with the aroma of food and drink that floated on the air at a fair, hot dogs, hamburgers, candy floss and hot coals from the bar-bar-que.

This Pride Parade was colourful, loud and brash, the music and performing bands at their best and the fairground attractions and stalls did a brisk business with the crowds who surged into the park.

This was London at the height of summer. The last two gay pride events had been rained out and expensive but this was one to remember. The summer heat continued throughout the day as Britons took off their clothes at even the slightest ray of sunshine gaily stripped and went about their business.

The streets were lined with buskers getting high whilst they pounded on their drums, the Hare Krishnas in their orange robes who were always at every festival preaching tolerance and love and doling out free food for those who could not afford the extravagant prices of the many festivals held in the city during summer and who always made new friends and converts even if the some were only temporary and guided by their stomachs.

London was a mixture of many different races and cultures and consequently London Pride was always a very cosmopolitan affair. Londoners required that there be different types of food and the drink tents and the range of cultures that could be found at London Pride was truly breathtaking.

Old fashioned English cuisine was served alongside, hot and spicy Ethiopian curries, exotic Caribbean dishes, sat side by side with food from Asia and the Orient, there was even a little Hawaiian cafe right next to the Polish stall, in between the Jewish and Croatian stands and from which, Albanian and Ghanian customers peered interestedly.

The continents were definitely represented and with dishes from all the different countries across Europe, Asia, Oceania, Africa and the Americas reflecting not just the commercial success of each country's cuisine but also the immigrant politics of the city of London itself. As a consequence almost every nationality and cuisine in the world was represented.

The Drink's tents also featured drinks from around the world beer tasting, wine tasting, champagne tasting and even vodka tasting tents. Then there were the different tents representing the different clubs and tastes lifestyles of the city's inhabitants. Fist, Club Whotever, Club Muthafuka, Ego, Trend, The Torture Gardens, The Candy Bar, Heaven, Liberty, and the most crowded tent of all was the Women's tent.

Most of the other tents tended to play what Lyric's friends mockingly referred to as hand bag pop which was popular dance music which meant that the other tents played the same type of music with three tents sometimes playing the same tune.

However the women's tent was exclusive and because it was women only and represented so much diversity they had to cater for everybody so that every type of music was played with the result that the tent was always over -crowded and bursting at the seams. Only women and transgender folk were allowed in and the queues were longer than those for the roller coasters and fairground rides.

Lyric was there with her friends they had just finished playing in the soccer tournament where her team came second. She had even picked up a golden boot award and was feeling really mellow if a little sore after playing football for what seemed like four hours but in fact was only

two. After that they had gone to watch some of the band performances on stage. She accepted another brew from her friend and they clinked bottles and that was when she saw her, mid-clink.

She had hair the colour of burnished copper with streaks of golden highlights and she was wearing the sexiest most risqué outfit she had ever seen in her life. The red leather dress, which hugged her generous curves jealously, was sleeveless and strapless laced up in front with a leather thong.

It had the effect of a bustier which pushed everything up and together and cinched in her tiny waist. Beneath that she wore a very short skirt which was long enough to cover the essentials but brief enough to be extremely provocative.

Lyric caught a glimpse of sheer black stockings attached to a black garter belt and knee high red boots with black stiletto heels. Her red blonde streaked hair was piled atop of her head haphazardly and it looked like it wanted to tumble down her shoulders.

She was dancing and writhing her hips, her hands in the air whilst was surrounded by three or four other women all striving to get her attention. She was sexy and she knew it, her cerulean eyes taunted Lyric as if daring her to come over.

Her gaze held Lyric's and the girl moistened her lips by licking them provocatively before making her lips into moue to blow a kiss at her. Her heart went into overdrive as she stared hungrily at the girl unable to move, unable to think unable to breathe.

Someone bumped into her so that she spilled her beer on the people standing in front of her. By the time she apologized and soothed ruffled tempers the girl had gone, lost in the crowd of revellers that was in the tent. Lyric searched for her everywhere but could not find her again.

As Pride started winding down everyone started making their way home to shower and get ready for pride parties that would be taking place at different venues across the city.

It was midnight before the pride in the park came to an end with a fantastic display of fireworks and then people started making their way to the underground. A few scuffles broke out as people struggled to get on the train but generally it was all good natured.

She was separated from her friends in the mad crush but since they all knew where they were going to meet up she wasn't too bothered when they left on the earlier train. Some of her friends were still behind her trying to get on the train and it was only by throwing her muscular weight around that she managed to get on to the train herself.

It was standing room only so she made her way to the corner near the exit but away from the entrance on the platform side which she knew would be crowded and there she was.

A man was standing over her, his eyes lecherously leering at her and Lyric had an insane instinct to protect her from him. She didn't know why she felt the need to protect her she had barely

spoken to the woman. She inserted herself between the man and the girl by the simple expedient of grabbing one of the over head handles.

Lyric stood at an impressive 6'0 in her bare feet towered above the man who was a lot shorter than her and the girl in the red outfit was almost eye level in her six inch heels. Yet Lyric was able to block his view of the girl with her broad shoulders and she smiled inwardly when she heard his disappointed sigh.

As the doors closed and the train started off someone started strumming an impromptu rendition of Bob Marley's Redemption song on a battered wooden acoustic guitar and the whole carriage joined in. Everyone was pleasantly mellow from the day in the park and the camaraderie on the coach was mainly because most of the occupants had just come from Pride.

Lyric could not seem to move her attention away from the girl. So she tried not to look at her at her but she remained totally aware of her on every level as her senses engaged her presence. She could smell her perfume in the crowded carriage, it was sensuous and womanly and promised many nights of sensual sultry delights and despite all the noise in the carriage she could hear her breathing, feel her flesh on hers where their skin touched, hell she imagined she could even taste her.

The train stopped with a lurch and she staggered against Lyric and grabbed a hold of Lyric's thin black cotton t-shirt.

"I am sorry about that."

She had spoken only a few words and Lyric surmised she was American, her accent was pleasant, easy on the ear and sexy as hell. She wanted to melt into a puddle of mush at her feet it was a miracle that she didn't.

Around them people had whistles which they blew enthusiastically as well as horns and guitars so the merry making continued until they arrived at the next station and some people got off but even more people got on pushing them right against each other leaving the other woman aware that it was only Lyric's large protective body that kept her from the gaze of the lecherous man still angling to ogle her.

He was intimidated by Lyric's punked up hair spiked into a mohawk and aggressive looking attire. She wore black combats, a vest and had a wicked looking tattoo of a red dragon rampant curling its sinuous body around her arm.

In her chin were five iron piercings in the shape of spikes which along with the airbrushed facial tattoo of a black scorpion and red contact lenses made her look extremely menacing. A studded belt rested on her lean hips and studded bracelets completed her frightening ensemble and he backed off sharply when she turned to glare at him.

The train started up yet again, its movements causing their bodies to rub against each other and Lyric closed her eyes and groaned inwardly. It was a mistake because of course when she

inhaled she was assailed by her perfume. Her senses were being overwhelmed by her scent, and Lyric was dying to taste her.

The train moved pushing their bodies together, she felt a frisson of desire trickle down her spine where her hand rested casually on her stomach to steady herself. Their hips were touching and Lyric accidentally brushed her soft breast with her forearm and then felt her breadth against her neck as the girl gasped with the contact.

Then they were pinned against the glass and each other, Lyric's hip between the girl's legs and the girl's legs nudging against the juncture of Lyric's thighs. Her lips were red and sultry and oh so kissable and then the girl bit down on her lip and looked away uncertainly? Lyric couldn't be sure but the look in her eye and the smile that played about her lips as though she knew a guilty secret.

She was so sexually aroused, with the incessant contact she wanted to throw back her head and howl instead she grit her teeth and tried to think of anything else but her taut stiffened nipples and the tingling ache between her legs that needed to be touched. The train came to a slow halt between tunnels and then stopped. All the lights went out and then there was a loud humming as the air conditioning and ventilators automatically came on.

They were facing each other and with nowhere to hold on to the girl had grabbed hold of Lyric's vest resting her hands on the taller woman's muscled torso leaving her hands lingering on her stomach whilst Lyric's arms closed around her.

There was no where to look except at her, no room to manoeuvre and where she touched Lyric through her vest felt electric. Her hands lingered on Lyric's body, small, elegant and perfectly manicured, her nails were natural and painted scarlet like the disturbingly sexy dress she wore. She couldn't stop staring at her small hands, she seemed to have developed a hand fetish along with a raging lust for the hot little blonde bombshell whose blue eyes invited her to drown in their cerulean depths.

Lyric knew the girl had to be feeling her heart pounding crazily beneath her fingertips, feel her body trembling uncontrollably with desire.

"Are you okay?"

Lyric nodded barely able to form a coherent sentence her voice seemed to have deserted her. Why was she feeling like this? She had never felt like this before about anyone.

There was another long silence. People around them continued to chat desultorily. Lyric shifted her body trying to adjust her legs so she could ease the pressure that was building between her legs.

"I can feel you against me." She said softly.

"I'm sorry I'm...." Lyric's hoarse voice tailed off and she cursed herself inwardly. She was wearing a fucking strap on because she had promised she would enter the drag King competition at Club Whatever and now it was shoved up between her and the girl, rubbing deliciously on her clit with each movement the girl made. That was what the beautiful blonde was feeling.

"It's okay. I like it." A slow sexy grin broadened her lips. "It feels good."

She moved again inadvertently causing the strap on to rub against Lyric's sensitised clit and this time Lyric was unable to hide her feelings she inhaled sharply through her teeth.

The words "Bloody hell!" escaped her lips involuntarily in a hiss. She could feel a cold trickle of sweat down her back as a heavy ache settled in her loins till the swelling in her clitoris was almost painful she grit her teeth and a trickle of slow sweat slid down her back. It would be so easy to just push up against her and rub their bodies together to ease the aching between her legs.

"Are you sure you're alright?"

What she wanted to say was "No I am not fucking alright, I want to make love with you so badly I think I'm going to lose my mind." What she actually said was "Yeah."

The blonde girl smiled mysteriously and then moved provocatively, purposefully brushing against the rigid body pushed up against her and deliberately pressing her body against her. Lyric felt utterly helpless as her nipples tautened painfully under the tender assault.

A loud voice spoke over the loudspeakers. "Sorry ladies and gentlemen, I'm afraid the train in front of us has broken down so we will have to push them to safety. Please be patient this should not take us longer than a few minutes."

As the train driver was making his announcement the girl's hands went on tentatively exploring between their bodies, down to the straining bulge of her jeans and glided tantalizingly over it, indirectly rubbing against her clit. Lyric groaned and thrust her hips forwards into the maddening caress.

Lyric gasped when the girl licked her lips slowly, deliberately, her tongue wetting her lips she thought she heard herself moan and unable to resist so she lowered her head to kiss her shiny red lips and was rewarded with a sigh of pleasure as she crushed the young girl's body between hers and the glass, and bit her lip. She whimpered and Lyric thrust her tongue into her mouth and ground her body against the girl.

Her lips were soft beneath hers and oh so very sweet as their tongues moved together tasting, each other tentatively at first and then more confidently. They were plastered against each other, the girl hooked one leg up on Lyric's waist and Lyric grasped her bottom in her trembling hand, her other hand slid under the girl's skirt and her thumb slipped around the side of her panties to brush against her sex.

As they moved against each other, the girl cupped Lyric's head in her hands, her fingers gliding though her black Mohawk. The girl moved against Lyric, her movements caused the strap on she was wearing to rub against her clit deliciously and Lyric pulled her closer, harder against her till Lyric had that tingling feeling in her spine and nipples, the one she got just before she was about to cum.

Unfortunately the train chose that moment to lurch forward before starting again with an insistent humming pushing them both back into the crowd of people behind them, and by the time the lights came on, they both looked quite presentable. It had been pitch black, as the train had been in a tunnel there was absolutely no source of light so no one had seen their passionate clinch.

As everyone's eyes got accustomed to the light the train pulled into a stop at the station. Before she could say or do anything the red haired girl got off the train and left without looking back.

Lyric was so horny, she could barely walk and that sexy tease had left her wet and hanging and then an unconscious smile played about her lips. It had been an interesting train ride though.

It was one of those lazy summer afternoons in the city. The sun was shining, the sky was blue there wasn't a single cloud in sight. Felborough Park was teeming with people enjoying the weather.

The park was strewn with corporate types eating sandwiches, children running around with their Frisbees and students tucking into fruit boxes from La Cacherie, the restaurant opposite the park which did a roaring trade during lunchtime in summer.

The fruit boxes were cheap and stuffed with ugly misshapen strawberries, large sweet blueberries, loganberries and slices of apple with a few grapes sprinkled with icing sugar. Unlike the perfectly shaped fruit salads available from the supermarket the La Cacherie fruits were sweet tasting and always freshly picked from the owners fruit orchards.

It was a major draw and when the restaurant was filled with clientele as it was now people simply spilled out into the park with their lunch. Lucy had managed to secure a table for them on the patio just outside at La Cacherie. Her court case had finished early and she was joined by Diera, Erienne, Sabrina, and Eden. La Cacherie was fondly called the headquarters by Rage, Eden's Fiancée because it was their favourite lunch spot.

As usual they were indulging in a salad because they were always trying to lose weight and this was accompanied by a glass of white wine because well it was summer and piping hot chocolate brownies smothered in hot thick sticky chocolate sauce with whipped cream and ice cream with black cherries because well life was just too short to spend it dieting.

Lucy usually the quietest in the group was talking animatedly about the latest addition to the law firm of Barton, Bingham and Ellington. The law firm where Diera, Eden and Lucy worked.

"She's rumoured to be a hotshot lawyer from England and she is going to be heading the Criminal Law department. She is like a genius. She went to Oxford university at sixteen and finished at nineteen. Then she went motorcycling around the world for two years before she made a killing on the stock market and was a millionaire at twenty three before going into going into criminal law and passing her bar exams here and in the United Kingdom. I heard she is fantastic at cross-examination." Lucy reeled off breathlessly.

"Oh la la Lu sounds like you 'ave a petit crush non?" Erienne teased.

"hmm " Sabrina's eyes narrowed. "The way you describe her even I am jealous. I have never seen you have such a passionate tendre for anyone." Sabrina licked her lips and her eyes surveyed Lucy in a predatorily assessing way that caused the other woman to shift uncomfortably.

"Unfortunately she also has Bradley Smith as her junior counsel. But that's okay I don't mind working with that arrogant nerd as long as Ellington okays my transfer to her department, I'm sorry Diera I know he's your friend."

"You asked for a transfer to criminal?" Erienne's eyes widened as she considered Lucy's words. "I thought you hated criminal."

"I did I do but mainly because I feel we are always defending rich scumbags." Lucy replied tucking into her food with gusto.

"And this is different why?" Erienne asked sipping her glass of wine.

"I don't know it just is. Anyway I am not the only one who asked for a transfer to the Criminal department of the firm, Diera asked for a transfer too."

Diera sipped her wine and wiped her lips daintily with her napkin. "Yes but I have good reasons. I don't feel comfortable working with David Barton he has wandering hands."

"Did you report it to Ellington Senior?" Erienne queried worriedly.

"Yes actually. He offered me the job in Criminal and since my arrogant nerd of a boyfriend works there as well I jumped at it. So I will be Ms Black's new P.A."

"Hmm sounds like the Criminal division might be a most interesting place to work these days." Sabrina licked her spoon and peered over the top of her designer sunglasses and then glared at her phone when it rang insistently.

Sabrina hushed everyone. "It's Angel." She grimaced and her tone turned cold as everyone tried to pretend not to be listening to the conversation."

"Oh honey what's wrong?" Eden inquired as Sabrina bit her lip and put the phone down clearly upset.

Sabrina sighed "Angel's been really pushing for us to settle down especially now she's been promoted to Detective in the police force and has a steady job and quite frankly I don't trust myself. I am not very good at the whole monogamy business." She negligently waved a hand in the air.

"But Sabrina," Eden pointed out in that annoyingly observant and sagely wise way she had been doing ever since Sabrina had known her. "You've been dating Angel exclusively for the past year and you haven't so much as looked at another woman or man for that matter."

"I know and it feels good but I'm just too high maintenance I'm not sure I can give up being a pampered socialite. I enjoy having someone at my beck and call. Angel is doing alright I suppose but she wants me to move in with her and she's very proud she wants to support me. She won't let me pay for anything and I am not ready to be the domestic earth mother like Erienne."

Erienne rolled her eyes at Sabrina. "I am a home maker not an earth mother."

"Prove it! Model for the children's benefit!" Lucy challenged sipping her coffee. She was drinking it with whipped cream and was enjoying the taste of the chocolate flakes melting in her mouth. She'd told them to leave out the sugar to cut down on the calories and now she added two little cubes of the white marshmallow stuff for character.

"Why not! I think I can even give Sabrina a run for her money."

"I will not be modelling this year. Although Cassandra, Bianca, Eden, Summer, Fiona and Diera will be. I have put their names forward." Sabrina said primly.

"I will?." Eden looked uncertainly at Sabrina.

Diera raised one tawny arched eyebrow. "That's news to me."

"Yes I will be co-ordinating so I am rather short of models this year. Lucy will be helping me backstage."

"To dress the models." Lucy grinned "I can't wait. Besides it's for a good cause at the end of the evening we are going to auction off the models. It's run by the Tolerance society. It's a charity that helps young gay kids. They are working towards placing gay children with gay foster families or gay orphanages or at least to ensure the kids are placed where they can express their sexual orientation safely."

"Sabrina, you know Rage is not going to be very happy about this she can be extremely unreasonable." Eden said uncertainly.

Erienne laughed "And jealous let's not forget jealous."

"Hmm," Sabrina grinned evilly "I was counting on it, between your jealous lover," She pointed to Eden "and Diera's ice cool blonde good looks and Erienne's domestic goddess reputation, I think we'll be raking in the cash." she high fived Lucy.

"Do you really think I'm a domestic goddess?" Erienne wanted to know.

Lyric Gaylord Black stepped off the plane with a shrug of her elegant shoulders. She smiled at the air stewardess who had made sure she was extremely comfortable throughout the flight. As smiles went this was a hundred watt killer smile.

She sailed through immigration and got stopped at customs.

"Anything to declare?"

Lyric eyed the customs woman lazily through her glittering black eyes . One too many glasses of champagne and a heavy petting session in first class with the Mexican air stewardess and she had decided that this particular trip to America was going to be more fun than previous trips. Off course she hadn't been travelling in first class on all her previous trips.

She wasn't too impressed with the customs woman though. She looked entirely immune to her charm. Lyric was good looking and she knew it and used it ruthlessly to her advantage every opportunity she got.

Her hair was jet black and her eyes were a dreamy caramel colour flecked with yellow, a throw back to her mixed Spanish ancestry, She stood at an imposing 6'0 in her excellently cut Armani suit. How could the woman not like her, but apparently she didn't. Instead the old bag was glaring disapprovingly at her.

"No." Lyric drawled in a decidedly bored tone.

The woman examined her bag anyway. Lyric examined her. She had short closely cropped hair and a stern demeanour.

"What do you have in this bag Ma'm"

"Oh, nothing important just a few clothes." Lyric said nonchalantly

The woman continued rummaging in her bags until she extracted a rather large bottle of Brandy VSOP special edition mounted spectacularly in a wooden case with velvet cloth and accompanied with two clear cut crystal brandy glasses.

The customs woman glared at her. "I thought you said you were only carrying clothes."

"I am," Lyric drawled "that's my night cap."

Well when she finally got out of the airport and ordered a taxi she was exhausted. Exhausted by endless questions and extremely bad tempered. So after unloading her bags in her antiseptic new apartment that she had rented she decided to go out so after a hot shower she hit the nearest gay bar looking for a little company.

There were lots of women everywhere and just when she found someone she liked and decided to go over someone even better looking popped up. Lyric thought she was going to like living in America.

There was a stage at the front and she realised that they were doing some sort of event. There was a drag king competition which she thoroughly enjoyed and even though she was there by herself and didn't know a single soul and hadn't even picked anyone up for the night yet she was really having a good time.

When the MC started introducing the models who were to be auctioned off for the evening she was intrigued.

The first girl up on the catwalk was a dark haired gorgeous woman. She did not have the figure of a model, she was too curvaceous for that. She seemed a little shy but she carried off the catwalk attitude with aplomb and a saucy little wink. When the bidding started the crowd went wild till she was won by a tenacious looking blonde. The way they kissed it was obvious that they were together.

More of the girls walked on to the catwalk and were snapped up by the audience. One girl was so raunchy that after her Elvis impersonation she stripped down to her boxers to waggle her strap on at the crowd. Another girl did an Anastasia meets Baywatch impression and all in all it was a good atmosphere.

Everyone laughed at the different antics of the girls as they tried to get the crowd hyped into spending money on the auction. Some danced, some pranced and the bidders all played along with the sums of money getting higher and higher.

One of the bidders was a 6'2 mixed race woman with raven black hair and mocha skin. Although there was a sprinkling of freckles on her face which was about the only thing that made her look remotely approachable. Her eyes were an extraordinary grey and she scowled fiercely.

She was lean and dressed casually in a white shirt rolled up to the elbows, blue denim pants and her short hair was cut into a modern rakish style. She spent a lot of money out bidding the nearest person. The woman she was bidding on was described as Erienne the domestic goddess, a curvy little blonde with sultry green eyes. She had a cheeky look about her, lovely dimples and an infectious laughter. She was dressed elegantly in a long black Carolina Balenciaga gown

Lyric who had an eye for precious stones realised she actually had real diamonds in her ears and around her neck but they were so numerous and beautifully set that most people would think they were just crystals or even diamante but Lyric recognised the real thing.

As she looked closer at her partner she realised it was her friend and business partner Maria Antiope Xavi affectionately known as Maxi. Maxi was actually closer to her friend Kieren since they both grew up on the rough side of the tracks and Lyric made a note to catch up with her before she left the club.

However at that moment, Maxi had eyes only for the blonde on the stage and appeared to be relieved when she won her prize. The woman who lost out looked extremely peeved but when the MC promised that the Erienne would send her famous Pumpkin and Lemon Meringue she seemed to perk up again.

Lyric made her way to the bar from her vantage point and the music changed. The MC was saying that the next girl was going to be the last girl on the catwalk for the night and everyone's last chance for a date. She paid the bartender as the MC hyped up the crowd into a frenzy of expectation.

When the lights dropped low and the music changed to a slow sexy rhythm driven by a heavy bass sound that vibrated thorough her being making her think of only one thing. Hot Sex.

She was expecting a really raunchy act but the woman who appeared on the makeshift runway was anything but. Lyric didn't realise she had stopped breathing until she felt dizzy enough to pass out. There was recognition in those blue eyes. She looked like a young Sharon Stone but more curvaceously sensual in her every move.

The model was wearing a white faux fur coat which she took off by the simple expedient of letting it slide slowly down her lovely creamy white shoulders to reveal a blue satin silky creation which defied gravity in some places and owed much to creative engineering in others.

The dress was held together by two thin spaghetti straps that looked like they were going to snap under the weight of her generous breasts before falling in figure hugging perfection down her slim waist and flowing down her long legs.

She was incredibly sexy, all beautiful ice cool attitude as she strutted her stuff on the stage and reduced her captive audience to a quivering mass of jellylike lust. Her hips swayed seductively as she flicked her head over her shoulder and simply sashayed across the stage.

Lyric felt a moment of panic as though she stood dangerously teetering on the edge of a precipice, a hairsbreadth away from falling into an abyss. She could feel it in her centre, that tight feeling, her body remembered that heavy ache in her loins caused by the girl with those blue eyes, those eyes that had haunted her dreams for years sometimes even intruding on her waking moments as she remembered their time on the underground and she shifted uncomfortably.

Lyric was staring and the girl was staring right back and she knew Lyric was staring. She couldn't help herself, her lips were rich full, sultry and begging to be kissed, Lyric's hands fairly begged to cup her magnificently voluptuous breasts in her hands and that walk, that hip swinging come and get me walk.

"Jaysus!" Lyric vaguely heard the woman next to her say as the blonde woman on the cat walk surveyed the crowd imperiously.

Her violet blue eyes held Lyric spell bound they were so dark as to be almost purple in their brilliance. Lyric smiled wryly and lifted her glass nodding her head to her in a silent salute. The blonde raised one tawny eyebrow challengingly, tossed her head and swivelled round in one fluid movement she literally prowled back across the stage like a sleekly sensual cat, hips swinging, head tossing and then returning to the spot where she had dropped the fake fur coat, she picked it up by its collar and dragged it behind her heedless of the dirt and debris on the ground.

It was her. Diera would recognise her anywhere because she had haunted her every fantasy for years. Now she stood smack in the centre of the room, minus the spikes and the tattoos, all dark and broody and smouldering like a burning brazier. Her magnetic presence was like a black hole at the centre of the universe inexorably compelling her attention.

She had stared not wanting to look away at anyone else around her because they were blurred and inconsequential. She had only ever seen those eyes once. Then as now they blazed with intelligence, intense and brilliant they stared at her with unblinking fervour as though she could plumb the very depths of her mind.

The dark eyes did a slow sensuous sweep of her body and even across the room they felt like a lover's hands moulding her curves with a Machiavellian like smile that promised temptation and dark dangerous desires. This was a woman capable of all manner of bad deeds.

Then like a corny cliché their gazes locked across the crowded room. Ice cool blue eyes met glittering opal hued ones. No one had ever looked at her the way the dark stranger was looking at her now.

She had to break the spell, She stopped and turned around to give the audience another look over her shoulder and they were gifted with a view of her backless dress which stopped just above the small of her back leaving just enough to titillate the imagination and then she left the stage to rapturous applause and frenzied wolf whistles.

"Wow Diera you were fantastic!" Lucy grinned and hugged her as she stepped into the dressing room.

Diera laughed, breathless with delight and shook her head her head easing herself out of her dress and back into her jeans and blouse. "I never ever want to do that again!"

"Why not? You had close to at least several hundred women eating out of the palm of your hand. Sometimes Diera I just don't understand you." Lucy put the dress in a plastic bag and returned it to the other collection.

The door of the dressing room opened and Eden and Erienne came in and kissed her congratulating her.

"Did you see that hottie at the bar? Her eyes were practically eating you up." Alison said hugging her enthusiastically.

"Alison!!!" Bianca said shocked

"What you don't think an old lady can like me can appreciate a nice specimen of womanhood when I see one?"

"You're married! To a man!" Lucy spluttered.

Alison gave a gallic shrug "I'm married not blind."

"Well I didn't see her, there were lots of women out there tonight." Diera said airily.

"The one in tan pants with the velvet jacket and killer eyes?"

"Diera even I could see the chemistry between you two, it sizzled. I can even tell the exact moment you spotted her in the crowd because your eyes lit up." Erienne was helping her to brush her hair.

Diera blushed and said stubbornly, "She's not my type."

"Tell me about it. She looks like the kind of woman even you would have a hard time pushing around." Erienne acknowledged.

Cassandra stroked her chin thoughtfully "She sounds like a challenge." and then she grinned "and I like challenges." However before Cassandra could approach the woman she was waylaid by an old friend.

"Come on let's go out and tear this place up." Bianca said almost gleefully.

The event was being held in the Phoenix rooms. Rage Fenton, Eden's fiancée had very kindly allowed Sabrina's charity to hold it for free and had also donated the profits from the bar towards the charity.

Angel had told her to approach Rage because she felt that Rage would be more amenable to helping out but she had not told her why. Sabrina never one to look a gift horse in the mouth agreed and was pleasantly surprised.

"Alright Peeps the bidding will be starting at two hundred dollars, two hundred dollars for a date with our very own Diera Voicemail."

After ten minutes of frantic bidding the price had increased to a thousand dollars and it was between Bradley, one of Eden's colleagues, the elegantly dark Archangel look alike at the bar and the whip toting, leather clad striking redheaded Amazon with flowing locks and flashing green eyes.

"Ten thousand dollars" Bradley winked at Diera and blew her a kiss thinking to end the bidding quickly.

"Fifteen." The black haired woman at the bar shot back.

Sabrina's eyes widened and Eden gasped and then giggled. Diera looked absolutely bewildered and a murmur began to sweep through the curious crowd.

"Twenty!" Bradley said defiantly but Diera heard the uncertainty in his voice and she shook her head. She did not want Bradley to spend twenty thousand dollars on a date with her.

"Twenty! Do I have twenty? Going once going twice..." Sabrina banged her gavel and raised it once more about to hit the table with it when she was interrupted once more.

"Thirty!" The redhead with the flashing green eyes said striking her leather clad hip with the horsewhip she held in her hands.

"Oh my god!" Lucy hissed "That is Miss Behaviour."

"Miss who?"

"Miss Behaviour, she's one of those dominatrix that's into sado masochism and pain management or is it pain processing..."

"Pain processing!" Diera squeaked.

"Oh don't be such a prude Lucy." Erienne returned smiling at Diera, "When you get your own big bad butch you'll learn to appreciate that whole Sub and Dom lifestyle it's quite interesting." Erienne winked.

"Erienne!" Lucy gasped.

"Thirty Five" The dark Angel Countered.

"This is absolutely ridiculous." Diera whispered to Eden. She secretly hoped the Dark Angel won because Bradley was out of the bidding and the leather clad woman did not look like someone she wanted to go on a date with.

"It may be ridiculous but if she is able to pay it will cover all our expenses for the night and possibly even the rest of the year!" Lucy said doing the calculations in her head from her last viewing of the accounts.

Bradley shook his head this game was definitely too rich for his blood.

"Thirty five going once, Thirty five going twice, a dinner date with the lovely Diera Voicemail last chance anyone last chance and..."

"Forty thousand dollars." Miss Behaviour stepped forward and the murmuring crowd went silent.

"Well I hope you will be able to come through because this ain't a joke sweetie?" Sabrina drawled.

"I don't think I look like a sweetie and yes I can come through if you want I can back up with a check for forty thousand dollars and I'd like to try before I buy." The redhead amazon smirked.

"Oh dear." Eden whispered under her breath.

Diera was having none of that. Her blonde eyebrows had receded so far up her hairline as to disappear and the beginnings of a thunderous expression were about to play across her delicate features which actually only served to make her look more attractive.

"Fifty thousand dollars!" The elegant looking Archangel drawled she had also made her way to the front of the stage "And since my bid is higher I believe you will have to top me to try before you buy."

"Oh I'd love to top you." The redhead drawled seductively but she gave a gallic shrug of her shoulders "but I can't."

"Going, going, gone! for fifty thousand dollars to the Hot stuff with the caramel eyes." Sabrina banged her gavel down with finality.

"Well Ladies and gentlemen thank you very much for your support the party will be continuing till dawn with the Phoenix Room's resident DJs Iced T, Dion Stoppable and MC Doobie Boogaloo. It...is...time...to Paaaaarrrrrtaaaay!!!!" Sabrina finished throwing her arms up in the air whilst flipping her head back her sable locks shining in the disco lights as Cristina Aguilera's shrieked "Dirty" exploded from the speakers.

Everyone flooded the dance floor as the music vibrated throughout the room. Lyric was approached by one of the ushers and diligently went over and wrote out a cheque for the charity. She'd barely finished when she was joined by the blonde on the stage.

Her hair was down and fell in gentle golden waves down her shoulders. She was dressed simply in jeans and a white low cut blouse with spaghetti straps that showed off her cleavage advantageously. A sight which Lyric appreciated and her eyes lingered a little too long.

"Do you always stare so pointedly?" Diera asked irritated.

"When a beautiful woman like you dresses like that, don't you expect me to?" Lyric drawled.

"You are so rude?" Diera could barely hide her annoyance.

"I hardly think paying you a compliment is rude."

"That was a compliment?" Diera asked disbelievingly

Eden who was standing beside the irate couple diffused the situation smoothly with a smile
"Thank-you very much for your contribution it is most appreciated. I hope you will enjoy the evening of Japanese culture we have planned for you.

I have here an envelope containing your free tickets to the Gilbert & Sullivan operetta "the Mikado" followed by a free dinner on the floating Japanese restaurant "the Yakisoba", which is a pleasure barge that floats up and down the river. I really think you'll like it."

Lyric turned round to see who had spoken and inhaled sharply. There were definitely too many beautiful women gathered in one place tonight. It was the voluptuous dark-haired beauty with green eyes.

On stage she was beautiful but up close and personal she was absolutely gorgeous. She looked like a young Elizabeth Taylor except sexier because this woman was all smouldering sensuality.

"I am Lyric, and you are?" Lyric ignored the outstretched envelope from the woman who had just spoken and took her hand instead.

"Eden..."

"And I'm her fiancée," said a menacing looking blonde with challenging blue eyes and bronze muscular arms which she wrapped possessively around Eden letting Lyric know in no uncertain terms that Eden belonged to her.

Lyric smiled ruefully but nodded her head acknowledging the gesture. She would have done the same. Lyric was an honourable woman in some ways. She never went after someone else's woman unless of course that woman came after her. Why then it was a different story.

"You can let go of her hand now." It was a command.

Lyric sighed theatrically but only did so after kissing the back of Eden's hand and winking at Eden with melting caramel coloured eyes.

"So when is our date planned for?"

"Next week Friday. I believe." Eden finished with a smile for Diera.

"How did you get these prizes? Some of them are amazing." Diera was saying as she looked over the brochure of prizes."

"Jay Fontaine, My ex-business partner, I think they are categorized as a tax-write off."

Rage lowered her head "You look fantastic!" she said kissing Eden's hair and then turned her lover around in her arms and kissed her again and again till the two of them were lost in their own little world.

Lyric turned to Diera. "Can I buy you a drink?"

Diera shook her head "I'm already spoken for tonight."

"Is that your boyfriend?" Lyric nodded at Bradley who was making his way over towards them hesitantly and haltingly through the crowd.

"He's not my boyfriend." Diera raised one tawny delicately arched eyebrow. "Not that it's any of your business." She shifted her body in the crush of bodies involuntarily causing her body to be pressed up against Lyric's who steadied her.

The two stared into each other's eyes for what seemed like eternity and Diera thought for a moment that Lyric was actually going to kiss her. She had mixed feelings about that because there was something about the woman that was exciting but at the same time dangerous she was hypnotised by her glittering dark eyed gaze. She dragged her eyes away with a monumental effort and started walking like a zombie towards Bradley who looked at her with an uncertain smile.

Their eyes locked across the room, Lyric's annoyed dark gaze was met with Diera's cool blue challenging ones.

Bradley wrapped an arm around Diera as she leant against the bar. Diera wanted to look away from the compelling eyes that held hers from across the room.

The whiskey coloured eyes blazed at her with such unblinking ferocity she almost felt they were boring into her mind as Bradley said something to her and Diera turned to look at him and appeared to give him all her attention but the truth was she barely heard what he was saying.

All her attention was focussed on the dark haired woman across the room, with the glittering eyes. There was something about the black haired woman's uncompromisingly rude stare that annoyed her intensely perhaps it was because she found her so devastatingly attractive.

She recognised her of course; she wondered if the woman remembered their encounter, she certainly had never forgotten it. The black haired woman still haunted her dreams.

She wore her chinos with a thick black belt and a long sleeved white cotton shirt, a single breasted velvet navy jacket completed the casual but formal look. She stood out like a sore thumb in a sea of denim and leather and yet she looked calm and competent as though it didn't matter how much shit life threw at her she would still come up smelling of roses.

Her hair was cut short yet, thick and luxuriantly wavy and she possessed such a cute little dimple in her chin that Diera wanted to kiss it.

If this woman walked down the street you could easily imagine men falling at her feet and women changing their sexual orientation just for her. It was difficult to miss her confidence and the proud way she held herself, all this combined with the sophisticated elegance and a suave polished urbanity that comes with being born into money and growing up with it.

Alison hadn't lied she was hot and definitely the sexiest woman Diera had ever seen and probably the most arrogant. The annoying woman leaned against the wall, a glass of brandy still in her hand which she lifted as though in a toast and then proceeded to undress her lazily with her eyes.

It was a gesture that so infuriated Diera she wanted to wipe that arrogant expression off her face. Instead she continued to feign an interest in her conversation with Bradley that she did not really feel.

Lyric did not see Diera divert Bradley's wandering hands. She was angry and she did not know why. The blonde was beautiful it stood to reason that she was already dating someone else and it looked like she was straight. She knocked back the rest of the brandy and turning her back on the blonde and her companion left the club and made her way back to her apartment.

Chapter 2

The next day was Lyric's first at the offices of Barton, Bingham and Ellington soon to become Barton Ellington and Black because Mr Bingham was about to retire. She was annoyed to be shown around by the same man who had been all over the beautiful blonde at the fundraiser.

He looked incredibly surprised to see her and even shifted uncomfortably from foot to foot. Lyric barely raised an eyebrow or even acknowledged meeting him before other than a cursory nod. She kept everything entirely professional.

He seemed to be more comfortable by her non-confrontational manner and she let his voice drone on and relegated it to the status of background noise.

Her other junior Lucy Cavendish seemed like a nice sort. She had mousy brown hair, twinkling eyes and a kindly smile.

The door of her office opened to reveal her secretary and Lyric groaned inwardly. She looked like Aquascutum woman. Her hair was tucked up into a severe bun, she wore thin wire framed spectacles and a grey "don't mess with me" business suit. She guessed the pink blouse she wore was her only concession to the fact that she was remotely human. Her PA was the picture of business efficiency.

"Get me coffee , three sugars and cream." Lyric said it to rile her. If she refused she would simply ask for a more amenable and aesthetically pleasing secretary. She didn't care what the rules were in America, in her rule book PA's always made her coffee or everyone in the office suffered the consequences of her nasty temper.

"Off course Ms Gaylord-Black." She said sweetly.

Lyric glanced at her suspiciously and the blonde gave her a bland but inscrutable look from behind her gold rimmed spectacles, Lyric frowned "I prefer to be called Lyric."

Lucy's eyes widened as Diera meekly complied reigning in her famous temper. Lyric Gaylord-Black was a cool customer. She acted like she hadn't just spent fifty thousand dollars on a date with Diera, she was taking the whole professional thing too far.

Lyric recognised Lucy from the evening before and after pleasantries they got down to business. Lucy was still puzzling over her odd behaviour when it suddenly dawned on her. Lyric had not recognised Diera from the night before.

It was the only plausible explanation for while she treated Diera with the most utter civility there was no hint of recognition in those opal coloured eyes when they settled on her secretary.

"Concentrate please Cavendish. I am well aware that to you this is only a simple hit and run matter but our client has paid us a large sum of money to try this case and that is exactly what we shall be doing."

The two juniors got down to work, mapping out their court room strategy and ensuring that they had filed the right motions and when they would be coming up for hearing. By the time they were ready to break for lunch they had managed to review most of the cases coming up over the next three months.

Lyric seemed to have a way of cutting straight to the point and making convoluted facts, complicated legal principles and arguments easy to grasp when she explained them. So that files that Lucy had been struggling with for the past few weeks since they had been assigned to her case load suddenly seemed extremely straight forward.

When Lucy and Diera came back from their daily lunch hour at La Cachette, Lyric had still not left her desk and had apparently ordered in and worked through lunch. Both women stopped and stared.

She had taken off her black jacket to reveal the black shirt she wore which was rolled up to display a pair of bronzed but lean muscular forearms. Her shirt was slightly undone to reveal a black bra which hinted at her cleavage. She lifted a hand to ruffle her thick black hair which stopped short at the nape of her neck also fell forward to slightly curl over her forehead.

Her nose was Grecian in its perfection, the dimple on her chin only added to the character of her face, her brows shaped like knives were dark and brooding, thick sultry lips were moulded into a pout as she glared at the telephone.

Bradley Smith was standing in front of her fidgeting uncomfortably and both women were startled when she growled ferally. "Cavendish! Voicemail! You're 3 minutes late."

Lucy was about to argue when she noticed that Diera simply smiled and apologised sweetly. Lyric scowled made a grunting sound and subsided into her chair.

"Voicemail, coffee please and make it quick, we need minutes for this meeting. Cavendish go and find the file on that forgery case, I think it's with Ellington Junior. Smith," She pointed to him "You can stay here and tell me all you know about the Salenko case."

Lyric wasn't really interested in the Salenko case. She had a photographic memory and had read over the Salenko case during her lunch break. The session was really for her team to familiarise themselves with the file as they discussed what they were going to do as she delegated work and plotted out their strategy to present the evidence they had to work with.

She always found the best way to deal with a matter was to discuss it to death. If you got as many view points from different people you picked up on points other people didn't notice and you could see from where the your opponent was coming from so you could shut them down.

They would probably have to file endless motions before they actually got to the essence of the case. That was just the way the law worked.

Lyric was more interested in contemplating the type of briefs her secretary might be wearing than the intricate points in the legal brief that Bradley Smith was finding difficult to come to grips with.

Lyric couldn't help but be fixated by the smooth length of her legs, the gentle curve of her calf and the way her skirt rode up her thighs as she moved in the chair and crossed her legs. Lyric wondered how a woman could sit with her legs crossed like that and look so incredibly sexy. Lyric could just imagine that she was wearing sheer stockings and a little garter to hold them up with.

A woman like that probably wore something lace-trimmed and silky which caressed her bounteous curves beneath her sober professional exterior and tiny teasing little panties that just begged to be ripped off with her teeth. Lyric almost moaned aloud at the thought of ravishing her petite little secretary on her desk. She felt a sharp tingle between her legs and shifted uncomfortably the feeling became an incessant aching between her legs.

Lyric tried vainly to get her errant thoughts under control. She couldn't quite put her finger on it but she was so sure she had met her before. It never occurred to her that the coldly efficient professional in front of her was the sultry vixen of the previous night or the tempting teenage siren of her youth.

Her attention wandered to her elegant hands and wondering how they would feel on her body. She couldn't help looking. She liked to think it was because there was something very familiar about the woman, she wasn't sure if it was her perfume, or her slender fingers and impeccable French manicure.

Diera was furious that Lyric was ignoring her and acting as though she wasn't in the room. Even worse she pretended as though she didn't recognise her and then surreptitiously checked her out.

She didn't have to look at her to know that the glittering dark gaze had done an Olympic fast track sweep of her body, with those hot smouldering eyes. Diera had taken off her suit jacket and was now wearing a pink silk blouse, which was opened to reveal a string of pearls and a pendant which drew attention to her very considerable cleavage.

A very short grey skirt and grey shoes with 3 inch kitten heels completed her outfit. Diera crossed her legs encased in black sheer stockings, flashing her garter belt and was perversely pleased to have Lyric's undivided attention.

Lyric finally managed to drag her attention away from Diera's legs and was confronted by a pair of all too knowing disapproving blue eyes. She'd been caught staring and she knew it. Lyric smiled challengingly daring Diera to say something when she didn't she lifted up the sheet of paper in her hand and pretended to read it. It was awhile before she realised she had been studiously looking at the wrong page.

She picked up another page and tried to concentrate. She liked Cavendish. She was not as unsettling as her P.A who seemed capable of making her feel like a sex crazed teenager and the lowest form of life on the planet all at the same time.

She thought Lucy Cavendish was pretty and had an engaging smile. Lyric decided she would ask her out for a drink. She would ask all of them out for a drink get to know them better and see what made them tick. She was well aware that when she was in the office she tended to be frank and abrupt which generally made people extremely uncooperative.

She had found in her professional life that it was always a good idea to let people know it was not a personal thing but was entirely due to her need for perfection. She knew they would be under a lot of pressure in the next few months. Her predecessor was a lazy bastard who let too many things slide and they would need to work really hard to get on top of things.

When she got home she put on a rock opera and dived naked into the private swimming pool on the roof of her apartment. It had a retracting roof so it could be used in winter but during the summer like now she could let the roof off so she could enjoy the hot weather. The music bathed her apartment and the powerful speakers could be heard right up on the roof.

After doing a few hundred lengths she wrapped a towel around her waist and went to answer the phone. She groaned when she heard her mother's cultured high pitched voice on the phone.

"Daaaahling!"

"Mother." Lyric said curtly.

"I would like you to attend a dinner party on my behalf tonight."

"Tonight?"

"You are such an introvert. You will probably have your head buried in some musty old law books I know how you get carried away once you set your mind on something. Overdoing things is always harmful darling. This applies particularly to efficiency. Why I remember when you were going through your stock broking phase and spent whole evenings brooding in front of your computer."

"Mother..." Lyric said warningly.

"Now, now, darling, I will give you directions and I absolutely insist that you attend."

"Why can't you go?" Lyric wanted to know.

"Oh darling, I did so want to go but I just couldn't make my flight in time and connections at JFK do give me a headache but then when Gianluigi offered me a ride in his private plane and I couldn't refuse...."

Lyric put the call on speaker phone so her voice came on the speakers and could be heard throughout the apartment. "That's quite a distance." Lyric frowned as she wrote down Allegra's directions, slipped into her clothes and concluded the rest of her toilette.

"Distance darling is the only thing the rich are willing for the poor to call theirs and keep. This is not a distance it's a hop skip and jump in one of those frightful little toys you and Concerto insist on going roaring around in. Now my good friend Paul Delaware is having a little dinner party this evening and I gather his daughter knows quite a few people and I think you should go instead of moping around your apartment."

"I don't mope mother."

"Lyric you're thirty three and you're not getting any younger you know. You don't want to be a bitter old maid wearing sensible shoes and living alone with cats for company, now do you darling? Especially since you're allergic to cats. You, my little tyrant need to get married."

"Mother, I'm well aware that marriage is a respectable institution but I don't think I'm ready to be institutionalised." Lyric drawled.

There was an ominous silence on the other end of the phone.

"And why ever not? Marriage is a fantastic institution. Why I've been institutionalised several times that's not a good enough reason not to get married."

"Mother I'm gay!"

"So? I've always known that. I can't say I'm not disappointed though especially since I was really looking forward to that expensive dinner. I always thought that when you told me it would be over a shockingly expensive meal at an exclusive and elitist restaurant, whilst I watched you stammer on about how you don't want to shock me, like your brother and sister did instead of

hearing the news over the phone like this why do you think I have blithely pretended ignorance all these years. Heavens I don't even get decent bottle of bubbly out of it, when you tell me over the phone like this I must say I really do feel rather hard done by."

"So you're not upset that I'm not..." Lyric faltered for the right words suitable for her mother's generation, "Normal."

"Heterosexuality is not normal darling it's just common and none of my children are common." Her Mother's proud snobbish aristocratic words were strangely reassuring.

Lyric genuinely felt relief however even that was short lived. Firstly she realised her mother was more upset over the fact that she had not been treated to an expensive dinner and secondly her mother was like an annoying mosquito when it came to the institution of marriage.

"I still don't see why you can't be happily married." Her persistent parent insisted. Once her mother got hold of an idea she was like a dog with a bone. She just would not leave it alone.

"Mother no one is happily married."

"Nonsense all marriages are happy. It's living together afterwards that's the problem."

"Mother, The whole point of being gay is you don't have to get married."

"Not get married! Lyric Gaylord Black what an absolutely ghastly idea! "

"Mother..." Lyric said warningly.

"But daahling, you can get married in America and England too for that matter. I have seven children and three of them are gay. All except one of them young lady (you know who you are) all are happily married and producing a steady stream of grand-children. Not get married indeed. Why perish the thought! When I think of all those poor gay women burning their bras so that you can get married? Why it beggars belief!"

"Mother, gay people did not burn their bras...."

"Well they should have. I am your mother and you Cinderella shall go to the ball. I carried you for nine months!...nine months..." The last two words ended in a shriek.

Her mother didn't stop for breadth however and continued blithely on listing her various ailments. "I got varicose veins, morning sickness not to mention...piling on the pounds and...and missing the Belvoir..."

Lyric tasted bitter defeat. "Alright mother, I'll go."

"There's a good girl." Her mother said cheerfully "And do wear something elegant and real shoes. I hope you haven't picked up that ghastly American habit of going everywhere in

oversized sweat clothes and trainers. "I'll call you later and you can give me all the goss mwah mwah darling tah tah!" Her mother trilled the last two words and hung up.

Lyric hailed a cab and found herself standing outside the house of her mother's friend Paul James Delaware and was still trying to understand what she was doing at the Delaware's residence when it was her mother who was now several thousand miles away who had been invited. Off course Lyric could have refused, however her mother was formidable woman and the fall out of disobedience was simply not worth it.

Her mother would know she hadn't attended and the consequences just did not bear thinking about. That was the problem with being the youngest. It did not matter which part of the world you travelled to, Allegra Gaylord-Black the family matriarch always knew where her children were and always managed to get them to do exactly what she wanted.

She knocked hesitantly on the door and waited. It was a mild evening, the sun was just setting its golden rays disappearing over the horizon. She supposed Paul Delaware was fairly well off by the type of cars she could see which were already cars parked in the driveway.

Eventually the door opened and after taking her overcoat she was led into the main living area by a man she presumed was the steward or butler.

"Ah Lyric, Allegra told me you'd be coming over. I'm Paul, come in please and meet everyone."

"Everyone this is Lyric, Lyric this is my daughter Kate Alfredo, She married an Italian you know, I have never forgiven her for taking up with a jonny foreigner, still he is a decent enough fellow I suppose."

The man he referred to introduced himself as Rocco and bowed elegantly. He was a very good looking man. He looked like he belonged on the cover of a magazine and she was not surprised when his wife gushed that he had in fact modelled for several magazines in his youth before owning his own modelling agency.

Kate his wife was very plain looking. She wasn't beautiful but there was something very attractive about her. She certainly had an amazing figure and she showed it off very well.

"This is Dr Beauregard Lane, a renowned expert in DNA and finger printing. Best in the city you know. Although I know you don't want to talk shop now but I imagine you will. You've always been a rather intense young lady. She drove Allegra mad!" He laughed heartily and rubbed his stomach as though in fond remembrance.

"There's also a little group of young people here I am sure you will find interesting they are what my daughter Elizabeth likes to refer to

as 'family' ."

"My daughter Elizabeth and her fiancé Penelope Ice, and Diera Voicemail, the daughter of my late friend Philippe and also one of Kate's friends, whom Allegra insisted I introduce you to." He winked at Diera and elbowed Lyric in the ribs and laughed heartily as though extremely tickled.

"Oh papa do stop you're embarrassing her." Elizabeth giggled "Don't mind Papa he's just being mischievous."

"Of course I must not leave out my dear friends Everard and his wife Naseera Payne."

"I'm pleased to finally meet you. Allegra is always talking about your considerable talents and accomplishments." Naseera Payne smiled and putting her at ease.

"Shall we adjourn for dinner? Kate and Elizabeth cooked up a storm." Penelope smiled lovingly up at Elizabeth.

Penelope was a very non-descript looking person, large brown eyes and mousy brown hair. There was nothing about her that made her stand out. In fact she looked the type to easily blend into the background.

The dinner conversation was actually quite entertaining. Everyone knew each other and although she herself did not know everyone, they all seemed to know of her. It was all rather unsettling.

"So how did you find the meat young Lyric?"

"Oh you know I just lifted up a potato with my fork and there it was." Lyric affected an expression of sarcastic surprise.

"Lifted up the potato" Naseera giggled "with a fork..."

"You know an implement used chiefly for putting dead animals in the mouth." Lyric replied.

Paul Delaware shook his head. "You are definitely Allegra's daughter."

Dr Beauregard Lane regarded her from above his half moon spectacles. Lyric resented being called "young Lyric" especially as Beauregard Lane did not look a day over forty. His patronising tone annoyed her intensely. He looked like what her father would call a Dandy. He wore a tweed jacket and a white shirt whilst around his neck he wore a green cravat with his family coat of arms. The same coat of arms as the Queen of England except this one also had the French fleur de Lils, interesting.

She noticed it because it was not an ordinary coat of arms since it had a great big blue and white baton rouge right across it obviously the ancestor in the Lane family who had inherited it had been born on the wrong side of the royal blanket. Lyric thought waspishly.

"Lyric, Diera tells me you are working at Barton, Bingham and Ellington these days." Paul Delaware leaned back and rubbed his stomach and Lyric wondered how that young lady knew that since she'd only met her just the once or was it twice?

"I am surprised to hear that Lyric, Allegra gave me to understand that you were a Barrister."

"A Barrister I thought you were a lawyer." Naseera frowned. "What's a Barrister."

Beauregard Lane cleared his throat. "A Barrister, my dear Naseera is one of the ten thousand varieties of the genus lawyer. In England the functions of a barrister are distinct from those of a solicitor. The one advises the other executes. But the thing advised and the thing executed is the client."

"Hmm well in America a Lawyer is simply a professional skilled in the circumnavigation of the law and not an executioner." Diera drawled.

"Diera always finds the good in people even lawyers." Elizabeth teased her cousin.

Lyric finally recognised her as the girl on the catwalk at the Tolerance society event at the Phoenix Chambers. The one she was supposed to be having a date with on Friday, the same girl who had rocked her world on the London Underground, during Pride week all those years ago.

She could feel herself reddening with embarrassment but how would she know she was working at Barton Bingham and Ellington? She reasoned Lucy Cavendish one of her juniors must have told her. They did appear to be friends. They'd been talking together at the benefit.

The conversation had moved on and when she managed to rejoin it only caught the tail end of Paul Delaware's speech. "Well I shouldn't be surprised that you'll be hearing from my friend Lambert Dryden. He's been accused of burglary. Apparently he broke into the safe of that odious woman the one with eleven dogs. What was her name honey?" He turned to Elizabeth.

"Beatrice Toast."

"Yes that's it Beatrice Toast, a perfectly ghastly woman. Well anyway the police found his fingerprints at the scene of the crime."

The talk at the dinner table turned to speculation about the unfortunate Lambert Dryden and Lyric was able to observe Diera across the table when she thought she wasn't looking. She was wearing a simple summer dress, made of some light material, the flowery patterns were in soft pastel baby blue colours.

Her hair fell past her shoulders in an elegant cut that still allowed her hair to be wavy and free. Her face was classically beautiful with a flawless complexion. Her facial features reminded her of the blonde american actress in one of those big blockbuster movies in the nineties. What was her name Sharon Something or the other. Lyric let her eyes linger over her slender neck down to her...

"Cigar?" Paul Delaware offered

"Thank-you."

He grinned when she accepted and Lyric noticed Diera glared at her. She couldn't understand why the woman was so hostile. Lyric raised an eyebrow.

Elizabeth ever the gracious hostess realised the ladies wanted to get away from the cigar smoke and have a really good gossip preferably over a glass of Chianti with rich lashings of dark chocolate thrown in, whilst catching a re-run of sex and the city. She stood up and smiled at the assembled company. "Diera would you get the fruit bowl for me and help Kate and I clear up, whilst everyone else adjourns to the smoking room?"

However to get to the fruit bowl Diera had to come over to Lyric's side of the table and lean over to get it which afforded Lyric an excellent view of her cleavage. She knew she was staring but she couldn't help herself.

She cleared her throat and then Diera leaned across her and brushing her breasts against Lyric's arm, she almost moaned when she felt the heat of arousal streak down her body to pool in her centre. She could smell her scent, an elusive yet familiar perfume. It drove her crazy.

Somehow Lyric found herself in the smoking room with a bunch of old men all asking her for financial advice on the stock market. Ordinarily she wouldn't have minded she liked talking business just not now. She would rather have been in the other room with the other women whom she could hear laughing and giggling in the kitchen getting to know the beautiful but elusive Diera Voicemail.

"I just put some money into Baeron und Ghoosier stock, I have it on good information it should go up in a few months." Beauregard Lane said airily.

Lyric thought he was annoying and narcissistic he would have been handsome too were it not for the lines of dissipation on his face and his paunch. Instead he looked like a fading beauty.

"Baeron Luc & Ghoosier, that's a drug company isn't it. I would probably sell before they announce the results of their drug tests. Their CEO is not a man to be trusted and they have never been able to substantiate any of their claims." Evarad said smoking his cigar with relish.

"Yes I would have to agree with you Mr Payne. I sold mine last week and I am looking at investing in something else. I think I will be doing more private placement stocks this year. I feel like doing something adventurous."

Mr Payne was so impressed with her understanding of the stock market he invited her to join him at the golf club and Paul Delaware made an appointment to see her regarding some financial matters. Several glasses of brandy later Lyric decided to seek the bathroom and start heading out.

She came out of the bathroom and shut the door. She looked up in time to see Diera gasp as her heel caught in the carpet and fall down the stairs as her the motion sent her flying down the stairs. Lyric instinctively reached out and caught her breaking her fall but she barely had time to steady herself for impact before the smaller woman collided into her knocking them both off their feet.

Diera landed on top of Lyric her hands trapped between their bodies and Lyric's hands on her bottom. Their faces were nearly touching, she could feel her heartbeat racing in her chest, she had to feel her heart pounding beneath her fingers, see her reflection in those dreamy blue eyes, eyes that held her captivated and enthralled.

Her flesh felt soft yet firm beneath Lyric's hands as she slid her hands down her body kneaded her bottom gently. Their lips were almost touching and she could feel her breath against her skin. Lyric was possessed with a burning desire to kiss her.

She'd been thinking about it all evening. She also realised why that perfume was so familiar. It was Boudoir by Amiel Larouge, the same perfume Diera had been wearing when they had first met on the London underground so many years ago, it carried a scent she would never forget...and there was another reason why it was familiar. It was the same perfume worn by the woman at the bar and the same perfume worn by her very sexy PA.

They heard a door slam breaking the hypnotic spell of the moment bringing Diera to her senses and she pushed ineffectually at the arms that held her captive. "Let me up."

"Well well it would appear my PA is quite the sex siren, it seems your dirty little secret is out. Fuck me if I'm wrong, but you were going to kiss me weren't you?" Lyric drawled.

"That's not funny Ms Black let me up." She replied outraged

"I think we should be on first name terms now that we are so intimately acquainted."

Diera's eyes turned into a stormy violet. "Lyric." She said her name warningly when Lyric still did not let her go.

"Ask me nicely." Lyric smiled mockingly

"I will do no such thing. You will let me go now or I will scream."

"And bring everyone running to view you in this compromising position? I think not. I mean what would they say if they found you on top of me like this, your dainty little hands all over my body and all ready to ravish me hmm?" Lyric teased.

Diera blushed and bit her lip. She was quite aware that her hands were resting on Lyric's breasts and her fingers were clutching the soft globes of flesh in her hands and the perfect handfults seemed to be made for her personal pleasure. However she refused to acknowledge that she was the one doing the touching. "Please let me up." She said quietly.

Lyric let her go. All she could think of as she got up was her sexy little secretary had some explaining to do. What she actually said was "Well the work place is going to be an extremely interesting place to be from now on. I look forward to our date on Friday."

"I am not going anywhere with YOU on Friday." Diera arranged her dress and brushed back her hair with shaking hands.

"It would be a shame to have to cancel my cheque to the Tolerance society."

"You wouldn't! That's blackmail!" Diera gasped.

"Blackmail? Voicemail? Hardly. I paid for a date with you on Friday, that's what I want, and that my dear is what I'm going to get."

"You were donating money to charity." Diera said exasperatedly.

"I was buying a date with you as were all the other horny women in that club. Now do we have a Date or are all bets off as you Americans would say."

"I hope you don't expect anything else from this date?" Diera asked angrily

Lyric didn't know it but an unconscious smile played about her lips as her eyes surveyed the younger woman. Diera looked absolutely gorgeous looking up at her with her breasts heaving in righteous indignation, her eyes flashing blue fire and her luscious lips all pouting and sultry begging to be kissed.

"You're a clever girl I am sure you can work out what I want from our date." Lyric winked and walked past her. Her clever cocky exit was a ruse and she got lost. She was directionally challenged it was a family trait she had inherited from Great Uncle Barty.

She finally found her way back to the library but most of the guests had left instead the only two people in the room were Kate and her father Paul Delaware and they were arguing.

"I told you when you married him he was a good for nothing gigolo. I bought you a car I bought you a house and now you want me to invest in his business, you must be out of your mind. Wake up and smell the coffee sweetheart the only thing he will use the money for is to pay for his whores..."

"They are not his whores they are his models."

"Oh is that what you are calling it now?"

Kate closed her eyes and took a deep breath as she tried to get past her father's sarcastic comments and tried to remember that he was doing this because he cared about her. "He runs a modelling agency which is doing well. We are just starting out and we just need a little money to tide us over..."

"He's a man! He should be supporting you not the other way around. You should be having babies and making a home not running around trying to raise money to support him!"

"But Dad!" Kate groaned

"No! And that is my final answer. If he thinks he is going to get any money from me he is sadly mistaken. He can go to the bank like every other business man and get a loan. If he even thinks he will get any money under my will when I die then both of you have got something else coming. I will change my will and have everything tied up in trusts if I have to."

Lyric cleared her throat. "I hope I am not interrupting anything."

Kate gathered herself up with admirable composure. "No you're not we are just done here. We have all made our way to the living room for coffee. Would you like to follow me?"

Lyric nodded and when she returned to the living room where everyone had gathered and was saying goodbye she retrieved her coat and thanked her host and hostess she left.

All the way home she couldn't get the image of blue eyes and the feel of how her soft womanly curves felt against her body. She wanted to laugh. She couldn't remember the last time she had felt this elated about going to the office, actually she couldn't ever remember feeling elated about going to the office.

The next morning she was due in court and one of her cases was actually going ahead. It was one of the few her predecessor had actually done any work on. Bradley Smith and Lucy Cavendish were both present. She intended to invite them both for a drink separately and jointly.

Chapter 3

The court room was not full mainly because there were no real important cases of any major press interest that day. The air conditioning was working and it was a good thing too because it was absolutely sweltering outside.

Inside the court room the witness, a sullen looking man in a rumpled suit and a dirty shirt stared sullenly back at Lyric. Beside her sat her two junior counsel. Lyric got up and walked to the front to begin her examination of the witness after making sure he had taken his oath she began her questioning.

She let her eyes sweep over the man from top to toe before dismissing him with a contemptuous look. She wanted to intimidate him, and he shifted uncomfortably when she looked directly into his eyes started asking her questions.

"Where did you see the defendant first that day?"

The witness shrugged nonchalantly. "Against Church Lane"

"So he saw you?"

"Yeah, he saw me." The witness shrugged his shoulders belligerently, cockily.

"You were loitering about?"

"No, I was going down the road."

Lyric stopped and gave him a pointed look.

Lucy was impressed. She could see that the jury already disbelieved him and no wonder. The witness was leaning against the edge of the witness box, toothpick in mouth with his hands in his pockets. He'd already created an unfavourable impression of himself as a loiterer, and loitering was the impression the jury would remember. He broke down under the relentless questioning as his testimony was discredited. The counsel for the other side quickly called for the next witness.

The next witness was a detective that Lucy knew well. He was an old hand in the business and notoriously difficult to cross-examine on the stand. Lyric started slowly putting the witness at ease and then suddenly applied the screws so that the witness began to buckle under the pressure.

"When you first went to the house, you told them your name was Martin Ray."

"Yeah."

"That was a lie wasn't it." Lyric's eyes glittered dangerously but her expression remained as bland as ever.

"Well yes."

"You also told them you were a nurse?"

"Yeah."

"That was a lie wasn't it?"

"Yes." He cleared his throat.

"You said throughout that you were unemployed, yes?"

"Well you see ya have ta do that in this business."

"Ah you mean you make a business of lying." Lyric said silkily

"No, but sometimes we have to lie when carrying out our duty."

"And since you make a practice of lying you have naturally become adept at it."

"Well there is no other way we can carry out our duty."

"And you get paid?" Lyric waved her hand distastefully as though there was a nasty smell in the room "for doing this sort of work" she finished.

"Yes."

"And you engage in this sort of work because you are paid for it?"

"Yes."

"In other words you are a professional liar who gets paid for it."

Lucy heard Bradley snicker softly beside her and almost felt sorry for the witness until she remembered that the woman was lying and trying to cover up the shooting of a little girl. The little girl's family were suing the defendant so they could have enough money to pay for the medical care the girl would need to have a better standard of life and he could well afford it.

"Objection my lord!"

However it was too late and even though the judge sustained the objection the detective had been discredited and everything she stated thereafter would be viewed with the suspicion by the jury and the judge that she was covering up for her friend and not surprisingly members of the jury would not believe a word of her testimony.

In order to try and reclaim his position the little girl who had given evidence earlier was now brought into the court. Lyric protested but the Judge who disliked Lyric's style allowed it. Lyric sat down beside Lucy and scowled.

As the little girl was brought back onto the stand. "You're enjoying this aren't you." Lucy said shaking her head.

"I absolutely love a challenge." Lyric drawled in her sexy upper class British accent.

"And if that little prick thinks he's going to get the best of me he is sadly mistaken." She hissed to Lucy. "I always take care of every detail."

"Did you talk with your lawyer about what you would say here today?" He leaned over eagerly towards the little girl.

"Yes Sir."

"Who did you talk to?"

The little girl pointed to Lyric who gave her an encouraging smile. "Her, that's my lawyer."

"Did she give you any advice? Tell you what you should say?"

"Yes she did." The little girl replied.

The counsel got excited and looked at Lyric triumphantly confident she was about to destroy the little girl's testimony and make it look like Lyric had coached her to give her evidence.

Lucy admired Lyric's sang froid it was so sexy how she remained calm and unflustered under fire. Bradley was already sweating and adjusting his tie yet Lyric's reassuring gaze calmed his fidgeting.

"What advice did she give you?"

The little girl took a deep breath "She said to tell the truth at all times no matter what happens."

The counsel looked at her shocked stuttered and swallowed but every damning word that flowed from the little girl's lips was like a nail in the coffin. The fact that she was in a wheel chair clearly made the jury more sympathetic to her plight, her little angelic blonde pigtails and the fact that she was clearly in pain yet still managing to answer the questions put to her, it was the judge who called an end to the torturous questioning.

Lucy was not surprised when after several frantic gestures from Georgio Pagliuca counsel asked for a sidebar to settle the matter out of court. The meeting was arranged for another day and Bradley Smith was instructed to follow up and arrange a date.

Lyric asked Lucy out to Lunch and Lucy was so flustered she said the first thing that came into her head.

"La Cachette. It's just a block away from here and not far from the office."

Lucy groaned inwardly. She could have suggested any one of a million places but La Cachette was the first one that came to mind and then again when she saw the others were seated already. Eden smiled and waved them over. Sabrina raised an Enquiring eyebrow, and Diera's face was, oh lawd Diera had her ice queen expression on.

They ordered lunch and sat down and the conversation was quite easy going, the food was delicious everyone had the healthy option except Lyric who ordered a steak so bloody it was worthy of comment and a sauce so rich that the other women simply stared at her plate with abject longing.

Erienne looked enviously at Lyric's plate "Have you noticed how anything good in life is either illegal, immoral or fattening?"

"That does look absolutely delicious." Eden sighed

"Every taste goes to the waist" Sabrina trilled

"A moment on the lips a lifetime on the hips I know I know" Eden said mournfully.

Diera laughed at Eden's mournful expression it was the first sign of emotion Lyric had seen since she sat down with them at lunch and she was utterly captivated.

"I am not really on a diet I just try to stay healthy that's all." Lucy explained
laughing.

"I always thought Dieting was just another word for eating healthily." Diera put in.

Lyric grinned "I'm not into eating healthy either, health food makes me sick."

"Seriously though Lyric, if you are anything like Rage and Angel the carnivorous lifestyle is a major contributor to heart attack." Lucy frowned.

"I thought all lawyers were carnivores." Diera teased "You know addicted to the habit of devouring the timorous vegetarian his heirs and assigns."

Sabrina decided to add her own two cents. "Diera? didn't you used to be vegetarian."

"I used to be but I'm no longer on the menu." Diera replied directing her answer to the darkly smouldering English woman and leaving no one in any doubt who her answer was directed at.

"You're on my menu, I happen to be an omnivore." Lyric whispered for Diera's ears only.

The afternoon was quite easy going and they all returned to the office in a much better mood. She was very surprised to find Philip Delaware in her office when she returned.

"Lyric, I hope I am not interrupting."

"Not at all, please sit down."

"I would like to get my affairs in order. I have a few outstanding debts people owe me and I think I should probably keep them somewhere safe."

Lyric sat back and offered Paul Delaware a cigar. She was wearing navy pinstripe trousers held up with suspenders, her light blue shirt was unbuttoned to give a hint of cleavage, its white collar sat loosely around her neck and her sterling silver cufflinks gleamed in the sunlight.

She looked every inch a powerful Corporate Shark and after offering Paul a fat cigar and a glass of Bourbon, She leaned back in her brown leather chair sipping on a glass of brandy whilst watching amused as Paul Delaware puffed contentedly on the hand rolled cigar she'd offered him.

"A safety deposit box perhaps?"

"Well yes I had considered that but I would like to keep a back-up copy with you. I am a cautious man Lyric and your mother assures me you're a brilliant lawyer and exceptionally good at keeping secrets."

"Absolutely."

"Good. They are mostly credit notes in my favour, from friends you know in case something happens to me and they refuse to pay back my daughters, I had them drawn up by my last lawyer so they are perfectly legal."

Everard Payne has finished paying up so it's really only Beauregard that owes me four or five hundred thousand dollars I can't remember I have to check."

Lyric whistled "That's a lot of money."

"Well we, four of us invest in mutual funds and every month we pay into the pot and use the money to buy shares. Mr Lane and Colonel Payne have not been able to meet some of their commitments, for one reason or the other. Although I think Everard is all paid up now."

"Why don't you just liquidate Lane's shareholding and get your money back?"

"Well it would be up to the others. I might decide to buy out Mr Lane and pay back or liquidate his investment." He shrugged "We shall see. Now about making my will are you ready to take my instructions?"

Lyric nodded and picked up her pen. "Fine let's start with the grisly stuff shall we? Would you like to be wormed or burned?" She asked irreverently.

Paul looked at her confused "Huh?"

"Buried or cremated?" Lyric clarified.

"Cremated?" Paul squeaked.

"You know the process by which the cold meats of humanity are warmed over."

"Good god Lyric you've inherited Allegra's diabolical sense of humour!"

In spite of Lyric's unorthodox approach to taking his instructions for the disposition of his estate on his death what should have been a grim and sombre meeting actually went quite well and was blessedly short. Their conversation finished and done with Lyric saw Paul to the door and when she opened it she was surprised to find Bradley Smith crowding her P.A. Diera looked relieved and Bradley Smith was blushing. She shot them both a black look and saw Paul out.

Diera watched Lyric go and wanted to run after her. Bradley had decided to declare his undying love for her and it was only the interruption that had forestalled him.

"Bradley I think that..."

He moved towards her and pinned her against the wall of the office. His lips looked gleaming wet as he attempted to slobber all over her. Diera tried to wriggle away from him and only succeeded in pulling the telephone cord out of the wall.

Her elbow caught him in the eye and he yelped as their feet tangled in the phone cord and then somehow they were both rolling on the ground with the lumbering Legal Executive on top of her.

The door slammed again and Diera was so surprised to see her she didn't realise she had said her name out loud.

"Lyric!"

For a moment the Opal coloured eyes were blazingly angry and filled with a depth of emotion she could only guess at. Then she turned to glare at Bradley Smith.

"What the hell is going on here?" Lyric stood in the doorway her black brows drawn up ominously.

"Miss Ba ba black..." Bradley stammered "I was just.. I mean Ms Voicemail, Diera and I we...were just..."

"I am well aware of what you were just doing." Lyric's eyes narrowed dangerously for a moment.

Lyric at 6'0 in her expensive handmade Italian leather shoes and bespoke Armani suit exuded an aura of arrogance and intimidation. The contempt in her eyes shrivelled any ardour that Bradley might have had as she let her eyes rest contemptuously on him.

"This is a respectable establishment Mr Smith. I would advise you to keep your conquests," Her eyes swept Diera up and down lazily so that her meaning was clear "out of the office." She finished.

"I am sorry I..." Bradley babbled "It won't happen again."

"Get out!" Lyric spat glaring at him as he stumbled out apologising.

Lyric stood in the middle of the room with folded her arms and watched Diera as she gathered her composure about her like a blanket of steel and then felt the overwhelming urge to pierce it again.

"I wouldn't go with Bradley Smith if I were you he's got a dirty little mind."

"Who I go with is none of your business." She was still furious at the way Lyric had spoken to Bradley and made her feel like a cheap slut.

Lyric shrugged "Suit yourself. You'll only have yourself to blame when he starts with you."

"Starts what with me?"

"You know his dirty songs. That boy knows lots of dirty songs. Songs no one with an ounce of common decency ought to know or even think about."

"Are you implying I could be the subject of these dirty songs."

Lyric shrugged non-committally and Diera looked slightly uncomfortable.

"Does he sing these songs in the office, I mean in front of people?" Diera frowned.

"No he whistles them mostly." Lyric winked at her and sauntered into her office shutting the door behind her.

Diera tried every trick in the book to try and get out of dinner with Lyric on Friday and failed miserably. The woman was disturbing. She made her feel things she didn't want to feel and even worse she made her think things that quite frankly made her blush and set her heart to fluttering.

She wanted to call in sick but then realised she had promised to meet Lucy for Lunch to discuss Eden's Hen night and since Sabrina was leaving town that would be the only chance they got to be together.

There was no way she could go by La Cachette and not go to work. Lyric was not in when she went to the office she had gone to the Court Registry to chase up some processes and meet with some clients so she never got the chance to tell her she had changed her mind.

When she got home she had a long bath and got dressed with a mixture of trepidation and excitement. When she thought about it she was actually looking forward to the date. She had always wanted to see the Mikado and dinner on the river sounded nice.

All she had to do was get over this date and make it clear she wasn't interested and she could go back to her normal boring life. Now why did that sound so depressing.

The doorbell rang and Diera went running to answer the door thinking it was her roommate Elizabeth Delaware. It wasn't it was Lyric standing there with a huge bouquet of flowers and thick black wind-blown hair.

Although it was summer and the clear blue skies meant beautiful days, the evenings could be especially cold which explained why she was wearing a brown sports fitted blazer. Her tan slacks, white shirt and polished brogues completed the outfit.

It screamed elegant, moneyed and CONSERVATIVE! Diera took one look at her and wanted to wipe the cocky grin off her arrogant face. She had just had her bath and had started dressing when the doorbell rang.

"Do you always open your door in that state of...." She paused waving her hand around as though trying to describe a word that escaped her and then said "Undress? "

"I was expecting somebody else." Diera motioned for her to come in and shut the door. "I'll be ready in just a moment."

"These are for you."

"Thank-you I'll just put them in water."

Lyric looked slightly irritated but Diera ignored her and went into the kitchen to get a vase.

When she returned she asked breathlessly "Can I offer you anything?" Diera groaned inwardly that did not come out right.

"What exactly are you offering?" There was so much temptation in her melodious low tone that in that moment Diera decided that the devil was a 6'0 female with black hair and a sexy English drawl.

"Not whatever is in your dirty little mind." Diera shot back.

Diera leaned back against the wall beside the door of her bedroom which was not far from her kitchen. Her silken night robe fell open to reveal a red lacy confectionery that was sexy enough to send Lyric's blood pressure shooting into the stratosphere.

"Whew," Lyric wiped imaginary sweat off her brow with the back of her hand "Is it hot in here or is it you?"

Diera unconsciously let a little smile play across her lips and shook her head. She didn't say anything instead she closed her eyes to gather her thoughts and focus consequently she had no idea of the effect she was having on the dark haired woman, she felt defensive enough as it was and did not see the lust burning in her hot glittering gaze. She was tempted to tighten her robe protectively around her but didn't, she did not want Lyric to know how much she affected her.

"Why don't we just skip the date and have hot monkey sex." Lyric drawled lazily a little half smile played about her lips as she said the words.

"No Lyric." Diera said firmly.

"Why not? We both know you find me unbelievably attractive." Lyric said seductively leaning over her, one hand on either side of her. Her warm breath brushed against Diera's ear making the younger woman shiver.

"So what?" Diera shrugged desperately trying for an air of nonchalance that she did not feel. "You're a very attractive animal, Lyric, but so is a tiger and I wouldn't let it anywhere near me."

Her robe loosely belted now fell open as though moved by the power of the ebony haired woman's stare to reveal her scarlet lace underwear to the hot devouring eyes that raked over her body before sweeping up again to engage her eyes.

"You think I'd take advantage of you?" Lyric asked perceptively.

"Wouldn't you?" Diera shrugged nonchalantly folding her arms.

Lyric moved towards her. "What exactly is it do you think I'm going to do?"

"I don't know Lyric, I don't know you."

"You're right you don't know me." Lyric towered above her. "But if you continue to give me those hot sultry looks then..."

"You've got an overactive imagination." Diera interrupted dismissively. She could see where this was going and all her resolve was melting under the intensity of Lyric's dark gaze.

"Do I? Am I imagining this?"

Lyric's arms came around her waist and pulled her in for a long searching kiss. It was hot sweet and filled with such hunger and passion Diera barely realised she was the one moaning. She loved the feel of Lyric's warm hands on her back, in her hair on her body and she just couldn't get enough.

Diera knew that if it wasn't for the intrusive ringing of the doorbell she would probably have skipped the date and jumped into bed with Lyric instead. As it was the loud insistent ringing brought her back to earth with an inglorious thump.

"There's someone at the door." She whispered.

"It can't be anyone important." Lyric kissed the soft skin behind her ear and dropped more butterfly kisses down her neck.

"Lyric...please." Diera placed a finger on Lyric's lips and moved away reluctantly.

"Dammit!!!" Lyric raked her hand through her hair. Diera adjusted her robe and opened the door.

"Diera Hi I just..." Lucy looked between a half-dressed Diera and a furious looking Lyric who was positively glaring at her. Diera's lips were red and slightly swollen as though she'd just been kissed very thoroughly too whilst Lyric's hair looked like someone had been passionately running their fingers through it. There was no doubt she had just interrupted a very amorous and intimate moment.

"Am I interrupting something?"

"Quite frankly yes!" Lyric folded her arms across her chest.

"Are you sleeping with her?" Lucy whirled around to glare at Diera.

"Lucy!" Diera gasped "You have no right to ask me that!"

"Just answer me!"

"Lyric could you excuse us?" Lucy waved a hand negligently in her direction.

"No!"

"No?" Lucy asked stupidly.

"No!" Lyric replied firmly. "I got here first so you can just bugger off." Lyric made a shooing motion with her hand.

Lucy found herself turning round and actually leaving. Annoyed she returned intending to go back and give Lyric a piece of her mind only to find Diera behind her and they were outside the door of her apartment.

"Have you slept with Lyric?"

Diera gasped "No!"

"I'm sorry, I guess I was a little shocked to see her here and you dressed like that. I missed you." Lucy took a step towards Diera who stepped back.

"Tonight is my date with Lyric, remember the charity auction of the Tolerance Society, the one you and Sabrina roped me into?"

"Oh!"

"Now I am already running late and I need to finish dressing. So I will have to see you another time."

"I'm sorry Diera, I just didn't think."

Diera forgave her wished her goodnight and she left not a minute too soon either because Lyric opened the door of her apartment with a dangerous glint in her eyes.

"I won't be long." She darted back into her bedroom.

She decided the best thing to do to dispel the romantic mood that the evening might become was to dress aggressively. So instead of wearing the flowery patterned dress with soft flowing lines that she wanted to wear which would make her look vulnerable and probably draw out all of Lyric's predatory instincts she decided to wear her sophisticated and perennial little black dress a la Audrey Hepburn with her hair up.

When she stepped back into her living room she felt confident and glamorous and she thoroughly enjoyed the incredulous expression she saw on Lyric's face.

"You look stunning." Lyric said hoarsely

"Thank-you, I think."

Lyric lead her to a yellow Ferrari and opened the door for her so she could get in. It was so elegantly done it took her breath away. Diera was so startled both her eyebrows shot up at the gallant behaviour but Lyric misinterpreted her surprise.

"It's not mine it belongs to my big brother Concerto. "

Diera looked a little bit surprised. "Concerto? Isn't your mother also called Allegra?"

"Hmm my Mother's Father Granpa Gaylord had a thing for music so we all got these how does my sister Sym put it happy hippy clappy names.

Diera laughed "He sounds like an interesting man."

"You don't know the half of it. I think I got off easy with Lyric, I did however come really close to being called B flat!"

"What are the rest of your siblings called?"

"Cymbal, Symphony, Melody, Clef and Descant."

They made it just in time for the performance. Diera enjoyed it too. The music, the dancing, the costume and drama. The programme explained that although it was sung in the style of an opera it was called an operetta because there was spoken dialogue and better yet the dialogue was in English.

The "Mikado" was set in Japan and since it was originally written in English written by Gilbert and Sullivan two British composers, it was easy to follow what was going on. As a child who

had attended the opera with her mother she had hated every minute of it because she simply did not understand the language but she really enjoyed this.

Afterwards they went on to the Pleasure Barge "the Yakisoba" and was surprised with the banquet of food that was served. Hot Miso Soup, crispy Vegetable Tempura dipped in a sweet red chilli sauce, a tender Salmon Teriyaki which melted on the tongue and was served with a plate of stir fried Udon noodles and Grilled Skate in blackened butter.

She was not really a Sushi lover but the variety included tender strips of Kobi beef, Tako which was a kind of octopus, there were also clams, shrimp, crab and deep fried Tofu.

Lyric was very suspicious of the California roll it was not like any delicacy she had eaten in Japan. It contained amongst other things crab meat, avocado, cucumber, and smelt fish roe and it was only after a little persuasion from the waiter that both of them tried it and were pleasantly surprised. Everything was served with Hot Sake.

It was nothing like the supermarket stuff which Elizabeth, Diera's flat mate insisted on buying and it was really nice having someone with her who was adventurous enough to try the different dishes with her.

Over dinner Lyric was actually a charming companion and dinner was quite pleasurable but the sexual tension still simmered quietly between them.

After the meal they decided to take a stroll on the deck of the boat. It was a clear night and all the stars glittered like diamonds in the sky.

"It's beautiful." Diera sighed

"Reminds me of my Safari in Africa. The clear still blue waters of the Zambesi River and the translucent white moon, and it would have been perfect too but someone forgot the cork screw and for several days after that we had to live on nothing but food and water."

Diera felt a smile tug at her lips. "That was terrible."

"And you are irresistible." Lyric murmured and kissed her, slowly languorously thoroughly as though she had all the time in the world, she bent her over her arm in a Hollywood style kiss. Diera moaned and arched her back grabbing handfuls of Lyric thick luxuriant hair, she could almost feel the darkness of it.

Lyric's lips brushed her throat and then she was brought up again and found herself breathlessly plastered to the black haired English woman.

"My place or yours?"

Diera shook her head. "I am not going to sleep with you tonight Lyric."

"Well that's a relief since sleeping did not form any part of my plans for you either." Lyric wriggled her eyebrows.

"That's not what I mean and you know it."

The voice of the ship's captain interrupted loudly over the tannoy drowning out any other sound. "Ladies and gentlemen, Kindly make your way to the departure point and thank-you for sailing on the Yakisoba. We hope you enjoyed your journey and please come again."

The boat had emptied pretty quickly after that and everyone disembarked quickly because of the exorbitant after hours parking fees.

The valet brought the car round and Lyric opened the door for her before getting into the car herself. She said nothing as she drove. Diera watched her date surreptitiously. Lyric was sulking like a child deprived of her favourite toy.

The only sound that could be heard in the car for a while was an old jazz classic written by Cole Porter and sung with Nina Simone's darkly smooth voice.

"Why did you pretend not to know who I was when I introduced myself at the office the first time?"

"I didn't know who you were."

"We'd met before in London on the Victoria Line. You remember where you left me high and wet." Lyric drawled

"You were a stranger on a train. Besides I was barely seventeen and just testing out my feminine wiles."

"So you thought you'd work me over."

"Oh, but I did work you over Lyric. Anyway what does it matter? You pretended you didn't recognise me from the auction."

"Annoying that wasn't it?"

"Is this a game to you Lyric?"

"Don't you like playing games Diera?"

"Oh I like playing games. But I am not playing this one with you."

"We shall see."

When they arrived at her block Lyric did not drive away but escorted her upstairs to her apartment.

"Good night." Diera turned to go.

"Not so fast." Lyric pulled her over, her voice sensual and darkly seductive. "I want you, and I know you want me too, so why don't you and me go inside and I can start by kissing every delightful inch of your delectable little body."

She closed her eyes against the seductive words but she was so tempted, so attracted to the dark haired woman and so afraid. "I never have sex on a first date."

"This isn't our first date." Lyric murmured into her hair. "But if you're angling for another date I would be willing to oblige you. Where would you like to go?"

"We work together. It would complicate things." Diera placed her hands on Lyric's shoulders and looked up into her black stormy eyes.

"I'm a great fan of complications."

"I'm sorry but we can't."

"Right, but it's okay to play tonsil tennis with Bradley Smith in my office."

"Are you jealous of Bradley?" She replied incredulously

"Absolutely!" Lyric's eyes blazed with passion.

"Well there's no need to be. I told him the same thing I told you I don't mix business with pleasure and you Lyric Gaylord Black are definitely business."

Diera shook her head. "Look I'm sorry I snapped at you I must be more tired than I thought. I'll see you on Monday at work, friends?"

"I don't want to just be your friend Diera."

"Well that's all you're going to get."

"But..."

"Thanks for the evening. I had a great time tonight, Lyric."

Lyric sighed. She would back off for now and then Diera did something she'd been longing to do all evening. She stood on tiptoe and dropped a maddening little kiss on Lyric's dimpled chin. Her finger came up to stroke the indentation on her chin where her lips had just caressed.

"Good night." She whispered softly and then she was gone in a cloud of perfume leaving Lyric still standing with her eyes closed savouring her touch.

"Dammit!!" Lyric glared at the closed door and then a smile broke out on her face and she found that she couldn't stop smiling. Diera had kissed her.

It was half time and they were taking a break from playing soccer on the astro-turf pitch. They met every Sunday to play in the park for a couple of hours before going off to Due South, the local English pub for drinks.

"No way....am I doing that. I am going to be a respectable married woman in just over a month. Once I get that ring on her finger then I can start misbehaving but right now I plan to be on my best behaviour." Rage poured what was left in her water bottle over her head.

"It doesn't work like that blood." Mercy shook her head. "The next time I get married I plan to be good. Very good."

"Your problem," Angel wiped her mouth and chewed thoughtfully on the orange she had just bitten into, "Is that you are in love with Lucy, have always been in love with Lucy and are to chicken shit to tell her."

"Yeah I don't get that either Mercy." Rage said after towelling her face dry "I mean you sleep with Lucy every chance you get and then you go off and marry Alicia and you're still sleeping with Lucy."

Mercy glared at Rage. "I told you Lucy's in love with Diera!"

"Bullshit! Lucy's in love with the idea of being in love with Diera, she's not sleeping with her."

"How would you know?" Mercy asked irritably.

"Because Diera has this untouched, naive almost innocent air about her." Rage countered.

"Oh come on! Have you seen that girl she's absolutely stunning and I know how hot Lucy is there is no way they are not sleeping together."

"Just because they're not sleeping together doesn't mean they're not together not everyone is like you Rage some people prefer to have a non-sexual relationship."

"A non-sexual relationship? You mean like dating but no sex? You're talking about friendship." Rage shook her head.

"Look half-time is over now is not the time for this conversation." Penelope got up and clapped her hands.

"I totally agree." Mercy said in relief.

They were just about to start up again when they saw a black haired woman watching them from the sidelines. Rage recognised her as the one who had tried to hit on Eden and her hackles rose as she sauntered over casually.

"Hey is this a competitive match or can anyone join in." Lyric had sauntered into the park after picking up the local gay magazine at the Phoenix rooms advertising soccer games.

Mercy grinned at her "Anyone can join. I'm Mercy and you?"

"I am pleased to make your acquaintance call me Lyric."

"This here is Rage, Angel..." As Mercy introduced her to the team Lyric thought they seemed quite a nice bunch of people well except for the blonde who was glaring at her.

Then she realised where she had seen her before, it was the night of the fashion show when she'd flirted with her girlfriend, the black haired beauty, Eden. Surely she would not still hold it against her.

She was wrong. She did. Lyric felt every tackle, all legitimate and it got to the stage she winced when she saw that she would have to either tackle her or concede a goal. Lyric hated to lose and the game soon turned into a very competitive one as challenges were flying right left and centre.

At the end of the game they all retired to Down South, a local bar that looked very much like an English pub which made her homesick. Despite the aggression on the pitch Rage was the first one to buy her a larger and it seemed all the earlier aggro had been forgotten.

Penelope Ice leaned against the bar and groaned. "Dammit I need a lift, I am going over to Dr Beauregard Lane's for dinner with Elizabeth's Dad anyone going in my direction?"

Lyric frowned "Not really but I need to see Mr Delaware, I am handling some things for him I guess now would be as good a time as any to go over there."

"Not to mention the fact that Diera and Elizabeth are very close so you would probably see her there." Penny nodded knowingly as Lyric blushed Penny continued speaking as though Lyric was not there "See I told you Rage nothing to worry about."

They arrived at Dr Lane's just as Diera and Elizabeth were getting there. Mr Delaware helped the two young ladies out of his car an elegant stately jaguar and into the house.

Dr Lane smiled at her and they shook hands and chatted desultorily. He barely acknowledged Penelope Ice whom he greeted with thinly veiled hostility. Lyric wondered at the undertones of anger she could feel emanating from the Doctor he was positively glaring at Penelope Ice yet Penelope was at the house at his invitation.

"Darling!" Elizabeth kissed Penelope very thoroughly "I've missed you."

"Not as much as I've missed you." Penelope replied wrapping her arms around Elizabeth. "You'll never guess who I found playing football in the park against Rage and giving as good as she got too."

"Oh dear!" Elizabeth said as her eyes alighted on Lyric. Elizabeth was friends with Eden and Sabrina and knew all about the meeting between Lyric and Rage. "Well it's good to see you are still alive."

"Barely" Lyric winced as she rubbed one of her bruises. "Rage doesn't take prisoners." She finished as they made their way inside.

As everyone left Lyric detained Diera by the simple expedient of catching her elbow. "You look sweet enough to eat." Lyric hadn't meant to say exactly what was on her mind, but her brain just seemed to short circuit when she saw Diera and the words just slipped out. She was a polished urbane lawyer used to guarding her tongue but right now her brain and body seemed to belong to two different People.

Diera did look gorgeous and not just because Lyric hadn't seen her all weekend. She was wearing a yellow cotton summer dress with spaghetti straps that buttoned all the way up the front. Her hair was piled up haphazardly on her head and looked like it threatened to fall down her shoulders. Her eyes were down cast so she could see her blonde eyelashes against her cheeks. Since when did she find eyelashes sexy?

Diera ignored the provocative statement and reached out a hand to cup Lyric's face. "And you look like you went five rounds with Mike Tyson. You've got the beginnings of a nasty bruise on your jaw."

"Wanna kiss it better?" Lyric lowered her head to kiss her and Diera couldn't resist. It was almost as though she'd been waiting for a drug fix. All weekend she'd felt dissatisfied even gloomy at the thought that she would not be dating the maddening ebony haired lawyer but now in Lyric's arms that feeling disappeared and she threw herself into the kiss.

Maybe she should just stop fighting it. Her hands slid through Lyric's thick luxurious black hair revelling in the thick texture before sliding down Lyric's neck to rest her hands on her shoulders against her chest.

"What a pretty picture you two make." Penny leaned against the door frame. The two lovers turned to look at her as though in a daze.

Diera blushed mortified to be caught in such an intimate situation.

"Yes don't we? Diera and I were just getting reacquainted." Lyric said smoothly arranging her clothing yet not taking her eyes off the blonde woman.

"Shall we?" Her glittering dark eyed gaze dared Penny to make any further comment and Penny wisely kept her mouth shut.

Inside the house Lyric managed to drag her attention momentarily away from Diera and noticed that Dr Lane was obviously quite well to do. His house reminded her of that of a grand-uncle rather than a bachelor of forty.

There were leather seats in the living room and lots of Oak furniture, whilst it was a beautiful room it still reminded her of her Great Uncle Archibald. Dr Lane seemed to have a crush on Elizabeth because he was extremely solicitous of her and was the perfect gentleman and a surprisingly entertaining host. It was soon obvious to Lyric why the man was enamoured of Elizabeth.

She was a lovely girl and seemed to always know what to say into some of the awkward silences at the table that arose as a result of Lane's Jealousy and Penny's insecurity. She almost expected Dr Lane to leap across the table and stab Penny with her steak knife.

"I understand you specialise in criminal defence law Ms Black."

"Please call me Lyric."

"Dr Lane is an expert in Forensics. I am surprised you have not come across him in your line of work." Elizabeth said.

"I am afraid I have not had the pleasure." Lyric's eyebrows rose.

"Dr Lane is a fingerprint specialist." Elizabeth turned around to face the Doctor who was watching her adoringly. "Aren't you Beaureguard."

"Well, I'm really an amateur but yes I do get consulted on several cases regarding fingerprint identifications and I have even acted as an expert witness in the stand. "If you are interested Lyric I could show you some of my work."

"I would be very interested Dr Lane, perhaps sometime after dinner."

"Please call me Beaureguard." He said beaming from ear to ear. "It's always nice to have one's work appreciated. Ah dinner is served."

Dinner was an old fashioned fare of thick slices of stuffed pheasant served with a rich red glass of red wine. It looked expensive and tasted expensive and Lyric was actually impressed with the wine. It actually tasted quite pleasant.

This was followed by a sweet but tart lime sorbet and served with champagne and then the main meal of Venison with an assortment of seasonal vegetables by which time Lyric was stuffed and looking for somewhere to surreptitiously dump the rest of her rich food. Finally desert was an

old fashioned English pudding Of Spotted Dick, a thick heavy circular sponge made with suet and drowned with lashings of Lyle's Golden Syrup, custard and raisins.

The animosity between Penny and Dr Lane seemed to have been tempered by the alcohol and the food and everyone was very relaxed and returned to the living room to relax. Dr Lane even took them to his study to show off his work.

There were casts of hands everywhere, some made from plaster of Paris, some from a synthetic rubber that felt very flesh like. It reminded her of a strap on. She was still stroking it thoughtfully when she heard Penny laughing and saw Elizabeth blushing and realised that they at least had an inkling of what was going through her mind. She winked at Elizabeth who blushed bright red. This last action only served to send Penny into peals of mirth.

"What's so funny?" Dr Lane glanced at the three women.

Dr Lane himself and Diera had been engrossed in making a cast of her hands so neither had been involved in the playful undercurrents in the room.

"I have no idea. Do enlighten us Penny." A mischievous smile hovered around Lyric's lips.

"The hands. They just reminded me of something your mother once said."

"My mother?" Lyric raised a disbelieving eyebrow.

"Everyman has something he can do better than anyone else and usually it is reading his own handwriting."

"Very Clever, deft change of subject." Lyric's lips still held the hint of a smile, her eyes twinkling with mirth. She whispered to Penny.

"Yes I thought so to." Penny replied under her breadth and smiled tongue in cheek.

"Yes that sounds like Allegra. I didn't know you had met my mother?"

"I've met your mother several times young Lyric, at Paul's house." Dr Lane started saying then he turned around and created a cast of Diera's hands. The casts were so lifelike that when Elizabeth looked up at him and asked "Oh Beau can I have a go?" He couldn't refuse her.

Dr Lane collected everyone's fingerprints and made casts of their hands. It was like being in art class in school and it was all actually a lot of fun. As the evening wore on and they imbibed more and more alcohol Paul Delaware fell asleep on the sofa and as Penny got a drunk she got more and more outrageous much to Elizabeth's irritation.

"I wish you wouldn't do this!" She hissed to Penny "All you need is a bottle in front of you and you lose control of your mind."

"Well I'd rather have a bottle in front of me than a frontal lobotomy." Penny slurred and laughed at her own joke.

"Come on I better take you all home." Lyric helped Penny to her feet and managed to arrange her in the back seat with Elizabeth. Since Diera shared an apartment with Elizabeth they were all going to the same place it made sense. Dr Lane drove Mr Delaware home himself.

When they got back Lyric helped to carry Penny to the spare bedroom whilst Elizabeth went to her own room to have a shower. When she came back to the living room only Diera was left and she was still in her evening clothes.

"Aren't you going to ask me to stay for coffee?" Lyric said softly.

"No."

"Even after I sent you roses?"

"The roses were from you?"

"Who else would they be from?"

"That's a loaded question and it's none of your business."

"You know you always act like you're not really interested but I have a theory about that." Lyric moved forward and Diera backed up until she was against the wall. She was in her own home and her cousin was in the next room. She felt supremely confident. She leaned against the wall and folded her arms across her chest her movements were unconsciously provocative and challenging.

"Please, I'm all ears."

"I think there's a naughty naughty girl inside you Diera, longing to get out. If you're so unwilling to let her out perhaps I should go in and fetch her hmm?" She came to stand right in her personal space, toe to toe eyeball to eyeball, not touching her with anything but her brilliant brown-eyed gaze.

Diera unconsciously licked her lips with the tip of her tongue wondering why Lyric's sexy English drawl was affecting her like this. She closed her eyes and took a deep breath.

"So why don't you just drop whatever sexy confectionery you have under that dress?" Lyric murmured her hot breath caressing her ears and lifting the blonde hair that swirled around her head. She moved her head lower as if taking in her scent, her hair, her neck, her skin and savouring every moment. "And let me give you a taste of something... sweet." Her teeth nipped Diera's ear and then flicked the pain away with the tip of her tongue. I promise you'll like it." Lyric said temptingly.

Diera bit her lip as her words sent a hot spike of desire straight to her heart and set her stomach to fluttering. Her centre actually twitched and her clitoris tingled. She looked up at Lyric with Big blue eyes and instead of words of denial coming out of her mouth what actually passed her lips was a breathless whimper.

However before she could say anything remotely coherent Elizabeth returned to the living room. She'd just had her shower and was wearing a rather large towelling robe.

"Lyric I didn't know you were still here would you like to stay for coffee?"

"No Lyric was just leaving. Weren't you Lyric?" Diera said after finding her wits. It was as though a spell had been broken.

Lyric looked her over for awhile. She looked tired and vulnerable. "Yes I was just leaving. Lyric leaned forward and kissed Diera's forehead goodnight sweeting." She left shutting the door deliberately behind her but the look in her eye was reserved for Diera only and it said they had unfinished business.

"Whew talk about sparks!" Elizabeth fanned herself.

"She is driving me to distraction." Diera groaned and collapsed on the sofa.

"Lyric? Don't you like her? Because from where I am standing Diera she has absolutely got the hots for you and you look like you feel the same way."

"I know. I want her too but it's complicated. I sometimes get the feeling it's just sex with her. I think I'm afraid."

"Afraid of Lyric? Has she threatened you in anyway?" Elizabeth came to put a comforting arm around her friend.

"No, I'm afraid of being hurt. I have never felt like this about anyone in my entire life and quite frankly it's terrifying." Tears glimmered in her wide blue eyes but they did not fall. "She has a way of making me forget my principles. I want to be in a committed relationship with someone I love and who loves me. I know I have feelings for Lyric I am just not sure whether she feels the same or whether she just sees me as just another sexual conquest."

"These things have a way of working out. Besides anyone who sends you a thousand dollars worth of roses deserves some kind of consideration in my book." Elizabeth grinned and kissed Diera on the forehead. "Come on let's go to bed."

Monday morning dawned bright and early and Lyric was in fine form and cross examining the opposition witness. She had Lucy Cavendish with her as second chair and she could not wait to get going. It did not matter where she practiced whether it was in England wearing her black robes, wing-tip collar and horse hair wig or in America in a pinstripe suit.

Nothing compared to that feeling of knowing you were ready to take down the opponent and break a witness. When you have prepared every legal strategy and successfully put the other side on the defensive. She loved the whole adversarial process.

She enjoyed everything from researching precedents and statutes till early hours of the morning trying to solve a problem, looking for an authority, to the banter in chambers, the brainstorming sessions of how best to attack a problem, arguing motions to final address but her favourite part of trial was cross-examination, prising the truth out of a lying witness and getting at the true facts.

She was a competitive animal, she liked to have an opponent to test her wits against and beat them which was probably why she enjoyed the adversarial process. She liked as in this case to watch her opponent build up his case confident cocky and arrogant that he was going to win, sit back and enjoy his artistic creation and then just like a tapestry find a loose thread that when tugged would unravel everything and bring it crashing about his ears.

Justice was a consideration for her but it wasn't her only aim it was why she took the toughest cases in the firm. Her name was going to go down in the Law reports as the best damn lawyer on either side of the Atlantic.

"Ms Black Your Cross." Judge Perkins pushed his spectacles up his beleaguered brow.

"He's an expert witness! Even you can't shake an expert witness."

The Counsel on the other side was actually quite a good lawyer. He was young and brash and absolutely loathed Lyric. They'd clashed before in some Maritime cases she'd done at the European Court of Justice.

His name was J Edgar Randall and he was tall with sandy brown hair and spectacles. At 6"4 he fairly towered above Lyric and was not above using his height to try to intimidate her not that she ever let him get away with it. She always made sure she was seated whenever he had to address her or speak to her and then it was always where she was relaxed and he uncomfortable.

She started her cross-examination innocuously enough. She danced around the actual evidence brought up the fact that he was being paid for by the state and so his evidence would obviously be prejudicial against the state. All standard practice since she would be calling her own expert witness.

Her questions were insidious and she asked them all smilingly and at a leisurely pace so that Mr Goldstein was not prepared for what was coming.

"Do you say that the signature on this Bond is a forgery?"

"Yes!"

"Is that your evidence Mr Goldstein? That it is not Mr Bavatsky's signature?"

"Yes." Mr Goldstein said firmly. "It is not Mr Bavatsky's signature."

"Mr Goldstein, what would you say if the Mr Bavatsky himself, who actually signed that document came into the box and swore, swore that he signed the document?"

"I simply would not believe him." Mr Goldenstein closed his eyes and said firmly.

"Ah but what would you say if a witness came up and swore he saw him write it?"

"I would say the same if a hundred witnesses came forward. Look the peculiarities are so strong there is absolutely no mistaking them."

"Yes but What would you say sir?"

"What would I say?" Mr Goldenstein agitatedly mopped his brow with the handkerchief in his jacket pocket. "What is the use of asking me what I would say?"

"If you had seen him write it himself?"

"I would not believe it!" He shrieked.

"No further questions for this witness!"

Chapter 4

Lyric's triumph in the court room was short lived when she realised she'd left her wallet and credit cards in the office and she'd have to go back and pick them up. She was also surprised to find Mr Delaware waiting for her in her office with a pilot case of documents. Lyric knew she would not be leaving the office for lunch and rolled up her sleeves and prepared to get down to work.

Financially he was not doing too badly for himself but his papers were in a bit of a mess and she knew he would have to engage an accountant to sort it out. She could deal with basic issues but his investments were so varied and substantially large enough for him to require professional help.

Lyric strode into her PA's office and she was in a good mood for all of 30 seconds until she heard Diera's voice on the phone.

"Hi Nigel it's great to hear from you."

"Nigel! Who the hell is Nigel?"

"That is none of your business."

"What now you're batting for the other team? Is he your boyfriend?"

"My personal life is none of your business."

"Your personal life is very much my business especially when it is conducted during company time."

Diera glared at Lyric and returned to her phone conversation with Nigel. "I'll call y0u later."

Lyric stood continued to watch her expectantly. "So you didn't answer my question." Her arms were folded across her chest, her wide legged stance was challenging and shirt sleeves rolled up her forearms, the black shirt moulded to her body in all the right places. Her grey trousers fell in clean straight lines curving gently over her ass and down her long shapely legs. Her dark eyes were hard and blazing with barely controlled fury. She looked hot and sexy as hell. Diera swallowed hard and tried to get her lips to form coherent words.

"What question?"

"Is Nigel your boyfriend?"

"And if I say he is?" Diera finally remembered to breathe and took a deep breadth. She wondered what if would happen if she slid her hands up those slim shoulders and cupped Lyric's face. She needed to stop fantasising and concentrate.

"You're lying." Lyric was saying.

"Why? Because I don't subscribe to the Lyric Gaylord-Black brand of charm?" Diera said mockingly.

"What you don't realise is that your thinly veiled insults could well turn out to be a turn on but then maybe that's your game Diera."

"You're the one who likes playing games Lyric."

"I think you are quite good at playing games too Diera. You tell me you don't mess with work colleagues but every time I turn around there you are with Bradley the human Octopus exploring tonsils in my office."

"Lyric we kissed once!" Diera said exasperatedly

Lyric continued ranting "...and when you're not doing that you're kissing me and successfully driving me stark raving mad for you.

Every time we lock tongues you can't keep your greedy little hands off me and then you turn around and tell me you're not ready to go to bed with me because you don't sleep with work colleagues why the hell should I believe you?" The English woman finished breathlessly.

Diera sighed. She could hear the frustration and anger in her voice. "I'm sorry Lyric but when I make love I want it to be with someone I love."

"Love!" Lyric threw her hands in the air. "Love is for fools and teenagers. What is real Diera is that you want me and I want you. What's the problem? It's not like you never had sex before this shouldn't be such a big deal."

"Well it is a big deal for me Lyric." Diera replied earnestly.

"What the hell do you want from me Diera?"

"If you don't know then there is no point to this conversation."

Lyric watched her as though contemplating a profound thought. "I bet if I kissed you right now you wouldn't be talking like this."

Diera's eyes widened "Don't!" She gasped leaning back. "Don't you dare!" The last thing she wanted was to have a client or one of her colleagues come into the office and catch her kissing Lyric. It had been embarrassing enough being caught in a compromising position with Bradley who had blabbed about it to the whole department it was quite another to be caught in another compromising position with her boss and have that all over the office, once was quite enough.

"Dare what?" Eden swept into the room though even her presence did not put much of a damper on the sexual tension in the room.

"Ah Eden," Lyric greeted her without moving her eyes from Diera. "I was just telling Diera how much I would like to..."

"Leave for lunch." Diera interrupted. She did not much like the predatory way Lyric was looking at her despite the fact Eden was watching them intently. She almost expected Lyric to leap across the desk and kiss her and although that thought sent a pleasant thrill down her spine. She did not want to examine why."

"Well I am glad to hear that because I needed to get your dress for the wedding. We can do the fittings today but if you..."

"Oh that would be fine. Lyric and I can do lunch another time can't we Lyric."

"I don't know I think I would enjoy coming shopping with you both."

"For bridal clothes?" Diera looked disbelieving.

"Why not? I am a woman after all and I do have plenty of experience with weddings. More so I'll wager than either of you two lovely ladies."

"Really how so?" Eden queried, she was standing by the door with her coat draped over her arm.

"Well I come from a family of six siblings all of whom are married as my mother never fails to remind me. I have experiences of civil, Catholic, gay and Jewish weddings, one blessing ceremony and even a wedding in Vegas."

Lyric helped Diera and then Eden into their coats. She grabbed her jacket and opened the door for them.

"I always forget how charming you can be." Eden said appreciatively cupping Lyric's cheek on their way out of the door.

"I aim to please." Lyric smiled holding the door open for them.

As they walked down the street it was nice to see everyone out enjoying the weather. There were café's and little restaurants on the sidewalk, the park as usual was a bustling hive of activity as was their favourite hang out La Cachette. They carried on walking till eventually Eden led them to a beautiful little boutique.

The boutique Eden led them appeared to be very exclusive. It was hidden from the general public and could probably only be found if one knew what you were looking for. The entrance to the shop was extremely discreet.

"Eden how on earth did you find this place?" Lyric asked looking appreciatively around.

"Rage found it actually we were..." She blushed and her voice trailed off as she gave a credible account of how they found the shop whilst leaving out the more salacious details. They'd been walking home after a romantic night and she'd pushed Rage into the doorway of the shop intending to have her wicked way with her lover when her eye caught on a voile lace wedding dress.

Rage proceeded to wickedly describe the myriad ways of taking off her wedding dress and they'd made love in the doorway setting off the alarm.

They'd had to pay the security guard a lot of money to get the security tapes. Always very cautious Eden and Rage came into the shop together collected the tapes and became good friends with the owners. Diera seemed to accept her explanation at face value but Lyric didn't though her eyes appeared to be twinkling with barely concealed mirth as though she knew.

One of the helpers went to see if she could find the three wedding dresses Eden had chosen and whilst they were waiting for her to get back, Lyric spotted a red dress with glittering black beads and spaghetti straps.

"Now this looks absolutely fabulous." She held it up from the hangar.

Eden laughed "I sincerely hope you are not wearing that to my wedding."

"I wouldn't dream of it but I do think Diera should consider wearing it to the cocktail party your parents are throwing for your engagement party." Lyric turned to look at Diera.

"It's looks really expensive." Diera said sighing wistfully as she looked at the dress.

"Why don't you try it on?" Eden shrugged "If only to see what it would look like." Diera was extremely tempted and took the dress from Lyric and made her way to the dressing room. After she left Eden saw the way Lyric's eyes followed her.

"You're in love with her aren't you?" Her eyes seemed to bore into Lyric's. Lyric couldn't hold her penetrating gaze. She found it extremely disconcerting that Eden had been able to easily discern what she was thinking.

"Love? I didn't have you down as a romantic at your advanced age."

"You make me sound old. Lyric, I'm only thirty-six."

"Old enough to know better. I'm in lust with her that much I know."

"Lust? Really?" Eden drawled the last word out sarcastically. "And do you find yourself wanting to spend every minute of the day with people you are in Lust with?" She came to stand in front of Lyric, "Find yourself dropping a very busy case load to follow them to bridal shops and suggesting they try on sexy shockingly expensive dresses which you have every intention of purchasing just to please them?"

Lyric shrugged and affected a bored look. "Maybe I followed her down here on the off chance I might get some free sex?"

"Free sex? The difference between sex for money and sex for free is that sex for money usually costs a lot less and I guarantee you this is going to be very very expensive."

Eden was obviously not fooled by her façade and Lyric knew it. Her eyes narrowed into little slits "How did you get to be so wise?"

Eden stood in front of her and smoothed the Englishwoman's jacket and collar in a gesture reminiscent of her elder sister Symphony. "I have a blonder, bigger, sexier version of you in my bed." Eden smiled sweetly patting her cheek like she would a small child.

"You're taking liberties with my person Eden." Lyric said dangerously. She did not like being made to feel like an errant little child especially by a very beautiful woman who was barely two years older than her and whom under normal circumstances should be succumbing to her charm or at the very least feeling intimidated by her sexuality.

"You don't scare me. So now I am going to give you some advice. Diera is my friend and more vulnerable than most. She is barely twenty three and for all her sang froid she is still a babe in the woods compared to your jaded sophisticated tastes. So when you play your stupid little

games as you will just know that if you hurt her you will have me to deal with and most definitely Rage as well."

"Diera is a grown woman who so far seems to be perfectly capable of handling me. In fact have you ever considered that I am the one most in need of your sympathy."

Eden shook her head. "You, Lyric Gaylord-Black deserve absolutely everything you get."

"Ah Eden we found the lace you were looking for why don't you come and have a look at this...Eden went into the other changing room and Lyric folded her arms across her chest unconsciously pouting.

In the changing room Diera had just gotten herself into the little scarlet creation. It was classically Grecian in style and made of shiny slinky satin and fell down her body in strategically placed folds which molded itself perfectly to her curves yet was scandalously brief so that, when she bent over to pick up the clothes hanger she had dropped she imagined she could see her panties in the mirror, she gasped it barely covered her bottom.

She stood up sharply and gasped again when she saw the front of the dress.

"Eden," She called out, "I can't wear this?"

"Why not what's wrong with it?" Lyric came into the dressing room still smarting from Eden's dressing down and inhaled sharply. "Sizzle! Sizzle! Sizzle!" She drawled as her eyes alighted on the vision before her.

Diera looked smoking hot and the pep talk Lyric had given herself after Eden had spoken to her, how she was going to stop lusting after Diera and trying to get her into bed at every available opportunity. Instead she would act more courteously and friendly, all of it flew out of the window with her good intentions, her tongue was already hanging out like a hound dog's.

It hurt just looking at her, she had that aura of demure sensuality that never seemed to leave her despite the overtly sexual dress she wore. Diera's wheat golden hair was thick luxuriant and wavy and fell past her shoulders, her face was classically beautiful, from her tawny eyebrows to her, violet blue eyes, sculptured cheekbones and thick sensuous lips which combined with the red dress to make her look absolutely sensational.

Her heart was pounding painfully in her chest and her stomach felt funny and every part of her body just ached to touch her, smother every inch of her in torrid hot little kisses from head to toe.

"Lyric? Lyric are you alright? You look pale."

Pale!!! She'd stopped breathing. Not wanting the younger woman to realise how much of an effect she was having on her she moved under the pretence of adjusting the dress.

"All you really need to do is zip up, then these," she cupped Diera's breasts from behind "will do the rest, you won't even need a bra."

Diera slapped Lyric's hands away and readjusted the dress. "I still think it's too revealing."

She could feel Lyric's breasts pushed up against her back. It wasn't an unpleasant feeling she quite liked it actually. "Zip me up." She ordered Lyric and lifted her hair out of the way whilst waiting patiently as Lyric zipped up the dress.

The dress although held by spaghetti thin straps had a plunging cleavage which owed much to clever engineering appeared to challenged the forces of gravity as it was zipped up.

Lyric slid her hands up her waist and then her hands pushed Diera's breasts together and upwards, sliding over the dress and kneading them gently. They were heavy and full, and very soft, Lyric brushed the pads of her thumbs across her nipples whilst her lips nuzzled Diera's throat.

"Lyric! What do you think you are doing!" Diera gasped.

"Hmm just checking to see if your erect nipples will show through the dress. Now **that** would be absolutely indecent." Lyric whispered against her neck.

"Lyric...please?" Diera bit her lip, she knew she shouldn't be letting Lyric touch her like this but god help her it felt so good and she didn't want her to stop.

"Oh dear, your nipples do appear to be showing through but I don't think you need to worry it will probably be too dark to see anyway." Lyric whispered against her ear. She nibbled Diera's earlobe and then trailed her ear with her tongue. Diera shivered with her touch it was so excruciatingly erotic and so sensual she could barely stand it as Lyric's tongue continued to play in and around her ear before finally taking in the pink shell and sucking on it slowly.

Diera heard herself moan as Lyric's hands slipped down to her waist over the curve of her hips to push her dress upwards so that her warm hands now rested on her bare thighs and Diera inhaled. She couldn't see the look in Lyric's eyes because the Englishwoman was looking downwards and her thick black eyelashes fell like a curtain on her cheeks to hide the burning desire that was now rapidly raging out of control.

She felt slightly apprehensive as Lyric went down on one knee behind her.

"Lyric what are you doing?" Diera asked warily.

"I am just checking the stitching on the dress." came the innocuous reply. Diera steadied herself if Lyric made one move she felt uncomfortable with she could always scream. After all they were in the fitting room of a shop. She inhaled and stood still as Lyric knelt down to observe the fitting of the dress moving the material across her hips. Her black brows furrowed thoughtfully.

"You are right though I think the dress length is rather outrageous." Lyric slid her hand down Diera's bottom and between her thighs, her thumb inadvertently brushed her crotch and Diera gasped.

Lyric stared up at her with wide eyed innocence. "Did you say something?"

Their eyes locked and Diera swallowed. Maybe she had imagined it. Lyric wouldn't dare touch her so intimately here, in a boutique or rather in the changing room of a boutique would she? "Oh nothing."

Lyric continued speaking as though she hadn't just touched her intimately.

"I think you might have to wear a thong with this 'cos your panty line is spoiling the shape of the dress."

Suddenly in one swift movement Lyric reached under her dress and ripped off Diera's panties. Diera gasped her name out in outrage and was about to turn around and berate her. Her left hand held her still whilst the other brushed the younger woman's bottom as she arranged the dress over her behind and surreptitiously stuffed the younger girl's tattered underwear into her jacket pocket.

"That's much better isn't it?" Lyric's voice had lowered to a seductive purr. She could see the blonde hairs that hid Diera's womanly secrets. Lyric's hand slipped between her legs, her fingers tangling in her pubic hair whilst her thumb rubbed her clitoris.

Diera swallowed and tried to speak "Lyric I don't..."

Lyric could scent Diera's arousal, and gently and deliberately continued her insistent stroking. She was so soft and wet.

"Lyric." Diera moaned unconsciously opening her legs. "We shouldn't do this here."

"Why not?"

"B...b...because." Diera stammered unable to think of a reason, unable to think at all.

"Don't you like it? Because it feels like you like it." Lyric said softly. Her long slender fingers continued their insistent stroking. Diera moaned again her breathing coming out in breathless gasps.

"Ladies are you quite done yet?" The boutique owner called out.

"Not quite." Lyric whispered as she brought her tongue closer to Diera's wet centre and flicked her clit. Diera gasped and tried to jerk away from the unfamiliar touch but Lyric held her firmly grasping her naked bottom spreading her netherlips and tenderly stroking her engorged and swollen clit till Diera's breath came out in a sobbing whimper of need.

Lyric's tongue moved rhythmically on the little blonde's flesh exerting just enough pressure till Diera was grinding her sex into Lyric's face her hands tangled in her thick black hair.

Lyric's tongue delved in between Diera's womanly folds stroking her, sucking her, before licking her up and down. Her movements were slow, her tongue penetrated insistently and then savored her, Diera's thighs began to tremble as Lyric's tongue swirled, flicked and curled around her swollen bud.

She couldn't help herself she started to tremble and whimper, her thighs shook with the strain, her pleasure mounted and then just when she thought she had reached the edge of a precipice of pleasure. The boutique owner called out something Diera barely heard her and then Lyric removed her mouth and tongue, her hands arranged Diera's clothing just before the shop owner stepped into the changing room cubicle.

Diera was left trembling, with unfulfilled desire, and not caring what the boutique owner was thinking either.

"I love it, it is fantastic." Lyric winked at roguishly at Diera and moved away.

The boutique owner's eyes darted from one to the other suspiciously and then she shrugged and smiled at a sexually frustrated Diera in the mirror.

"It's beautiful. I think you should take it."

"And we shall. Please put it on my card." Lyric handed her the card hoping the bloody woman would leave so she could finish making love to Diera. Alas it was not to be.

"I'll just change out of this." Diera said shakily.

The boutique owner turned and smiled at Lyric. "Please come with me you will need to enter your pin into the machine and I will bag that up for you."

Whilst waiting at the check out to pay, Eden was still packing a few things into the boxes Diera glared at Lyric. "I can't believe you did that?" She hissed.

Lyric shrugged "What's to believe. The important thing is you enjoyed it." Then Lyric turned around and murmured for her ears only "Now you know how sexually frustrated you leave me it's about time you had a taste of your own medicine."

"You're playing a dangerous game Lyric and it is one you are more than likely to lose."

"Really? Try me." Lyric challenged.

Diera's eyes narrowed dangerously. "You might just get your wish Lyric Gaylord-Black." Diera took a deep breath "I can't accept the dress."

"Why not?"

"It's too expensive and I couldn't afford it on my salary."

Lyric came to stand behind her and leaning down she bit Diera's earlobe gently and tugged at it with her teeth. "Would you like me to drag you back into the changing rooms and persuade you to accept it?" Lyric drawled for her ears only, "I can be quite persuasive." Her tongue flicked at Diera's earlobe.

"Are you actually threatening to make love to me unless I accept the dress?" Diera's blue eyes widened as she turned to look up into Lyric's dark eyes.

The image her provocative words conjured up in her already overactive-imagination almost undid her. She would love to make love with Diera, touch her, taste her, kiss her...

"Lyric?" Diera looked up searchingly into the whiskey coloured eyes above hers. Lyric had an expression on her face that made her heart beat faster. She couldn't think of the word to describe it, desire, need, longing, and then it was gone.

"It's a gift Diera, no strings attached just accept it and don't argue with me." Lyric said shortly. Diera stared after the crazy woman who stormed out of the shop.

They had lunch at La Cachette Diera was very subdued as she pushed her lunch around her plate.

"You know Lyric food is an important part of a balanced diet." Eden said pointedly when Lyric ordered a liquid lunch and didn't even bother to order anything solid to eat. The English woman scowled at her and defiantly drank her beer.

Eden guessed something had happened between the two lovers who kept staring at each other with hungry eyes when each thought the other wasn't looking.

So she tried to keep the subject light and the conversation easy so that by the time they had finished eating both of them had returned to an acceptable level of civility. They returned to the office for the rest of the afternoon. Diera found she was disappointed to hear that Lyric had to meet a client on site and would be out of the office for another two weeks. Somehow the office did not feel the same without her.

After work she went home and found Elizabeth in the kitchen making dinner.

"Expecting company?"

"Can't I cook dinner for my best friend?" Elizabeth teased.

Diera smiled "You generally leave the cooking to me."

"That's because you're little Ms homebody. Eden called me and told me to look after you. She said you were feeling rather delicate and I should treat you with kid gloves."

Diera gave her a watery smile. "What's for dinner?"

"Chinese takeaway I warmed it up in the Microwave myself." Elizabeth said proudly. As they tucked into dinner it was nice to unwind with Elizabeth. These days they rarely spent evenings together since she'd started dating Penelope.

"So where's Penny?"

"We had a fight. Dad told me he had it on good information that Penny was seeing..." She took a deep breath "Prostitutes and when I confronted her she refused to deny or confirm it she just kept on going on about how I always take Beau's side all the time.

"I don't understand what Dr Lane has to do with this."

"Penny thinks Dr Lane told Dad that she sees," Elizabeth took a deep breath "Has sex with prostitutes." She clarified bitterly.

"Oh." Diera blushed unable to say more.

"Well when I asked her she started off saying she was helping out a friend and then before I knew it we were screaming at each other and now...I don't know." She finished glumly.

"Elizabeth I do know that Beau is in love with you and I know he is very old fashioned. Now I am not saying he is lying but is it not conceivable that maybe he did see Penny with a friend who was dressed provocatively and misconstrued the situation?"

Elizabeth sighed "I suppose. It's just I know Penny has some really unsavoury characters in her life. She told me she used to be a cat burglar for crying out loud. The thing is it's not such a long shot to imagine Penny having something to do with someone like that."

"Hey prostitutes are people too. Everyone deserves a shot at love."

"It's alright for you to say I couldn't imagine your Lyric having anything to do with prostitutes."

"She's not my Lyric. She's my boss."

"Right I wish I had a boss who sent me a dozen roses every week. I think that's so romantic." She sighed "I'm lucky if Penny sends me a cheap bunch of flowers from the gas station."

I have no intention of dating Lyric I have someone else in mind."

"Oh really? Who?"

"Nigel."

"Oh my god! Not Nigel Robinson?" Elizabeth could feel a headache coming on at the thought of Nigel Robinson.

"What's wrong with Nigel Robinson?"

"If you were going to bat for the other team could you have picked a more pathetic specimen of the opposite sex? Why would you drop a dead sexy love goddess that most heterosexual women would lose their left pinkie to sleep with to date Nigel Robinson."

"We have been discussing having children." Diera said petulantly.

Elizabeth's jaw dropped in sheer disbelief. Kate, Eden and Elizabeth were the nearest people that Diera had to family so she valued their opinion.

"With Nigel Robinson!!!" Elizabeth said aghast "Are you out of your ever-loving mind?"

"You don't know what it's like to go through life alone. No family, not having someone who loves you unconditionally, you have Kate and your father I have no one. I want a child, I want a family and I'm so tired of being alone." Diera had been besieged by tumultuous emotions and stress and her conflicting strong emotional pull towards Lyric it was all too much she burst into tears.

"Oh Diera!" Elizabeth wrapped her arms around her. "Of course you are not alone and we all love you. I understand some of what you are feeling and it is because I love you that I can never approve of Nigel Robinson. At least promise me you will look into alternatives other than Nigel Robinson."

Diera smiled through her tears. "I promise."

Unfortunately Diera's quest for a baby daddy had so far proved unsuccessful and despite giving her word to Elizabeth two weeks later she was back to square one so she had decided to broach the subject with Nigel and he had suggested the Two Keys restaurant.

She didn't really feel comfortable in that part of town so she'd left a message with Elizabeth telling her where she was going and who she was going with.

The restaurant was cheap the steak she was given was tough and badly cooked, frozen raw on the inside charred on the outside. She had not touched it but Nigel had proposed they eat there after the seminar on art history they'd attended at the Fielding Gallery.

She tried to show an interest in Nigel's earnest recounting of the lecture's highlights but she was finding it extremely difficult to concentrate. She had initially thought he would make a good father, he was clever and held a good position as a lecturer in art history at the local university but she was now noticing things about him that she had never thought were important before.

Like the fact that his hair was greasy and he had a bald patch which he tried to hide with a comb over, His beard was unkempt and untidy, his red checked shirt clashed horrendously with his Yellow anorak and she was getting rapidly revolted by the way he ate.

She watched with growing distaste as he shovelled large globs of food in his mouth, whilst he talked, spat and masticated his way around it and anything that wasn't projectiled back onto his plate found its way onto his shirt, his beard, the table, the floor everywhere but his mouth where it was meant for.

She found herself comparing his lack of social graces with Lyric's urbane polished sophisticated elegance. An image of the black haired English woman and her arrogant smile filled her mind. She frowned with annoyance when she realised she was fantasising about kissing Lyric's dimpled chin. Lyric might be elegant and darkly beautiful but she was also her boss.

Nigel was stabbing the air with his fork to punctuate a point when his big masticating jaw dropped open to reveal the entire contents of the dinner he had just stuffed in his gullet and then came to a stuttering open-mouthed halt as he pointed his fork to a point over her left shoulder.

"Diera isn't that your Gaylord-Black?"

"She's not my Gaylord-Black."

She needn't have bothered to turn round Lyric made her way to the table and people parted for her like the proverbial red sea. She was dressed immaculately in what was obviously an expensive designer charcoal grey suit and a crisp white cotton shirt and she stood out like a dish of expensive caviar amongst cartons of third rate low quality supermarket pizza. Her brown eyed gaze was completely focused on Diera.

"Who the hell is that and what the hell are you doing here?" Lyric almost growled.

"I am on a date. That is my date."

Lyric's eyebrows lifted as she surveyed the hapless Nigel up and down like some sort of insect that had just crawled out from under rock and had a nasty odour. "You actually find his company pleasurable?"

"But off course Nigel is a clever articulate well spoken man and he..."

"I'm sure he is." She drawled in a tone that implied the complete opposite. "But when I'm on a date conversation is not a priority on my agenda, nor is it a list of qualities I require. Mostly I'd prefer it if they expressed themselves in other more physical ways."

Diera knew Lyric was being deliberately provocative but she could not help responding angrily. "Fortunately not everyone is like you." Diera tried to keep her voice low so she did not make a scene but she also realised that the people at the nearby table were not only obviously staring at them but also straining to listen in on their conversation.

"You're deliberately being crude and immature!"

"That's not what you said the other night when you had your hands in my hair and your..."

Diera flushed and interrupted angrily "We should continue this conversation outside."

"Absolutely." Lyric agreed.

In one smooth movement Lyric picked up her bag handed it to her, moved the table out of the way and helped her up out of the chair. When Nigel attempted to get up her dark brows scowled fiercely at him, pinning him in mid-motion like a deer caught in the headlights.

"I think I should warn you now that as your soon to be lover I am extremely territorial and very possessive so when you say goodbye to your friend here try to keep your incidents of physical contact to the barest minimum." Lyric said the words with such menace that Nigel who had stood up to kiss Diera goodbye sat meekly back down under the force of Lyric's glittering gaze. Diera herself, actually felt slightly nauseous at the thought of touching Nigel at all.

Lyric snapped her fingers loudly and made a writing gesture with her fingers and a waiter appeared with the bill. Her black scowl never left Nigel's face as she brought out a thick wad of cash and paid the waiter.

"You just have to reduce everything to the physical don't you. Nigel and I are on the same level of thought we share a meeting of minds and have common interests." Diera finished primly.

"Well believe me when I say that like me your friend is just as anxious as I am to conduct a relationship with you on a horizontal level. He's just too much of a chicken shit to say it."

Nigel opened his mouth to say something but swallowed hard when he saw Lyric's dark eyed glare.

"Please feel free to contribute to the conversation." Lyric said threateningly almost daring him to speak.

"I...I....I could have paid for the meal." He stuttered.

"I'm sure you could in a place like this."

"I didn't come here to be insulted?"

"Oh really? Where do you normally go?" Lyric glared back at him shoulder's squared up and looking extremely capable of doing poor old Nigel some serious injury. Her eyes blazed with a black fury. She was so angry and so very jealous it was a wonder she had not knocked him into kingdom come just for breathing.

Nigel seemed to recognise that he was out of his depth for he quietly remained in his seat. Lyric Gaylord-Black actually looked like she not only wanted kill him with her bare hands right there and then but was quite capable of doing so and would probably enjoy every moment of his demise with relish.

Despite the fact she was wearing a very expensive suit and spoke with a very cultured English accent her air of civility appeared to be nothing more than a very thin veneer. Lyric counted some notes from her wallet which more than covered the bill and threw it onto the table.

The aristocratic voice continued in its mocking cadence. "Consider it compensation for taking her from you." Lyric said over her shoulder as she smoothly opened the door for Diera with seamless elegance and helping her out with a hand at the small of her back.

"How did you find me?" She asked angrily.

"Elizabeth apparently has an even lower opinion of Mr Nigel Robinson than I do. Now that I have met him I fully appreciate her concerns."

"You were so rude to him." Diera noted irritated that Lyric also managed to get a parking space right in front of the restaurant. Where was a traffic warden to burst her bubble of smooth urbanity.

"If he cared that much he shouldn't have let me take you away from him." Lyric replied opening the door for her and waited calmly for her to get in. "I wouldn't let anyone take you away from me Diera." Lyric finished softly looking down into her eyes. Diera was momentarily held captive by her brilliant brown eyes. She finally managed to drag her gaze away and slid gracefully into the car.

The only way she could retain her composure was to hang on to her anger and not allow her heart to melt when Lyric said things like that to her. "You intimidated him."

"He's not worth your time!" The Englishwoman slid on her dark aviator sunglasses and adjusted the mirrors before starting the engine of the car.

"You are insufferably arrogant do you know that! I can't even begin to understand how anyone could even find you attractive."

"Well if the best that you can do is Nigel I begin to understand your confusion. The truth is sweetheart that you find me unbelievably attractive, you have since the first time we met on the tube in London and you can't stop comparing me with your boring insipid lovers."

"Right now I do not find you attractive at all." Diera said outraged "And if you must know I do happen to find the human mind sexy and infinitely more exciting than the human body."

Lyric glanced over at her noting the way her long legs were crossed demurely and her hands itched to caress their smooth silken length.

"There's nothing wrong with sex between two..." Lyric grinned mischievously "or more consenting adults Diera."

Diera shook her head she was not going to rise to the bait. "You're entitled to your opinion of course but personally I find a mental connection more stimulating than a physical one."

"Opinions are influenced by experience and you're more interested in the mind because your experience is with people like Nigel who have very little to offer you physically. Tell me does he make your heart race like I do when I kiss you? Does he ever make you forget everything but the touch of his lips on yours? Has he ever made you feel like that?"

"I don't want to sleep with Nigel."

"But you were considering him as your baby father."

"Yes but I wouldn't sleep with him!" Diera said emphatically.

"Hmmm" Lyric drawled "I can't imagine that any woman would want to sleep with Nigel never mind make babies with him. He wouldn't do for you anyway. You need someone aggressive who's willing to challenge you and break down that implacable wall of ice you've surround yourself with."

"Someone like you?" Diera said scornfully

"Yeah someone like me."

"You know what? Stop the car!" She was absolutely furious. She was so angry she was trembling with rage. "I cannot stand another moment in your egotistical, arrogant company."

"You should have thought of that before you kissed me." Lyric said smugly.

"I did not kiss you! In fact I never kiss you. You always kiss me!"

"Yes I do, but then you always kiss me back and you **always** have your greedy little hands all over my body because you can't keep your hands off me, can't stop touching me, wanting me, tasting me and driving me stark raving bananas."

"I do not!"

"Do you want to test out that theory Diera?" Lyric stopped the car turned to face her challengingly.

Diera bit her lip, despite her anger she was tempted but at the same time she wasn't going to play out Lyric's game. She tore her eyes away and looked out of the window.

"No" She said petulantly.

"Get rid of Robinson otherwise I will do it myself."

"He's not mine to get rid of!"

"Glad to hear it."

"I told you I am more stimulated by a mental connection than a physical one."

"Yeah yeah I know you want me for my mind. You just won't admit you want my body too."

"It's not all about sex!"

"Really" Lyric stopped the car outside her apartments. She switched off the ignition and turned to face her, Her eyes sweeping up and down her body, black lashes rested on her cheeks as she lowered her head, "It's a hot day but your nipples are straining against your blouse, your pupils are dilated, your lips are moist," She said softly against her slightly parted mouth "begging...yearning to be kissed by me."

Diera couldn't take it any more she kissed her. Her hands cupped Lyric's head and drew her in for the kiss. They broke apart breathlessly.

"I thought you only wanted my mind. This isn't going to be any fun if you don't at least try to be a worthy adversary Diera." The maddening woman drawled against her lips.

"Shut up Lyric!" Diera pulled Lyric's head back down to continue the kiss.

She didn't even know when or how it happened. One minute they were having an argument and the next minute they were all over each other. It was when she felt Lyric's hot mouth close on her bare nipple that she realised some modicum of modesty.

"Lyric!"

"Hmm?" Smoky brown eyes regarded her lazily.

"We can't do this here."

"Why not?"

"Because we are in your car in full view of passers-by and everyone can see us." Diera replied shakily.

Lyric looked at her groggily, still confused by the sexual haze Diera had inadvertently weaved about her, her hands slid up the blonde woman's thigh to push her skirt upwards.

"Car's got tinted windows." She murmured against Diera's throat.

"Lyric!" Diera placed both hands on Lyric's shoulders and pushed "I don't want our first time to be in your car." Diera's mind fell back to her friend Fiona's recounting of her disastrous first time in the back of her boyfriend's car.

"Why not? It's as good a place as any." Lyric scowled blackly with disappointment as she watched Diera adjust her bra and do up her blouse with trembling fingers.

"Why can't you just behave?" Diera said exasperatedly

"You really want me to answer that?"

The way Lyric was looking at her she did not think she should push the English woman any further. She composed herself and gathered her things so that by the time she got herself together Lyric had come around the car and opened the door for her. Diera reached up and took the hand Lyric held out to help her unto the pavement and locked the door behind them.

They went up to her apartment and Diera opened the door to her apartment.

"So what were you really doing with Nigel, were you perchance trying to make me jealous because if you were you succeeded beyond your wildest dreams."

"I want to have children and if we are going to have a relationship you need to know that at some point I would like to have children."

"Children!" Lyric could feel a shiver of terror start down her spine and simply stared at her in utter disbelief.

She'd had this conversation before with her father. He put pressure on her to have children and now she could not believe Diera was doing the same thing.

"I do not want children!" Lyric could not believe that one word could put a damper on her libido so quickly.

"Well I do." Diera said firmly.

Always she had run relationships on her rules. She was willing to accede to her demands for monogamy. She was willing even wanted Diera to move into her flat and live with her and share all her worldly possessions but children? Children?!

"I can't believe this we haven't even had sex yet and we are discussing children. Hell Diera we haven't even discussed marriage and we are talking about kids."

"Because If I have a relationship with you, a long standing commitment then I want to know you are in it for the long haul."

"And you think children would guarantee the longevity of a relationship? Children do not hold a marriage together Diera, there are lots of children out there from broken marriages. Bloody hell Diera I should know I am one of them."

"You already said you don't love me so what am I supposed to hold on to, your libido? What do I do when someone sexier or younger comes along?"

"I cannot bear the thought of you and another person Diera, I will not share you with another man which is what would happen if you had a baby with another man. You would have to sleep with him...I can't I just can't!!"

"There is such a thing as artificial insemination."

"No...I cannot. I will not. Even if you had IVF your baby father would demand to be in your life, in the child's life."

"It would be done anonymously, not all men want to have a part in the life of their children's upbringing, we could even have an agreement that he relinquish all parental rights to the child."

"Until the child becomes famous or rich or both, or what about when he realises I am quite well off and I become a target for blackmail or even worse he takes a look at you and decides yeah He wants you?"

"Lyric," Diera sighed "That is not going to happen."

"Why because you say it won't? You want me I want you. We are good together, instead you want to throw all that away to be with men like Bradley and Nigel because you want children."

"What about adoption? We could adopt."

"Children cramp your lifestyle. We would be constantly making arrangements for babysitters..."

"I can afford it."

"They are expensive."

"Again I can afford it."

"What if we adopt some psycho kid who decides to murder us in our beds?"

"That's a chance everyone takes whether they have biological children or adopted children. Lyric you come from a big family. I never knew my parents I was brought up by my grandmother and when she died I had no one except maybe Uncle Paul who is not even related to me. I would love to live in a house filled lots of children and have a real family." Diera finished earnestly.

"What you mean like the Brady bunch? Real life is not like that Diera. Family's are interfering, annoying always squabbling and quite frankly a pain in the butt."

"If that's the way you feel then I think you better leave because we are just not going to agree."

"You are right I better leave!" And Lyric left slamming the door behind her.

Chapter 5

Over the next few days the atmosphere in the office was distinctly chilly. Lyric and Diera were barely civil to each other. At the cocktail party held by Eden's parents, Everard and Naseera Payne, Lyric arrived alone. Her parents were there. Allegra Gaylord-Black and Artemus Black were close friends of Paul Delaware and Naseera and Everard Payne.

Even Kate and Rocco had flown in from Europe to be at the cocktail party. Lyric wore a black Alfredo Bertinelli tuxedo with a burgundy dress shirt. Her gold cuff links and studs glinted in the romantic lighting. Her thick black hair looked like she had just got out of a lover's bed and her long black eyelashes rested on her cheeks as she looked down to stub out her cigarette.

She smoked a lot, drank a lot of alcohol and kept herself aloof from everyone else. She was civil to the point of rudeness and witty to the point of sarcasm.

Allegra marched over to her daughter and took the cigarette from her and stamped it into the ground.

"It's just one cigarette." Lyric said exasperatedly.

"Hmm it's been my experience that cigarette are killers that travel in packs. Hand the rest over baby you've been busted."

A smile twisted the younger woman's lips as her mother took the packet from her and lit two for herself and pocketed the rest. Allegra was shameless in her hypocrisy sometimes.

"Don't you think you are overdoing it?" Allegra noticed that whilst her words were directed at her Lyric's attention was not.

"Overdoing things is always harmful darling especially when it comes to efficiency." She watched her daughter's eyes follow the beautiful blonde woman in the scarlet shockingly sexy satin confection on the arm of the conservative grey suit.

"Is that who you are eating your heart out for?" Allegra asked arranging her daughter's bow tie. It was more to soothe her obviously troubled daughter with her touch than because there was anything wrong with her grooming. Lyric was always impeccably elegant. Lyric cursed under her breath. She'd never been able to hide anything from her mother.

"I have never been a great fan of offal Mother."

"No? just a large dish of humble pie then."

"How did you know I was in love with her?" Lyric asked quietly.

"Darling, You may be able to fool all the people some of the time and some of the people all the time but you can't fool your own mother." Allegra chuckled her daughter under the chin.

"She wants children." Lyric drank the rest of her champagne at a toss.

"She also appears to want you. She keeps looking over this way and you evidently haven't taken your eyes off her all evening." Her mother tossed the two smoked cigarettes into a nearby ashtray.

"Allegra!" Her father enveloped her mother in a hug and kissed her. "Lyric." He nodded at his daughter.

"Lyric's in a bloody mood darling. She's just lost her girlfriend to the grey suit in the corner. I think it's the gorgeous blonde in the scarlet satin creation. She wants to settle down and have children apparently and my darling little tyrant is against the whole idea. Hence she is sitting here suffering in silence ah la tragedie d'amour."

"You mean she has morals. None of this jumping in and out of bed at the earliest opportunity an old fashioned girl, a girl after my own heart, excuse me darling. I'm going over to introduce myself to her."

Lyric wanted to strangle her mother. She knew her father would make a bee line for Diera. He was a fertility doctor who was always trying to propagate the Gaylord-Black line. The fact that he had fertility issues and she was gay and greatly opposed to having children would not stand in his way. His motto was impossible is nothing.

Eden's parents came over and Allegra gave them both a hug. "You must be very happy.

"Absolutely and Artemus promised to help Eden and Rage with pioneering treatments at his fertility clinic. He says he has a new procedure it's all very hush hush."

"I don't know why everyone is so fired up about having children they're expensive and annoying." Lyric muttered under her breath.

"Well if you're parents didn't have children, chances are that you wouldn't be here." Allegra retorted "Besides I had six lovely children and one precocious brat and I thoroughly enjoyed the experience. You should try it." Allegra watched her daughter carefully. She'd always wondered what her daughter's confessed aversion to children was especially since Lyric adored and spoilt all her nieces and nephews rotten, she also had a great relationship with every single one of them, never forgot a birthday and even attended their various sports days when she could, in her opinion Lyric would have made an excellent mother.

"With one in every sixth person on the planet being Chinese I'm surprised you decided to take the gamble and play the odds mother."

"Children bring joy and laughter into a house and they make you want to be better than you are." Naseera smiled at her daughter across the room fondly who smiled back and waved at her mother. "They give you the strength and their belief in you gives you the strength to accomplish things you would never have believed possible."

"Well I guess everybody should believe in something, I believe I'll have another drink." Lyric said politely extricating herself from the conversation.

She was walking back to the bar when she was accosted by Rage of all people. The blonde looked dashing in her black tux and diamond studded earrings. She was fairly beaming with happiness. Which only served to make Lyric exceedingly envious.

"Congratulations."

"Thank-you."

"Great party."

"You say that with all the enthusiasm of a wet blanket." Rage laughed "Come on why don't you let me introduce you to some pretty women."

"Now why would you want to do that I wonder?"

"Because you look like you are in the mood to cause trouble and the best thing to get over a heart break is another affaire de coeur."

"Fantastic! Am I that obvious?"

"Only to those who know your history together, now Eden is coming over behave and act very happy otherwise I will beat the shit out of you." Rage said smiling.

"Charming." Lyric drawled

Rage kissed Eden on the lips for an indecently long time and when she finally let her go she looked beautiful and thoroughly loved. Lyric also kissed Eden but more discreetly on each cheek.

"Congratulations Eden I was just telling Rage how absolutely divine you look. I take it you have met my father Dr Artemus Black."

"Yes. He's lovely."

"He's like a male version of you." Penny Ice interrupted their conversation and planted more kisses on Eden's cheeks.

"Say it ain't so." Lyric said shocked.

"Ah Eden...Rage...I can't say I approve but seeing you together well it all makes sense. You make a lovely couple. My young Lyric don't you clean up nicely you look absolutely stunning."

"A pleasure to see you again Dr Lane. How is the case regarding Beatrice Toast and Lambert Dryden." Lyric retrieved her hand. Dr Lane always shook her hand enthusiastically.

"Well I was able to take casts and..." As Beauregard Lane launched into a long winded recital of how he'd solved the case, Lyric let her mind wander off, first it drifted to Beauregard lane and his green cravat with it's pretentious family crest when she saw Diera talking to Bradley. He seemed to be gazing adoringly into her blue eyes and the bastard couldn't seem to stop touching her.

Bradley Smith made to slide his hand from her back to her bottom and Lyric caught his eye and shook her head glaring at him. If he tried it she would kill him civilised company or not. She barely caught the tail end of Beauregard Lane's boring recital.

"I used Eden's Father's prints, as casts as a comparison, he obviously wasn't there and well we were able to get Mr Dryden off but I mean that Detective Burrows what an idiot I simply can't bear idiots."

"Apparently your mother didn't have the same difficulty." Penny drawled.

"How dare you!!! You queer little thief I'll fix you! I'll fix you good if it's the last thing I do."

"Yeah go ahead take your best shot." Penny said defiantly.

Rage put Eden behind her body protectively just as Dr Lane threw a wild punch which whizzed past where Eden had been standing and which Lyric herself barely avoided.

Penny Ice retaliated and caught Dr Lane. Seeing that Penny could take care of herself, Lyric stepped out of the way. Penny's punch caught Dr Lane in the chin and he stepped back startled.

"Wooh" He put his hands on his hips and bent over almost double. "That hurt!" He took a deep breath and put his fists up and swung again. He missed and Penny hit him again. It was comical because Penny was 5"5 to Dr Lane's 5"11 and yet he was coming off the worse.

He swung again and missed and Penny landed another blow and Dr Lane's eye started swelling. Eventually finding suitable space during their hostile exchange Lyric was able to step in and drawled with a bland expression. "Now Dr Lane I'm afraid I will have to hold you back before you hurt her anymore."

"Yes! Yes! Please hold me back." He agreed with Lyric and then turned to Penny.

"And let that be a lesson to you." Dr Lane said defiantly as Lyric led him away and glared over her shoulder at Penny whilst cocking her head at a horrified Eden.

Rage's lips twitched and her body shook with suppressed mirth. When they were safely out of earshot. Rage exploded with laughter she couldn't help it. Eden hit her on the forearm horrified.

Lyric called a taxi for Dr Lane and was extremely polite to him. Her face neither mocking nor pitying was impressively bland. He seemed to respect that and thanked her. When she turned around she saw Angel, Mercy and Rage standing outside in their tuxedos.

"We came to make sure you were okay." Mercy it seemed was the only one who could speak because the other two collapsed with laughter and a wide grin broke out on Lyric's face.

"Come on short stuff let's get you wasted so you'll be shitty at soccer tomorrow." Angel grinned.

Inside Eden slid an arm through hers "And here I thought you were the one who was going to give me trouble. Thank-you."

"What fisticuffs at dawn? Not my style. I'm a lover not a fighter." Lyric's amused English drawl replied.

Eden raised a disbelieving eyebrow "Now why do I find that very hard to believe."

"Hey Lyric come there is someone who is dying to meet you. This is Sabrina my very good friend, she wants to see what it is like to actually earn a living and she is now teaching English as a foreign language in a Japanese school."

"Oh I've always wanted to learn English as a foreign language so that when I speak foreign people can understand me." Lyric drawled to Sabrina.

Sabrina chuckled throatily at Lyric's outrageous comment and flirted shamelessly with her knowing full well that there was nothing really between them. It soothed Lyric's battered ego since Sabrina was a witty and pleasant companion with a wicked sense of humour and the great repository of salacious gossip. By the time Sabrina excused herself to go to the bathroom Lyric was feeling quite relaxed and the prospect of facing the evening did not seem so bad.

As the party picked up people began making their way to the dance floor Diera and Lyric continued to circle each other apprehensively. Diera was talking to Mercy when Rocco came out of the men's bathroom looking slightly disgusted.

"Bradley has just thrown up all over the floor. My cousin Pepe will take him home do you know where he lives Diera?"

"Yes shall I come with you?"

"I do not think that would be a good idea. He currently has his lips locked on the statue of Aphrodite in the lobby." Rocco, Elizabeth's brother-in-law looked even more irritated.

"I will speak to Alison's husband to arrange for a driver to pick up his car in the morning." Lyric nodded.

"Good Elizabeth and Penny can take you home." Rocco nodded satisfied with the arrangements, Diera briefly gave him Bradley's address and directions on how to get there and he left leaving Diera and Lyric standing awkwardly alone in the middle of the room.

Lyric was about to say something when they were interrupted by her parents.

"Is this the lovely Diera I have heard so much about?"

"Only good things I hope." Diera smiled back.

"Diera this is my mother Allegra Gaylord-Black and my father Artemus Black. Mother, Father this is Diera Voicemail."

"So is it true you have found a way to tame my daughter? She can be an absolute beast in the mornings. She went through three personal assistants in one week when she was working at that stock broking firm what was it called?"

"Patel, Singh & Patel." Artemus interjected taking two glasses of champagne from a passing waiter and offering one to her mother keeping one for herself. Artemus did the same for himself and Diera.

"What's your secret darling?"

Diera smiled conspiratorially "Thick sweet sickly coffee with cream and sugar."

Lyric held her breath, her mother managed to either annoy her girlfriends or irritate them intensely with personal questions and talk about their clothes.

However Diera gracefully deflected any such questions whilst at the same time charming Artemus. Her eyebrows rose when Allegra led her away to introduce her to some people and actually put an arm around her in a motherly fashion.

"I like her, she is intelligent, respectful, beautiful, well spoken, a lady and she has a strong sense of family."

"I knew you would like her." Lyric muttered.

"Why because she wants to settle down and have children? She is certainly nothing like your ex-girlfriend Valeria, you know the busty one who looked like an escapee from a bikers movie the one who propositioned me in the gents?"

"She did not!" Lyric was horrified.

"Oh yes she did and your mother too. Very little shocks your mother but Valeria certainly did. Speaking of which how is Valeria?"

"Ugh Dad!"

"Then there was that other one Lisa, you must admit you have shown atrocious taste in women about the only good thing that could be said for them is that they all have big bosoms and big bottoms. You had your mother and I rather worried about that Lisa too for a moment."

"Well don't get your hopes up Diera won't even date me."

Penny sauntered over "Oh Lyric there you are I need to take Elizabeth's Dad over to my flat he is not feeling well can you arrange a ride for Diera?"

When Lyric told Diera of the change in plans she was furious. "I bet you arranged that."

"I arranged for Elizabeth's Dad to fall ill or that all the cabs will be taken? I offered you a ride because you look tired and the party is winding down. My parents are staying at my place. I have a spare room you can use and I will take the couch. We are all taking a cab back to my flat together and I am absofuckinglutely exhausted. As much as I am flattered by you thinking I am in any position to ravish you I am afraid I must decline."

"Alright then I accept."

Diera had never been to Lyric's flat, Lyric had always dropped her off at home. She was amazed by its beauty yet at the same time saddened by the cold antiseptic impersonality of it.

Everything either glass or wood and all the colours were cream. There were art photos on the wall. One was of Allegra and the other of Artemus both shot in black and white.

The picture of Artemus, showed him wearing a white coat and working in a lab. Around him were test tube bottles and a microscope. Whoever had taken the photo had caught all the intensity and passion that he put inside his work.

The picture of Allegra was very glamorous she was wearing diamonds and a long silk evening dress, smoking a cigarette from a long bone handled cigarette holder and wearing long white gloves with a white boa around her neck. Both pictures seemed to capture not just their faces but their characters as well as though the photographer knew both subjects intimately. They could only have been taken by the owner of the apartment.

There were glass doors which led out onto a swimming pool and even a bar. Lyric poured out a drink for everyone and led her parents to the guest room.

Whilst she was settling them down Diera noticed there pictures of other people on the wall also in black and white. They all looked similar and she realised they were probably her brothers, sisters, nieces and nephews.

Lyric it seemed was not cold at all. She seemed to unconsciously project an image that she was cold and unfeeling but if you cared to look deeper you would actually find an intriguing person with different layers and a lot of depth different from the shallow easygoing persona she presented to the world it was the same with her flat.

"You can have my room. It's just through here."

"Are you really gonna crash on the couch?"

Lyric nodded and smiled "I'm afraid so. It would be inappropriate for us to share a bed whilst we are not married and my parents are under the same roof. Besides I imagine my mother would rip me to shreds with her very long and sharp acrylic nails."

"Lyric I never had you down as being old-fashioned."

"I'm not but my mother is and she invariably gets her way."

"Remind you of anyone?" Diera teased

Lyric smiled back. "Goodnight Diera sweet dreams."

"G'night Lyric."

The next morning Lyric was woken up by the sound of sizzling and chatting and giggling. All were very alien noises. Sizzling was definitely alien because she did not cook she ordered takeout, the chatting meant she definitely had company. She remembered her parents were staying with her and she groaned.

She got up and made her way to the kitchen. Her mother was dressed as usual in a very glamorous house coat thing with lots of feathers and Diera was sitting with her mother on the counter tucking into a good old fashioned English breakfast.

"There you are darling." Allegra held her cheek out for her daughter to kiss and then ordered her to sit down in no uncertain terms. Diera watched their interaction and it was strange to see Lyric always so calm and assured meekly toe the line and do everything her mother ordered without complaint. Well that was not strictly true there was a lot of muttering under her breath.

Diera had never had a full English breakfast before and it looked to her like Mama Black had simply gone hunting, killed every animal she met and fried it in butter before serving it artistically on a plate.

There were bacon, eggs, sausages, devilled kidneys, black pudding (which was a sausage made of blood, she avoided that!) baked beans, toast with marmalade, mushrooms, grilled tomatoes, fried bread (which was exactly that bread fried in butter and then Lyric smothered it in orange marmalade Eww!)all of which looked like a heart attack on a plate."

All this washed down by orange juice and Earl Grey tea for Allegra. Diera well aware of the nature of the beast made Lyric a strong cup of coffee with lots of cream and sugar. In the time she had been working with her the cup of coffee was not just for Lyric's sanity but for Diera's survival as well as her peace of mind.

She shuddered when she remembered a morning when she hadn't made coffee because she was on another assignment helping Mr Ellington. The office had been in disarray and Lyric was on the verge of firing three people for no logical reason other than that as she put it "their presence on planet earth irritated her exceedingly."

"Oh don't be fooled by that facade," Allegra smiled as Diera smilingly related the incident."

"She can drink tea with the best of them. She's an Englishwoman through and through but she only drinks it in the afternoon. I drink it all the time."

"Mother's just trying to make a good impression on you. She's really an old fashioned gin and tonic kind of gal."

"Really Lyric you're giving the dear child the impression we are a family of alcoholics." She frowned at her daughter and smiled at Diera. "So I guess I should be asking what your intentions towards my daughter are?"

Lyric choked on her orange juice.

"Are you alright there darling?" Allegra asked her daughter worriedly coming over to rub Lyric's back worriedly.

Luckily for Diera that conversation did not go any further because Artemus came in from the bedroom and held his arms out wide and then proceeded to sing in a very deep but tuneful baritone.

"Oh what a beautiful morning, Oh what a beautiful day, I've got a beautiful feeling, Everything's going my way."

Diera applauded his performance and he bowed and kissed the back of her hand. Diera enjoyed every minute of their company. Artemus was charming Allegra was hilariously witty and Lyric had a dry but wicked sense of humour. She was also looking smoking hot. Her black linen trousers and vest showed off her lithe sexy body. It was difficult to tell the woman had just got out of bed and didn't have on a stitch of make-up.

Lyric had been watching her in the kitchen moving around in her white cotton work shirt she'd given her to sleep in. She looked absolutely gorgeous. Every time she stretched up or bent down or just moved and Lyric got a glimpse of thigh or leg or cleavage and her imagination ran riot as she speculated over whether she was wearing anything under the shirt that thought alone caused her cardiac system to go into overdrive.

She was trying to think of a way to get her parents off to the airport whilst getting Diera to stay in her flat and have her all to herself. Alas it wasn't to be she ended up having to drop her parents at the airport so she needed to take Diera home first.

"Well thank-you for letting me spend the night at yours." Diera said quietly aware that Lyric's parents were waiting patiently down stairs in her car.

"It was a pleasure although I was hoping when you did stay it would be for longer than a night."

"Lyric...I" Diera stopped speaking unable to verbalize what she wanted to say. Instead her hand came out to move Lyric's hair out of her face and her fingers wandered to the dimple at her chin.

She wanted Lyric and she wanted a family, she was so torn but she also didn't want to hurt this dark enigmatic woman who stood before her. However now was neither the time nor the place to have such a discussion and Lyric seemed to understand what she could not put into words.

"It's alright." Lyric smiled and kissed the tip of her finger sending tendrils of pleasure down her spine. "Although you do know that I am not going to let you get away without giving you at least one toe curling kiss."

"I'd be disappointed if you did." Diera looked up into Lyric's honey brown eyes. Just once she wanted to kiss the dark woman on her own terms. She cupped Lyric's face in her hands and stood on tiptoe.

Although Diera had initiated the kiss, when Lyric returned her kiss Diera just forgot everything and was lost in the moment. In the taste of Lyric's mouth, the feel of her lips and tongue. Her eye lids felt heavy, her breathing was laboured. She could feel Lyric's heart beating fast beneath her fingertips, she could feel Lyric's hands on her hips, feel her cheek against hers.

Diera pulled away her fingers drawing swirling patterns on Lyric's t-shirt covered chest and turning the dark haired woman into a gibbering wreck. Diera enjoyed the feel of her swarthy satin skin beneath her fingers. She felt rather than heard Lyric gasp and moan as she touched her, tracing the lines and contours of her curves and muscles that rippled beneath her touch.

"Oh god Diera don't stop touching me." Lyric moaned helplessly burying her face in the blonde woman's neck and pulled her closer into her body. She could feel herself getting intoxicated as she inhaled her scent.

They kissed again, it was deep intense hungry as they feasted on each other. Diera's fingers ran through Lyric's thick black hair as Diera was lifted up against the wall.

She felt Lyric's teeth close on her nipple through her clothes and she gasped as she felt the same nipple being soothed by a warm wet tongue directly on her skin. She moaned and arched into the wet caress. In the distance she could faintly hear Lyric's car horn loudly insistently and irritatingly calling for attention.

"I think I hear your parents outside." Diera said breathlessly between kisses.

"Ignore them they will go away." Lyric replied desperately against her cleavage. Unfortunately the car horn did not stop instead there was a loud knocking as people yelled at them to keep it down and Lyric realised Diera might not want her parents to catch her in flagrante delicto with the woman of her dreams

"Lyric we both know that's not going to happen." She murmured lifting Lyric's head up with her finger.

"We need to talk." Lyric said hoarsely.

"There's nothing to talk about." Diera said firmly "You need to put me down and take your parents to the airport otherwise they will miss their flight."

"This isn't over Diera." Lyric let her slide down her body slowly and held her hand when the younger woman turned to enter her apartment. Diera did not say anything. She just looked down at her hand where Lyric held her and Lyric let her go. She watched Diera enter her apartment safely and went downstairs to take her impatient parents back to the airport.

At the office on Monday, Diera made up her mind to avoid Lyric as much as she could making sure she was never alone with her. Fortunately for her Lyric had to travel out to attend a Law Conference on Construction and she would be gone for two weeks. Diera missed her energy and vibrance in the office, it was as though work had become a really depressing place to go when she was not there. Elizabeth had travelled out of town as well so she was really lonely at home.

Lyric was exhausted after the two week conference and just wanted to collapse on her sofa and watch the Champions League soccer with a can of ice cold beer. She was therefore surprised to hear a loud knocking on her apartment door. She did not remember inviting anyone up. She looked through the keyhole and recognising the figure she saw on the other side of the door she opened it.

"Eden! This is a surprise a very lovely one at that." Lyric drawled obviously leering at the other woman whilst towelling dry her short black hair roughly. She stepped back and indicated that Eden should enter the apartment.

"You're naked!" Eden gasped. Lyric was absolutely gorgeous and she could not help comparing her to Rage, where her girlfriend was lean with a whipcord body, Lyric had a muscular body, the type of a woman who worked out regularly and was toned to perfection.

Her abs fairly popped out of her stomach, her biceps were defined and she had high rounded firm breasts and a lean waist. Lyric wore a towel around her waist whilst she dried her hair with a smaller one which barely managed to cover her breasts. Her nipples were brown and hard very hard.

Eden swallowed hard and flushed guiltily as she felt a tug of arousal at the sight of the blatantly attractive woman in front of her. Eden turned her face to the door behind her more to give Lyric some privacy and remove her eyes from the other woman.

"Hardly, I'm wearing a towel come in please no need to expose my assets to the rest of the world." The smaller towel now hung around her shoulders each end strategically placed to cover her breasts.

"Oh!" Eden felt quite unsettled but then Lyric had that way of unnerving everyone around her. It was those piercing hazel eyes that seemed to strip you of your skin and look right into your soul. Her long thick black eyelashes that brushed against her cheeks and that dimpled chin that hinted at hidden depths.

She was beautifully tanned with a graceful panache that only money could buy. Where Rage was like a rough diamond, hard edges and raw sensuality Lyric was like the finished article polished, sophisticated elegance and from the way her eyes were sweeping down her body almost as dangerous.

"So does Rage know you are out causing Englishwomen all over the city to melt into puddles at your dainty little feet?"

"Is that what you are doing Lyric?" Eden said with an amused smile. A few years ago she would not have been able to flirt so brazenly and confidently with someone so blatantly and overwhelmingly sexual as Lyric but after living with and loving Rage she had learned to hold her own.

"There are puddles at your feet Eden." Lyric's brown eyes twinkled merrily at her and a smile hovered at her lips.

Eden looked down and laughed. Of course there were puddles at her feet from where Lyric dripped water after her hasty exit from the shower."

"Lyric go and change you're unsettling me."

"That's not all I would like to do to you." Lyric drawled sliding her hands onto Eden's hips drawing her closer and lowering her head dangerously.

Eden briskly removed Lyric's hands but the English woman only placed them back.

"I thought you were in love with Diera?" Eden couldn't help herself she reached out and slid her finger slowly across Lyric's dimpled chin to see if the tip of her finger would fit into the indent.

"I am hopelessly in love with Diera but she won't have me so you'll have to be my rebound affair."

Eden placed her hands on Lyric's shoulders intending to come back with a sarcastic retort but she just couldn't hold on to what she had to say any longer and her eyes clouded with tears.

"Eden is anything wrong?"

"I would prefer it if you put some clothes on, I actually have an emergency I would like you to deal with." She managed to hold in a sob.

"So you're not here for a bit of rumpy pompy?"

"What do you mean Rumpy Pompy?"

"Sex " Lyric explained with a shrug.

"Sex!" Eden struck Lyric's shoulder outraged. "No! I didn't come here for sex, I already have a girlfriend who satisfies all my needs Lyric. Go and get dressed!" Eden said firmly the tears disappearing in her outrage.

"Why do I get the feeling American women are allergic to me?" She asked the picture of her brother Concerto which hung on the corridor wall on her way to the bedroom.

When Lyric returned she was dressed more decently in a pair of chinos and a navy Ralph Lauren cotton shirt with the sleeves rolled up to her forearms. "Can I get you a drink or" Lyric paused before she finished the rest of her sentence. "anything?"

"No! To anything Yes! To a drink."

Lyric poured out two generous glasses of brandy and handed one over to Eden who tossed hers down with abandon. "So if you're not here for Rumpy Pompy to what do I owe the pleasure of your company?"

"I need your help." Eden held her breath when Lyric's eyebrows had gone up. Lucy sent me. Penny's been arrested."

"Arrested as in caught criming without the money to satisfy the policeman arrested?"

"She's been accused of murder Lucy had to go with Penny to the police station."

"Bloody hell! Penny! Murder? Of who?"

"Elizabeth's father Paul Delaware."

"Bloody Hell!!"

"I tried getting hold of Diera but she's not picking up her cell. I... It was horrible."

Eden's lower lip trembled. Although she was a lawyer, she handled commercial cases. She had only ever dealt with one Police case when Rage was falsely arrested for the crime of murder, and that had never gone to trial because Rage was never actually charged for the murder but only investigated as a murder suspect. This was something else entirely. Penny was going to be charged with Paul Delaware's murder.

Rage had witnesses who could put her away from the crime and even the police already had an alternate suspect in Jane Lee a gangster. In this case Penny had no alibi and was the only suspect.

Paul Delaware was a respected member of society, a man she knew and liked, a man she had dinner with a week earlier and now he was dead and she had seen him with his eyes open and staring.

Suddenly she couldn't take it all in. Her hands started shaking and she started crying. When she finally pulled herself together Lyric was holding her.

The teasing flirting sexual predator was gone in her place was a caring friend. "Hey listen, why don't you go lie down, I'll call Rage, Lucy and Diera and take care of everything, alright it's going to be okay."

"Elizabeth...she's..."

"I'll take care of it you go lie down okay. It's alright."

Lyric picked up her wallet, Cell and keys. She had a phone plugged into her car so she could drive and concentrate at the same time. She called Lucy and Elizabeth on the phone. Elizabeth had already identified her father, Lucy was now at the station it was a mess but Lucy was a competent attorney and she knew she would be able to deal with the situation.

They were going to charge Penny for murder in the first degree and even though she had no prior criminal offences the police refused bail which meant she would have to file motions first thing in the morning. She called Bradley and arranged for Lucy to meet her in her office in the morning and set to work.

She finally got through to Diera who was not happy to be interrupted not that she blamed her.

"Diera?"

"Lyric?"

"Listen I want you to come to the office straight away."

"This is just another excuse to try and scupper my relationship with Bradley. I do have a right to a social life you know."

"I don't give a damn who you're with or what you are doing I want you back in the office within the next fifteen minutes and don't make me come over and get you."

"Fine!" Diera slammed the phone down satisfactorily. She was actually quite relieved to ask Bradley to take her back to the office he was becoming over amorous. However when she explained that Lyric wanted her to work late, he look suspicious and it was only when he dropped her outside the office building that he seemed to take it as a genuine request.

He was a little irritated because apart from a stolen kiss in her office they had not spent any time together. Diera promised to make it up to him and they said goodnight to each other he left with a reluctant wave of his hand.

Diera was absolutely livid. She tapped her foot angrily in the elevator on the way up to Lyric's office whilst muttering under her breath thinking of the myriad ways she was going to murder Lyric. By the time she was standing in Lyric's office she had worked herself up into a rage.

"Lyric you know what you've won." Lyric's eyes widened as Diera pulled off her t-shirt and tossed it onto the floor of her office.

Lyric just stood and stared. She couldn't stop staring. Ye gods she was beautiful, she was magnificent standing defiantly glaring at her eyes offering a challenge. Lyric could feel her own nipples and clit harden, she could feel goose bumps all down her back and she knew she was probably wet enough that all she had to do was feel her throbbing centre beneath her fingers and...

"This is what you want isn't it? Let's get it over with. Then maybe we can start acting like professionals." Lyric barely avoided being hit by a pair of kitten heel shoes. She unsnapped her jeans pulled them off and flung them at the shocked Englishwoman. Unlike the shoes which Lyric barely avoided the jeans did however hit Lyric squarely in the face before dropping to the floor and they were soon followed by Diera's white cotton blouse.

At first Lyric just leered her eyes raking in the sight of Diera in her very sexy lingerie. She took a step forward when her conscience decided to develop a voice. Lyric made a strangled sound before taking a deep breath and counting to ten said. "You really enjoy provoking the hell out of me Diera!" She rasped. She closed her eyes and tried to marshal her wayward thoughts which were now imagining her rolling around naked with Diera so she opened them again and just about managed to keep her composure.

"Please put your clothes back on. I don't know how to say this but I'll be brief. Your Uncle Paul is dead."

"No! How! When! I don't understand?"

Diera folded her arms across her chest shivering with shock and Lyric took a step toward her unsure of how her actions would be construed. Eventually she swallowed hard and simply

wrapped her arms around a weeping Diera. She tried to focus on comforting her friend and not let her mind wander to the fact that Diera felt so good in her arms.

The burgundy lace bra emphasised her cleavage and swollen nipples and she was unable to prevent her hands from sliding down her back to her hips to cup her bottom in fact she barely prevented her errant fingers from sliding into the silky dainty tiny panties and sliding the material down her hips. Her hands however refused to move from cupping Diera's luscious bottom.

"I'm afraid the news gets worse, Penny stands accused of murdering Paul Delaware, your roommate's father. We need to make an application for bail to be filed and heard first thing tomorrow morning and you need to get dressed Diera because despite my very good intentions I am having extremely lustful and impure thoughts about you and my imagination has become especially torrid seeing as you are standing here in my arms in your unmentionables."

Diera sniffed and nodded proceeded to get dressed quietly. At first Lyric watched her but then she found watching Diera putting her clothes on erotic so she closed her eyes so that all she could hear were her clothes rustling as she got dressed which got her thinking of other things in the end she just turned around and stood where she was with clenched fists till Diera finished getting dressed. She opened one eye tentatively first and then the other.

"Penny! But why! Oh my God! Elizabeth is she...okay? I should be with her."

"She's fine. She's sedated. Lucy's with her."

Diera was now adequately dressed, wiped her eyes and arms folded defensively. "If it's going to be a long night I'll go and make coffee. You switch on the computer and find the template file it should make everything easier."

"Thank-you." Lyric said hoarsely.

They worked in companionable silence till they got it all done. Lyric regarded her from beneath her thick black eyelashes.

"I really appreciate this and I'm sorry for ruining your evening with your friend."

Diera smiled ruefully "No you're not. You're not in the least bit sorry for ruining my evening but not only was it work related but also to help Uncle Paul and Elizabeth it is not a problem I'll forgive you."

"And you do have magnificent breasts."

"I know." Diera picked up her handbag.

"So why don't you take your clothes off again so we can make love hmm." Lyric asked wriggling her eyebrows suggestively

"I'm leaving Lyric."

"At least let me drive you home sweeting."

"Only if you promise to keep your hands to yourself."

"Oh I will" She trilled grabbing her jacket and keys "but you're the one who can't stop touching me."

"In your dreams!"

"There too."

When they got outside Diera's apartment building, it was dark and one of the bulbs was broken so Lyric escorted her up the stairs. Outside her door Lyric leaned against the frame whilst Diera fiddled nervously with her keys. She slid it into the lock and looked up to say goodnight.

"You're probably going to kill me but I can't resist you." Lyric lowered her head and kissed her, raiding her mouth with her tongue roguishly. The kiss was long and sweet and over much too soon.

"You promised to keep your hands off me." Diera whispered.

"My hands, not my lips." Lyric whispered against her cheek. "Besides you're the one whose got her hands all over my body."

Diera looked down to find her hands under Lyric's t-shirt, her fingers caressing taut pectoral muscles her fingertips brushing against the underside of Lyric's breasts. She blushed and carefully removed her hands.

"Good night Lyric." She said deliberately stepping into her apartment and shutting the door.

"Good night Sweeting." Lyric smiled even as the door shut in her face. Diera had kissed her and touched her she gingerly touched a finger to where her soon to be lover had kissed her lips.

She got home exhausted and slightly irritated when she realised she had left her keys at the office. Luckily Eden was there to open the door. She had barely shut it when it swung open viciously behind her. She turned around and a fist connected with her face.

"Bloody Hell! What the?"

She looked up ready to confront her attacker "Rage oh it's you for a minute there I thought...ugh" she grunted as another punch landed this time to her body knocking the wind out of her.

Lyric barely got out of the way of the next blow which was accompanied by a shriek from Eden who currently stood just outside her bedroom door wearing one of her work shirts and looking

quite sexy actually and Rage standing all 5'11 of raging blonde with murder in her eyes. She wondered if she would survive the night. From the look in her cold eyes the blonde had put two and two together and come up with twenty two.

"You bitch I knew I couldn't trust you!"

"Wait a minute this is not what it looks like?" Lyric said breathlessly wiping her bloody nose.

"Yeah? I come looking for Eden, I find her half naked in your flat with you strutting around like the Queen of Siam."

"Rage! You are overreacting! Nothing is going on here. We've been over this before and we agreed to trust each other." Eden interrupted.

"I did not agree to trust her. In fact I don't trust her."

"She didn't do anything!" Eden said exasperatedly.

Rage turned and glared at Lyric "Look at me and tell me you didn't even think of making a pass at her?"

Lyric turned her head and her eyes swept up and down Eden's body, her eyes couldn't miss the fact that Eden was blessed with erotically lush curves and a smouldering sensuality. The woman was fucking gorgeous with her thick black hair falling down her shoulders even though her beautiful eyes were slightly pink from crying.

Lyric liked and respected Eden both as a friend and as a professional colleague. She thought she was a lovely woman and appreciated her beauty in an aesthetic way. She also thoroughly enjoyed the thought of irritating Rage by ogling her girlfriend. A roguish smile played about her lips and she shrugged "I can't!"

Eden rolled her eyes recognising mischief when she saw it.

"I am going to kill you!" Rage snarled.

"You might at that. I was never terribly good at the whole martial arts thing. Did fencing in school you know."

"Fencing?" Rage moved forward and lunged at Lyric from across the table. The English woman skipped away as Rage closed on her with murderous intent.

"You know with Swords."

"Like Xena warrior princess?"

"Rage Fenton if you don't stop acting like a Neanderthal this minute the wedding is off." That seemed to stop the blonde in her tracks.

"Eden honey wait a minute I was just..."

"I had to come and tell Lyric that Penny had been arrested. Lyric has been up all night trying to get a team together so they can get Penny out of jail first thing in the morning. She saved me having to do all the running around especially after finding out Uncle Paul was murdered and the police arrested Penny Ice for it." Eden burst into tears and the raging Blonde tiger with the ferocious snarl became an apologetic pussy cat. The look she sent Lyric's way however promised retribution at a later date.

"I'll go and make a cup of tea." Lyric went to the kitchen and poured two glasses of brandy she also put the kettle on. She was later joined by Rage who regarded her for a moment.

"No bullshit what stunt did you try to pull?"

"We flirted a little..." Lyric started and then rephrased her words at Rage's raised eyebrows. "I flirted a lot. Look, Eden is a beautiful sexy and extremely desirable woman and I know she's your fiancée but there's no harm in me telling her how gorgeous she is and you know lucky you are to have her. She's a keeper besides any idiot can see she's crazy about you."

Rage looked away and poured the hot water from the kettle into a mug. "So you didn't try to kiss her."

"No, Yes, maybe but I didn't."

"So you thought about it."

"Yes of course I thought about it I still think about it, I'm not dead you know, but the important thing is I didn't." Lyric took a sip of her brandy "Besides you know she wouldn't let me touch her like that."

"Rage gave her a considering look. "How are you and Diera?"

"I've got a better chance of having hot monkey sex with an Orangatang." Lyric said morosely and Rage laughed

"Diera's a lovely girl she's just very vulnerable beneath all that you know. She's an orphan with no one to look out for her except her Uncle and now he's gone."

Rage eyed her from top to toe as though considering a potential rival. "You are very much like me. Richer may be, even better educated but you are like me. So I know that you made a pass at Eden if she wasn't who I know her to be I know we would not be having this conversation but as she quite rightly said I trust her and I know she would have made it clear to you that she's not interested."

"Which she did." Lyric assured her.

"So if I ever find you cross the line and you know where it is so help me god I will rip you a third asshole with my bare hands. "

Lyric smiled ruefully " Ouch! Well that told me. Eden's tea is getting cold you should probably take it to her."

Chapter 6

The next morning Lyric made her way to Penny's arraignment hearing. She had Lucy with her. She had decided to assign Bradley to the Laurenstone case. It was quite straight forward and she didn't think even he was capable of messing it up.

She was also contemplating speaking to Ellington about having Bradley shipped out to some far away corner of the globe they had to have an office somewhere like Guantanamo Bay she could arrange for Bradley to be dumped. Maybe with her rival out of the picture Diera would start thinking with her clit instead of her ovaries and she could jump start their relationship.

Lyric groaned inwardly when she recognised the Assistant DA on the other side. A young Asian attorney of Pakistani descent with an avowed hatred of homosexuals, He was going to come after Penny like a dog with a bone. She smiled at him and blew him a kiss and his monobrow disappeared into his receding hairline.

"Lyric what are you doing?" Penny asked shocked.

"I am throwing down the proverbial gauntlet."

"Lyric why are you blowing kisses at that man?" Penny whispered.

"That ladies, is Pamendra Kulkani. He has an intense dislike for anyone living an alternate lifestyle so you can assume that he's coming after you with everything he has. He is a worthy adversary and extremely intelligent. I am looking forward to this little confrontation."

"Is she always this arrogant?" Penny asked Lucy.

Three knocks and the words all rise rang out. The inhabitants of the court room got up for the honourable Judge Merrilee Fairweather.

When the judge came out of the chambers her red hair was streaked with golden highlights and fell down in straight heavy waves to fall down to her shoulders her green eyes blazing hostility when they alighted on Lyric who sighed inwardly.

"Wow she's gorgeous." Lucy whispered. "And she hates you Lyric."

Lyric did not think it prudent to disclose to her client or colleague that she had slept with the most honourable Judge Fairweather six months ago after a party at her brother Concerto's house. She looked like she was looking forward to getting her revenge back. Judge Merrilee was married to Lambert Fairweather. That however did not stop her from indulging in extra-marital affairs with other women whenever the opportunity arose.

Lyric got up, shrugged her shoulders and adjusted her cuff links "May I have an ex-parte side bar your honour."

The Judge nodded and she walked right up the Judge.

"I'm sorry but you remind me of a certain someone I met at a party held by a certain Englishman. If memory serves me right I offered that person a lift to her hotel and we indulged each other's Erotic fantasies by partaking in certain activities of an adult nature for several hours. Unfortunately I had some unfinished business in the morning and left rather hurriedly. I hope said person will not hold it against me."

The judge covered the microphone with one hand and narrowed her eyes. "You were not as memorable as you would like to think Lyric."

"I also remember another party I attended at the Governor's mansion when I found a certain person who greatly resembled your honour and the Governors wife feasting on each other and now one month later here you are, a judge, imagine that. Now I'm British so correct me if I'm wrong but I understand that in America Governors appoint Judges to the bench."

"Ms Black you will hold this office in the highest respect."

"I can assure you your honour that I intend to uphold everything about this office, in the most tender respect and I hope that your honour will consider my ex-parte applications most thoroughly in your chambers."

The way the English woman spoke and the emphasis she placed on the adjectives she used made Merilee Fairweather wonder whether she was being propositioned. Judge Fairweather eyed her consideringly. "You may sit down. Ms Black."

"Call the first case please." The Judge said banging her gavel and giving her clerk a nod of approval.

"Case number 366778 The Commonwealth vs Penelope Ice the charge is murder in the first degree." The Court Clerk read out the case particulars.

"What was all that about?" Penny whispered to Lyric as she sat down and folded her long legs elegantly into the chair.

"We had our moment. I had to leave in a hurry. Evidently I didn't satisfy her." Lyric muttered under her breath.

Lucy always a salacious gossip was shocked. "You didn't...I thought you..."

"Ah my reputation precedes me. I satisfied her physically I just didn't stick around to cuddle. I hate that part." Lyric shuddered.

"Oh!" Lucy peeked a look up at the judge.

"She hates you!" Penny said forlornly.

"No Penny she wants to sleep with me and I intend to use that to your advantage."

"My advantage?" Penny almost squeaked

"To win the case." Lyric explained patiently.

"Appearances?" The Judge looked down at Lyric from behind her reading glasses like she was examining a particularly noxious insect.

Lyric gave her a winning smile and stood up. "Lyric Gaylord Black appearing for the defendant Penelope Ice with me is Lucy Holmes. She sat down and waited for the counsel on the other side to announce his appearance.

"Yes Ms Black?"

"We will waive the remainder of the reading of the charges and promptly enter a plea of not guilty. I would ask the court to release her on her own recognizance. My Client has strong roots in the community and does not pose a flight risk further she has ..."

"A conviction for shoplifting and is a practicing homosexual." Kulkani interjected and got up pointing at Penny.

Lyric scowled reading the papers Kulkani passed to her. "Penny, why didn't you tell me you had a conviction for shoplifting?"

"What does she mean by practicing homosexual? Does that mean I am not a good homosexual?" Penny replied.

"I think it means you have to work at it." Lyric added her two cents.

"Concentrate we are discussing the conviction for shoplifting." Lucy said desperately.

"Oh that conviction for shoplifting, it slipped my mind." Penny waved her hand airily.

Lyric growled at her actually growled at her and Penny moved back a little afraid. She was beginning to understand why Elizabeth often described Lyric as a Wolf.

"Geez sorry I asked." Penny slouched into her seat.

"Further your honour this is a first degree murder..." Kulkani continued.

"My client is presumed innocent until proven guilty." Lyric interrupted the DA forcefully.

"Further my lord that shoplifting offence was five years ago and there have been no other repeat offences."

"One million dollars Bond, One hundred thousand dollars cash."

"Thank-you very much your honour." She turned to Penny "We'll arrange for bail. In the meantime don't speak to anyone about your case and I mean no one Penny."

She asked Diera when she got into her office building. "How's Elizabeth holding up?"

"She's been released from hospital and has gone back to work. She said she cannot sit around doing nothing all day. Kate and Rocco are flying in from Milan tomorrow."

Lyric strode into her own office and took off her coat and hung it up. Diera walked in behind her with her mail and a cup of coffee. She handed the coffee to Lyric who took a sip and savoured the taste for a moment before putting the coffee on the desk and giving her mail a cursory glance. She came around the front of the desk.

"Are you sure you still want to do this?" She asked softly.

Diera nodded and Lyric gave her a reassuring smile. She knew how close Diera was to Paul and Lyric had offered her time off but Diera told her on the phone that she wanted to do something.

"Yes. I don't want to be sitting at home alone, what with Elizabeth out of hospital and back at work already."

She bit her lip as tears shimmered in her blue eyes.

"Hey come here sweeting." Lyric hugged her and Diera just allowed herself to borrow a little of her strength and inhaled her scent. It was so comforting and reassuring just being held like that. Lyric made her feel as if everything was going to be alright.

"How come you're not leeching after me." Diera asked curiously between sobs.

"I don't leech." Lyric replied indignantly.

Diera smiled through her tears. "You're always trying to touch me, inappropriately I might add."

"That's cause you feel so good. Why? Are you missing my wandering paws?" Lyric slid her hands up Diera's back and down again, sending goose bumps down the younger woman's back.

"Lyric what happened here?" She touched the dark bruise on Lyric's jaw lightly.

"Oh this? Well funny you should ask last night I just happened to walk into Rage's fist."

Diera was totally unsympathetic. "If it had anything to do with Eden I'm quite sure you deserved it."

"Aren't you going to kiss me better?" Lyric asked hopefully.

"Lyric I can't."

"Why not?"

"I told you I wanted children."

"And I told you I did not. What has one to do with the other?"

"Last night Bradley and I..." Diera swallowed and bit her lip. "Bradley proposed to me and I accepted."

"You accepted." Lyric felt as though her world was coming to an end. The earth literally seemed to move beneath her feet. "So you accepted Bradley's proposal and you kissed me last night the way you did? You don't even love him."

"I do love him in my own way."

"You want to make a baby with him, I get it but you don't have to marry him to do so."

"I know that. He was the one who insisted. He was willing to be the baby's father if I agreed to marry him and stay at home to look after them."

Lyric opened her mouth to protest when Lucy popped her head into the office. "We're waiting for you in the conference room."

"This conversation is not over Diera." Lyric said sinisterly following Lucy out of the door.

Lyric shrugged her shoulders and arranged her cuff links. "Okay team Penny went home to change she'll be here about lunchtime and she wants to get started straight away so we'll come back after lunch to get her statement. I think you should be with me on this one Lucy. Bradley you can take the Cross in the Delainey divorce case."

He grinned and punched the air and left smirking at Lucy. When he left Lucy turned to Lyric.

"I'd like to talk to you please."

"Sure. But make it quick I'm busy."

Lyric strode into her office and shut the door behind her motioning for Lucy to take a seat. The other woman refused. Lyric shrugged and went to sit behind her desk.

"When I first came to work here I really looked forward to working with you. When you started dating my girlfriend I was upset but I am a professional but now you make Bradley Smith lead in a case when I am clearly the better lawyer that is unprofessional and the only reason you are doing it is because you are jealous of my relationship with Diera."

"Lucy, please sit down."

"I will..."

"I said sit down!" Lyric fairly roared at her and Lucy sat down meekly.

"First of all what you are suggesting is completely ridiculous and ordinarily I would not bother to explain myself to a subordinate however I have a lot of respect for you as a professional colleague. I would rather have you as second chair with me on a murder case than first chair on a case which is a laughable farce which is what the Laurenstone case is.

I have been trying to shift it onto someone else. If you read the case file you will find they have both been cheating on each other and are still sleeping together and do not really want a divorce. It is all a waste of time so unless you want to find yourself as a by-line in some tabloid go ahead. If on the other hand you want to help out your friend and make the front page news at the same time second chair in the Ice case is an excellent option."

"Oh!"

"Secondly, we both know Diera's not your girlfriend. Mercy is the woman you are swopping bodily fluids with, Mercy is your girlfriend and I think that you and Mercy need to acknowledge that."

"Is it that obvious?"

Lyric gave her a look from under her eyebrows that left her in no uncertain terms that it was.

"And thirdly Diera just informed me that she got engaged to Bradley Smith last night."

"But she can't do that! She's gay!"

"She wants children, I don't, so she is going to marry Bradley flabby arse Smith. So you see Lucy you have absolutely nothing to concern yourself with."

Lucy watched Lyric sympathetically. "Are you gonna be okay?"

Lyric scowled blackly. "I don't know."

"Ah Lyric? I think you need to see this." Eden came into her office and switched on her television set. The rest of the team were gathered in the conference room still.

Lyric frowned at the big blonde sexy Anna Nicole Smith Look alike, the woman looked vaguely familiar. She wore lots of make-up with red lipstick and a red jacket She was probably wearing red...

"Guilty! Guilty! Guilty! If she's gay she's guilty of something!" The woman's high nasal whining twang cut irritatingly across her thoughts and set her teeth on edge.

"Hello, am I the only one on the planet with enough guts to say these people are sickos. If she won't follow the rules of morality what makes you think she's going to follow the laws of society! Perve in the bedroom, perve on the streets, perve in the society, That's what I say. This is Lana Turrell at RTV."

"Bloody hell isn't there supposed to be some law that says that you can't talk about an ongoing case once it's in court." Lyric exploded. "Why haven't we got a bloody gagging order or something?"

"That is National TV so the case is going to make waves. If it had been limited to Ravendale, the population of which 60% of its residents are homosexual it would not even be news."

"Whew! 60%."

"Well Ravendale is called the city of dreams for a reason."

"Lucy can't you see if you can get some sort of gagging order against her." Lyric said irritably picking up her mobile phone which was now ringing insistently. She walked back to her office and slammed the door behind her leaving the others in no doubt about her temper.

In her own office Diera had been wrestling with her own thoughts. When Lyric kissed her she lost her mind, she couldn't think straight and it was wonderful. However she knew that it was just the honeymoon period or worse probably even just lust.

What would happen when the first flush of love died down and Lyric was tired of her. She would be alone and broken hearted. She did not love Bradley but she wanted a committed adult relationship, with love forever after and a white picket fence, she wanted children and she wanted for better or for worse, in sickness and in health. She wanted to be a housewife and more importantly she wanted to spend time getting to know her children.

She would even have been more than willing to be with Lyric if Lyric was willing to consider raising her child or even adoption, but Lyric categorically refused to consider it.

No one but Diera knew how deeply lonely and alone she felt. She had friends and they all invited her to their homes on during the holidays but no matter how kind and hospitable they were she always felt like an outsider looking in.

She wanted to be the one to invite her friends to her home. She wanted her own family traditions, presents under the tree, Christmas stocking, reading bed time stories to her son or daughter, someone who would love her unconditionally.

As much as she wanted to be with Lyric she could never have those things with her but she could with Bradley. Although the thought of letting Bradley anywhere near her body made her shudder. Even after he had proposed she had not been able to let him give her more than a chaste peck on the cheek.

Her intercom went off distracting her from her thoughts. It was Mr Ellington requesting she find a memo and bring it to Lyric's attention. She picked it up and walked into Lyric's office, where she found Lucy and Lyric deep in thought.

Lucy was frowning, her hands in her hair as she pored over the documents scattered on the table, gold-rimmed spectacles were perched on the end of her nose. Lyric on the other hand was pacing the room restlessly. Her shirt sleeves rolled up to her forearms, her thick black hair mussed from running her fingers through it, Her black trousers hugged her firm well-rounded bottom and flat stomach before falling down her long legs in a straight tailored yet baggy line.

She looked fantastic and Diera could not stop staring. Her knees felt weak, they always did whenever that brilliant opal gaze alighted on her she sometimes felt the other woman even knew what she was thinking. She cleared her throat.

"Mr Ellington said I was to give you this memo, he would like your comments on it by close of business today."

Lyric took the memo from her outstretched hands and the dark eyes promised retribution. Diera bit her lip unable to look Lyric in the eye. "Anything else?" It came out as a whisper.

"We are having a brainstorming session. Since you were quite close to Paul Delaware you should probably stay. There might be something we are missing."

"Go over it again?" Lyric tapped her pencil against her forehead.

Lucy went over it for the third time. "Okay we have evidence of breaking and entering and four prints belonging to Paul, Elizabeth, Penny and Mr Payne. None of them are out of place. The police found a green fabric in Mr Delaware's throat and they don't know how that got there. They've also got an unexplained powder under his fingernails"

"Hmm knowing Uncle Paul, Probably Plaster of Paris, He loved playing with Dr Lane's moulds. He said they reminded him of..." Diera's voice trailed away and she blushed. Lyric grinned. She well remembered what the moulds reminded her of.

"They test it for drugs?" Lyric asked.

"Affirmative, We are waiting for the lab results. The C.O.D was blunt force trauma to the head."
Lucy replied

Lyric looked puzzled "C.O.D?"

" Cause of Death."

"Time of Death?"

"The Coroner's office gave about 6pm."

"Anything stolen?"

"No actually. The only thing missing was a diamond ring from his safe."

"Burglary?"

"The police found the ring on Penny."

"Not good."

"But it's not unreasonable that he could have given it to her." Diera sat down and crossed her legs. She held her breath as she felt Lyric's gaze linger on her. She raised an eyebrow and Lyric looked hungrily at her before dragging her gaze away.

Diera looked down pretending to smooth her skirt but she continued speaking calmly as though Lyric's scorching hot looks had not just pierced her chest.

"As long as I have known Elizabeth and Kate, I have always heard Uncle Paul say that He would never marry again. He promised to give Kate, their mother's wedding ring when she got married which he did and Elizabeth was to get the engagement ring when she got married. Paul Delaware was keeping the ring and had promised to give it to Elizabeth when she got married."

"So he would never have given it to Penny."

"I would think so especially if Penny was going to propose. It was after all an engagement ring. I guess it was also a way of seeking his blessing on their union. If he gave it to her it meant he approved. If he didn't well" Diera shrugged.

"What do the State have?"

"Well they have Penny's prints all over the study."

"That's nothing Kate and Elizabeth both stand to inherit substantial amounts from his will. I happen to know that Dr Beauregard Lane owes Paul Delaware several hundred thousand dollars and incidentally so does Everard Payne. He owes him about fifty thousand dollars.

All private loans which would under normal course of events be uncollectible but since I drew up financial contracts up for them all to sign those debts would go to his estate. But not a lot of people would know that. They would be expecting such debts to be wiped out on his death. All their prints are all over his study."

Diera frowned "Are you saying that your list of suspects includes Eden's Parents?"

"Yep."

"Well you have some interesting suspects there but none of them have a criminal record like our girl." Lucy said opening the brown file that the private investigator had passed over to her earlier.

Lyric winced "Penny's got a criminal record?"

"Hmm." Lucy confirmed frowning as her eyes swept over a surprisingly long rap sheet.

"It's a long one too."

"What?"

"There's one here for assault."

"Assault?"

"With a deadly weapon."

"The good thing is all the offences except the shoplifting were conducted as a minor."

Lyric folded her arms across her chest and said thoughtfully, "Well that's alright those records are sealed. Unless he can prove she's some sort of psycho who has been harbouring homicidal tendencies since she was a child."

"Yeah but the shoplifting one might give them access to all the other unsavoury acts she committed as a Juvenile. This is going to be tough." Lucy ran her hands through her tawny brown hair.

"Well the other good thing is the court's are about to go on vacation so they won't be swearing in the jury till after we come back from vacation. So we will have lots of time to investigate. Diera please could you call Samantha Spade back, see if she can dig up something."

Lucy watched Lyric watch Diera go "For crying out loud Lyric you look like you're going to devour her." Lucy shook her head.

"Wouldn't you want to do the same?" Lyric replied her piercing black gaze was unsettling as though reading her mind. Lyric it appeared was well aware that Lucy still had feelings for Diera but she did not care.

Lyric's mobile phone rang in the awkward silence that followed and she turned her back to take the call indicating with a hand movement that the meeting was over. It was Mr Ellington. He could not make an engagement at the university and required her to go on his behalf. He then told her there was an annual barbeque where the firm entertained the staff at his estate so she could use his personal helicopter and fly herself there. When she turned around Diera and Lucy had left.

It had been an interesting week and although Diera had not seen Lyric recently, she knew she was going to see Penny at the State Pen then she would be covering an engagement for Mr Ellington. The office seemed quieter without her. Bradley was very sweet giving her space when she explained to him she was not very experienced and did not believe in sex before marriage.

In fact he seemed to be inordinately pleased about it and he did not try and corner her in the office and slobber all over her again. When she got home she told Elizabeth who stared at her in shock.

"Let me get this straight. You got engaged to Bradley Smith."

"Yes."

"Have you told Lyric?"

"I told her today."

"How did she take it?"

"It's difficult to tell. She did not betray any emotion, you know that annoying bland look she gets when she doesn't want you to know what she's thinking. "

"Oh dear coming on top of the news that the grand jury sent the case to trial I imagine she would not be happy. Diera are you gay?"

"That's an interesting change of subject?"

"Well?" Elizabeth raised an inquiring eyebrow.

"I don't know." Diera sipped her glass of wine. "I have only ever really felt sexually attracted to one person."

"Who?"

"Lyric." Diera sighed

"So why Bradley?"

"Bradley is my friend, we like the same things, we want the same things out of life it's just that the thought of him touching me makes my skin crawl."

"Yet you are planning on marrying him and having children with him. Are you sure you know what you are doing Diera?"

Diera did not have an answer to that question.

Chapter 7

Diera kept replaying Elizabeth's words over and over again in her head. Was she doing the right thing? How would Lyric react in this informal setting out of the office. The normal bounds of professional behaviour would be blurred because the whole point of the weekend was for the staff to socialise with the partners and get to know each other. She had not seen Lyric for a week since the day she told her about her engagement.

Bradley mistaking the reason she was worried tried to reassure her. "Try to relax Diera, Lyric might be a Partner and the Head of the Criminal Department but she's only human and it's not like she's owns Barton Ellington & Black.

Mr Bingham was retiring and the Law Firm was taking the name Barton, Ellington and Black so it was really to introduce Lyric to the staff and clients and have a sort of work retreat at the same time. Mr Ellington had chosen to invite certain members of his staff to his country home to discuss their yearly strategy and those people who were about to be promoted to prominent positions within the firm.

Bradley had been offered a position in the Los Angeles office and he had already passed the California bar. At first she had thought Lyric was manipulating things behind the scene. Ever since the acrimonious break up of their fledgling relationship over the fact she wanted children and Lyric emphatically did not, she had used Bradley as a buffer between them.

In her moment of weakness she had told Bradley how she longed for a child. She remembered that he had immediately proposed. He wanted a home maker for a wife an old fashioned woman to have his children and help him up the corporate ladder. It had seemed like a good idea at the time but she was totally unprepared for Lyric's reaction.

At work there had not been time to have words about the situation because Lyric had been called away to attend a seminar on behalf of Mr Ellington and had been gone all week.

So she had been very worried when Bradley was offered the position in California but he assured her he would ask for her to be posted there with him as his P.A. His enthusiasm was infectious and she therefore felt more capable of dealing with whatever diabolical plan Lyric had cooked up.

At the dinner being held at Ellington's house she was not surprised to find Lyric looking elegant in a white evening shirt, white bow-tie and white jacket. As always she looked dynamic and charismatic.

Diera found it difficult to swallow the jealousy that cut through her like a sharp knife, when she saw the English woman give her companion, a beautiful brunette with laughing eyes an answering smile. The girl looked barely out of her teens Diera thought cattily as she giggled at something Lyric said.

"I understand you're getting married shortly."

"Yes sir in three months actually." Bradley said eagerly.

"Well I hope you have cleared it with your wife." Bartholomew Barton Senior known as Barty to his friends was saying to Bradley. "I think it's always important how a wife feels about the job and its location. It can make a big difference for a young wife."

"I am sure Diera would love to live in Los Angeles."

"I can tell you that I would be happy to go off to wherever Bradley was offered a job."

"Home is where the heart is eh." Barty Barton rubbed his stomach and puffed on his fat cigar.

"Trite but true." Diera smiled dazzlingly winning another conquest.

"Ah Lyric and who is this lovely lady. I don't think I've had the pleasure."

"Barty this is my niece Harmony Gaylord."

"Delighted." Barty kissed the hand she held out with old world gentlemanly charm.

"I'm sure you are you old reprobate but she's not for the likes of you." Lyric's black brows came down in a frown.

Harmony laughed as she touched Lyric's face fondly "You must forgive Aunty Lyric she was always the one babysitting us and it's a role she still finds difficult to shake off."

"Brat! I can't wait until you're safely married off and not giving me any more grey hairs."

"Why Aunty Lyric," Harmony said batting her thick black eyelashes "When I grow up I want to be just like you."

"Now why do I find that thought infinitely frightening." Lyric drawled.

"Because aunty darling you're very naughty. You are the only Gaylord I know who went through her trust fund in 3 months."

"Three months?!?" Bradley was stunned.

"Yes, I spent most of my money on fast women, fast cars and shockingly expensive alcohol and the rest I just wasted"

"Ah but you did it in style." Harmony's eyes twinkled.

Despite herself Diera found herself amused by the banter between Lyric and Harmony. She rather liked the young lady who obviously had a massive crush on her Aunt.

Intelligence and confidence seemed to run in the Gaylord family genes because she held her own against Lyric's sometimes caustic wit and smoothed over any overt hostility Lyric might have had towards Bradley. So that when she excused herself to take a phone call Diera was surprisingly sorry to see her leave.

We were just discussing Smith's move to California. I hope you have made all the arrangements so that everything goes smoothly." Barty turned to Lyric

"Absolutely." She drawled in a way that left Diera in no doubt that she was up to mischief. Barty took his leave with a hearty slap on Bradley Smith's back.

"You'll even have your own P.A."

"I thought I would take Diera." Bradley was about to slide an arm around Diera's shoulders and then dropped it when he saw the glittering dark eyed glare which pinned his hands to his sides like invisible bands.

"Diera is mine!" Lyric growled aggressively and then cleared her throat. "My P.A. and a wonderful P.A. she is too which is why I shall be keeping her." Diera heard the proprietary tone in Lyric's voice and knew she was not going to like what was coming next. "Of course if you can't fit into the new set up..."

"Oh I can." Bradley interrupted excitedly "Besides Diera won't mind it's not as if she's a lawyer or anything important, she's just a P.A. not a dedicated career woman or anything like that."

Lyric's expression was bland and unreadable. "Really I seem to recall Diera has a Business Administration and Information technology degree and her grade point average was certainly higher than yours." Lyric's eyes bored into him and Bradley shifted uncomfortably.

"I...I..am not saying she's not good at her job but she is..."

"Expendable?" Lyric asked softly

"What I mean is, what I am trying to say is she isn't career minded."

"You mean you want her to sacrifice her career for yours."

"Yes...no...what I mean is" Bradley buckled under the interrogation and adjusted his tie nervously whilst Lyric regarded him with cool hostility as she drank from her champagne flute.

"Rather than talking about her as though she wasn't here maybe we should ask Diera what she thinks of this?" Lyric turned to face Diera reminding him Diera was standing right there and able to speak for herself.

"Bradley is quite right. Whilst I thoroughly enjoy my job I am far from being a dedicated career woman. There are other things more important in life."

"Enlighten me." Lyric drawled

"Well I'd like to settle down and have children, be a homemaker. We can't all be overachieving multi-millionaires."

There was an awkward silence during which Lyric knocked back the rest of her champagne. "I will give instructions for the helicopter to pick you up first thing in the morning Smith." She recovered smoothly flashing a banal smile at Bradley.

"Will it be okay for Diera to come with me?"

"I don't think you will have much time for pleasure." Lyric gave Diera a sweeping look. "I'm sure Diera can be parted from you for a few days, unless of course you've changed your mind about going."

"Oh no!"

"Excellent. I'll arrange for a wake-up call for you."

The next morning Diera woke up dressed and packed intending to leave with Bradley but by the time she'd got out the only sound she heard was the sound of the helicopter leaving.

She found Lyric waiting at the helicopter pad after waving him off. She turned and smiled at Diera. "Good morning I am surprised to see you up this early."

"Are you? I was supposed to be with Bradley on that helicopter."

"He didn't promise to see you before he left did he? Oh well it was a very early morning call. He probably decided you should get some beauty sleep and not worry your pretty little head about it." Lyric drawled the last words insultingly. "After your performance as the perfect airhead yesterday he probably didn't think anything of it."

She watched the English woman leave and realised she had been brilliantly out manoeuvred and there was nothing for it but to enjoy what was left of her weekend at Ellington's mansion till Bradley returned.

She changed into her bikini and made her way to the pool. Harmony was there with some friends and there were other employees so it was not like she would be alone with Lyric. She did some sunbathing and was surprisingly disappointed not to run into the enigmatic English woman.

At dinner everyone was relaxed and informal although everyone dressed for the meal she was happy to see Lucy, Mercy and Eden. She even danced with Rage for awhile before making her way tiredly up to bed. She did not really see much of the senior partners. They were mostly closeted up in Ellington's office she had no doubt they were working by the frazzled expression on Victoria's face. Victoria was Mr Ellington's P.A.

She had just finished her shower and changed into her baby dolls when she came out of the bedroom to find Lyric standing in her room. Diera recognised the expression in Lyric's smouldering gaze and knew there could be only one outcome if she was not careful.

"Get out! Lyric this is my room."

"Actually it's mine. Victoria asked if it was alright for me to share with you because we had unexpected visitors."

"I am not sharing this room with you."

Lyric walked over to her and slid her arms around her waist.

"Please Lyric don't do this." Diera whispered helplessly. She was afraid of the look in Lyric's eyes. Afraid of the way Lyric made her feel and she was afraid of how she was going to respond, because now there was nowhere to run and if Lyric kissed her she knew without a doubt she would succumb to the dark temptation the smouldering English woman represented.

Lyric knew it was wrong to cold bloodedly plan and seduce away an already attached woman but what she felt for Diera was way beyond what she had ever felt for anyone in her life. She had decided a long time ago Diera was her's and that she was going to fight for her. She lowered her head and wordlessly kissed her till they were both gasping for air and their breath mingled as one in a heated mist.

"Lyric we can't do this, this is so wrong." Diera almost sobbed she was trembling with the effort of trying to fight the attraction that threatened to overwhelm her. Her treacherous body it seemed had other ideas it literally craved Lyric's touch.

"Diera, I'm sorry but I can't help myself. If you don't want me to do this just say no and I will leave."

"You know I can't do that." Diera said brokenly.

Diera felt a fist of desire slam into her chest and belly and then she couldn't breathe and she couldn't think and she no longer had the desire to say no.

Not when Lyric lowered her head and kissed her, threading her hands through her hair, not when she placed Diera's hands on her shoulders, not when she felt Lyric's hands on her bare skin. Instead she found herself kissing Lyric back passionately with all the hunger she had long denied herself.

Only Lyric kissed her like this. Only Lyric made her feel dazed, dizzy with desire, breathless with anticipation, but she'd fought for so long her desires just seemed to overwhelm her.

In her heart she knew they were made for each other, they were meant to be together, her body recognised its soul mate. She could feel Lyric's heart pounding like crazy beneath her finger tips, she felt like she was drowning as her own blood roared in her head beating in time as she was consumed by demanding hot kisses.

Before she knew what was happening she was entangled in white satin sheets, naked and flat on her back lost in smoky whiskey brown eyes and whimpering with each kiss as she lost the last vestiges of control she had on her sanity. Her hands slid under Lyric's white dress shirt caressing the satin smooth silky skin and flat belly, so different from Bradley's flaccid hairy body as they fumbled to remove each other's garments.

Lyric covered her breasts, belly and thighs with hot searing kisses, burning caresses till she felt she was going to go up in flames and then her will vanished as the kisses became hotter and wickedly intimate. She dug her fingers into Lyric's hair gasping and sobbing as she neared an abyss, hovered on the edge of a precipice yet not able to fall into it and then they were both naked, Lyric was on top of her and around her, hot skin to hot skin and heated flesh to heated flesh.

She parted her legs when she felt Lyric's slim fingers probe at the juncture between her thighs, she involuntarily pushed away, no one had ever touched her there like that before and whilst it was enjoyable it was an alien feeling. Lyric whose body was always closely attuned to Diera's sensed her distress and stopped to smile reassuringly down at her.

"Relax Diera there's nothing to be afraid of. You're acting like a skittish little virgin. You have done this before haven't you?" Lyric smiled gently teasing her soon to be lover.

Diera stopped breathing and bit her lip unsure whether or not to tell her the truth.

Lyric frowned at Diera's hesitation and an unbelievable thought crossed her mind but she discarded it immediately Diera was a beautiful twenty three year old woman with a healthy appetite for sex right?

"Well technically..." her voice trailed off.

"Technically?" Lyric frowned and thought *what the hell did that mean?*

Diera closed her eyes and unable to look into the smouldering honey eyes that seemed to burn into her soul. "I haven't." She whispered.

She would have laughed at the look of puzzled bewilderment and dawning comprehension on her lover's face if she wasn't about to be consumed alive by the inexorably compelling vortex of overwhelming desire which the English woman had created and which now threatened to overload her nerve endings and overwhelm her.

Lyric froze, unsure and hesitant but Diera didn't want her to stop and she unashamedly begged her not to.

"Lyric please....please don't stop now...please?" She cried thrusting her hips upwards and forcing the issue so that the Englishwoman could only make one decision.

"Oh sweeting." Lyric moved slowly inside her gently, felt the obstruction and then she was inside her. Her cry of pain was swallowed up in Lyric's kiss. At first it was slightly uncomfortable and then Lyric thrust in and out of her, she could feel the pressure building up in her centre, feel Lyric's fingers inside her filling her up, smell her, taste her all around her, as the pressure began to build at her centre till it peaked into a crescendo and her hips were moving rhythmically with Lyric's till she screamed out a shuddering release.

She was basking in the afterglow contentment of their lovemaking, enjoying Lyric's gentle kisses, soft caresses and honeyed whispers. She fell asleep and woke up when Bradley's face flashed before her and she was consumed by overwhelming guilt and shame.

"What have I done?" She moaned. "Get off me! How could you do this to me?"

Lyric did not move and simply continued kissing her and nibbling on her ear. "Calm down sweeting, now is the time to savour the moment and not the time for regrets."

She hit Lyric's shoulder but the big lummo did not move and only continued to smile down at her and even kissed her shoulder. "I never had you down as prone to theatrics."

"Dammit Lyric you've ruined my life! I didn't want it to happen like this! It wasn't supposed to be like this I have nothing to give to my husband now."

Lyric's eyes narrowed dangerously and there was an unmistakably possessive look in her whiskey coloured eyes. Any mention of Diera and Bradley drove the English woman insane with jealousy. In fact any mention of Diera and anybody else but her made her angry.

However she took a deep breath to try and control her emotions and spoke as calmly as she could but she could not quite keep how she was feeling out of her voice. Lyric's English accent which could be cold and cutting in it's preciseness when she chose to enunciate every word had now dropped to below subzero temperatures and was absolutely freezing.

"Bradley? Your husband! You need to face facts Diera. From the day I met you, it was perfectly obvious to both of us that a nitwit like Bradley Smith was never going to be your husband."

Lyric's voice became warmer more persuasive as she threaded her fingers through Diera's golden locks. "We belong together you and I." Lyric kissed her gently on the forehead and then French kissed her again, deeply, hotly, intensely and Diera unconsciously responded until she realised she was kissing Lyric back and wanting to make love to her again, shocked she tried to pull away but Lyric was suckling on her nipples and kissing her breasts, her caresses were so erotic so excruciatingly pleasurable that she didn't want it to stop.

"Do you think I am going to repeat the worst experience of my life?" Diera said breathlessly.

Lyric lifted her black head, her whiskey brown eyes were totally unrepentant. "The worst experience of your life? That's laughable sweetie. You were practically begging me to make love to you. Are we going to repeat this experience? Absolutely."

Lyric drawled the last words in her English accent that left her in no doubt that she was going to pleasure her till her head exploded. She moaned as Lyric lowered her head and started suckling on her nipples again and Diera felt an answering twinge in her body that went all the way down to her epicentre igniting a physical reaction that threatened to overwhelm her.

"I can't do this to Bradley!" She gasped even as she arched her body into Lyric's dark and sensually compelling touch. As her lips made their way slowly down her body before dipping her tongue into Diera's naval.

Lyric was totally merciless seeking out her pleasure and that of her lover with ruthless abandon, kissing Diera's neck and fondling her breasts leisurely and now her fingers were touching her intimately so that Diera couldn't focus on her anger.

"Would you stop that!" Diera tried to think through the mist of tears that was building behind her eyes and the heavy aching arousal that was rising at her centre wondering why she had eluded Bradley, Nigel and even Lucy only to give herself to the arrogant Lyric.

Lyric subsided when she saw the tears pooling in her eyes which fell down her cheeks. "Am I hurting you?"

Diera shook her head

"Good." Lyric said huskily and then bent her head to her task, using her lips, mouth and tongue expertly on Diera's netherlips to draw out a shuddering reaction from her young lover.

Diera moaned "I just... you feel so good..I..." the rest of her sentence became one long uninterrupted moan of pleasure as her orgasm exploded powerfully bringing her to tears.

"Oh sweetie don't cry." Lyric comforted her and Diera cried in her arms and then they made love all night long because well she just couldn't help herself. When it was her turn to explore Lyric's body she fairly basked in the knowledge that her touch could bring this powerful enigmatic woman to a quivering release and make her helpless beneath her finger tips.

In the morning when she woke up she was both relieved and disappointed that Lyric was not there. She was relieved because she had still not worked out what to say to the other woman and disappointed because well she wanted Lyric to make love to her again. She really wanted a baby. Lyric did not and it was the only reason that Diera wanted to marry Bradley.

Lyric would not even discuss it. It meant so much to her. She did not know why it did. Maybe it was because she was an orphan, alone with no family, no brothers or sisters. She wanted her own family her own child.

She wanted someone who would love her unconditionally and need her whether she was right or wrong. The truth was that she was scared. She was scared of her feelings for Lyric. What if Lyric left or decided she did not want her anymore. She did not think she would be able to survive it. It would be like living in the sun and then being plunged into an unending darkness a living hell.

That was why she wanted to marry Bradley.

Bradley was safe because she could never fall in love with him. She could never want him with the same heart wrenching intensity that she wanted Lyric. There would be no ups and downs she did not have to face the stares of society, she would have her children to comfort her. The thought of such a life should have filled her with contentment but instead it simply made her miserable.

She sighed and stepped into the shower enjoying the spray of the hot shower jet against her body. When she came down everyone else was just coming down to breakfast.

"Victoria's done a runner. The partners are back in the study and they roped in Selina to do the typing. I think she used to be Mr Barton's P.A. If I were you I'd pull a sickie like Victoria so you can enjoy the rest of the weekend. Otherwise you might get stuck in the negotiations too seeing as you're Lyric's PA." Lucy giggled.

Fortunately it never came to that. The partners came out of Mr Ellington's office and announced to one and all that the Partnership agreement had been worked out and Mr Bingham was officially severed from the practice and replaced by Lyric. Mr Barton made arrangements for everyone to go on a boat ride down the river and everyone had their own little gondola's rowed by men in black shorts, a red sash and a white shirt with wide brimmed hats.

They embarked and stopped off at a spot downriver to watch an open air comedy acted by the local theatre group at a mock Greek amphitheatre. She even recognised one or two Hollywood A-list celebrities. After that they had a picnic followed by a hilarious game of softball before making their way back to the Ellington mansion for the final night.

"Harmony are you riding with us?"

"No aunty dearest, I have a ride with some friends already thanks."

Rage, Eden, Mercy and Lucy had already left the remaining employees were simply too intimidated by Lyric to ride with them and Diera found herself alone in the car with Lyric. Lyric searched in the back for the remote control and then after giving the driver directions ensured the darkly tinted dividing window that separated them from the driver was raised to give them some privacy.

Diera knew Lyric very well so that when the other woman leaned over to kiss her she placed a restraining hand on Lyric's chest.

"Don't presume Lyric. I have no intention of ever being in your bed again."

"Not to worry sweeting this isn't a bed." Lyric moved closer.

"Lyric I am not going to sleep with you again." Diera moved back against the car door and placed her hands on Lyric's chest.

"Again? I don't think we slept at all last night." Lyric's hand slid up her thigh pushing her dress upwards and Diera slapped the older woman's hand away.

"I mean it Lyric I have no intention of having sex with you again."

"Shame. I rather thought you enjoyed it." Lyric drawled and sat back in her own space.

"Last night should never have happened." Diera re-arranged her dress.

"Having regrets sweeting?" Lyric mocked.

"Of course I regret it. I don't know how I'm going to tell Bradley."

"You're going to tell him." Lyric repeated in a dead flat tone of voice.

"Off course I am especially since we are going to get married."

Lyric did not like the way this conversation was going at all. "How do you think he'll take it?"

"He's probably going to be shocked, disappointed angry..."

"I'm sure he'll get over it. It's not like it's going to be the first time he's been disappointed." Lyric shrugged.

"Are you trying to tell me something?"

"If you've never slept with him before now and then you tell him you've slept with me what makes you think he'll forgive and forget."

"He loves me. I know he'd try and understand." She replied uncertainly.

Lyric laughed mockingly "He couldn't even get you into bed with him what makes you think he'd try and forgive you."

"He was patient with me. He knows I was waiting for someone I love to sleep with rather than just having sex with random strangers."

"Right and then you sleep with me. I thought you loved Smith."

"I did. I do."

"So why did you sleep with me? I'll tell you why and it has nothing to do with love and everything to do with the fact that when I touch you, you go up in flames but when cold fish Bradley even comes near you pull away. I know I've been watching you." Lyric finished smugly.

"I am still going ahead with our wedding Lyric."

"How can you? Smith is a selfish bastard. He may have some feeling for you but he loves himself more and when he finds out you've been teasing him the way you tease me and dangling him on a string but then you turn around and make love to me I imagine he's going to be royally pissed at you."

"I'm sure if I explain he'll understand. It just depends on the way I put it to him."

Lyric looked extremely sceptical. "Do you realise how unlikely that is? Of course if you decide not to go ahead with the wedding you wouldn't need to tell him. You could just end it or you could let me tell him believe me I would enjoy doing that." Lyric finished with relish.

"That may be the way you operate Lyric but I don't. I am going ahead with this wedding."

"Even after what happened between us? Can he make you feel the way I make you feel?"

"That's just sex." Diera said dismissively.

"As in casual sex?"

"Yes!"

"As in a casual one night stand casual sex?"

"Yes!"

"So you, a girl who by her own admission doesn't sleep around and who has waited twenty three years to share her first time with someone special to her, someone she loves, doesn't sleep with her own fiancé the man she professes to love and wishes to spend the rest of her life with, sleeps with me and then decides its casual sex. He won't believe you, hell I don't believe you we both know it was more than that."

Lyric tried vainly to control her rising temper and keep the panic from her voice. She did not think Diera would resist this much. She did not like it when things did not go as planned.

"It was just sex! You're a sophisticated urbane woman well schooled in the arts of seduction and you seduced me!"

"We didn't just have sex Diera, that's what made last night so special and we both know you could never have that with Smith."

"Why not?"

"Because he's a selfish, social climbing bastard."

"You don't know him."

"Diera the guy was ready to sacrifice your needs for his. He's shallow and incapable of caring for anyone but himself." Lyric finished dismissively.

"He's the man I want to marry and have babies for and enjoy the future we have planned together with."

"The future? What future? The future where he'd be working for me and every day he comes to work and looks at us knowing I'd kissed you first, touched you first, been inside you first, fucked you first slept beside you and held you in my arms first and sweeting you better believe that I would take great delight in rubbing his nose in that!"

Diera winced, as Lyric spoke, each word was like a hammer blow to her conscience.

"Not everyone is as territorial as you are."

"Hah! He'd never be able to trust you, He'd never be able to trust me around you, hell I don't trust me around you. The strain on your marriage would be unbearable and we'd all end up losers."

"What the hell would you be losing?"

"An intelligent, hardworking, employee and a valuable, effective member of my team. Good staff are hard to find you know."

"Fine then I won't tell him."

"Then I will." Lyric replied and folded her arms stubbornly across her chest.

Diera turned round and gasped at Lyric. "Why? But you just said...I don't understand." However, when she saw the self-satisfied smirk on Lyric's face she did understand.

"You scheming Machiavellian devil! You've planned this all along. You don't want me to marry Bradley do you? So you find a way to destroy my wedding plans." Diera was so angry if she wasn't so well behaved she would have spat. She was literally spitting mad.

"I hate you!"

"Well thank heaven for that. You loved Smith and ended up in bed with me. I think I'll take your hate so far it's formed the basis of a most rewarding relationship."

"If you think I am going to be your girlfriend you are sadly mistaken!"

"Well if you think you're going to be Smith's wife then **YOU** are sadly mistaken!" Lyric roared her heart beat fast with indescribable fear at the very thought of Diera being with her rival.

"Lyric, why are you doing this?"

"Because we are good together sweeting, I would look after you. After last night we both know I am better qualified to take care of all your sexual needs," Lyric drawled sexily.

"Why does everything boil down to sex with you!"

"Because it is important to me and besides I am also financially and emotionally more capable of looking after you and your needs," Lyric shrugged "I can give you more than Smith can."

"I don't give a damn about your money! I'll make my own damn money. I can look after myself."

"I thought you wanted to stay home and become one of the Stepford wives." Lyric drawled sarcastically.

"I do!" Diera said defiantly "There is nothing wrong with being a homemaker in fact I think it's one of the most underappreciated jobs in the world."

"Well if you think you can play wifey with Bradley let me disabuse you of that fact. You'd probably end up being the breadwinner and more mother than wifey in that relationship the guy is as thick as a plank and has a low sex drive."

"How do you know that's not what I want?"

"What to spend your life wallowing in misery with that fool? That will never make you happy."

"What the hell makes you think Bradley would not make me happy?"

"You can't even bring yourself to sleep with him! I've kissed you more than he has, touched you more intimately than he has, made love to you more often than he has!"

"This is not a competition Lyric!" Diera screamed back angrily.

"What the hell is your fascination with Bradley anyway?" Lyric fairly roared at her in frustration.

"He's willing to have and raise children with me Lyric! Which is something you are not prepared to do or even willing to consider!" Diera stormed as she got out of the car and slammed the door.

"Shit!" Lyric swore and hit the sideboard in frustration again and again with each swear word.
"Shit! Shit! Shit! Shit! Shit!"

Chapter 8

They had been back from the Ellington retreat for about two weeks now and Diera had made sure she avoided Lyric as often as she could and that she avoided being alone with Lyric. It annoyed her Diera wouldn't take her calls and refused to be alone with her. So here she was at the jury selection process and Lyric found herself taking out her frustrations on Pamendra Kulkani, Judge Merrilee Fairweather, Penelope Ice and any other unfortunate person who happened to cross her path.

"Are you gay?"

"No!"

"My lord this witness is unsuitable."

"Your honour Ms Black is trying to influence outcome of the trial by picking the jury based on their sexual orientation."

"You are representing the state and you sent over a jury pool with not a single gay person in it. How is that possible?" Lyric fired back.

"Duh! I don't know maybe because gay people are a minority."

"Not in Ravendale. They don't call this the city of dreams for nothing. This is the city where minorities get on well together and has the lowest rates of gang violence across America."

"And this is a murder trial. There are other issues involved and I cannot help but think that Ms Black is making a mockery of this court."

"Your honour Penny Ice has a right to be tried by a jury of her queers, I mean peers. It's her constitutional right." Lyric slammed the table with her hand.

Lucy groaned "I can't believe she just said that." She whispered to a horrified looking Penny.

"I am afraid that will not be possible at this time."

"Then I move for an immediate mistrial."

"Ms Black I'm warning you. We shall continue with what we have I will not allow your antics to derail this trial."

"Fine I'll have him then. He looks like a fairy."

"Ms Black!" Merrilee banged her gavel three times for orders.

Lyric was absolutely ruthless in her questioning and despite Kulkani's best efforts to prevent it she managed to get three gay people on to the jury and remove two of the three conservative Sarah Palinites that he tried to stash there. It annoyed him no end and got him thrown into jail for contempt when he lost his temper.

She gathered her things together and made her way back to the office. It was lunch time so it was relatively quiet in the office almost everyone had gone out for lunch. Finally Diera was alone and sitting behind her desk with a limp salad and a bottle of water it looked like she was just about to start eating.

She hadn't noticed her and Lyric just stood for a moment and stared at her. She was wearing a black pinstripe corporate skirt suit and white camisole under her jacket. Her hair was swept up into an efficient French Chignon as usual there wasn't a single hair out of place.

She always looked so cool and unflappable in contrast to Lyric whose short dark hair which was best described as unruly from running her hands through her hair during her confrontation with Kulkani her hair always looked like she just got out of bed.

Diera looked up and caught Lyric watching her from the doorway. "Was there anything you wanted?"

"You are not seriously considering that pathetic excuse of a salad to be adequate for your lunch are you?" Lyric walked over to Diera's desk and perched on the edge of her desk.

"Why not? It's healthy and packed with nutrients."

"I'd rather have something juicy and fleshy that I can sink my teeth into." Lyric leaned over her, and made her meaning clear with the way her hot eyes lecherously swept her up and down. "Like a wild boar steak."

"Well, they say, you are what you eat." Diera replied sweetly.

"Are you implying that I'm a boar..."

"Just saying you are what you eat." Diera smiled sweetly. It was a cheap shot but sometimes Lyric's arrogance and ego needed taking down a peg.

Lyric's lecherous smile grew even wider as she leaned down so close to Diera their lips were almost touching and she could feel Lyric's breath on her skin. "If you are what you eat, I could be you by tomorrow morning." Lyric said softly.

Her breath caught in her throat as her mind was thrown back to their first time together when Lyric made love to her. Lyric was staring so intently at her she could have sworn the oversexed woman was about to drag her somewhere and ravish her. Diera ignored the tingling in her chest and her eyes narrowed dangerously.

"Leave me alone Lyric."

"Only if you promise to have lunch with me."

"I can't afford to eat at La Cachette everyday you and Lucy seem to forget that I do not collect the same pay check as you."

"I'll treat you."

"No! I am engaged to someone else. If anyone is going to treat me he will."

"Bradley is getting fat eating off some client's expense account whilst you starve yourself."

"My mind is already made up so don't confuse me with facts." Diera replied stubbornly.

"Come on Sweets" Lyric tried to cajole her, "I can't exactly take advantage of you in a public restaurant. Besides we need to talk."

"We have nothing to talk about."

"You have not told Bradley the engagement is off have you?"

"Because it is not off!"

Lyric's eyes narrowed dangerously at her and Diera wondered what was going on in that diabolical mind of hers. This time when Lyric spoke there was a sinister ring to it.

"Very well have it your way then." She went into her office and slammed the door behind her.

Diera sighed and went back to her salad. It had been a hollow victory. Lyric shut herself in her office for the rest of the day and sulked only coming out when she needed to. Diera actually found Lyric looked quite adorable with a pout on her full sexy lips but she ignored her mood and continued to be civil and polite.

At closing time Diera packed up her things all ready to leave. Bradley was supposed to be taking her out and she waited patiently for him in the lobby of the building. It was pouring with rain

outside and she had not brought a coat because when she'd set out in the morning it had been a warm sunny day. Her phone rang insistently and she picked it up.

"Diera hi it's me Bradley."

"I thought you were coming over to pick me up."

"I've been given the go ahead to go and work as lead counsel in the criminal department in the LA branch next week isn't that fantastic!"

"That is great news. I knew you could do it."

"I am going to get my own office and everything and my assistant is totally hot you should see her. She is so organised and efficient and I get my own office and everything."

He said excitedly. "Now I know I said I would be there to pick you up but I am on a business meeting with Mr Ellington. But if you hang on for another couple of hours I could swing by and pick you up."

"Another couple of hours? Bradley where are you?"

"I am at the Three Harbours it's just a couple of doors down from La Cachette."

"Look your meeting sounds really important don't worry about me I'll find my own way home."

"Are you sure, I know I stood you up but I promise to make it up to you." He rang off without even saying goodbye and Diera sighed. She would have to get the bus to the subway. It was rush hour so it would be packed she just did not relish the trip to the bus stop in the pouring rain.

She'd changed in the ladies into a dark green cocktail dress because she was expecting that they would go out. She already felt self-conscious standing in the lobby in her cocktail dress and she was attracting a lot of attention. She'd left her office clothes upstairs in a bag. She would have to go upstairs and change and get a cab.

She walked up to the reception desk. "Walter could you please get me a cab?"

"It's going to be at least a half hour wait unless you want to share a cab with Mr Barton." Diera groaned inwardly. No she did not want to share a cab with David Barton he had wandering hands and was the reason she had transferred from the shipping department.

David Barton walked into the lobby siddled up to her with a thoroughly lascivious grin on his face. She could almost see him drooling.

"Diera what a pleasant surprise."

"Mr Barton." She said curtly but politely.

"You look very tasty."

The way he said it made her flesh crawl as his eyes swept up and down her body. He did not take his eyes off her but he turned to Walter and said. "I seem to have left my pilot case in my office why don't you go and get it." He handed the young man a hundred dollar bill. Walter's eyes widened and Diera suddenly realised she was alone in the lobby with David Barton. He moved towards her and she stepped out of his way.

"Now Diera, don't be coy."

"No!" She pushed his hands away and he stepped back.

"Bitch!" He lunged towards her and she stamped on his toe and kneed him in the groin. He fell to his knees clutching his genitals his eyes rolling in his head.

"Shit!"

He tried to grab her again and instead of Diera his body and came into contact with a larger powerful body that checked his body movement and a hand that wrapped its halfway around his neck and cut off his ability to draw breath.

David Barton thought he was looking into the eyes of a killer because Lyric's black pupils reminded him of death. He saw stars and almost blacked out. He dimly heard Diera asking Lyric to let him go and he sank to the ground taking deep gasps of air into his body.

"Lyric?" Diera said hesitantly, "I think you can let him go now." Her hand gently brushed Lyric's back and the other woman dropped her hold as though she'd let go of a hot potato. She dismissed him with a sneer, took off her suit Jacket and placed it around Diera's shoulders.

"And let that be a lesson to you." She said to the man who was still bent over on the floor clutching his genitals and struggling to breathe. She leaned down and hissed viciously for his ears only, leaving David Barton in no doubt about her words. All Diera heard was "You ever lay a finger on her again and I will literally rip you another arsehole and infest it with the fleas of a thousand camels."

David Barton scrambled to his feet and limped out of the foyer. Lyric satisfied with the work of her hands turned back to Diera "Why don't I give you a lift home?"

"I'm fine."

"David might be a bit of a wuss but even you could have a little trouble if you were caught out in the rain and ran into some serious trouble."

Diera considered her options. She could handle Lyric she was not sure she could handle walking in the rain to the bus stop in high heels and a cocktail dress. Lyric escorted her to the underground car park and helped her into her Mercedes.

"You look absolutely stunning by the way."

"Thank-you."

"So where's lover boy? I thought you had a date? Stood you up did he?"

"I don't want to talk about it." She said sullenly. She was really angry. Angry at Bradley angry at David Barton and most of all she was irrationally angry with Lyric.

"So instead of wasting that dress how about dinner? I know a nice little seafood restaurant and..."

"I just want to go home." Diera said tiredly.

"But I'm starving..." Lyric complained plaintively reminding Diera of a whining little child.

Diera sighed "I'll cook you dinner just take me home."

"You'll cook?"

"You heard me."

When they got to her apartment Elizabeth was waiting for them and she opened the door she raised a quizzical eyebrow. "I thought you were having dinner with Bradley."

"Change of plan." She stormed to her room and Elizabeth turned to Lyric

"What happened?"

"Well let me see she got stood up by Bradley the prick Smith and then David the octopus Barton made a pass at her she kicked him in the goolies and here we are."

"The goolies?"

"Testicles."

"Oh dear."

Diera came out of her room now dressed in a pair of denim hot pants and a hot pink tankini and made for the kitchen. There was a lot of pot banging and clanging and Lyric looked alarmed.

"Cooking is therapeutic for her it's the first place she heads to when she is stressed." Elizabeth said airily pouring both of them a glass of wine.

"And is the food edible?" Lyric asked worriedly.

"Always it's when she's in a cheerful mood and experimenting that you really need to worry."

Lyric turned to look at Elizabeth. "How are you holding up?"

"As well as can be expected I guess considering that my fiancée is accused of murdering my father."

"She didn't do it you know." Lyric said softly.

"I know and neither did Kate or Rocco or Mr Payne despite what you would have everyone believe."

"Elizabeth I am just doing my job."

"By making me out to be a murderer? By making my sister and her husband out to be a murderers? By making Eden's father out to be a murderer the man's harmless."

"He was special ops Elizabeth. The man was in the SAS and he saw action in the Falklands conflict and in the Iran-Iraq war. He is hardly harmless."

"You even put Beauregard Lane on the list of suspects because he made a threat to Penny at Eden and Rage's engagement party. He's definitely harmless why he could barely take on Penny whose all of 5'4 and have you seen his house? His cars? That man does not need money he is obviously financially well off."

"He is not as financially well off as you think he is."

"He had an alibi. When I called him the phone went straight through to him and I even spoke to him for crying out loud."

"That's not what your phone records say Elizabeth. It says you called him on his mobile."

"No I did not I dialled his home number and it went through to him."

Lyric picked up Elizabeth's phone and dialled the number Elizabeth showed her and her eyes narrowed when she got answering machine message. She handed the phone back to Elizabeth. However before she could tell Elizabeth what was on her mind there was a loud shriek from the kitchen and she rushed in to find out what it was fearing the worst only to find Diera standing on a stool in the kitchen.

It was bad but it was not as bad as she expected. There was water all over the stone kitchen floor and it was rapidly flooding the kitchen at an alarming rate. There was a step down which brought the kitchen floor onto a lower level and contained the water but it was obvious at the rate the water was gushing that it would not be long before it flooded the rest of the apartment.

"What the..." Her sentence was unfinished as water continued to flood the flat.

"We need to turn the water off at the mains."

"I have no idea where the hell that is." Diera replied trying to keep her cool as the water level in the kitchen continued to rise.

"Okay Elizabeth go to the fuse box switch off all the electrical appliances, Diera stay on the chair. The water will be charged so do not get in. I will try and get over to you."

"Where's the fuse box?"

Lyric cursed under her breath "You know what just get the building Super, I'll try and get Diera out."

"Diera climb onto the table now the chair that's it don't let your feet touch the water..."

Elizabeth dashed outside to try and find the Building Supervisor. The problem was however a lot worse than she thought. There was water in the corridor almost an inch deep and it wasn't just coming from their flat.

Elizabeth was on the second floor when she saw a blue streak of current go up the walls and catch one of the sockets which sparked and then started burning. She screamed as suddenly the paper thin wall in the converted building started to smoulder and then there was smoke and fires breaking out everywhere and as if that wasn't enough the smoke alarms came on but no water came out of the water sprinklers.

"Fuck the Super I'm calling 911!" Elizabeth muttered under her breath.

There were people running out of the flats with their belongings and the smoke was getting thicker and blacker as the fire spread and then the sound of the fire engine sirens and police sirens could be heard wailing in the distance. Elizabeth tried to go back and get Lyric and Diera but the force of people just pushed her further down the stairs and towards one of the fire exits.

"My friends are still in there! Diera! Lyric!" She screamed as someone stopped her from going back into the building and dragged her away. She fought him but the man just continued to pull her away. Then the crowd swept both of them along as they surged out of the building.

"Ma'am I can't let you go back in there."

Elizabeth knew she had to warn her friends and she frantically dialled her cell phone and spoke to Lyric. Her heart beat frantically when the phone continued to ring and then she calmed somewhat when she heard Diera's voice on the phone.

"Diera you have got to get out of there the building's on fire."

"We know we are on the fire escape on the second floor. There's glass everywhere. I lost my slippers in the water and Lyric is carrying me."

"Where are you?"

"We had to go down the fire escape round the back there is too much smoke for us to try and make it through the front entrance."

Elizabeth could not believe her eyes not ten minutes ago she was in her sitting room sharing a glass of wine with Diera and Lyric and suddenly their building was flooded and she could see blue streaks of current streaking up the walls like lightening and water flooding out of the ground floor. There were sparks everywhere and then there was a loud explosion.

The roof was on fire and as the fire fighters battled to bravely bring down the flames they realised it was an electrical fire they needed foam because water would simply not do the job. As the water came out of the firemen were unable to approach the building as they realised the water was probably carrying an electric current. Elizabeth started to pray as tears fell down her eyes.

She called her sister, she called Rocco, Rage, Eden everybody she could think of as she became hysterical with fear not knowing what was happening not daring to even think. Someone wrapped her up in a blanket and then she saw one side of the building simply collapse in a heap of dust.

The side which had housed her flat where not less than fifteen minutes previously Diera and Lyric were sitting with her. The sudden shock of it all was too much for her and Elizabeth fainted.

Meanwhile on the other side of the building Lyric and Diera were trying to negotiate their way out of the building without getting hurt.

"Lyric! Would you stop that! You're a sex maniac!" Diera said with exasperation and anger
"We're trapped on a ledge on the second floor of a building that is about to catch fire and you are fondling my bottom!"

"Yeah but you feel so good Sweets!" Lyric grinned wickedly at her.

"It may have escaped your notice but this is a life threatening situation. We are going to die."
Diera finished desperately.

"Off course we are going to die that is a fact. We just have to make sure that it's not today." Lyric said cheerfully lifting her onto the brick balcony.

Diera found Lyric's cheerfulness annoying. So annoying in fact that because all her anger was focused on Lyric's annoying cheerfulness she forgot her fear of heights that was until there was another explosion that rocked their precarious position. Some of the debris flew in their direction and Lyric took the brunt of it as her body covered Diera's. She grunted and Diera felt her stiffen with pain.

"Baby are you alright." Diera asked concernedly her hands smoothing away the lined brow above her head.

"Yeah it was nothing." Lyric pressed a reassuring kiss into her palm and cleared her throat.
"Sweets put your arms around my neck and shut your eyes."

"Why what are you going to do?" Diera asked suspiciously. She had a fair idea but she did not want to think about it. They needed to get onto the ledge on the first floor from there she knew that there were bricks in the wall that would enable them to get down.

It was part of the building's design. They needed to get off the ledge and the fire escape because it looked like the water was about to drip onto the metal fire escape.

"Why kiss you off course." Lyric answered as though that was a stupid question.

"You are not serious."

"Not really I just wanted to distract you for when I do this."

Lyric leapt off the ledge with Diera screaming and clinging to her and she managed to make it to the ledge. Slowly she lowered them down the brick walls.

"You know I once did a spell in Devon mountaineering. One of my mother's adventure holiday summer camps, she thought I was too introverted and needed to get out more." Lyric continued her inane chatter as she climbed carefully down.

She could feel every muscle in Diera's body tense with fear as the younger girl shut her eyes. "So there I was 50 feet up in the air hanging from a harness with only one clip upside down by the seat of my panties, which stopped me from plunging fifty feet into the gorge to my death and turning into a most unbecoming blob."

Lyric looked down and spotted a wooden board. There was a large puddle of water around it though if she could just get onto that and onto the pavement they would be safe. She did not want to think of what would happen if they landed in the puddle.

She tensed her muscles ready for the jump. She took a deep breath and said "shit!"

Rage had gotten the message from Elizabeth and had rushed over to the flat with Mercy and Eden. The flames were so high they were reaching the sky. The fire had reached the roof and the firemen were fighting to keep the blaze under control fearing that the fire could spread quickly with disastrous consequences.

There were a lot of people standing outside the apartment trying to evacuate the apartment block on either side other's helped with the survivors carrying the spill overs to hospital because there simply were not enough ambulances. The news crews arrived and the police tried to disperse them all.

Eden and Rage got to Elizabeth's flat first and contacted Kate and Rocco. Eden held a hysterically weeping Elizabeth in her arms as they drove her to St Charlotte's hospital.

"I can't get them on the phone anymore Oh my god Oh my god..." Elizabeth was crying uncontrollably in her Eden's arms.

"We are going to have to sedate her." The Doctor said firmly ushering them out of the emergency ward. He knew it was going to be a long night and he had to get back to ER so his tone was abrupt as he ushered them out of her room.

Eden tried Lyric's mobile phone again and again and Mercy, Lucy, Rage and Angel all stood waiting by the radio, as the local news team finally got pictures of the apartment that had become a raging inferno in so short a time.

Meanwhile back at the apartment Lyric swore as Diera's phone fell into the water confirming what she thought as it sizzled, fried and died. The water was charged up. Now she was scared, now Lyric thought she was beginning to understand the phrase scared shitless.

"Diera this ledge cannot hold us for much longer." Lyric said quietly.

Diera felt a chill in her heart. Throughout the whole ordeal she had felt safe with Lyric as though somehow she would not let anything happen to her. Her annoying banter and even the inappropriate fondling had served to successfully distract her from the horror of watching her apartment with all her belongings catch fire and the very real danger of being electrocuted to death unfold before her very eyes. However the brown eyes that stared so intently into her own could no longer hide the worry over their increasingly dangerous situation.

"Diera, I want you to listen to me very carefully I am going to push off the ledge with all my strength and throw you on to the board..."

"No!" Diera could not possibly agree to what Lyric was going to propose.

"Excuse me?"

"I know what you are doing and I am not going to let you do it. So you can forget the save yourself leave me here to die routine because it's not going to work. Either we leave this accursed ledge together or we die trying together."

"Diera there's no other way." Lyric said quietly and Diera shook her head.

"Don't you dare!" Her arms were already wrapped around Lyric's neck now she also wrapped her legs around Lyric's waist and clung even more tightly to her making it impossible for Lyric to dislodge her easily. Another explosion racked the building bringing them precariously lower onto the water below as the buildings foundations were rocked with the force. Then a large piece of roofing fell into the water smashing the wooden board into two.

"See I told you it was a bad idea. I would have been standing there." Diera whispered against Lyric's ear. Another large piece of roofing fell in front of them and without thinking Lyric stepped onto it just as the ledge behind them fell into the water and with another movement she hopped onto the brick wall and onto solid dry land just as the roofing sank into the water and the mud.

An explosion racked the building and Diera screamed as pieces of debris flew at them.

Chapter 9

Most of the debris hit Lyric who protected her with her body, but the force was so strong that she almost dropped her precious cargo but with one more leap she made it onto dry land.

Now they were on dry land Lyric reached for her phone but could not find it. It probably dropped down somewhere in the building.

Eventually they made their way to the car park where Lyric unable to get her normal parking space in front of her apartment had parked. They tried to call Elizabeth but her phone was switched off and neither of them knew anybody's number off the top of their head.

In the car Diera persuaded Lyric she was okay so Lyric drove her to her own apartment. In the car Diera was crying uncontrollably as everything caught up with her and Lyric offered to take her to the St Charlotte's, the hospital was the closest.

"No I don't want to go to the hospital, especially when there are other people who are probably in more need than I am." Diera managed to sob. She was so tired all she wanted to do was crawl into a bed with cool sheets and sleep in Lyric's arms.

Lyric looked her over once more to make sure she was okay and started the car, she drove back to her apartment silently talking in gentling tones wishing she could find a way to comfort Diera as she continued to cry silently.

"Hey Diera it's all just stuff. The important thing is you and Elizabeth got out alive and no one was injured Sweets. Everything else will work out."

"But I lost so many memories in the flat, my pictures of my parents and grand-parents..."

"We'll make new memories together babe. What is important is that you are alive and well okay." Lyric placed a gentle kiss on her forehead. "Come on let's go upstairs. I'm sure you want to shower and change into something else."

Lyric took her upstairs to her apartment and laid out one of her shirts for her. Whilst Diera was having a shower, Lyric ordered Chinese takeout and headed for the shower.

Diera sank into the bath and tried to figure out how she could get hold of Elizabeth no doubt her friend would be worried about her. She did have an address book in the office with everyone's

number on it and she would have to go and get it tomorrow but right now she was so tired all she wanted to do was eat and sleep.

She had used the guest bathroom before so she knew her way around. She slipped on Lyric's white shirt and made her way to the living room when she heard someone at the door.

Lyric managed to get Lucy on the phone and spoke to Rocco and Kate, the others were with Elizabeth in the hospital and she let them know that they were both alright and that Diera would be spending the night with her.

It was a Chinese delivery he informed her it had been paid for on account and she was just about to take the food packages from him when Lyric showed up behind her looking extremely sexy in a pair of black satin pyjamas. Diera held her breath as Lyric elegantly moved about the flat.

The vest molded her body beautifully highlighting the curves and muscles of her arms and shoulders. If there was one thing Lyric was not short of it was alcohol and now she opened a bottle of ice cold white wine for them both.

"Is Elizabeth alright?"

"She fainted. I think she's suffering from shock. She was slightly crushed in the rush to get out of the building but they think she will be alright. Rocco, Kate, Rage and Eden are with her. I let them know we are both alright."

"Thank goodness. I would like to go and see her tonight."

"I think you've been through a lot yourself. We can always go and check on her tomorrow."

"I want to go to the office tomorrow and get my address book and some things. So I can get my bank card and check into a hotel tomorrow."

"Diera, you and Elizabeth are welcome to stay here as long as you wish, no strings." Lyric said seriously.

"Thank-you." She replied softly watching the other woman carefully. There was no sexual innuendo or intimidating leer Lyric was just being well Lyric. It was a side of her that Diera decided she liked. After dinner Diera insisted on washing the plates.

"Leave it someone will clean it up in the morning."

"It won't take five minutes for me to tidy up."

"I know it won't but I don't expect you to do it."

"Yes but I want to do it."

Lyric scowled about to protest. She'd been in this position before her girlfriends complained of always cleaning up after her when in fact she'd made arrangements for the mess to be cleaned. She was not an eleven year old boy and now instead of going to bed Lyric would probably have to help clean up otherwise it would seem churlish unless...

"I am afraid I will have to insist that you leave the washing up and go to bed Diera. Otherwise you will only be depriving Anastasia of a job that I pay her for."

Diera was about to protest but she had seen the drawn up eyebrows. Lyric had a pair of very expressive eyebrows and when they were drawn up together as they were now it meant she was about to dig her feet in and be stubborn and Diera really did not want to fight over the privilege of doing the washing up. So she gave in gracefully and made her way to the spare bedroom.

She got into bed between the cool sheets and she could not sleep. It had been a long night what with being stood up by Bradley and being mauled by David Barton and then watching her house burn down and knowing she could have died tonight if she had not been with Lyric, would she have been able to get out alive?

She knew she would never have had the courage to climb down that ledge. She was terrified of heights. She tossed and turned restlessly seeing the house burn down, seeing Elizabeth and Lyric and her baby in the flames, her Uncle Paul calling out to her and then she was trapped in the debris of the burning house and she couldn't breathe.

"Diera! Wake up! You were having a bad dream." Lyric's voice seeped slowly into her consciousness and she found herself staring into a pair of worried looking brown eyes.

"Lyric?"

"You were dreaming Sweets, crying in your sleep are you alright can I get you anything?"

"No just make love to me." Diera said quietly, she felt so vulnerable but relieved to be alive and as Lyric's arms closed around her and the other woman took her to the dizzy heights of sexual oblivion. She wrapped her legs around Lyric and arched her body forward as Lyric's lips closed around her nipples and then Lyric was inside her taking her to the abyss of pleasure. She screamed as her body stiffened convulsing into a powerful orgasm and her cries eventually subsided into emotional sobs as all her emotions just seemed to overwhelm her.

Diera fell asleep with Lyric spooning her from behind, the English woman's large hand nestled between Diera's naked thighs cupping her mound the other cupping her breast. Lyric sighed possessively and the last word Diera heard fall from her lips was a very satisfied "Mine!" just before she fell into a deep and dreamless sleep.

When she woke up she found herself sleeping on top of Lyric, their limbs entangled carelessly. She could hear her steady heartbeat in her ear and her breadth tickling the top of her head. It was strangely pleasant to wake up in her bed and it gave her the opportunity to study Lyric's features in repose. Her hair was as black as midnight and her thick black eyebrows which on another

woman would have looked ugly were very sexy. She ran a finger down the bridge of her nose curiously.

Her face was chiselled perfection, high cheek bones lightly tanned with a clear complexion. Her lips were thick and full hinting at a very sensual nature which Diera was all too aware of but most of all the dimple on her chin that Diera loved.

She always wanted to kiss it and she did so now to her chagrin Lyric still did not wake up. Diera trailed a hand down her neck and shoulder muscles, then her biceps loving the feel of her skin beneath her fingertips. She rested her hands on Lyric's stomach and slid her hand lower to her thigh. Suddenly she found herself rolled over unto her back and Lyric was above her. She held her breath and reached a hand up to stroke the short black ebony locks on Lyric's head.

"Good morning." She said softly.

Lyric continued to stare down at her not saying a word. She lowered her head and Diera expected or rather wanted Lyric to kiss her. Instead the English woman leapt off the bed. "I'm going for a swim." She said tightly and then she was gone.

"Well good morning to you too." Diera muttered under her breath.

Diera got out of bed and frowned at her own clothes, but she picked them up and took them to the kitchen. She would have to go shopping for something to wear. Well it was 10am on a Saturday she would have to borrow Lyric's stuff till she could get some things. She headed to the bathroom and brushed her teeth before making her way to

one of the guest rooms and to change into the brand new bathing suit she'd found in one of the wardrobes.

It was in a box marked Harmony's things. She felt guilty opening the wrapper that held the brand new bikini knowing it's owner had never worn it before and promising to replace it when she had the chance. She stripped out of Lyric's shirt slipped on the black bikini and went outside with Lyric's shirt a couple of towels and Harmony's rubber slippers.

When she got to the private swimming pool on the roof behind the breakfast room Lyric had already beaten her there. She wore a black one piece uni suit that showed off her athletic physique.

Lyric was about to start her morning exercise when she heard the shuffle of slippers on the tiles and looked up to see Diera was wearing a skimpy Black Brazilian tanga bikini that left very little to the imagination. If she had been a cartoon she imagined that someone would have had to pick her jaw off the ground.

Diera took off her bikini top so that she could oil her lush femininity whilst she lay in the late morning sun. She looked forward to getting a lovely brown tan because of the privacy the roof pool afforded. She lay down on her back and closing her eyes she settled down to relax.

Lyric found herself leering at Diera for what felt like hours but was in fact only a few minutes. A sexy little smile played about Diera's lips when she commanded Lyric to come over which the suspicious English woman did, was there a husky catch to her voice?

"Lyric please could you help me oil my back before you get into the pool?" Diera asked huskily.

Lyric who had lost her powers of speech came and knelt beside the sun lounger Diera lay on, her eyes glued to the woman before her. Diera smiled and her thumb caressed Lyric's jaw sliding over the little indent on her chin to wipe away imaginary drool.

"Lyric Gaylord-Black put your tongue away, you are drooling." Diera gave her another little knowing smile before turning over on to her stomach. Lyric poured oil on her hands and cleared her throat as she tried to remember the promise she'd made to herself just this morning to give Diera space and that meant not seducing her or pushing her into having sex.

If she jumped her now she might think she was obliged to do something crazy like offer sex as rent which was not her intention she just wanted to be there for her right now and she felt so good under Lyric's hands. Her skin was warm and silky smooth and Lyric's eyes lingered to her bottom and her fingers itched to pull down her bikini bottoms and...

"Thank-you Lyric that's fine." Diera smiled into her elbow. It was fun teasing Lyric. She knew she shouldn't but the English woman so often got the last laugh it was fun to turn the tables on her.

Lyric got up and took a step back but continued staring she was not even aware of her hands stealing down to ease the now painfully throbbing ache of arousal that was assaulting her clit.

It was only when she saw Diera open one sleepy eye and look down at where her hand was that she realised she'd been fondling herself. She looked down and moved to make it look like she was adjusting her suit.

When next Diera looked over she found Lyric swimming lengths of the swimming pool like she was in an Olympic competition. She was an excellent swimmer and her movements in the water were sleek and elegant reminding her of a knife cutting through butter.

She rolled onto her back once more and then decided to go to the kitchen and to make breakfast, cooking helped to clear her head. She didn't bother to put on her bikini top opting instead to wear Lyric's white long sleeved shirt which fell half way down her thighs and which she did not bother to button up.

In the kitchen she found some eggs and vegetables so she made an omelette and served it with bread, some slices of fresh fruit on the side and coffee and went to the pool area. She poured coffee for both of them and sat waiting expectantly for Lyric to come out of the pool.

When Lyric got out of the water she took off her goggles and tossed them in the bucket with her other goggles unzipping her uni suit and as she walked over to the breakfast table Diera handed

her the towelling robe that sat on the chair. Lyric rubbed herself down roughly all the while staring at her.

"Aren't you going to eat?" Diera looked into the brown eyes and wondered why the other woman was so quiet. She'd barely spoken a word to her all morning. A pained look crossed her face and then to Diera's amazement she sat down at the table and started shovelling food into her mouth with great speed.

The elegant sophisticated Lyric she knew was gone this one couldn't seem to get away from her fast enough and her attempts at conversation were met with monosyllabic answers.

Finally Diera couldn't take it any longer she put her cutlery down on her plate deliberately.

"Lyric what's wrong?"

She was met with a pained expression and Lyric closed her eyes and cleared her throat.

"Nothing."

The words came out in a hoarse rasp and Diera shrugged and then to her amazement Lyric picked up her drink and then crushed the glass of orange juice in her hand. Luckily the juice was spilt onto an empty plate and the glass fell into three large shards on the table.

"Shit!"

"Are you okay shall I..."

"DDDon't tttttouch me." Lyric stammered and got up and stepped back. Her breathing loud and shallow as she almost fell over her chair in her haste to put some distance between them.

"Lyric? What's wrong?"

The English woman muttered under her breath. "I think I need to swim another 100 lengths."

"Hmm?"

The Englishwoman scowled "Nothing."

"Are you okay?" Diera took a step toward her and Lyric swallowed hard and tried to ignore the woman standing so close to her.

"What is going on with you? The truth Lyric." Diera demanded forcefully.

"I...I...want to make love with you so bad it hurts." Lyric closed her eyes and finally admitted exactly what was on her mind.

"Ah." Diera smiled grabbing Lyric by her uni suit and pulled her forward. When she was close enough she wound her arms around Lyric's neck. "I would like to make love with you too."

"I don't want you to be uncomfortable around me and I didn't want to pressure you into anything this morning and I promise that I will...what did you say?"

"I said that I would like to make love with you too." She returned softly, her voice like a gentle caress, her fingers trailed over the back of Lyric's neck before sliding down to trace the outline of her collarbone and tweaking her hard distended nipple.

Desire slammed into Lyric and her skin fairly crawled with fire, her clit swelled with need, wet heat pooled in her aching loins. Her black eyes glittered as they slid slowly possessively all over the little blonde woman who stood before her. Her heart was thudding loudly and she could hear her blood pounding like a dull roar in her head.

"You would?" Lyric asked stupidly.

"I would." Diera pulled Lyric's head down to hers and captured her lips in a deep searching kiss that fairly curled the toes of her black haired lover.

Lyric lifted her up and carried her off to the living room fully intending to take her to bed but they never made it. Instead Diera parted her shirt and then managed to slide off the straps of Lyric's uni suit and suckle on her lover's nipples. Lyric moaned then the rest of the uni suit was on the floor so Lyric was naked.

Diera fastened her lips on Lyric's big red juicy nipples and suckled hard glorying in the helpless sounds of her black haired lover. She sucked and lathered her breasts with her tongue whilst her other hand grasped Lyric's breast and squeezed gently.

"Bloody hell Diera You're gonna kill me." Lyric rasped unable to stand anymore. She collapsed on the leather sofa with Diera on her lap and Diera pushed her till she was flat on her back. She blazed a trail of hot kisses down her body till she came to the juncture between her legs and Lyric's hips jerked up at the first tentative touch of Diera's tongue.

She shuddered with each gentle caress and moaned with every deliberate stroke knowing she was going to come and not wanting to do it alone she urged Diera to turn round and lower herself down.

Lyric was extremely glad Diera was not wearing any other clothing apart from the tanga which she disposed of in one deft move and then she stood up so Diera was hanging upside down her legs around Lyric's neck her hands grasping Lyric's waist the shirt fell over her head as Lyric gave her a thorough tongue lashing, laving in and around her folds before penetrating her with her tongue.

She tasted so good Lyric blanked out the fact her muscles were straining with the pain of holding her lover helplessly upside down as she made love to her with her tongue. She could feel Diera's breath against her tortured clit which in itself drove her insane.

She grasped Diera with one arm around her waist and with the other slid her fingers slowly into Diera's glistening slit and her hastily exhaled breath brushed against Lyric's netherlips as she continued tantalising her helpless captive with her tongue. Lyric ground her hips against Diera's fingers even as she continued stroking her womanly folds till they shuddered their release at the same time and came screaming their orgasms together.

Lyric collapsed back onto the sofa and grinned wickedly at Diera who looked absolutely stunned.

"Wow!!! That was amazing." Diera gasped

"Baby you ain't seen nothing yet." Lyric did a terrible imitation of an American accent causing Diera to giggle helplessly.

"Really?"

"Yes really and this time I would like to..." Lyric lowered her head and began to describe in excruciating detail what she would like to do to her and how she was going to touch her which just made Diera more and more aroused till she got up and dragged her naked English lover to the bedroom.

"Why the change of mind?" Lyric asked when they were lying in Lyric's bed their arms around each other after an exhausting three hours. She felt pleasantly satiated and was reluctant to leave the bedroom. She was enjoying their closeness and Lyric's gentle caresses and soft kisses. "Not that I'm complaining or anything."

"After all that happened last night I just did some soul searching and decided that life is so fleeting, so fragile and so unpredictable. This time yesterday morning if someone had told me my apartment building would have been burnt to the ground and I would barely get out alive and that you of all people would be the one to rescue me I would have thought they were crazy. I want you Lyric, I want to be with you I know I have deep feelings for you and I want to explore where this is going."

Diera was not yet ready to admit she might be falling for her persistent black haired lover.

"Yesterday I learned nothing lasts forever and if this does not last forever then I guess I am going to have to deal with it like I dealt with yesterday."

"Are you sure about this Sweets? I will not share you with Bradley or Nigel or any other man or woman that you decide you want to have babies with. I know it's wrong and I will probably have to work at it but I discovered I am very possessive and an extremely territorial lover especially when it comes to you. "

"Yes I know." Diera sighed there was no denying that.

Diera needed to inform the bank of what had happened and they promised to send her replacement cards and cheque books. In the meantime Lyric took her out to the mall. Diera loved her girly clothes and shoes so she was a little annoyed to be in Lyric's oversized jeans and t-shirt sans make-up. Lyric seemed to realise this because she took her to the mall and the Saturday market to go shopping.

"I don't want you to buy me a whole new wardrobe Lyric I don't want to owe you."

"Fine you can pay me back." Lyric replied handing the cashier her card.

"Lyric, please I can't afford this on my salary it's..."

"I want to do it. You like the dress and the shoes and everything else, I like the way you look in them. If you want to pay me back, you can do so by wearing them for me. I am now officially your girlfriend and I would like to take care of you okay."

Now, no more arguments please, you promised me a home cooked dinner and the pleasure of your company whilst watching the entire six star wars films with the uncut Director's cut versions."

Diera shook her head and cupped Lyric's face in one hand. "You are such a geek. Lucky for you I like Star wars, otherwise this relationship would be over before it began. Thank-You" She finished kissing her gently on her lips.

They had dinner together and never got around to going to the office to pick up her address book. The next morning Elizabeth, Kate, Rocco and Eden turned up at Lyric's apartment almost immediately.

She ended up making a Sunday roast using one of the recipe books Mama Black had left behind. Lyric and Elizabeth were more of a hindrance than a help in the kitchen so she kicked them out into the living room but she was glad to have Rage and Eden's company as she cooked.

"You know you are quite welcome to stay with us if you want to?" Eden offered.

"No thank-you Eden although I appreciate the offer, I think I'll stay here with Lyric we do have a few issues to iron out."

"Are you in love with her?" Rage asked quietly.

"I think so, Maybe, I don't know." Diera sighed. She had always been very close to Eden and usually it was Eden that asked the searching questions but the fact that it was coming from Rage made her realise that the other woman did in fact value their friendship and she found she was pleasantly surprised that she did.

The kitchen door swung open and Lyric came into the kitchen looking harried. She placed the empty bottle of beer on the side table and went over to where Diera sat at the kitchen table putting the finishing touches on the desert before it went into the fridge to be chilled for her guests and kissed her lingeringly on the lips before wrapping her arms around her.

"Whew talk about an interrogation I've just been put through the third degree by Rocco, Kate and Elizabeth."

Diera smiled "I am sure you handled them very diplomatically."

"Speaking of which when are you two going to fix the wedding date." Lyric turned to Rage.

"We have decided to postpone the wedding until after Mr Delaware's funeral." Rage said quietly wrapping an arm around Eden and dropping a light kiss on her forehead.

They settled down to dinner and played a riotous game of monopoly and charades. The evening went really well and Monday morning dawned bright and early. Lyric drove her to work she held her breath when David Barton approached her in the reception area of Lyric's office.

"Could I have a quiet word alone with you Ms Voicemail?"

"Not on your Nelly." Lyric replied sliding her arm casually round Diera's shoulder's in what could only be interpreted as a protective gesture. Her black eyes blazed angrily.

"I just wanted to..."

"I am well aware of just what it is you wanted to do." Lyric said angrily and Diera placed her hand on Lyric's forearm. It was as though she felt her touch all over her body urging her to calm and she subsided but her black eyes made it clear that it was only Diera's touch that stopped her from committing grievous bodily harm against the unfortunate David Barton.

"I wanted to apologise to Diera about my behaviour last night it was unbecoming and ungentlemanly and also to ask her not to bring charges of sexual harassment against me."

"Why shouldn't she?" Lyric scowled sullenly.

"It may have escaped your notice Lyric but as a partner you would be equally liable with me for any financial obligations we would owe to Ms Voicemail."

Lyric scowled "I can afford it."

"I accept your apology Mr Barton."

He shrugged his shoulders said thank-you and left. Lyric continued to scowl. "You should sue."

"I don't want to besides you couldn't be my lawyer you were a witness."

"Lyric, I am glad to have caught you."

They both turned around and Diera was surprised to find a tall copper haired woman with a military style short back and sides hair cut making her way towards them.

She looked extremely butch in the male styled suit yet the lines did not fall on her body in a shapeless ill fitting way but was tailored to accommodate her natural feminine curves in clean masculine lines. It was obviously a bespoke suit.

She wore a white shirt with a sizzling scarlet tie in the style of a very fashionable thick Windsor Knot. Her gold cufflinks glinted in the artificial lighting and encrusted as they were with diamonds Diera did not doubt that they were real.

She looked extremely masculine and had a cleft in a chin that appeared to be chiselled out of granite in a face that was all hard angular looking features with killer cheekbones yet for all that she had a flawless mahogany caramel complexion with an endearing splash of freckles that hinted at a childlike playful mischief that was reflected in her twinkling green eyes.

"Kieren this is an unexpected surprise, I thought we had a meeting for tomorrow."

"We do but I needed to catch Eden one of my vessels was arrested. And who is the lovely lady?" She finished her eyes warming as they alighted on Diera.

"This is Diera my PA. Diera this is Kieren Sorin Beaste."

"Delighted to meet you." Kieren smiled and took Diera's hand and held it for an inordinately long time.

Lyric looked absolutely furious. Kieren might be a long time client and a good friend but she was also one of the most promiscuous people she had ever met with a reputation as a seducer of women, married, single, engaged, straight, whatever.

Kieren Beaste was a playgirl, a cad, a breaker of hearts and her tastes ran to anything in a skirt that was of legal age and she was not known to discriminate and right now she did not like the way the other woman was looking at Diera.

Lyric extricated Diera's hand from Kieren's and Kieren was surprised when Lyric said irritably.

"Diera is also my girlfriend Kieren go get your own." Lyric said in no uncertain terms, her glare leaving Kieren in no doubt that she was serious.

Lyric was not known to be territorial with her women and Kieren began to wonder if the relationship was a serious one. However Kieren remained unoffended but could not resist the urge to taunt her friend a little.

"ooh so possessive." She laughed saying to Diera "Is she always like this with you?"

Diera shot Lyric a behave yourself look which only made Kieren smile. "Not that I blame her I think I would be just as possessive if I had a girlfriend as lovely as you are."

"You are a silver tongued devil aren't you." Diera retorted recognising a fellow flirt when she saw one. Although there had been a spark of attraction between them it was as though they both realised they could never be more than friends.

"Wouldn't you like me to show you what else I can do with my silver tongue?"

"I can well imagine what you can do with your silver tongue." Diera replied boldly enjoying the harmless flirtation, a small hint of a smile played about her ruby lips.

"Is there another reason why you came to my office today apart from to piss me off by flirting with Diera?" Lyric interrupted their conversation irritably.

"Yes there was but now having met the lovely and very charming Diera, I cannot imagine what it was." Kieren's emerald eyes twinkled back at Diera who giggled and blushed furiously.

"I believe you wanted to brief Ms Black on the upcoming acquisition of Van Buren Transportation." Diera said smoothly.

"Beautiful and clever why couldn't I have found you first." Kieren said mournfully.

Lyric groaned "Kieren don't tell me you are still after van Buren and his brood."

Kieren's eyes narrowed as the red haired woman reinforced the myth about red headed women being passionate. "I will die before I let that bastard off the hook. Excuse the French Diera." Kieren apologised to her for swearing and continued talking. "I am this close to taking over van Buren Incorporated and I can't wait."

"Diera would you please hold my calls and reschedule the meeting with Mr Ramos for tomorrow afternoon he just left a message on my phone that he cannot make it today. Come this way please." Lyric swung open the door of her office and motioned for Kieren to enter which she did and turned around to face Diera.

"Flirting with my clients Diera, I'll deal with you later."

"I'll be looking forward to it." Diera gave her a saucy wink.

After Kieren Beaste left, Diera was busy throughout the day herself and Lyric was rushed off her feet yet despite it all Lyric still found time to steal kisses and take her out to lunch. The person she dreaded meeting was Bradley and that confrontation came early in the evening.

She knew it was cowardly to allow Lyric to handle it but she had had enough drama already. So when he came out of Lyric's office she was expecting him to be antagonistic, angry even bitter.

She held her breath when she saw him. He stood at her desk regarding her for a moment. He did not say anything and Diera did not know what to say to him.

"I guess I should never have stood you up Friday night and I totally understand why you would be angry with me. I can even understand why Lyric is a more attractive prospect than I am, she's richer than I am and more educated she even has an aristocratic title. What I want to know is how come when she looks at you, you glow like a Christmas tree yet you couldn't even bring yourself to kiss me?"

"I'm...I"

"Shouldn't you be leaving Smith. I did after all approve your transfer."

Lyric came out of her office. She wore a black pinstripe trouser suit her arms were folded across her chest and the diamonds on her silver cufflinks glinted in the sunlight streaming in from the window set off brilliantly on the black shirt.

"You bitch!" He spat "You wanted Diera from the first day you saw her and you manipulated all of us so that you could have her. I never even wanted to go to L.A.! YOU were the one who put the idea into my head when we were discussing the Salenko case just as you were the one who convinced Mr Baras that I meet up with him on Friday night when you knew I had a date with her."

Lyric raised a taunting "You put your career ahead of your relationship and that's my fault?"

"That's not true and you know it." He turned to Diera. "I loved and I still love you Diera. I wanted to make a better life for us."

"By putting your career ahead of hers and then blaming me for it?"

"I never really had a chance did I?" Bradley turned to Diera "I am sorry but if you think she's going to make you happy forget it. At least I am willing to have children with you, a family. You don't know what kind of manipulative game she is playing. I have been on the receiving end and believe me it's not nice. When she's done with you she will throw you away like a piece of rubbish."

"Get out!" Lyric said with quiet venom and took a step towards him. Bradley did not back down instead he took a step towards her and Diera came to stand between the two of them. She placed her hand on both their chests to get their attention and they both looked down at her.

"Bradley I think you should leave." Diera said quietly "Before either of you do something you regret."

Bradley nodded "I'll let it go this time because of you. But you," He pointed at Lyric

"I will settle accounts with you later."

"I look forward to it Smith." Lyric sneered back.

When he left Diera turned around to look at her black haired lover, "Is it true?"

"Does it matter?"

"Yes I think it does Lyric." Diera replied into the charged silence.

"What do you want to know? That I want you, I have wanted you from the day I set my eyes on you on the train in London," Lyric whispered seductively and nibbled the sensitive area behind her ear before dropping kisses along her jaw. The English woman was attuned to every nuance of her lover's body, could hear her breath quicken with raw desire.

"That I deliberately seduced you away from Bradley, Lucy, Nigel and your other insipid lovers," Lyric ran her hand's over Diera's shoulders to cup her breasts whilst her thumbs rubbed insistently on her nipples till they were hard and surging insistently against the material of her blouse. A low soft moan involuntarily escaped Diera's lips as the other woman continued to weave her dark magic with her voice low and hungry and filled with stark need.

Diera felt Lyric's hands take out her hairpins slide into her hair to wrap around the back of her neck as she pulled the other woman inexorably closer to her. "That I out manoeuvred all of them by some stratagem or device? That I am a manipulative persistent bitch it's all true. What can I say? All's fair in love and war Diera and I don't take prisoners."

Lyric lowered her head and kissed Diera hard crushing her lips ruthlessly beneath hers. Diera struggled in her hold, not because she didn't want to be kissed, she did but not like this, as though Lyric wanted to possess and dominate her.

Lyric sat down on the chair behind Diera's desk and placed the little blonde on her lap.

"Lyric!" Diera protested breathlessly pushing ineffectually at Lyric's chest as she settled Diera on her lap so that she straddled the dark English woman hiking her grey suit skirt upwards so that it rode high up her thighs.

Diera tried to catch Lyric's wandering hands but Lyric was stronger than her and held both of her hands behind her back by the simple expedience of shackling both her wrists in one of her hands and then parting her legs and spreading Diera's thighs. Her other hand went to her grey silk blouse and flicked away the buttons and the front clasp of her bra so she could cup her breast and roll her nipple between her fingers.

Diera moaned she could feel herself melting into the caress and stopped fighting enough that Lyric released her hands and started pushing her skirt up to her hips Diera stilled her marauding hands and managed to pull away from the kiss although Lyric continued to kiss her neck and nuzzle her ear another sigh escaped her when she felt Lyric's hot mouth on her bare nipple.

"Lyric Noooo." She moaned the last word. Lyric's mouth felt so good on her heated flesh but she did not feel comfortable making love in the unlocked waiting room anyone could walk in. She eventually managed to lift Lyric's head up in her hands.

"We can't do this here." She said breathlessly and Lyric's eyes narrowed and Diera gasped when she was literally swept off her feet and carried into her office, Lyric locked the door and then continued their love-making on the couch in her office.

Her panties came off next and Diera involuntarily arched her body against Lyric as her lover's caresses got more wickedly intimate. She was being pleased thoroughly and loving every single moment of it all as she was hit by a slew of multiple orgasms that had her screaming and convulsing in Lyric's arms.

Lyric almost ripped off the front of her trousers in her haste to feel Diera's hands on her body and she felt Lyric shudder as her hands slid down to the womanly folds beneath her fingers.

"Do you like that baby?" Diera asked her quivering lover.

"Oh god Diera yes!" Lyric rasped breathlessly as she shifted her body to get closer and then Diera teased her cruelly stroking her and bringing her close to her orgasm yet not letting her come, keeping her hanging excruciatingly on the precipice of pleasure begging for release.

"Don't try and bully or manipulate me again Lyric otherwise you will not like the consequences." Diera said softly so that her meaning was clear. Lyric nodded wordlessly there was a quiet strength about Diera that always caught Lyric off guard like now.

Diera might be smaller, and physically weaker but that did not mean she did not have her own strengths and ways to deal with her and Lyric was rapidly becoming well aware of that fact.

"Take your pleasure baby." Diera whispered as Lyric's hips uncontrollably bucked against her. Diera moved her hands and placed her fingers against Lyric's lips before kissing her again.

Chapter 10

The first day of the trial dawned bright and early and Lyric drove to the courthouse with Diera because it would be easier than dropping her at the office and returning to the court house. The court was packed ready for her opening statement.

Lyric pulled out a soap box from under her desk and stood on it.

Merilee Fairweather was slightly perturbed and banged her gavel. "What do you think you are doing?"

Lyric shrugged her shoulders into her jacket and adjusted her cuff links before striking a pose. "Well what does it look like I'm doing. I'm climbing on my soap box your honour I used to do

that once a week. In Hyde Park in London we have a little corner where you can pontificate for free. It's a tourist attraction."

"Get off that thing right now Ms Black."

"Fine I'll just pontificate from down here then shall I, but I dare say, this is vintage soap box stuff. Murder, Money, beautiful women, sex and lesbians . My colleague would have you believe that my client suffers from a disease called homosexuality. He wants you to stop seeing my client as a person, but as a disease like you know flu with terrible awful symptoms like murder. He wants to paint her as a violent woman driven by this disease to commit depraved acts against innocent young women lured into her web of deceit and who commits murder against their male protectors in this case her father. You know perpetuate the myth that all lesbians are really men-hating murderers with no soul but it's probably just that he feels threatened by lesbians because he has a small dick and he can't satisfy his wife in bed."

The jury snickered at the angry red-faced Kulkani and the Judge banged her gavel and glared at Lyric who smiled beatifically back at her but continued.

"I would like to stress that Homosexuality is a lifestyle choice a very personal one. We have the right to gay marriage in Ravendale despite what Mr Kulkani would have you believe, this case is not about whether homosexuality is sex between consenting adults or whether homosexuality is a disease that causes people to behave in a depraved way, this case is about a murder, specifically the murder of Mr Paul Delaware.

Mr Delaware was well aware of the relationship between his daughter and the accused. He gave Penelope Ice his wife's wedding ring to show he gave them his blessing.

There are several people in this case with financial motives like Dr Lane who the evidence will show owed Mr Delaware three hundred thousand dollars, then there's Colonel Payne who owed him fifty thousand dollars, there's Mr Delaware's eldest daughter Kate married to a young struggling business man she stands to inherit a substantial amount from his estate upon his demise and who was heard having a disagreement with him and also his favourite daughter Elizabeth she stands to inherit a substantial amount from his estate also.

None of his business acquaintances or contacts were investigated by the Police despite the fact Mr Delaware was a successful business man with varied interests in munitions, pharmaceuticals and even an interest in a casino which had possible ties with the Italian mafia and the Chinese Triad and we know how uncompromising they can be. Not a single one of these people were investigated by the police yet all of them, all of them stand to gain from the demise of Mr Delaware all of them had the motive and all of them had the opportunity to do so.

My client is the only one who has no financial incentive to gain from his death. Why was she arrested? because she is gay. My client is not guilty of murder. In fact the only crime my client is guilty of is love and you know what they say If love is a crime then put me the hell away."

As they came out of the court room with Penny cameras flashed and bulbs went off as reporters thrust their microphones into her face as they tried to get their story. Mr Delaware was a popular local business man but it was in the circumstances that he had been murdered by his daughter's lesbian lover that made the news all the more salacious and some of the newspapers had already judged Penelope Ice guilty.

Lana Turrell, the woman Lucy described as Lyric's favourite reporter was the first one to get to them. This time her big blonde hair was blowing in the wind and yet her make-up did not seem out of place as she yelled into the microphone in her annoyingly grating voice.

"This is Lana Turrell for RTV reporting from the steps of the court house. Where Ms Gaylord-Black has made her opening statement. Even her lawyer has a queer name Gaylord-Black I am telling you these people never quit. Here is Ms Black now...I am Lana Turrell from RTV tell me Ms Black, how can an accomplished advocate like yourself defend someone she believes to be guilty?"

"Why didn't you ask the DA how an accomplished lawyer like him can prosecute someone he knows to be innocent?"

Lana Turrell stood stuck for words and Lyric breezed past her and went back to the office. When she got there it was to find a furious Rage waiting for her.

"You dare to make Eden's Parents out to be murderers I'll kill you." Rage threw a punch which Lyric neatly evaded, having already been on the receiving end of one of the blonde's punches she had no desire to receive anymore.

"That could have hit me. Eden reign in your tiger and explain to her that I was just doing my job. Your father did owe fifty thousand dollars to Mr Delaware."

"I'm well aware of the implication. Rage, Please Lyric is right she needs to throw reasonable doubt on the supposition that Penny did it. Lyric has to create a red herring, to show that someone else other than Penny could have done it."

"So you don't believe that Penny did it either?"

"No Eden I don't."

When Diera left the office Lyric was still in a brainstorming session with Lucy and a new lawyer whom she'd been introduced to and who would be taking Bradley's place. She had collected her cards and check books from the bank and decided to go shopping for something to eat.

Lyric never cooked, did not have a clue and was completely hopeless in the kitchen preferring to live on takeaways. So she'd decided to get some groceries and make dinner.

Meanwhile Lyric who normally was the last to leave the office found herself clock watching and hurrying up her clients so that she could go home. When she did finally leave she was not the last

to leave the office. She rushed home to the smell of something delicious bubbling up in the kitchen and when she got in it was to find Diera wearing something lacy and pink and sexy and transparent.

"You look gorgeous." Lyric growled against Diera's throat as she enfolded the little blonde in her arms. Diera moaned as Lyric's hands moved upwards to cup her lush breasts and she felt something hard nudge against her bottom. She shivered as Lyric lowered her head and nipped at her ear before thrusting her tongue into her ear and sucking on her earlobe. "I'm starving I wanna...eat now..." Lyric turned her around in her arms so she could kiss her deeply.

Diera slid her hands up the lapels of Lyric's Jacket. "I made dinner." She said when she finally pulled away breathlessly.

"Fuck dinner you're gonna be the main course."

Lyric lifted her up onto the kitchen table ripped off her panties and proceeded to devour her with relish. Diera moaned as she was thoroughly ravished on the kitchen table. She felt Lyric fumble with something in her trousers and then Lyric pinned her down to the kitchen table holding her wrists in one hand so that she was completely helpless. She felt something warm and hard rub against her slit and Diera bit her lip as Lyric thrust slowly forward as she was penetrated slowly by something that was definitely larger than Lyric's finger.

"What...?" She gasped

"It's a surprise it means I can hold you down so that I can kiss you, touch you and fuck you silly all at the same time." Lyric said with relish as she proceeded to do just that. Lyric held her down capturing both her wrists in one hand whilst she kissed her and rolled her nipples alternating her greedy mouth between both her nipples and Diera's lips all the while thrusting deliciously between her thighs and working herself into a frenzy.

Diera was in heaven she loved it when Lyric was in this domineering mood, she loved being held down whilst Lyric's tongue thrust into her ear and sucked her earlobes whispering and telling her how much Diera drove her crazy and how she loved touching her, she relished the feelings of Lyric kissing and suckling on her neck, licking the sweat from the valley between her breasts before suckling hungrily on her nipples.

Lyric stood up taking Diera with her and the little blonde was forced to wrap her legs around Lyric's waist. Lyric's hands moved her faster and faster, sweat was pouring off her body. Lyric sat down on the chair and arranged Diera so she was facing away from her and her hands were able to roam at will whilst she could explore her lover's mouth to her heart's content.

Diera was mindless with pleasure because Lyric's hands were literally everywhere that counted she seemed to know just where to touch her to draw out pleasure from her body all she could do was wrap her arms around her dark haired lover and ride the storm.

As she approached the edge of her orgasm Lyric's hand inadvertently closed around her mouth and nose just for a split second and Diera's Orgasm was so violent it was almost as though she was having a seizure by the time she came down she was sobbing with it. Lyric gently kissed away her tears as Diera cuddled into her lap.

"Are you okay baby?"

"Okay? I loved it. I especially liked the part when you held me down and kissed me." Diera grinned mischeviously.

"I thought you hated me being domineering."

"I don't, I just hate it when you are being domineering and manipulative there's a difference and I..." Diera shivered as she realised why she was cold and then wailed "Lyric you didn't have to rip my clothes off."

Lyric looked down really looked down at Diera. She was totally naked and the pink lacy confection was literally in tatters all over the floor.

"I'll buy you a new one." She promised.

"And just last week I was praising your self-control when it came to my negligees and lording it over Eden."

Lyric laughed "Rage rips off Eden's negligees?"

"All the time, it's no laughing matter she's thinking of making it part of their marriage contract." Diera stood up and Lyric loathed having to let her go but she stood up with her.

Diera's small hands deftly undid Lyric's shirt buttons and slid her jacket off. She stood on tiptoe and kissed Lyric on the lips. Her hands slid into her short thick black luxuriant hair and her nails raked the back and neck of her English lover causing Lyric to shiver with need.

Lyric felt her heart melt under Diera's gently questing lips and hunger was once more forgotten as they kissed Diera slowly undressed her taking the time to explore every curve and plane of her Dark lover's naked body till they were naked on the couch and lost in their mutual pleasure.

Lyric groaned as Diera's nails raked her back in the throes of their passion as their moans got louder and louder as their passion intensified, she loved hearing Diera tell her how much she wanted her loved it when thier fingers intertwined and Diera squeezed her fingers so hard just before they exploded together into oblivion.

As Diera lay in her arms, Lyric pondered on the fact that she felt comfortable having Diera in her arms, she felt too comfortable in fact. She didn't mind the fact that Diera was absently stroking her collarbone weaving an air of intimacy around them. Lyric was not a facile person outside of

sex but she could not keep her hands off the little blonde she was like her personal magnet. Wherever Diera was in a room was where Lyric wanted to be.

Normally after sex all Lyric want to do was jump out of bed and get on with doing something else but since she met Diera she didn't want to leave her side and she could spend the whole day in bed in her arms.

It was only when her stomach rumbled that Diera insisted on Lyric getting up to eat something that she moved under protest. As Lyric tucked into the meal with gusto loving every bite, Diera frowned at her partner distracted by another matter that worried her and she watched her lover carefully as she spoke.

"I'm going to the children's shelter on Saturday afternoon."

Lyric froze. "What for?"

"I volunteer there twice a month." She said quietly "I would like you to come."

"No!"

"Do you have some sort of phobia regarding children or something?"

"I don't want to talk about it." Lyric said curtly. "

"Fine I'm going to bed." Diera said disgustedly and left. She slipped off her dressing gown and climbed into bed. She wasn't surprised to find Lyric in the room five minutes later.

"I don't hate kids Diera, it's just a sensitive subject with me right now and I am not ready to discuss it."

"Whatever." Diera got into bed and Lyric sighed and slipped in beside her and took her smaller hands in hers. She kissed Diera's fingertips and placed her hands on her body.

"Diera don't be angry with me, I need you, I need you to be patient with me."

"Okay baby." Diera whispered cupping Lyric's dark head in her hands, Lyric groaned and kissed her back. She would never get enough of the woman in her arms.

At the weekend Diera found it was going to be hard to get to the shelter without a car. She was also not relishing the thought of spending so much money on a taxi so she held her breath and asked Lyric to drive her.

"Just take the keys, I am not going too far today."

"I can't drive."

"Why not?"

"I never needed a car so I never bothered to learn to drive."

"I'll teach you."

"No. I just need a lift to the shelter."

"Okay how about I promise to come with you to the shelter if you drive at least part of the way."

Which was how Diera found herself driving hesitantly to the shelter, Lyric was extremely patient with her and how they managed to get to the shelter without killing anyone was a complete enigma to her. The other enigma for Diera was that at the shelter Lyric got along very well with the children there. They absolutely adored her so she simply could not understand why she was so against them having children.

On Sunday Lyric dragged her off to the park. Where she met up with the rest of the crew, Rage, Mercy, Angel, Lucy, Summer and Penny. There were some other people that she simply did not know but was introduced to. Not everyone played soccer.

Eden, Rocco and Sabrina had a dislike for any kind of physical activity and preferred to lounge around in the sun with various fashion magazines. Angel cheered from the sidelines whilst munching on various items of food but Diera decided that she would actually play and enjoyed herself especially after scoring a goal against Lyric's team.

Lyric had the ball and managed to dribble Rage a rare occurrence and another girl called Clancy a not so rare occurrence so that she had a clear run on goal and looked like she was about to score. Diera did not know what possessed her to do what she did next but she simply grabbed Lyric by the seat of her shorts.

In the heat of the moment Lyric turned around to complain about the foul and then realising it was Diera a big grin broke out on her dark features and she stopped running. She turned around to face her, the soccer game forgotten as she chased a laughing squealing Diera across the pitch and caught her pinning her into the soft grassy carpet that covered the city park with her body.

"Witch!" Lyric muttered under her breath as she lowered her head to kiss her. Diera grinned as their mouths melded together in a deep mind blowing kiss that made her heart beat faster. She had successfully distracted the black haired English woman from the game so that Diera's team could score instead.

After the game they went to an Old style English pub which served Beer and sang Karaoke till the DJ came on at 2am in the morning. It was a good thing Lyric only played football every other weekend, Diera thought as she snuggled into bed with her inebriated partner.

She ached in all sorts of places, having discovered a whole muscle group that she never used before. Although she'd showered with Lyric and was still finding mud in all sorts of places like

behind her ears and the backs of her knees but most importantly she was tired and happy and very much in love with the woman who held her tightly and made her feel safe and warm and loved.

Monday morning found Lyric cross-examining the psychiatrist that Kulkani had brought on the stand to prove that Penelope Ice had killed Paul Delaware in a jealous rage.

"I am a psychiatrist."

"Your evidence is that Ms Ice suffers from a Mental Disorder that makes her violent."

"Indeed. She suffers from SSAD."

"And that is..."

"Same Sex Attraction Disorder."

"Objection your honour my client is not being tried on account of her sexual orientation but for murder."

"I agree with Ms Black, Mr Kulkani where are you going with this?"

"It goes to the state of mind of the accused at the time your honour."

"Very well I'll allow it."

"Objection your honour being gay stopped being regarded as a medical disease many years ago." Lyric shot up.

"Whilst Regrettably in 1973 the American Psychiatric Association declared that Same-Sex Attraction was not a mental disorder. We have however continued in our research on SSAD and we find that sufferers are typically prone to drug-use, self-mutilation, alcoholism, paedophilia, violent behaviour and other immoral behaviour." The expert witness said smiling patronisingly at Lyric.

"Objection!"

"Penelope Ice is well known to the law for being a Juvenile delinquent and all of this tallies with the behaviour of the accused."

"Objection!" Lyric shot to her feet. "There is no statistical evidence of such findings before this honourable court."

"Sustained"

"So When Paul Delaware told this Sexual Deviant to end the relationship with his daughter..."

"Objection!" Lyric interjected

"Sustained."

"When this Sexual Pervert..."

"Objection!" Lyric shot up and shouted angrily.

"Sustained. Mr Kulkani you will refrain from using derogatory words to describe the defendant."

"Here's an idea for an acceptable word. I'll give you a clue, the first syllable starts with Homo and the second syllable rhymes with exual." Lyric drawled

"Fine when this Unnatural..."

"Mr Kulkani!" Merrilee Fairweather banged her gavel.

Lyric got up deciding to totally derail Kulkani's examination-in-chief of his expert witness. "It is quite obvious that the only reason my client is being prosecuted by the DA's office is because of her sexual orientation. If the DA's office don't come after you, your honour, the skinheads will, don't forget the Extremists and if they don't get you, the Republicans and the Sarah Palinites are all lining up to take their shot."

"Ms Black!"

"That's fine your honour I'm ready to take my punishment like a Man. Did I say Man? I meant Lesbian."

"In my chambers now! Both of you!"

As they came into her office Merrilee Fairweather strode to her desk her gown floating behind her and Lyric calmly shut the door of the Judge's chambers.

"If you want to debate the morality of Homosexuality you may do so in your own time! This is a court of law and we are here for a murder trial. We are not here for the two of you to conduct your petty rivalries."

"I apologise your honour it won't happen again." Kulkani said suitably chastened. He'd already suffered a lock up for contempt.

Lyric clapped mockingly. Merrilee turned to Kulkani "You may leave." Kulkani looked suitably humbled but he shot Lyric a killer look as he left the office.

After the door closed behind him she glared at Lyric. "I'm warning you I will not take anymore of your outrageous antics in my court room or in my chambers." Merrilee Fairweather stormed furiously.

"Hmm once I get started. I find it hard to stop. Surely you remember that Merry." Lyric swaggered up to her desk after giving Merrilee Fairweather another once over with her raking gaze, before shooting her with a lascivious grin.

Merrilee scooted behind the desk to use it as a barrier against Lyric's considerable sexual charm and appeal. The English woman intimidated the hell out of her and she was not exactly a shrinking violet.

Lyric moved forward and made to clear the items off the judge's desk and Merrilee pushed all the items Lyric had moved back into place.

"You, You're suggesting an ex-parte encounter that could get us both disbarred." Merrilee said shakily.

"That is bad isn't it? But if my memory serves me correctly you like being a bad girl don't you Merry." Lyric came around the desk and leaned against it. She lowered her body and sniffed at Merrilee's hair and throat. "Hmm White Diamonds, unapologetically sexy and very womanly but then you know I love womanly women."

The way the black haired woman moved was so predatorial. She was so felinely sinuous her movements so gracefully economical. Merrilee held her breath almost expecting Lyric to pounce on her like a tiger. Merrilee was very tempted by those brilliant brown eyes. She closed her eyes and took a deep breath and licked her lips nervously.

"Keep it about the case Counsel."

"That's it?"

"That's it."

Lyric gave her a considering look her mouth turned into a pout, she folded her arms across her chest. Merrilee raised an eyebrow and let her eyes sweep over the English Lawyer, enjoying the sight of her lean lithe body in the black tailored suit, the black open-necked shirt that hinted at her cleavage and her long wide legged stance.

She licked her lips unconsciously and Lyric raised a black eyebrow, a mocking smile played around the black haired woman's lips.

"I mean it Lyric. Out!" Merrilee pointed to the door.

"Unfortunately for you I already have a very hot, very sexy little blonde in my bed," Lyric drawled the last words in that sexy Aristocratic English drawl that made her hot and breathless.

"She satisfies **ALL** my fantasies and desires, otherwise I'd be more than happy to indulge in an ex parte encounter with you."

"Get out!" Judge Merrilee Fairweather spat it was only after the door slammed behind her that she remembered she had forgotten to fine Lyric for contempt of court. That woman got away with murder. She exhaled rubbing her forehead with shaking fingers.

Lyric took a deep breath. She was running out of options and intimidating the judge would only get her so far. The only break she had managed so far from Sam Spade which had been corroborated by Elizabeth was that sometime around when the murder was committed Beauregard Lane was not in his office.

The phone had been diverted to answering machine but as Elizabeth pointed out, Beauregard Lane was hardly a match for Penny never mind Paul Delaware a man who had once served in the Marines.

The sky was overcast a perfect day for Paul Delaware's funeral. Diera was listening intently to the sermon and now sat down on the church bench and crossed her long legs demurely. She was wearing a black broad rimmed hat and sunglasses to hide the fact that she'd been crying and a sexy little satin and lace black dress with stilettos that did all sorts of things to Lyric's libido.

Lyric could smell her perfume, sexy, sultry, hot, just like her. Paul Delaware had been a friend and a good client and she was here to pay her respects but all she could think of was dragging Diera somewhere private so she could make love with her and hear her cries of pleasure ringing in her ears.

They made their way to the grave side and it was after the prayers that the family began to weep. Diera flinched each time the soil hit the coffin with a loud thud and then she turned and buried her face into Lyric's shoulder and began to cry silently. Lyric held her realising what she was thinking.

Here was a vibrant man loved by his family, his life cut short violently. Now he was buried under six feet of earth, never to smile again, never to laugh or cry, never to be seen again, it was so final.

When the ceremony was all done they would all walk away and continue their lives as though he'd never been. Yes the memory of him would live on in their hearts just as the Pastor said but the truth is that the essence, that which made him was gone.

She had not wanted Diera to see his body laid out in state but Rage had told her, explained to her that Diera needed closure and further she could not protect Diera from everything. She needed to see his cold dead body to know that, what was buried in the grave was not her loving uncle but simply his remains, she needed to know that the essence that made him, the life force that was him had moved on to a better place.

After the funeral they all went to his house and people sat milling around. Diera sat in Lyric's lap in the library cuddled up in her arms. There was nothing sexual in the way she held her just comforting. As Diera just bawled into Lyric's shoulder till her eyes were red and she had a headache.

"I wish you didn't have to see me like this."

"Hey, you just lost someone close to you. It's not surprising you feel so emotional." Lyric kissed her forehead and rubbed her back with one hand. Diera felt awful, she couldn't remember where she'd left her hat or her shoes which whilst they looked great were killing her feet. Lyric massaged her feet, fed her and got her something to drink, stroked her hair and just comforted her.

She felt so loved like she had never felt in all her young life. She could feel the steady reassuring heartbeat of her black haired lover beneath her fingers which rested on Lyric's chest, feel Lyric's lips on her forehead until eventually she just fell asleep.

They were like that for awhile just holding each other in the library when Penny and Artemus came into the room.

"Lyric I am really sorry to disturb you Sam, the investigator would like to see you."

"Sweets I've got to go will you be okay?" Lyric asked reluctant to move.

"Yes, I'll be fine." she smiled tremulously up at her.

Lyric kissed her lingeringly on the lips and Diera got up so she could leave. She turned to her father. "Please look after her Dad I won't be long." She left with Penny.

When they left Artemus watched her consideringly for a moment. "You love her don't you."

Diera nodded and smiled "Am I that obvious?"

"Well if it's any consolation Diera, she loves you too. Even though she may not have told you. My daughter can be extremely close mouthed sometimes. She gets it from her grandfather, the old English stiff upper lip."

Diera looked up at the older man as he sat down on a high backed chair not far from her "Stiff upper lip?"

"You know don't show any emotion. Always be stoic duty above all else that sort of thing."

"Lyric does not strike me as someone who believes in duty."

"She doesn't but she's got that bland condescending look," He raised an eyebrow in a perfect imitation of Lyric and Diera chuckled as he nailed the look perfectly.

"Unfortunately it's the same look she has when she is angry and does not want to show it or when her heart is breaking and does not want to show it." He took a large sip of his whiskey.

"I wonder if it's the same look she'll give me when she finds out that I'm dying."

Diera looked up at him alarmed but the old man just knocked back the rest of the whiskey in his glass.

"Should you be drinking that then?"

Artemus shook his head. "I guess Paul's funeral just brings home the issue of mortality that much closer. One day you think you will live forever the next...well you begin to realise that is not the case. I don't know how much Lyric has told you but I am a fertility doctor.

The only child I ever had was Lyric and whilst I love her to bits I think that my attempts to get her to have children failed woefully and it has left her with this regrettably negative attitude to having children.

In fact it was because of her that I pioneered a method for women to have children without a male partner. I spoke to your friends Eden and Rage and they were interested. I would like it if you were to have Lyric's baby. I do not think I will live long enough to meet the young' un though."

"You would like me to do what?"

"Lyric told her mother that you wanted to have children, I know I shouldn't have eavesdropped on their conversation but I wanted to ask if you are still interested."

"I am but I don't think..."

"I can give you a child. Lyric's child. My only request is that you marry."

"Excuse me?"

"I want the child to have Lyric's name, my name. Lyric is the Marquess of Blandford. I am selfish enough to want the title to stay in the family instead of passing on to my cousin Trenchard Campbell which is what would happen if Lyric does not marry. The title is entailed and only passes via blood relations.

"Wouldn't Lyric have something to say about this? She does not even want to get married."

"Allegra had six children with her lover Rupert Miller and only one from me. I have known about the relationship and even encouraged it throughout our marriage because of well vanity. No man likes to know that he is shooting blanks. Lyric was conceived as a result of a pioneering IVF procedure so it would not be the first time that I have used my knowledge of science to push the bounds of nature."

"Artemus what you are asking me is..."

"Just think about it okay and know that if you decided to go through with it you will be making this old man very happy."

Chapter 11

Lucy was going to cross-examine Elizabeth first then that would be followed by another cross-examination of the Doctor who did the post mortem on Paul Delaware. Lyric knew that the witnesses were not being called in order but it was a ploy to try and destabilise Kulkani and so far it was not working.

By calling and recalling witnesses she hoped to buy some time until she could come up with a plausible suspect for the murder because right now all the clues were pointing to Penny.

She could not put her finger on it but she knew there was something she was missing. It was not just at work that she had the feeling but also at home. Ever since her father had come to stay with them Diera had been acting strangely. Well not strangely exactly.

They still made love and it was still intense and beautiful and mind blowing at least it was for her but it was as though Diera kept a part of herself separate. Rage had told her that Paul Delaware's death must have hit her harder than expected and that she was going through a grieving period.

It was difficult to understand though because with the exception of the funeral and once in awhile in the evenings Diera hardly cried. Now though she was crying all the time and Lyric simply did not know what to do. She tried to concentrate on Lucy's cross but her mind seemed to wander off. If she had been concentrating she would have noticed Elizabeth's belligerent expression and probably been able to put a halt to the cross as it was she was preoccupied with worrying about Diera.

Kulkani leaned against the witness box and watched his witness like a cat about to lick a pot of cream, she was glaring at Penny who sat there tightlipped. "Miss. Delaware, is your appearance this morning pursuant to a deposition notice which I sent to your attorney?"

She smiled sweetly before providing her answer. "No, this is how I dress when I go to work."

Kulkani cleared his throat. "What is your date of birth?"

"September 15th"

"What year?" He asked impatiently

"Every year." Elizabeth drawled sarcastically.

"Objection your honour this line of questioning goes to no issue?" Lucy interjected.

"I would merely like to show the corrupting influence of the defendant."

"Your Honour, Ms Delaware is an adult over the age of twenty one and well capable of making her own decisions." Lyric interjected.

"Sustained"

"Are you sexually active?" Kulkani tried again.

"Apparently, I just lie there." She glared again at Penny as the gallery twittered nervously sensing something important was going to come up.

"You were in an exclusive relationship with the defendant were you not?"

"I thought I was."

Kulkani looked over at Penny who bit her lip anxiously and looked away. "In your evidence you said that the defendant had spent the night in your bed. Is it possible that she could have gotten up sometime during the night."

"Probably."

"But in your testimony you said she spent the night in your bed."

"Yes but now I think about it she may not have, it was what she said you see. The first thing she said to me in the morning, the first thing." She said indignantly

Musharaf leaned over the witness box. "And what was the first thing your fiancée said to you when she woke up?"

She said, "What happened Susan?"

"And why did that upset you?" Kulkani persisted.

"My name is Elizabeth."

"Your honour I would like to call for a recess at this time to confer with my client." Lucy jumped up to interrupt the potentially damaging cross-examination.

Merrilee Fairweather refused it was nice to watch Lyric squirm for a change. Penny's alibi that she had spent the night with Elizabeth never very strong began to look distinctly shaky and by the time Judge Fairweather granted an adjournment the damage had been done.

In her office Penny lounged in a leather chair and smoked her cigarette nonchalantly.

"Oh come on Lyric, so what I cheated on her that does not make me a murderer. It's not like you never cheated on Diera before."

"What the hell are you talking about? I have never cheated on Diera!" Lyric said angrily.

"Yeah right, You go into Judge Fairweather's office and her clerk says she hears the two of you planning an "ex-parte encounter!" Penny put the words in quotes with her two fingers.

"The clerk?"

"Yeah the clerk, I am sleeping with her. I have been ever since Elizabeth suddenly decided that I am the evil fiancé that Beauregard Lane tells her I am. Never mind that I jumped through hoops to get him to approve of me, never mind that I actually and genuinely like the old man, never mind that Dr Lane has been telling him all sorts of lies about me but Paul genuinely believed in me and not Dr Lane. Yeah so what I called her Susan, it was just a slip of the tongue I..."

"The issue here is you lied to me. Did you spend the entire night in Elizabeth's bed or not?"

"I never thought I would get caught!"

"Bloody hell Penny!!! You fucking piece of shit!" Lyric flew at her and grabbed her by the lapels of her jacket.

Penny headbutted her back drawing blood. "Get your fucking hands off me Lyric."

Diera heard the sounds of a struggle coming out from Lyric's office and just when she was thinking it would be a good time to go and investigate Eden and Rage walked into the waiting room.

"Hi Diera I was just coming down to...what the..." Eden stopped mid-sentence as the air turned blue with curses and Rage rushed into the office without waiting. Lyric had managed to restrain Penny who was cursing and threatening to beat the living daylights out of her.

Lyric much taller and stronger had the other woman in a hold whereby she could not get at her. It looked to Diera that Lyric had the situation under control although she could also see that Lyric was bleeding profusely from a cut above her left eye.

"Let me go!" Penny bit out angrily.

Lyric let her go and Penny went to sit on the leather chair.

"What happened here?" Rage asked quietly unable to believe the scene unfolding before her eyes. Lyric was a cool customer, always calm and rarely lost her temper. It was difficult to believe that she would now be engaging in a brawl.

"Your hypocritical highness here got pissed off at me for pointing out that I am not the only one that cheats on their girlfriend."

"You bitch!!" Lyric was so angry she could barely see straight.

"Yeah so what I fucked Susan, you fucked Judge Fairweather." Penny screamed at her "I am not going to jail for fucking her. I told you I did not kill Paul Delaware and I get the feeling you do not believe me anymore."

"I am finding it harder and harder to believe you Penny. You never tell me the truth. You didn't tell me about your shoplifting conviction, you didn't tell me about your drink driving conviction or the fact that you beat up your hooker girlfriend that you were pimping out or that you have been done on three different occasions for grievous bodily harm. No I had to find out from the documents Pamendra fucking Kulkani filed so yes I am finding it hard to believe you."

"Then maybe I need another lawyer." Penny said with tears in her eyes and slammed the door shut behind her as she exited the room.

Eden had heard the entire conversation along with Rage and Diera and wondered what the younger girl was thinking.

When she darted a look at Diera she did not seem worried or concerned in anyway but now held Lyric's hand in one of her small one's whilst she lifted Lyric's head so she could inspect the cut on her girlfriend's face undisturbed. Eden had sent Rage after Penny hoping she could bring the other woman back.

"What happened Lyric?" Diera asked quietly as she moved the hand which had been holding Lyric's to stroke the English woman's back.

"Penny is a freaking psycho that's what happened." Yet Lyric being Lyric she managed not to raise her voice. So that the words came out in her usual cultured tones with a controlled edge that let everyone know that she was extremely angry. Diera's smoothing motions on her back however were working and she was calming down, she closed her eyes and took a deep breath.

"This is not an easy case to try and Penny's being economical with the truth. She told me she had spent all night in Elizabeth's bed and then it comes out in the cross that she sneaked out of Elizabeth's bed for a midnight assignation with a woman called Susan in court! open court!

She didn't tell me about it no, but it's okay to tell the whole court, Ravendale TV and a whole host of other strangers, but me her lawyer does she think I should know this piece of vital information no. Then when I confront her with it she accuses me, Me of cheating on you and sleeping with Judge Fairweather, next thing I know she headbutted me, attacked me and threatened to kill me. That woman has a nasty nasty temper."

"So did you sleep with Merrilee Fairweather?" Rage had returned mid-tirade having been unsuccessful in finding Penny and now stood folding her arms across her chest belligerently as she asked the question.

"What the hell kind of a question is that Rage?" Lyric growled.

"It's the kind of question that neither Diera nor Eden would ask because they are too polite to even though I am quite sure they are dying to do so."

"That's not strictly true. I didn't ask because I trust Lyric and I don't believe that she would do something like that." Diera said quietly.

Rage raised a disbelieving eyebrow but said nothing. "Well?" she asked of Lyric.

"Yes I did sleep with her, once but that was before I even started working here. I came on holiday to see Concerto and met her at a party. I have never hidden that fact and I told both Lucy and Penny."

"I thought you were going to bring Penny back." Eden said turning to Rage.

"Penny's gone I think you should let her cool off before calling her back." Rage replied.

Diera concluded her inspection of Lyric's head wound and decided the cut, was not deep but because it was a head wound and it had bled profusely. "You're going to have a nasty headache for awhile. You should probably go to a hospital."

"I am not going to hospital. I have a trial to conduct." Lyric muttered.

Diera sighed Lyric could be extremely stubborn and she reserved a special loathing for hospitals. "Fine but I'll have to arrange a taxi to take us back. You are not in any state to drive.

"Are you still going to represent Penny?" Eden asked looking at the angry woman who seemed to have dissolved into a puddle of mush under Diera's ministering hands.

"Penny? That woman is a maniac. I never want to see her again. No I have another trial coming up tomorrow. It's an adultery case."

"I'm sure Lucy can handle it right now you need to get some rest. Rage will drive you and Diera home." Eden said patting her cheek like that of a younger sibling.

Rage drove them home in her Mercedes and Eden followed in Lyric's car. The stitches in her head, placed there after Diera insisted she go to hospital and the painkillers made her drowsy. In the flat Diera settled Lyric on the couch and made dinner. They had just finished eating when there was a buzz at the front door.

Rage approached the door and came back watching Lyric warily. "It's Penny she wants to talk to you."

"Tell her to go away." Lyric said sullenly.

"Lyric we deal with clients who have been accused of murder every day. You know that it is a stressful time for most people and they all react differently." Diera tried to reason with her.

"Diera the woman head butted me!"

Diera walked over to her scowling black haired lover and stood on tiptoe before holding Lyric's face in her hands to hold her attention. "I know baby and I think she has come to apologise. The least you can do is hear her out." Diera's fingers traced the line of her jaw before brushing Lyric's dimpled chin with a soft lingering kiss.

"Diera's right you know." Eden said joining in the argument. "She's probably scared and besides apart from being her lawyer you were her friend. Have you ever considered she may not have wanted to tell you about her criminal record because she finds it embarrassing?"

Lyric sighed her ire already under control by her partner's nearness. "Okay okay I'll hear her out."

Rage opened the door and Penny came into the flat. She saw Rage and Eden and on the sofa sat Diera and Lyric. Lyric was glaring at her, but Diera's face was more sympathetic.

"I came to apologise, I was out of line."

"Fine I accept your apology. But you should probably think about getting another lawyer."

"I don't want another lawyer I want you."

"Well you should have thought about that before you head butted me!"

"You don't trust me! Do you think I'm guilty?"

"What the hell do you expect me to think Penny? You never tell me the whole story I keep hearing these details about your criminal past in court from opposition counsel. It feels to me like you are the one who does not trust me."

"It's embarrassing having to tell a friend that all the things I used to do as a kid. I am not proud of the fact that I am a juvenile delinquent. I thought Elizabeth would be my last chance to you know settle down and live a straight life and then this happens. I had no reason to kill Paul Delaware and I didn't do it. All this has been a complete nightmare for me."

"I get that I do look, If I were a doctor you would trust me and you need to trust me Penny otherwise I won't be able to help you and murder in the first degree in Ravendale, is the only

offence in Ravendale that carries the death penalty. We are not talking a long jail sentence here we are talking about your life."

Penny closed her eyes and took a deep breath. "If you take me back as your client I promise to tell you everything from now on and keep nothing hidden from you."

Lyric accepted her apology and after seeing Penny, Eden and Rage off she went to bed. Lyric planned to just wrap her arms around Diera and lay her head on her breasts and just fall asleep to the reassuring sound of her steadily beating heart. However when she returned to find Diera wearing a pastel blue lacy negligee her brain cells froze as all the blood in her body rushed to her clit.

Diera smiled at the expression on Lyric's face as she helped the taller woman undress. Diera slipped off her jacket and shirt and lightly raked her fingernails up Lyric's bare arm before winding her arms around her neck. "You seem to be picking up a lot of bumps and bruises lately. How's your head?"

"Better but I could do with something hot." Lyric slid her hand's up Diera's body and cupped her bottom. Her headache forgotten now that the painkiller's were working she shook off the drowsy feeling and lowered her head to suckle Diera's nipples through her night gown.

Diera moaned "Like some hot chocolate?"

"Uh uh" She shook her head "I'd like something hot to wet my throat, maybe American and extremely intoxicating." Her white teeth closed on Diera's nipple making the little woman gasp. Diera lifted Lyric's head away from her body.

"I don't think whiskey is a good idea especially with all those painkillers you've already taken." Diera frowned up at her.

"Who said anything about alcohol?" Lyric growled before capturing her lips and sweeping her up in her arms and carrying her off to bed.

Diera woke up early the sunrise not allowing her to sleep any further. Artemus words kept playing around in her head. She cuddled up against Lyric unsure of what to do as her hands stroked the thick black hair beneath her finger tips. The action soothing her inner turmoil somewhat and she pressed a gentle kiss to Lyric's forehead and heard her sigh in her sleep.

She had a chance to have a child with Lyric, but she also felt she would be betraying her because Artemus had told her she could never tell Lyric until after she was pregnant but that just felt wrong.

Later that day the divorce trial was postponed till the weekend and the matter was adjourned for the Defence to call in their expert witness. Unfortunately he had been delayed in Chicago due to a freak sandstorm so the judge postponed the trial till the next week.

As Rage and Eden were going to be married the next weekend Angel and Mercy arranged for Rage's bachelor party.

"Now whilst I wanna get Rage into trouble I don't wanna do anything that would put me in Eden's bad books." Mercy was saying.

"Are you going where I think you are going with this?" Angel wanted to know.

"Where do you think I am going?"

"No alcohol, no lap dances no bad behaviour."

"I'm just saying."

"It's her last night as a single of course she needs to behave badly."

"Well, Lyric interjected. I know that if Sabrina has anything to do with Eden's bachelorette party there will definitely be strippers and lap dance and alcohol."

"Maybe but Lucy and Eden are not so much into that neither is Elizabeth or Diera. No I foresee a tame day at the spa followed by..."

"Too much alcohol and bad behaviour." Penny grinned "What? This is Sabrina we are talking about."

"I have got a different suggestion. It will get Rage into trouble, but not enough to put us all in Eden's bad books. I was thinking of wrestling."

"Wrestling?"

"Hmm wrestling in baby oil. There's a club called Slicky Vicky's, they strip you naked rub baby oil all over your body and then you have to wrestle against the twisted sisters it's like a tag team combo of these two gorgeous brunettes with the biggest..."

"I thought you said you didn't want to get Rage into trouble." Mercy interrupted

"No what I said was it would get Rage into trouble but that we wouldn't get into Eden's bad books."

The weekend that followed was the weekend of Rage and Eden's wedding and Diera was one of the bridesmaids.

They spent the night at the hotel that Eden's father Everard had rented for the wedding. The hotel had provided a large bouquet of flowers for each room together with a complimentary bottle of champagne. The castle hotel was built to look like something out of a fairy tale with high spires and grey stone rising out of what could have looked like the Black Forest in Germany. She went

over to the window to watch the sunset in all its colours, orange, yellow and red its golden glow reflected in the Ravendale river which ran into the city and sighed.

"It's beautiful." She whispered admiring the sheer beauty of nature. She felt Lyric's arms encircle her waist and leaned back into the powerful arms that held her so securely.

"You're beautiful." Lyric murmured against her ear and brushed her lips against the line of Diera's jaw. Her lips moved on till they nipped at the younger woman's ear before caressing her ear lobe with her tongue. Lyric smiled when she felt Diera whimper and tremble in her arms.

Lyric thought back to how she had tried to keep her hands to herself as they had driven over unable to stop touching her. Diera had been wearing a denim mini skirt which showed off her long shapely legs and a white peasant blouse with a distracting cleavage.

"Flatterer." Diera teased.

"You know what they say, Flattery will get you everywhere." Lyric murmured sliding her hands up her hips to her waist and up her body to cup her breasts. Lyric very gently kneaded her softness and was rewarded with Diera's nipples hardening under her knowing touch. She couldn't wait to get Diera out of her clothes and into bed.

Diera laughed and then moaned. "You're insatiable." They had already made love several times before their late morning start to drive to the castle hotel. Lyric gently turned her around.

"That my love is because you are irresistibly sexy."

Lyric had to fight down the urge to rip her out of the peasant blouse and instead she lowered the blouse down Diera's shoulders and then gasped when she saw the white corset she was wearing underneath.

Diera laughed her fingers lightly caressed Lyric's chin, her fingertips tracing the dimple on the Englishwoman's chin. "You're drooling again." She teased her black haired lover.

"I don't know whether to fuck you or eat you!" Lyric rasped.

"Why don't you do both." Diera whispered back seductively her hands coming up to gently rake her long manicured nails along the back of Lyric's neck and through the luxuriant thick black hair on her lover's head.

Her black haired lover moaned and swept her off her feet and carried her off to bed. Lyric eased Diera's skirt down her shapely thighs and then she was confronted by satin and lace panties and suspenders which held up a pair of white stockings.

"Oh my god!" Lyric said speechlessly her eyes glued to the sexy little woman on the bed. She looked so hot even with her smug little smile as Lyric's breathing got louder. Diera had shaved everything off so that she could gaze on her womanly secrets which were no longer hidden by a

screen of blonde curls and a predatory smile played about her dark lips causing Diera to look up at her with trepidation.

Lyric was still fully dressed in her black trousers and white cotton shirt whilst she was down to her underwear.

She reached behind her and propped Diera's head and hips up on several pillows. "I want you to watch me make love to you."

Lyric slowly removed the corset taking off every hook and little by little almost as though she was unwrapping a precious gift. She loved looking at Diera and her eyes lingered on her body as trembling fingers slowly removed the rest of her under wear so she could just look at her, Diera's nipples hardened under the glittering intensity of her gaze.

The pupils in her violet eyes were so dilated as to be almost black with lust, her blonde hair was spread out on the pillow and Lyric marvelled at her beauty and kissed her. She kissed every inch of her face and then her neck and her beautiful bounteous breasts suckling her nipples gently and then more forcefully before spreading kisses down her abdomen and thighs.

Lyric leaned across the bedside table to the little basket of oils and perfumes provided by the hotel and with one hand she popped open the bottle and began to massage her young lover.

"I want to worship your body with mine." Lyric whispered against Diera's ears "I want to pleasure you and adore you. I want to be your every fantasy and fulfil your every desire. I want you to breathe for me, long deep breaths...yes just like that."

Lyric said as she complied and continued massaging her face, her shoulders, and then her arms and fingers which she nipped and sucked and kissed before lavishing her attention on her breasts and belly, massaging, rubbing and caressing Diera till the younger woman felt as though she was going to burn up.

Diera moaned with delight under the tender ministrations of her dark lover nothing escaped her attention as Lyric kissed, massaged, sucked, rubbed, caressed and licked her neck, shoulders, breasts, abdomen thighs, feet, toes, chest, nipples and fingers all the while whispering to her how beautiful she was and how much she'd been dying to make love to her and her language started to get more and more vulgar as dirty words spilled out of her mouth.

At first she had been a bit uncomfortable with the language. Lyric spoke with a cultured English accent such that when any other person said a rude word it wasn't as shocking as when her aristocratic English girlfriend said it but as she got more comfortable with it she could feel herself getting wetter and wetter under Lyric's heated words and expert touch.

First her long elegant fingers drew concentric circles repeatedly on her mons and she felt every touch because now her skin was newly waxed and bare to her lovers caresses. Lyric drizzled some of the oil on Diera's soft fleshy mound so that it dripped over the outer lips of her vagina

causing Diera to gasp with the sensation of it and then she began to gently massage her mons and the outer netherlips of her moist centre.

Lyric's face was a study in intensity and concentration she looked absolutely adorable with her tongue sticking out to one side of her mouth and Diera fell in love with her all over again. Diera bit her lip because Lyric was now taking her sweet time driving her slowly insane with each hot steamy caress of her fingers as she gently squeezed each outer lip between her thumb and forefinger. She looked up at Diera and gave her another deep searching kiss all the while continuing with her intimate caress.

Their kiss was long deep and passionate and Diera longed to touch her lover through her clothes but Lyric prevented her by the simple expedience of tying her hands above her head to the bed so that she was now totally helpless to prevent Lyric from doing anything she wanted. She felt extremely vulnerable and slightly apprehensive but even that brought with it its own pleasure as Lyric continued to encourage her to take long deep breaths despite her mounting arousal.

Lyric's nimble fingers moved to the inner lips of her sex and her fingers continued the same motion squeezing each inner lip and sliding her fingers up and down except now Lyric would ask her if she wanted it harder or softer, deeper or slower and still she hadn't touched her clit even though Diera had begged her to.

Now she drizzled some Chantilly cream over her sensitised bud and Diera moaned and as Lyric stroked her swollen clitoris clockwise then anti-clockwise then gently squeezed it between her thumb and forefinger. Diera was unable to speak or think as soft whimpers of pleasure escaped her lips and she lifted her hips upwards into the caressing touch.

"Oh Lyric!" She groaned as Lyric stopped her movements to caress her breasts and pinch her nipples rolling them in between her fingers and rubbing the backs of her knuckles over her left nipple. She showered her left breast with so much attention and deliberately ignored her right breast which was now begging for attention.

When she slid down Diera's body once more her hot mouth came down on her mons licking and sucking her outer lips and biting on her mons before licking at her clit. Diera unconsciously widened her legs and bucked off the bed trying to get closer to Lyric's maddening tongue and its rhythmic caresses as she flicked down the whole length of her clit from the tip to the opening of her vagina.

"Oh fuck me baby please fuck me please Lyric!"

Lyric slid one long finger slowly inside her quivering lover's hot quim and Diera moaned with the cessation of Lyric's tongue. Diera bit her lip at the look in her dark lover's eyes as her finger slowly explored her.

"I love being inside you baby. You're so hot and wet."

"More." Diera moaned.

"More baby? Like this?" Lyric replied moving her finger up and down and then sideways rotating with each thrust moving her finger deeper and deeper into her lover whilst kissing her mound and flicking at Diera's clit and then Lyric slid another finger inside her trembling lover moving around till she found what she was looking for the thick spongy tissue just under her pubic bone that told her she had reached her g-spot.

"Lyric don't do that....I feel like I want to pee."

"Is this better?" Lyric eased on the pressure of her lover's G-spot and Diera bit her lower lip and nodded wordlessly and then a third finger followed thrusting in and out of her. Diera closed her eyes and widened her legs calling out her lover's name.

She wanted to feel Lyric on top of her she felt so bereft without her lover's weight and whilst she was indeed being pleased beyond her wildest imaginings she wanted their connection to resume. All those thoughts were soon blown out of her mind though when Lyric's versatile little pink tongue once more assaulted her clitoris and a fourth finger slid easily inside her.

Diera felt her head was going to explode as Lyric's entire fist now settled inside her and she could see it do so. She felt so full and so totally possessed and ravished. She was so wet she could feel her cum dripping down her thighs but even as her pleasure intensified she still needed that contact with Lyric to complete the feeling and yet everything was so intense.

It was as if she could feel everything hear everything taste everything. The oil, the perfume the sheets and then Lyric slid slowly out of her and slowly licked her fingers. She felt bereft, Diera did not know what she needed but she knew she needed release.

"You taste and smell so good." Lyric whispered "What do you want Sweeting, just tell me what you want."

"Cover me, I want to feel your weight on me Lyric and I want you inside me too."

"Tell me..."

Diera bit her lip and her eyes went wordlessly to the dildo that she had felt against her belly when Lyric held her. Lyric followed her eyes. She found it extremely disconcerting that whenever they made love Diera increasingly demanded she fuck her with this particular dildo.

However she wanted to please Diera so she said nothing and instead settled between her naked thighs and strapped on the harness. Diera was so wet she could smell her arousal which fuelled hers and so soft she had to taste her again. Diera arched her body into the kiss unable to direct Lyric with her hands she moved her body squirming to direct the caress of Lyric's soft pink tongue.

The intimate caress was making her crazy and she begged Lyric to take her. Lyric untied her hands longing to feel the touch of the little blonde woman who now ached to touch her. Lyric released her bonds with one hand whilst her other fingers gently parting Diera's flesh before

pushing into her with one slow deep languorous thrust and finally at last she felt Lyric's heavy weight on her body, her arms wrapped around her, and her legs wrapped around the English woman's thighs.

Lyric picked up a long slow steady fucking rhythm grinding against her and thrusting into her, long deep slow thrusts which increased in speed and then Diera felt the beginnings of the most intense orgasm she had ever had in her young life since they had started making love.

It curled her toes and made her legs tremble and then it just exploded jerking her body violently as she was consumed she screamed as her body shook and shivered and Lyric's relentless thrusting took her to a place she had never been to before it felt as if her head exploded and she could hear herself sobbing and crying could see herself sobbing and crying uncontrollably as spasm after spasm crashed racked her body.

She could feel the scratchy material of Lyric's trousers between her legs, differentiate it from the sheets at her back she could smell Lyric, taste Lyric taste herself on Lyric's lips she didn't want to let go afraid she might pee on the bed but her lover was absolutely relentless ringing every last drop of pleasure out of her and she just let go and passed out.

When she came round she was being cradled very tenderly in Lyric's arms as the older woman tried to soothe her tears and trembling body.

"Lyric I'm so sorry I think I peed on the bed." Diera sobbed into her shoulder.

Lyric laughed "No you just had a vaginal orgasm and ejaculated it's rare when it happens but it's the highest compliment a lover can receive." As though to make her point Lyric moved out of her slowly and went down on her slowly licking up the nectar between her legs taking care with her sensitive muscles. Lyric dropped a kiss on her shaved mound and then slid back up to hold her in her arms.

"I wanted to make love to you too but I am so tired." Diera said sleepily it was true she was absolutely exhausted.

"I think you'll find that was part of the plan." Lyric grinned as Diera burrowed into her lover's body tiredly.

Lyric woke her up again and made love to her more tenderly but without the same intensity and she was grateful she did not think she could have survived another lovemaking session like that although she had loved it. She also got to touch Lyric to her heart's content.

Indeed they made love for the rest of the night and stopped only long enough to order room service. Lyric had a very inventive use for the strawberries and Chantilly cream that came as part of their desert.

"So are you going to tell me what happened at the bachelorette's eve party." Diera straddled Lyric's hips whilst her hands caressed her stomach and breasts.

Lyric grinned "If you tell me what Sabrina arranged to have Eden looking incredibly guilty and subdued."

Diera smiled "I have a feeling yours is going to be a hell of a lot worse. Eden kissed a Rage look-alike who performed an extremely raunchy and very public lap dance and then she passed out in the ladies bathroom."

"No way glamorous sophisticated Eden!"

"Your turn."

"You know what they say what happens at Slicky's stays at Slicky's."

Diera cruelly twisted Lyric's nipples and was rewarded with a sharp intake of breath by her black haired lover.

"Ow!"

"Don't hold out on me baby, you know what I can do to you."

"Whatcha gonna do to me?"

"I can reduce you to a mass of quivering unsatisfied female flesh in a matter of moments." She leaned down and whispered the words against Lyric's ear. Her teeth nipped at Lyric's ear before flicking her earlobe with her tongue and gently blowing into her ear causing the woman beneath her to whimper.

Diera leaned over her lover making sure her breasts dangled enticingly just out of reach teasing her captured lover beneath her. A growl from Lyric's throat let her know her tactics were working and by the time she gently raked her blood red nails across Lyric's muscled stomach sending a shiver of desire down the older woman's spine, Lyric was already lost.

In truth Lyric could feel herself weakening she could never say no to her golden lover. She was already entranced by the sight of Diera sitting naked astride her hips, her hair falling about her shoulders and her generous breasts and large upstanding red nipples that she wanted to lick and bite and suck and then taste her womanly centre delve into her..."

"Lyric?" Diera said quietly breaking into her lewd thoughts "I'm waiting."

Lyric caved. "Let me see after getting absolutely plastered following in the great British tradition of a pub crawl."

"What's a pub crawl?"

"It's a challenge, we all get handcuffed together and had to drink a shot of whiskey and a pint of beer at each bar we encountered on the strip. We then ended up at Slicky Vicky's wrestling in

baby oil with two brunettes called the twisted sistas Velvet and Honey who have the biggest ti...ti...toes you have ever seen in your life."

"Toes?" Diera queried amused.

"Then Rage got drunk and spewed projectile vomit all over the wall of the ladies bathroom, after which she French kissed a six foot eleven red headed Scottish man with the thickest brogue you ever heard, streaked across the park butt naked, tattooed a picture of Eden with the word's Eden's property on her arse which she proceeded to show to random passers-by including mooning a bus full of old age pensioners before finally passing out in an alcoholic haze sometime around seven o'clock in the morning."

"She didn't!" Diera gasped in abject disbelief.

"No she didn't we had a quiet drink at the bar and then we all went home." Lyric said piously.

"No you did not because when I got here you were still not back and you arranged for the taxi to take me to the shelter the night before." Lyric had indeed arranged a taxi to drop Diera the following morning knowing full well she would need transportation to the shelter where she volunteered because she would probably be spending the night looking out for at least one of her friends.

"Yes well in the absence of Mercy who was trying to explain to her ex that she was now dating Lucy and Angel who had mysteriously disappeared with a certain blonde advertising executive who shall remain nameless. I realised I would have to take Rage home."

"I thought Angel was supposed to be in charge of the night."

"Oh she was but you know Angel. Her head gets turned easily by a pretty face. Mercy on the other hand is a different kettle of fish."

"I wonder why she didn't ask Mercy."

"She did but Mercy thinks she will jinx the wedding because every time she has stood up with someone they have got divorced exactly 6 months to the day later. Now enough about the justice league lets you and me get down and do the naughty." Lyric rolled over so Diera lay under her.

"The Justice League?"

"You know Angel, Mercy and Rage? I always thought their names sound like a league of super heroes."

"Don't you mean the X-men." Diera shook her head and smiled "The Justice league is Superman, Wonder woman and Batman although technically Batman is not really a member of the justice league he is more like a consultant."

"Oh my god I've fallen in love with a geek." Lyric groaned.

"Who else would watch six episodes of star wars with you and think that a weekend in watching Lord of the Rings parts one two and three was a good idea."

"I should count my lucky stars." Lyric agreed although her attention was now drawn to a pink rapidly hardening nipple and Diera sighed when she felt Lyric's hot mouth on her and arched into the insistent suckling mouth moaning involuntarily.

"That feels so good baby."

"I aim to please." Lyric replied as she set to work worshipping her golden haired lover's body with her own.

As she drifted off to sleep with Lyric's head nestled between her breasts, a thought occurred to her.

"Lyric?"

"Yes sweeting?" Lyric replied half asleep already.

"Are you in love with me?" She asked hesitantly.

"Hopelessly!" Lyric murmured sleepily and truthfully. Above her Diera smiled and slept like a baby.

The next morning dawned bright and early. The sky was blue, the birds were singing and there was not a single grey cloud in sight. Diera got up early to get dressed so she could go and help Eden dress.

All was going well too until she came out of the bathroom in her white Theodora Bellucini lingerie and then had to fight off Lyric the human Octopus Gaylord-Black. If she was meant to be getting undressed it would not have been a problem but they did not have much time and she needed to do her makeup.

"Leave me alone and go and have your shower." Diera said exasperatedly when Lyric tried to unhook the front of her bra unsuccessfully for the umpteenth time. Lyric's look of unmitigated longing almost weakened Diera's resolve, almost but not quite. The Englishwoman sighed and went into the bathroom.

By the time Lyric had finished dressing, Diera was trying to pile her hair on her head in some elaborate hair style and Lyric watched her completely fascinated. She turned around and stepped into her dress and then walked over to Lyric.

"Could you help me fasten this up please?" Diera asked

Lyric obediently did as she was told and helped her with her dress. Diera lifted her hair out of the way so Lyric could easily see the zipper of her dress. Lyric leaned low and brushed her lips against the back of Diera's neck and the little woman shuddered as the caress left a pleasant trail of goose bumps down her back. After putting the finishing touches to her make-up Diera turned to go and then noticed something amiss.

"Shall I help you with that?"

Lyric looked sheepish "Would you? I normally get Concerto or Mom to tie it up for me."

"Come on I'll show you. Uncle Paul taught me."

"You miss him a lot don't you."

"More than I can say."

In her stilletoes Diera did not have to stand on tiptoe to reach Lyric's bow tie. Lyric rested her hands on Diera's hips and waited for her to retie the offending piece of cloth. After Diera finished tying the bowtie, she slid her hands down to smooth her shoulders. When she looked up at Lyric she saw an expression on her face that made her stop breathing.

"Will you..." Lyric swallowed hard and tried to speak again. "Would you..."

Diera said nothing waiting patiently for her to speak her hand came up and she caressed the dimple in Lyric's chin. Lyric lowered her head almost instinctively intending to kiss Diera. A loud knock at the door broke them apart. Lyric swore as Diera made good her escape to finish getting ready leaving the English woman to answer the door in a daze. She glared at a very agitated and panicked looking Angel.

"What the hell did I do with the ring!!!!"

Chapter 12

The wedding was beautiful and passed by in a blur. Eden looked stunningly beautiful in a white dress and Rage had chosen to wear a white trouser suit with Angel as her best woman. Sabrina wore a scandalously provocative lilac dress which dared the imagination.

It was the first time Eden would meet Rage's foster mother Marcia in the flesh. Marcia was also Mercy's biological mother she was also the sister of Angel's mother who had died tragically in a gang land shooting, she was hit by a stray bullet and social services had sent Angel to live with her.

A warm and loving woman she attended with her partner whom she had been seeing since she was sixteen and was very proud to be able to witness a gay marriage sanctioned by the State something she never thought she would see in her lifetime.

At the wedding reception Diera watched the couple wistfully as they danced their first dance as Mrs & Mrs before they were joined by their unruly relatives. Well Rage's relatives were unruly since they paired up with Eden's more sedate relatives and before she knew it she was doing the cha cha slide.

When the dance ended and someone requested "Let's get it started in here" by the Black Eyed Peas and the Party really took off. She also realised something. Lyric couldn't dance. She was enthusiastic, she was fun but she couldn't dance and she found it absolutely endearing so she joined in her dorky moves and enjoyed every moment. It was so rare to see the stiff upper lipped English Woman actually letting go.

Diera was giggling when Lyric persuaded her to go outside for some air. Diera knew what she wanted, after an hour of teasing her lover and grinding her body against Lyric's tight and muscular body she knew exactly what was going through the horny English woman's mind.

It was just getting cold as the day turned into night. It was that special time of the day when the sky turned red, yellow, pink and orange. Diera shivered and Lyric took off her jacket and wrapped it around her after which she dropped a kiss on the tip of Diera's nose.

"This should keep out the cold. Now is there anything I can do for my lady."

"Yes you can find me somewhere to sit because my feet are killing me!"

"Never fear fair damsel, over yonder is a secluded bench in a secluded grove from where we can sit and watch the sun set."

Lyric indicated the bench which Diera sat on and then yelped as she jumped back up again.

"It's freezing."

Lyric leered at her and sat down "Why don't you sit on my lap?"

"Said the spider to the fly." Diera countered watching Lyric warily.

"C'mon I'm hardly likely to try anything here." Lyric motioned for her to sit on her lap.

"Do you promise to behave?" Diera asked waving her finger in Lyric's face.

Lyric nodded and waited impatiently for the little blonde to settle in her lap.

"See I can behave."

"Uh huh so if I do this?" Diera drew circles on Lyric's shoulder "Can you still behave?"

"Uh huh"

"What if I do this?" Diera dropped a kiss against Lyric's jaw and then her chin.

By the time Diera had her hands in Lyric's trousers the older woman was a quivering wreck. She strained into Diera's hands.

"Do you want me to kiss it better?" Diera whispered against Lyric's ear and sucked on her earlobe.

"Ye gods yes!" Lyric replied and unashamedly stood up to unbuckle her belt and unzipped her pants so they dropped around her ankles. At the first touch of Diera's tongue on her clit her eyes rolled to the back of her head and she moaned as Diera continued to work her magic thrusting her hips forward and her hands into Diera's hair so the pins fell to the ground. It was Diera who heard the sound of footsteps first.

"Someone's coming."

Lyric pulled them behind one of the bushes so that Diera lay untop of her. The couple were now sitting on the bench they had just vacated yards from them. Lyric put Diera's hands on her crotch. "Touch me just there, like that."

"Lyric!" Diera hissed "We could get caught!"

"Please whoever it is, is doing their own thing come Sweets you can't leave me like this." Lyric begged. Diera rather enjoyed having her arrogant domineering lover begging and hot for her so she teased her a little, making Lyric beg some more before using her fingers to bring Lyric to her own orgasm. Lyric was just getting her breath back when she heard a shrill scream followed by a grunt and then Sabrina screaming.

"What the fuck!" Lyric got up and put Diera behind her but both of them were a bit shocked at what they saw. Rocco with his dick hanging out of his pants and getting bitch slapped by Angel then Angel turned round and gave Sabrina a slap and turned and gave Rocco a punch.

"Lyric do something." Diera hissed frantically they are going to kill each other.

Lyric cleared her throat "Ah guys?" Her voice came out as a squeak and then to her amazement Sabrina stopped her screaming and Angel stopped her punching and Rocco stopped his cursing. "Couldn't we discuss this?"

To their amazement someone burst out laughing and Lyric turned to find Eden standing in the alcove next to them with an irritated Rage who like Lyric had her pants down her ankles.

"I'm so sorry." Eden eventually said when she got her breath back "But you and Rage look really cute standing there with your pants around your ankles." Lyric rolled her eyes and groaned inwardly when she heard Diera giggle behind her as she scrambled to pull her pants up and zip them up.

"Well I'm glad someone thinks it's funny! How long have you been fucking Sabrina behind my back!" Angel slapped Rocco against the side of his head.

"Angel it just happened we were just..."

"And you!" Angel raised her hand to slap Sabrina and Rage leapt in before the slap could connect. "You're nothing but a fucking slut!" Rage managed to restrain her.

"Fucking get off me Rage."

"Hey blood calm down."

"Fuck this shit! I'm outta here." Angel shrugged off Rage and stormed off.

Sabrina started crying and Rage stared at her disbelievingly "Now you cry?"

"Rage don't that's not going to help." Eden said "Sabrina let's go inside okay baby." Eden led Sabrina away and Rage followed throwing Rocco a dirty look over her shoulder.

"I suppose you think this is all my fault. She came onto me you know and I..."

Rage glared at him. "Hey put the cannon away and get the fuck outta here."

"Oh my god!" Diera hid her head behind Lyric's shoulder she did not want to see Rocco's cannon.

"Kate can't find out about this." Rocco said shakily running his fingers through his hair.

"I think that it is highly unlikely you are going to keep this little indiscretion quiet." Lyric said with her cultured English accent.

"Shit! What the fuck was I thinking?" Rocco sobbed.

"Now you cry?" Lyric asked disbelievingly

"What am I gonna do?" He sobbed.

"How the fuck should I know?" Lyric replied

"Lyric!!!" Diera slapped the back of Lyric's head. "Maybe you should go and talk to Kate before she hears about this from someone else."

"You think so?" He said hopefully

"You're shitting me right?." Lyric turned to the weeping man. "Rocco I'm going to say this only once. Pack your bags and get the hell out of here and go somewhere far away and wait till your

wife calms down and then talk to her because Angel is going to tell Kate and the two of them are going to come after your Italian Stallion ass capish."

This seemed to make sense to Rocco who fled into the night. Lyric turned to Diera and grinned "Now where were we?"

Lyric hated drama and although she would have preferred to spend another night in the hotel she decided she would rather escape the drama and after making arrangements for someone to bring her car over she ordered a cab to take them to yet another hotel in the area.

When they got there it was 3am in the morning and the two of them slept the whole day waking up intermittently to make love, kiss cuddle and hold each other. She liked Lyric like this, warm, naked, tender and so very intimate. The touch of her fingers on Diera's skin was like the kiss of a butterfly's wings.

"I feel so sorry for Angel. I think she really loved Sabrina. I can't believe Sabrina did such a thing."

"I'm not, Eden told me Sabrina had been having doubts about Angel. You know Sabrina likes money and Angel is all about love and relationships and standing through thick and thin. It's a shame cos Rocco only loves two things in this world Rocco and Kate and I'm sure this is not the first time he's been caught with his pants down."

"Why would you say that?"

"He flirts with every female he sees."

"He's never flirted with me?"

"That's because Mercy and Rage threatened to kill him if ever tried anything with you and I threatened to cut off his testicles if he says more than two words to you."

"You didn't!" Diera said outraged sitting up to scowl at her.

"See all this time you thought no one cared about you and meanwhile you have an army of over eager protectors watching you with an Eagle eye. Mercy and Angel grilled me during football practice, Eden and Rage threatened me with hell fire and brimstone hell even my own parents warned me to behave myself around you."

"I am perfectly capable of looking after myself."

"I should know it took me almost seven years to get you into bed!!!" Lyric grumbled.

"Seven years?"

"Yeah I rode on that underground train for at least three days looking for you hoping to catch you again."

"Hmm that's so sweet but I was barely legal then."

"How old were you?"

"Sixteen."

"Bloody hell!" Lyric closed her eyes "They let you out of the House looking like that?"

"Actually I was staying with Eden's parents and I did not let them know I was going to pride. I went with some friends and you know how it is you all jump unto the nearest carriage. I got separated from Erienne and Eden and we all met up again at the next stop." Diera shrugged and got into bed.

Lyric was wearing her black satin trousers and a black vest and was lying on her back on top of the bed watching her take off her make-up. She brushed her hair and slipped off her satin negligee which she wore over her yellow flowery baby dolls, hung it over a chair and got into bed.

"You were such a tease. How did you learn to be such a tease?"

Diera sat astride Lyric and rested back on her heels. "I borrowed a book from Sabrina by Maiden Gibson called "How to please your Butch" so when I saw you standing there looking so arrogantly butch I decided to test out my new found knowledge. I'd never had a butch girlfriend before most of my friends who were gay like Sabrina and Erienne well they are not particularly butch. More what Maiden Gibson would call girly girls or femmes. Alison and Fiona are not gay but neither are they girly girls and Eden was not gay until she met Rage.

"Rage made Eden gay?"

"Hmmm Eden fell in love with Rage and they've been inseparable ever since."

Lyric frowned "Did I make you gay?"

"No you made me fall in love for the first time in my life." She dropped a light kiss against Lyric's jaw and then proceeded to slowly drag her tongue along the indent of the dimple in Lyric's chin.

"Hmm I love the dimple in your chin, I like putting the tip of my finger just there to see if it fits and I'm happy to say it does." She kissed Lyric's chin again.

Lyric cleared her throat. "So what else did you learn from this Madison Gibson book?"

"Well" Diera drew out the vowels in the words as she spoke slowly running her fingers through Lyric's hair. "I learned that you aggressive butch types scowl a lot and it does not necessarily mean you're in a bad mood it's just a defence mechanism because you get so much grief from the world and sometimes even some of your lesbian sisters for displaying your masculine side so openly."

She let her hands trail up her body to absently trace an abstract pattern on Lyric's chest and collarbone "and I learned that some of you even have that old fashioned Lancelot complex which Maiden Gibson said we should take advantage of to seduce you."

"Lancelot complex! I don't have a Lancelot complex!" Lyric scowled.

Diera smiled and kissed her "hmm yes baby you do you were all set to punch that guy in the head for leering at me on the train and you get all protective if David Barton so much as looks at me."

"Barton is a pervert." Lyric scowled blackly her brows drawing together in furrows. Diera smoothed them away with her fingers "...and Maiden Gibson also said that after a long day at work if I want to get the best out of my butch I should water her and feed her and pet her like so."

Diera brushed her lips against Lyric's and her knuckles grazed Lyric's nipples again and again till she heard the English woman moan under her. "and when I have her hot and ready enough." Diera rolled over unto her back and pulled Lyric down over her and wrapped her legs around the other woman's waist and pulled Lyric's face down to hers. "I can lie back and enjoy being a pillow princess because my sexy hot randy butch will be all over me like melted butter on hot toast."

Lyric groaned and kissed Diera hotly, passionately, deeply holding her tight determined to wring out every last cry of pleasure from her sensual lips. They made love all night passionately, tenderly, they played with each other giggling under the sheets and when they got hungry they made for the shower where they stayed till their skin started to resemble a prune harvest.

They ate lunch at Ronaldinho's a Cuban bistro-cafe which served spicy food along with it's hot latin rhythms. Lyric apparently could dance the tango and it was the one dance at school that Diera enjoyed. It was easy and Lyric made it fun lifting her up in her arms and sliding her down her body, it was hot and sexy and most importantly it was fun.

Some of the steps they executed together were complicated but since Lyric approached the whole thing with enthusiasm and laughter when they did mess up they both laughed it up so that by the time they waved goodbye to the cheerful owners and their customers they had made quite a few friends. They decided to take a walk down the riverbank.

The sky was clear and the stars sparkled in the skies and as it got chilly Lyric wrapped her in her blazer. It was a little chilly, Fall was on its way and the leaves were beginning to darken and fall on to the black fertile earth.

"How come you're not cold?"

"I'm still warm from all that dancing and I loved dancing with you." Lyric confessed.

Diera laughed "I would never have guessed." Lyric sat on a park bench and settled Diera onto her lap. Their shared warmth staved off the worst of the chilly evening.

"I also love watching you cook. It has to be the biggest turn on ever."

"You do?"

"Yeah. I love the way how when you taste a bowl of gravy you've been whipping you stick your finger into the pot and lick it real slow, and I like the way when you make Ice Cream you lick the back of the spoon and the way you knead dough..."

"You like the way I knead dough?" Diera asked disbelievingly and put the back of her hand on Lyric's forehead "Are you feeling well?"

"Yes Diera the way you knead dough."

"Next you'll be telling me you like the way I chop tomatoes."

Lyric leaned forward and said seductively "Baby you can chop my tomatoes anytime." And then gave her an outrageous wink.

Diera threw her head back and laughed "You are absolutely outrageous."

"You love cooking sweetheart how come you never wanted to go into the trade?"

"It relaxes me. I find I make my best dishes when I am stressed or angry. So if I was happy I could rustle up a steak and fries with a nice salad but if I was stressed or angry I could make foie gras with smoked pork and Stilton and Pancetta sauce ."

"In a chef's kitchen you would be stressed all the time."

"Yeah I guess but I could also lose the love I have for cooking, creating art on a plate tantalising the taste buds. Also I've always dreamed of being the mother of a family of children you know cooking traditional recipes from books for them, handing down my grandmother's old family recipe book."

"So you weren't kidding me when you said you wanted to settle down and be little Suzy Homemaker?"

"What's wrong with being a home maker?"

"I just had you figured as more of a career girl you know."

"Homemaking **is** a career."

"Oh please it's just sitting at home and playing with kids. Besides it's bad for you, your conversation becomes dull from conversing with children the whole time, you spend most of your time in the country club and when boredom overtakes you, you start cheating on your partner with the milkman the postman or whoever."

"Home making is just as important a career as being a lawyer or a doctor. Looking after children and making sure your loved ones are well taken care of it can be the most rewarding job in the world."

"Well let's just agree to disagree." Lyric held her hands up. Diera was not convinced and Lyric tried another tack. "If I didn't know better I'd say you were Mediterranean. They have that whole culture of living to eat, sharing a meal, the day, and life's little dilemmas with family." Lyric said almost wistfully.

"It sounds like you miss it."

"Sometimes I do." Lyric sighed

Suddenly it hit Diera that Lyric did understand the concept of family that she had been trying to get across to her. "I want that feeling, the feeling of being surrounded by people you knew and loved, not necessarily blood relations but people who knew you for what you were and accepted you anyway. That is what I want."

"I hear you angel but I..." Lyric shook her head afraid to really say what was on her mind. "Come let's go it's starting to get chilly out here."

"Why do you always shut me out baby?" Diera touched Lyric's face and the dark woman looked away too ashamed to look into her eyes.

Lyric was spoilt rotten, the youngest in the family of six children and the only one of the Gaylord-Black children to attend an English boarding school. Her Great Uncle Barty Saxe Coburg de Bourbon had insisted she attend because she was turning into a little hellion.

She'd felt like an unwanted ass wipe although she knew she was not and shunned any notion of family in her life, making sure she was always absent for family events and get together's unless literally dragged there by her nieces and nephews.

It was a totally irrational thought, one that she could not put into words but she felt that if she had a family with Diera she would be once more on the outside looking in. It was something she was not ready to address or deal with yet so she went on the offensive.

"Why do you Americans always feel the need to psychoanalyse everything why can't you just let things be?"

"And why can't you British learn to let go more." She retorted a little stung. She sighed realising that was not the way to deal with Lyric.

So she started again. "I just want to get to know you better and I want you to know me." Diera turned Lyric's face back to hers, her cerulean eyes searching, brilliant piercing and all seeing. Lyric never ceased to be amazed by the differing shades of Diera's eyes.

They lightened becoming almost aquamarine when she was angry and darkened to an almost violet purple colour when she was upset...like now. She caught a deep breath about to open up to tell Diera how much she loved her, how she wanted to be with her, feel her touch, hear her laugh, make love to her till they grew old together but she was afraid, afraid that she would be sent away when the baby came, that she would be on the outside looking in. It was totally irrational but she couldn't stop herself from feeling that way.

Lyric hated herself for what she was about to do but she was a coward in every sense of the word when it came to her emotions.

"If you want to get to know me better, why don't we go inside and conduct an in depth exploration of each other's bodies hmm"

Diera shook her head "I'm not going to push you because I don't want to ruin a great evening but we are going to have to talk about this sooner or later."

Lyric heaved a sigh of relief and in her mind promised to make it up to Diera the best way she knew how. However that night when they made love Diera held a part of herself from their lovemaking. Lyric used to Diera's total unquestioning abandon in their bed now felt bereft, confused and panicked.

Their lovemaking had been wonderful as always and usually Diera cuddled into her and initiated their after-sex cuddle, one which Lyric hated to do with previous other lovers preferring to roll over and fall asleep but now she looked forward to such moments with her golden haired lover, moments she grumbled about and never thought she would miss.

However this time she lay watching Diera lie on her side and so many times she wanted to reach out to her and touch her and hold her but she was afraid to let down that final wall of intimacy.

On her side of the bed, Diera was crying helplessly, tears fell down her cheeks. It seemed such a long time since Lyric's sleepy admission. She knew that if she did not initiate intimate non-sexual contact between them that Lyric never would. Suddenly the gap in their bed seemed to her as wide as the Pacific Ocean. Then to her surprise Lyric moved over to her and sighing wrapped her arms around Diera and kissed her forehead.

"I'm sorry I just...I'm not used to all these emotional displays. I love you and I hate to see you cry it disturbs me. Look I'm the youngest of six children and the only one who was sent away to boarding school and...when I am with you I have you all to myself now you want kids and I have to share...I am not good at sharing your attention Diera, I try but I'm crap at it. This whole

children thing is difficult for me but I am trying to come to terms with it because it is what you want and you seem to think it will make you happy. I want you to be happy so I am making an effort but it's not easy."

"Lyric just because we have children does not mean I will love you any less."

Lyric sighed "Look I know what having children entails believe me, I know you will have less time for me and..."

"I'll make a deal with you. If we do have children I will make an effort to spend time with you."

"Quality time?" Lyric leered

"Sex maniac!!! Diera giggled "Yes quality time, cuddle time, play time, whatever we'll work something out."

They returned back to the daily grind in Ravensdale and it was almost three weeks before the trial started up again. The day before the last day of the trial and so far Lyric had nothing, the situation was looking desperate.

She was resting her head in her favourite place to be which was on Diera's bosom and inhaling her young lover's special scent, a mixture of Boudoir by Amiel Larouge and that special scent that was all Diera whilst her lover was running her fingers through Lyric's head of thick black hair her nails working on her scalp and sending shivers down Lyric's spine. They'd just made love and were enjoying a lazy Sunday afternoon in bed.

"You know tomorrow is the last day of trial and I would like you to come on holiday with me to England."

"Lyric I can't just leave my job."

"I thought you wanted to be little Suzy homemaker here's your chance. You know I would take care of you financially."

"Thank-you but I value my independence besides what would I do with myself all day we are not planning on having any children yet."

"You see that's why I want you to come on holiday with me. Once you meet my family and their offspring all thoughts of having children will simply evaporate from your mind."

"That is not going to happen but I would love to meet your family so I will see if I have some leave time okay." Diera compromised.

"Now that's settled I am off to play some soccer in the park wanna come?"

"Yes I am meeting Eden and Sabrina there but we are not playing, Eden and I are going shopping. I wanted to get a pair of black stiletto heels I saw on sale."

Lyric grinned "You already have fourteen pairs of black shoes honey."

"You can never have enough black shoes." Diera replied indignantly.

Lyric lifted one darkly disbelieving eyebrow.

"Well I've noticed that you like me in my black stilettos." Diera said slyly.

"Can't argue with that."

"So will you give me a ride?"

"That's not all I wanna give you little girl." Lyric drawled eyeing her lover and wondering if they had enough time for a quickie.

Lyric's leer did not get by Diera. "You're a sex maniac do you know that?"

"What I know is that I've had plenty of girlfriends but you're the only one who makes me wet with just a look from those gorgeous baby blues."

"Just for that I'm going to give you a treat." Diera eased down Lyric's drawstring pants her fingers sliding through the low cut well groomed black curls that hid her partner's secrets and Lyric moaned as her fingers began to work her magic.

Her lips touched the English woman and Diera's name came out on a long drawn out wail. A smile played at her lips as she executed her desires and was rewarded with her lover's drawn out moans, groans and a particularly fulfilling loud roar of pleasure. Diera used the shower first because it took her longer to get ready and even though Lyric used the shower after her she was still ready first.

Lyric was wearing her shorts and vest then she slipped on her shin pads strapping them on to her calves before pulling up her socks and lacing up her boots. Over that she wore her football shirt and her tracksuit which she zipped up halfway up her torso. Diera surreptitiously watched her thinking her actions reminded her of an ancient soldier or gladiator getting ready to go to battle.

The phone rang and Lyric went to answer it so Diera got dressed as quickly as she could trying not to get irritated at Lyric's pointing out the time saying for the third time that they were going to be late. When she was finally ready she turned around hands on her hips ready to tell Lyric off when the dark haired woman gave her a hundred watt killer smile.

"You look absolutely fantastic and well worth the wait." Lyric lowered her head and kissed her sweeping her off into her arms.

"Lyric put me down you'll hurt yourself." Diera said as they made their way to the elevator, luckily there was no one there to see them except perhaps the very amused lift attendant.

"Sweetie if I put you down I guarantee we are not going anywhere trust me when I say right now this is the best place for my hands."

Diera sighed and ran her fingers through Lyric's hair. "You know I think you've run out of shampoo and conditioner shall I get you some?"

"I only used shampoo and conditioner because you got them for me I normally just use Carlyle's Coal Tar soap." Lyric said proudly

"Lyric, baby bar soap is not a replacement for shampoo and conditioner."

"But I hate the women's shampoos they make me smell like a bowl of bananas and the men's ones tend to be too musky and heavy." Diera couldn't resist dropping a kiss on Lyric's adorable pout.

"You liked the pine and sandalwood one I got for you right so if I find something like that will you use it? I'll even wash your hair for you?"

"I'll let you if you use that charge card I bought for you."

"Lyric it's expensive and the penalties are horrendous."

"Honey it's a charge card not a credit card and the use is on condition I clear the balance up at the end of the month. So feel free to buy whatever you want on it."

"So you're not concerned that I could buy a new car?"

"You can't drive and you're too honest and sweet besides I know where you live."

The elevator came to a stop and the attendant wished them luck "I'd take the offer lil lady not too many people like the Marquess running around these days."

"Thank-you Jonas."

"But I..."

Lyric put her down when they arrived at the car park and led her to the car. "Is this how you are going to argue with me when we get married?"

"Is that a proposal?"

"No more like a prophecy but if you want it to be a proposal..." Lyric tailed off.

"No way are you getting off that easy baby you are going to beg for it on your knees."

"Ooh I can't wait." Lyric turned the ignition and the car roared into life and span away.

When they arrived at the park the others were just sorting themselves out into teams. Eden came and gave them both a hug. "Elizabeth and Fiona wanted to come along with us as well."

Elizabeth hugged her and spoke first. "Yes I haven't seen you in awhile and I wanted to discuss house hunting. I cannot stay with Fiona and Summer forever and I wanted to get your opinion before I find another place."

Lyric's eyebrows came down in a black scowl but before anyone could say anything Rage sauntered over with Angel. "You ladies are obviously not playing so I would appreciate it if you did not distract my team."

Suddenly Lyric was very reluctant to allow Diera to be alone with a group of people that she secretly thought of as the Lipstick Mafia where they were going to discuss analyse dissect every facet of their relationship and conclude that Diera should move back in with Elizabeth and maintain her own space or some other such nonsense that was bound to rile Lyric.

Diera caught the look of uncertainty on her lover's face and stood up on tiptoe to kiss Lyric lingeringly on the lips. Lyric's arms came around her in a warm reassuring embrace.

Sabrina sighed "Aw aren't they cute."

"Be careful." Diera whispered against her lips and stole another kiss and left.

Lyric watched her slide into Eden's car then she felt Angel's hand on her shoulder. "Come on let's go kick some ass."

The game was fast and scintillating as usual and it soon became obvious Lyric and Rage should never have been placed on the same team because they thrashed the other team so badly that by half time it wasn't even a contest.

It was supposed to be a friendly encounter between the Barbarians affectionately known as the Barbars, who were so called because they were a mixture of all the local teams in the area and today they were playing the Ravendale Business School (RBS).

The Barbars also had Angel in goal and despite her girth she used her height and technical knowledge of the game quite well so she was quite formidable. Mercy was incredibly swift and Kieren Beaste one of Lyric's friends was incredibly rugged in the midfield.

Lyric was absolutely lethal in front of goal scoring the first two goals in under ten minutes and generally terrorising the defence. Rage was an excellent provider and passer of the ball and she also had excellent technical dribbling and passing ability creating chances and setting up several chances for her team to score.

The score was 4-0 at half time and whilst Rage as captain wanted to forfeit the game the RBS would preferred to have lost than to take the blow to their pride of having other members of the other side come and help them. The game finally ended at 6-2 and both sides got together in the local lesbian Bar called Due South and got wasted. This was followed by an impromptu karaoke session before they arranged for taxis to drop them all at home at 1am in the morning.

Diera had spent the day with her friends at La Cachette. She felt very guilty spending the money that Lyric had pressed on her, whether it was in the form of cash or the credit cards and charge cards that now filled her purse.

They had gone shopping at Agent Provocateur and Didi's boutique and indulged in one of her favourite passion's lingerie shopping. At first she'd only intended to buy one or two outfits but she'd noticed Eden and Erienne buying five or six. Summer was actually the one who'd spoken up.

"You two are buying up the entire shop why do you need so much lingerie?"

"Because Maxi has this annoying habit of ripping them off!" Erienne replied in her elegant french accent.

The Ash blonde woman was a friend of Fiona and Sabrina's and married to Maria Antiope Xavi who owned a manufacturing business. Maxi was one of Lyric's clients,

Maxi was tall mixed race and broody with unsettling grey eyes and a permanent scowl on her face. She also played soccer in the park with Rage and Lyric every other Sunday. The only time Diera had seen her smile was at Erienne or their children Rainer and Catalina at the soccer barbeques.

Erienne rolled her eyes "They always promise to buy another one non? but when it is time to go to the shopping they are nowhere to be found."

Eden lifted an item off the hangar and placed it against her body as she continued speaking. "Too true so Erienne advised me to tell Rage to open a lingerie account thinking if she had to pay for it she would be more respectful of my clothing."

"Did it work?" Elizabeth asked intrigued

Eden and Erienne looked at each other and said in unison "No!"

They all laughed and after shopping they went to a restaurant to eat. Whilst they were waiting for their meal Diera's phone rang.

"I bet it's Lyric." Sabrina winked as Diera fumbled in her bag for her cell.

Lyric's English accent caressed her eardrums. "Hello Sweets."

"Hi baby." Diera replied.

"Where are you girls?"

"We decided to go to The Mad Donkey for Lunch."

She shivered when she heard Lyric's deep throaty chuckle on the phone. "I like that. So what kind of food do they serve?"

"The usual do you want me to pick up something for you to eat?"

"I'd rather you got your sweet little self over here so I can eat you."

"Lyric!" Diera blushed prettily hoping the others wouldn't notice as Lyric went into the excruciating detail of how she was going to make love to her and how she would love to ravish her body and then she remembered Lyric was with Rage and Mercy and Maxi and Kieren and Angel and oh my god the rest of the consorority of jocks!

"I thought you were playing soccer in the park." Diera hissed.

"I was but then I got all hot and bothered thinking of you so I fouled someone, rather than giving me a red card Rage threw me in the sin bin for ten minutes." Lyric arrogantly drawled.

"Sin bin?"

"I get to sit on the bench and watch the others play for ten minutes whilst repenting my sins but what I'd really like to do is kiss your..." Lyric's seductive voice almost had her going to look for a private place when Erienne grabbed the phone from her and listened in "Who eez dis? Dis is eh stalker non?...Lyric! You ave a very dirty mouth and I give you back to Diera oui. Oh la la!!! Oh la la la la la la!!!!"

They finished their conversation and Erienne giggled "Oh la la! Your Lyric is very bad non!" And that got the conversation over lunch on to intimate girl stuff and Diera did not think she would ever be able to look at Rage, Angel, Penny and Maxi in the same way again.

Afterwards they went house hunting. She had not yet decided whether she was going to move back in with Elizabeth or simply stay with Lyric. She decided to keep her options open and offered to share the flat with Elizabeth. The other girl was obviously relieved.

"So does Lyric know you are planning on moving out?" Sabrina asked archly

"Sabrina!" Eden scolded

"I'm only staying with Lyric until I find alternative accommodation. She knows that." Diera replied enjoying the view of the city park from the apartment.

"So she's not going to come hammering at Elizabeth's door and drag you back to her lair by your hair at 3am in the morning."

Erienne blushed remembering when Maxi had done the same when they first got married. Eden scowled at Sabrina but Diera didn't notice instead she looked at Sabrina quizzically. "What on earth makes you think Lyric would act like that?"

"It's been my experience that all those brooding successful over-achieving alpha type butches act like that. Now correct me if I'm wrong Eden but didn't Rage come and drag you out of my parent's house the first time you had an argument and threatened to move out."

"She didn't drag me out of the house you exaggerate besides I went willingly."

"And Erienne what did Maxi do when you told her you were moving in with Eden and I during your little quarrel?"

"She was most un 'appy." Erienne agreed.

"Most unhappy? She threw you over her shoulder like a Neanderthal and carried you back home."

"Yes and then we made love all night and she proposed the next day. What is your point Sabrina?"

"Maxi has a territorial streak wider than the Mississippi, Rage is just plain crazy about Eden anybody can see that and Lyric is just as possessive about Diera in fact dare I say she's worse. Lyric is just as likely to come storming down Elizabeth's door and exhibit primitive Neanderthal tendencies."

"Lyric would never do zat she as this whole British thing that they don't like to show their emotions." Erienne said confidently waving her hands in the air to emphasise her point.

"Or cause scenes you know that cold stoic undemanding stiff upper lip." Eden interjected.

Diera gave Eden a quizzical look "Lyric cold?" and then gave Erienne a dark look "She is extremely demanding! She's also very cunning."

Elizabeth nodded her head at Diera's assessment. She'd had to listen to Nigel Robinson ranting down the phone at her about Lyric's behaviour.

"Lyric is more than likely to execute some diabolical scheme. You need to be careful with that one. Maxi and Rage are more straightforward Lyric is a different creature entirely. I should know I work with her." Eden finished thoughtfully.

Diera sighed "Eden's right Lyric is more likely to execute some Machiavellian plot to get her own way and I would never know what she was up to till it was too late. You have to promise not to tell her I am thinking of moving in with Elizabeth till I am ready to do so."

"Why do you want to move out anyway I thought you were in love?"

"Oh I am but I'm just not the type of girl to live in sin. I am going to marry Lyric she just doesn't know it yet." Diera said primly.

"So what do you call what you are doing now" Sabrina asked in abject disbelief.

"Flat-sharing with benefits." Diera said piously.

Chapter 13

Lyric, Diera decided was not human, because after partying late into the night she got into the apartment in the early hours of the morning she had then crawled into bed and seduced her so that they did not sleep until at least 3am in the morning and now it was barely 7am and Lyric was dressed in a black trouser suit and a black shirt.

Her black hair was slicked back since she had just got out of the shower. Diera watched casually as she slipped on her Platinum and diamond cuff links. She smelled of Baddedas Shower gel and Cartier eau de toilet. It was a unisex scent and smelled of power and money.

She did not wear a tie instead her shirt was left unbuttoned to show a hint of cleavage. The only other jewellery she wore, were the diamond studs in her ears and the Patek Phillipe wrist watch on her left wrist.

"I can't believe you're up already and you were the one with the hangover."

Lyric went to sit beside her on the bed her dark gaze taking in her lover's eyes puffy from sleep and her lips swollen and red from their recent lovemaking. "Well today is make or break day the last day of trial before we close our case and I still have no idea what to do."

"Well lucky for you I got a call whilst you were sleeping saying the case has been postponed for a week. Apparently Judge Fairweather had a medical emergency last night."

"Oh I hope it's nothing serious."

"Well apparently she went to dinner with the Mayor and the District Attorney last night and all three of them are laid up with food poisoning as well as several guests. They are still investigating."

"That means I have another week to see if I can get Penny off. I need to check in with Sam sometime today. Do you need a lift to the office or is Eden giving you a lift today?"

"No thanks Eden's giving me a lift, She'll be here for about eight." Diera stretched out on the bed sensuously like a satisfied cat and Lyric completely forgot the next thought in her head as the sheet lowered to reveal the tops of Diera's breasts. Lyric hungrily pounced on her naked girlfriend kissing her deeply and thoroughly. Diera felt a little guilty as she had not even brushed her teeth.

"Lyric I need to get ready for work." Diera half-heartedly tried to discourage her amorous girlfriend unsuccessfully. Who was she kidding she loved the way Lyric was touching her and kissing her in fact she was enjoying their lovemaking so much she knew they were going to be late for work and she did not particularly care.

"Call Eden I'll take you into work." Lyric murmured passionately against her neck.

Diera reached for the phone and dialled her friend's number, breathlessly managing to explain that Lyric would be taking her into work. They finally got into work for ten. Lyric had a luncheon meeting with Kieren Beaste and she was pleasantly surprised when Artemus came and took her out for lunch.

Artemus like his daughter had a very forceful personality but because of all the charm and good manners it was very well hidden. Diera could see where Lyric got her domineering nature from because Artemus Black was merely a toned down version of his daughter.

The old world charm and manners were there as he opened the door of the restaurant for her and helped her with her coat even pulled a chair out for her. They ordered dinner except that where Lyric would have consulted her over dinner Artemus simply ordered for her the annoying thing was that he picked exactly what she liked.

"How do you know I would have ordered the chicken?"

Artemus raised an eyebrow in a way that so reminded her of Lyric she almost inhaled her food.

"You may or may not be aware that Allegra speaks to all her children at least twice a day and since all Lyric ever talks about is you in glorious technicolour detail, I have made it my business to know everything about the girl my only daughter has fallen head over heels in love with like the fact that this is your favourite restaurant, that is your favourite dish and this." He held up the glass of wine he was holding "is your favourite drink."

"I...I..." Diera was speechless.

"Whilst my emotionally challenged daughter may not be one to wear her heart on her sleeve even I know this is the real thing and I have to act fast. Time is not my friend so have you given any thought to our last conversation?"

"Our last conversation?"

"Children are you ready to have children for Lyric?"

Diera was not ready to admit even to herself that she longed to have children for Lyric. "Artemus I don't think Lyric is ready for children."

"Look I have always known Lyric is not going to have a child conventionally. She did donate several of her eggs to my fertility clinic and told me to do what I wanted with it as long as I left her alone. I have experimented with them and all I need is DNA material from you and they would be ready for implantation. This is the best chance you and Lyric have for children together and I know that it is only my daughter's pig-headedness that is holding you back."

"Well that and the fact that what you are talking about is impossible isn't it?"

"I have found a way."

"So do you go around propositioning Lyric's girlfriend's like this?"

"No Lyric with only one exception being you, has atrocious taste in women, you are the only one I chose to approach. Look Paul told me that you were an orphan. I myself lost my mother quite young so I know all about that feeling of loneliness and isolation. As though you are the last, the only one, I know what it feels like to watch other people and their families and feel like you don't belong anywhere."

Diera tried to stop the tears that glistened in her eyes and fell down her cheeks. Artemus wordlessly gave her his handkerchief.

"I am giving you a chance to have a child who will love you unconditionally and whom you can return that love to. I must confess I have not been entirely honest with you. There are only two ovum left which I took from Lyric and I know she will not let me have any more. The technology I used to store them has been degrading and I only found out last week. If I do not take the opportunity now the ovum itself may start to degenerate to the point it will be useless and further the doctor has only given me three months left to live. I am dying from prostate cancer."

"Oh my god! Does Lyric know?"

"No and I don't care if she does. If you refuse I will simply find another to be the mother of her children. I want you to be very sure about one thing I am going to do this procedure whether Lyric likes it or not and if you refuse I will simply find someone else and that could get messy." Artemus threatened.

"Are you threatening me?"

"No, a threat is something which I may or may not do. I am promising you. If you do not help me I will find another woman who will. Such a woman would not know Lyric and would be only in it for the money nor would she care for Lyric the way I know you do. Such a woman would always be in your lives because for all her antagonism towards the idea of being a mother she

adores her nieces. Lyric would make time to be with her children and be an excellent mother to them and that is something you would definitely regret being unable to give her."

Diera actually found that thought distressing. "My God I can see where Lyric gets her diabolical Machiavellian mind from."

"Well?"

"I want you to know I am doing this because I love Lyric and I don't want you to hurt her like that."

"How very admirable."

Diera sighed "Alright then what do you want me to do?"

"Come to London next week."

"I can't that's when Penny's trial closes."

"Very well then exactly 24 hours after they give the verdict in the case I want you on a plane to London. I will send you tickets. You must not tell Lyric make up an excuse do what you have to do just make sure you get there. I will have someone pick you up. After we are sure of conception you can tell Lyric."

"Why can't I tell her now?"

"She's my daughter and I know her better than you think. That would be a great mistake."

She made her way back to the office and on her way to the elevator whilst she was pondering over Artemus words she ran smack into Kieren Beaste. The tall red head caught her and steadied her in her arms except her touch seemed to linger a little too long.

"This must be my lucky day." Kieren smiled down at her.

"Ms Beaste I'm sorry I..."

"Take your hands off her Kieren." Lyric bit out.

Kieren's eyes widened and she jumped back from the menace she saw in the black haired woman's face.

"Lyric we were just..."

"I know exactly what you were just doing."

Diera cleared her throat "Lyric it was an accident. I bumped into Kieren."

Lyric scowled but did not say anything and as the awkward silence grew Kieren smiled wryly and said her goodbyes before leaving.

"Lyric what has gotten into you?"

"Kieren wants you." Lyric replied holding the door open for Diera as she walked into her office and shut the door behind her.

"Well she can't have me. I love you remember." Diera smoothed the dark brow with her fingers and Lyric groaned and pulled her into her embrace and apologised.

"I'm sorry sweeting I just saw her arms around you and I guess I saw red."

"You were jealous? You don't trust me?"

"I trust you I just don't like seeing Kieren with her arms wrapped around you."

"So you're possessive?"

"Yeah but you knew that."

"I am not a possession Lyric."

"You are mine!" Lyric said forcefully "And I don't like seeing Kieren Beaste's big greedy hands anywhere near you."

Diera raised one beautifully shaped tawny eyebrow and regarded her partner with stormy blue eyes. "Do you see a ring on this finger? No! So I am not yours! Not yet!"

"But you will be!"

"Will I? You assume too much!" Diera said icily holding Lyric's gaze steadily till the other woman lowered her head and kicked a spot on the chair and mumbled an apology.

She looked so endearing that Diera stood up on tiptoe and planted a kiss on Lyric's dimpled chin. "I'll accept your apology on this occasion and your punishment will be to come grocery shopping with me."

"Certainly not!"

"Uh huh. Otherwise you'll be eating lesbian food for the rest of the week."

"Lesbian food what the hell is lesbian food?"

"You know, lentils, tofu, Roobush tea, rice crackers, need I go on?"

"When do we go I have seen the light. I'm coming grocery shopping tonight." After work Lyric helped Diera into her new car a brand new model of a very impressive Swedish Supercar that looked like it came out of a new age magazine. Diera was slightly embarrassed by the looks of awe they were getting from the Supermarket store staff who ordinarily ignored her whenever she went grocery shopping but now bent over backwards to please her and Lyric as they made their way around the store.

Actually grocery shopping did not prove to be so bad. Lyric could not remember the last time she had gone grocery shopping. She was not exactly a domestic goddess and Lyric preferred to live on takeaways when she was at home. Dial a Pizza, Dial a Curry, Dial a Chinese and Madam Win's Beer parlour were all on speed dial. Lyric was not a regular visitor at Wal Mart but Diera chose to drag her into DC Wayne's in Ravendale.

DC Wayne's was an upmarket grocery store with fresh locally grown produce. All the meats, fish and poultry were all from local farms and producers and packaged beautifully as well as being organically grown and displayed beautifully. Lyric got distracted when they got to the alcohol section by the cider.

She had no idea that there were cider makers in America. It was a long time since she'd had the alcoholic beverage made from apples. She was surprised to find both still cider and sparkling cider sweet and dry, French, British and of course American, she couldn't decide which to get for Diera to try.

When she came back to join the younger woman at the cash till Diera raised an eyebrow at her selection of items.

"I'm curious Lyric are you perhaps thinking of starting a mini bar at home?"

Lyric was about to protest when she looked down at her selection. Pink champagne, American white wine, Italian red wine, Expensive French Brandy, a case of designer Belgian beer, some expensive Irish Whiskey, Portuguese port and off course some bottles of good old English cider. Diera was being diplomatic it looked more like she was stocking up a brewery.

She shrugged "Well I figure since we will probably be having company I think Mom and Concerto are coming over sometime this week for a couple of days."

"And they drink copious amounts of alcohol?"

"Well no but I mean it's also my turn to host poker night for the soccer lovers on Wednesday."

"When were you going to tell me all this?" Diera asked exasperatedly.

"Sorry Sweeting I'm just getting used to this whole living together thing I would have told you eventually."

"So how successful do you think poker night would have been if all we had in the house was tofu and rice chips?"

Lyric shuddered "Sweets you wouldn't do that to me would you?"

Diera raised one beautifully arched eye brow and regarded her carefully. Lyric cleared her throat.

"Lyric! Diera! Imagine meeting you here."

"Dr Beauregard Lane." Lyric said and turned around. The little man was about to give Diera a peck on the cheek when he saw Lyric's glare and the almost imperceptible tightening of her fist.

Nigel Robinson, his golfing partner told him the story of the nightmare date he had with Diera had warned him that Lyric was extremely territorial and especially possessive of Diera so that instead of kissing her cheek he instead pressed a chaste kiss to the back of her hand and shook Lyric's hand enthusiastically.

"I just had lunch with your parents and Eden's parents today."

"My parents are in town already?"

"Yes but only for a little while. They did not want to disturb you because they know you have that trial coming up. I must say I am surprised that you would choose to defend Penny."

"It's just a job Dr Lane and even those accused of murder need to have legal representation."

"Well I am quite sure she did it her fingerprints were found on the scene and no two finger prints are exactly the same apart from anything else she was wearing the green cravat that Paul was wearing on the night he died. There is no way she could not have murdered him."

"So you saw him the night he died I thought you were at home." Diera said absently.

"No I told you I had the phone on divert I have a perfectly good alibi because I was in Ed's Diner at the time."

"Oh what were you doing there?"

"Well actually I saw Kate and Rocco talking I was going to speak to them when I realised they were in the middle of having an argument. I think Kate suspects Rocco of killing her father." Dr Lane said conspiratorily.

"Lyric I thought we agreed you were going to leave work at the office. I'm sorry Dr Lane but she is a workaholic and trying to get her to relax is very difficult." Diera shot her a quelling look.

"Well I can see who wears the pants in this relationship the bigger they are the harder they fall." Dr Lane winked at Diera and Lyric rolled her eyes. "I better get going I have my eye on a special cuvee they do here and it usually runs out about this time. Lovely to see you though."

He took his leave from them and left and Lyric watched him go her eyebrows wrinkled in thought. Diera ran her fingers over Lyric's brow and the dark haired English woman captured Diera's hand and kissed Diera's fingertips gently.

"What were you thinking?"

"If he knows Penny was wearing a green scarf then he must also have been at the scene of the murder at some point. Witnesses said they saw him at the diner but if his phone was on divert then it is not impossible that he would have had a window opportunity to see Paul before he died. I think I might have to recall him to the stand as our last witness. He might have seen something."

"No more work I want us to spend some quality time together. I have a feeling we'll be having your parents over for dinner tomorrow night."

"Quality time, is that what you're calling it now?" Lyric replied taking the trolley from her and pushing it to the cashier. She wrapped her arm around Diera's waist. However before Diera could bring out her purse, Lyric had pulled out her wallet, and paid for the groceries and also tipped the cashier who arranged for carriers to come and load up their car with the grocery shopping leaving Lyric's arm free to wrap around Diera's waist and more importantly fondle her bottom an action which caused Diera to blush and call her on her inappropriate behaviour although she did not move Lyric's hand away from its resting place.

"Well after all that shopping I am absolutely famished why don't I order for pizza?"

"You have got to be kidding me. We just spent two hundred dollars on groceries and you want to order out? I'll cook and if you want to make yourself useful you can go and rent us a movie."

"Now that sounds like a plan." Lyric kissed her and they went home. Lyric unpacked the groceries and placed them where Diera requested and went out to get the DVD's. She stopped off at Due South for a drink and ran into Mercy and Rage.

"Hey what are you doing here?" Rage high fived her as she sat down on the table with half a pint of beer.

"Diera's making dinner and asked me to get her some DvD's I think she just wanted to get me out of the way so she could make dinner. Why what are you doing here?"

"Me? I'm in femmegatory." Rage said morosely.

"Femmegatory?" Lyric raised an eyebrow "Is this some sort of American colloquialism I am not aware of?"

"Femmegatory my dear Watson is that place between femme heaven and femme hell where you go to when you make a royal fuck up of the femmegulations." Mercy did a creditable impersonation of Lyric's English accent.

"Femmegulations?!" Lyric looked over at Mercy.

"Rules determined by your woman that you must adhere to in order to extract yourself from Femmegatory." Rage answered taking a deep swallow from her budweiser.

"Like getting royally drunk during the week after playing a rousing game of football and then chasing the little woman round the living room begging for sex and when she finally gives it up you fall asleep on the job." Mercy said looking at Rage and shaking her head woefully.

Lyric turned horrified eyes to her friend. "Rage you didn't."

"What! you remember the game we played in the park? I was exhausted plus I did not get home till like three in the morning because I had to go to the club first." Rage replied defensively.

Lyric started laughing "No wonder you're in the dog house."

"May be you need like some female Viagra I mean as you start getting old and all Rage."

"I'm hardly in my dotage Mercy."

"Nope just in the doghouse. Well here's to living single, seeing double and drinking triple!" Mercy took a long drink of her beer.

Angel replied with "When times are hard, and wages are small, drink more beer, and fuck'em all." She downed her beer in three large gulps and slammed the glass upside down on the table to a loud cheer from her friends.

"Hey my turn." George the behind the bar composed himself. "Here's to women, beer and song, may none of them be flat."

Amidst a flurry of boos Angel said thoughtfully to George. "You don't have a girlfriend do you?"

"Only a mother could love that face." Mercy agreed.

Rage turned to Lyric "You got anything English?"

Lyric grinned and raised her glass, "Here's to you and here's to me, together as friends we'll always be, And may we never disagree, But if we do, to Hell with you, Here's to me, Fuck You!"

"Language!" Rage pretended outrage.

Lyric knocked back the rest of her drink. "Well people it's been nice but I gotta dash I gotta warm willing woman waiting for me at home." Lyric grinned happily.

"Rub it in why don't cha." Mercy groaned.

"Hey where's Lucy?"

"She just left. I asked her to marry me and she turned me down flat! Said I had ex-girlfriend issues."

"And do you?"

"Do I what?"

"Have ex-girlfriend issues?"

"Yeah I want her to be my ex-girlfriend and Lucy to be my current girlfriend but my ex won't stay exed...hey Lyric You sure you don't want another drink...one for the road?" Mercy noticed her friend had slipped on her coat and was making her way to the door.

"I am going to obey the femmegulations and get myself home before Diera starts with the femmebonics and sends **me** to femmegatory.

"A regular comedian that one." Rage shook her head as Lyric left.

Diera had just finished cooking when the kitchen door opened to reveal Lyric with the videos and two glasses of ice cold pink champagne. She accepted a glass from the Englishwoman and took a sip whilst surreptitiously checking Lyric out. Her black shirt was rolled up to reveal her forearms and a few veins were rippling under her skin.

Her shirt was unbuttoned to reveal a hint of cleavage and her long legs were encased in a pair of black trousers. Diera couldn't help herself she reached out and tenderly traced the dimple in Lyric's chin with the tip of her thumb and then followed the tender caress with her lips. Lyric groaned and gathered the little blonde woman in her arms and kissed her deeply.

Diera was wearing a red dressing gown and beneath that matching red and white baby dolls and not much else underneath as Lyric found when she lifted her into her arms. Lyric buried her face in her lover's neck inhaling her womanly scent and felt a corresponding pull that melted her loins and fairly set her clit to throbbing and her sex to swelling and aching.

"Honey I've got to take the stew off the fire." Diera managed to get out. Lyric was about to argue when her cell phone started ringing as well. She reluctantly let Diera go and picked it up and followed Diera in the kitchen whilst absently listening to the phone.

In the kitchen she watched Diera move about reaching for the plates and watched her negligee ride up her long shapely legs and stopped just short of revealing the curve of her bottom. Lyric let out an involuntary groan and heard Sam call her attention back.

"Uhm yeah I saw Dr Lane this afternoon it seems his phone was on divert at the time of the murder I think this checks out with something Elizabeth said to me earlier."

"You think Lane might have something to do with it?"

"I have a theory all worked out so I think I will just put Lane on the stand and see if I get something from him with the cross. I think he definitely knows something though he won't tell the truth because he has something against Penny."

Diera bent over and took the beef casserole out of the oven with her oven mitts and Lyric gasped, she was not wearing any underwear.

"Bloody hell!"

Diera turned round to find Lyric literally smouldering at her." She blew her a kiss and continued what she was doing.

"Lyric...what happened?" Sam asked worriedly.

"Ah nothing..." Lyric scratched her chest absently "Can I call you back?" she said distractedly.

"Lyric wait...I..." Lyric switched off the phone and moved towards Diera who slipped away and motioned for her to sit down. She was about to protest but Diera had that no nonsense look in her eyes so she sighed and did so.

Diera leaned over her and to put her food on her plate and Lyric got an eyeful of cleavage then she scampered across the table and sat opposite her with a naughty wink.

"So what did you get for us to watch?" Diera asked cutting up her meal and putting a fork full of food into her mouth. Lyric watched her like a hawk taking in the way she licked her lips as she savoured each mouthful. She wanted to leap across the table and feel her tongue on her hot flesh. Instead she swallowed and tried to answer her questions coherently.

As Lyric named the films she had taken out Diera was a little disappointed. She was expecting a romantic film like those she watched with her girls, Summer, Sabrina, Erienne, Eden and Fiona like It's Complicated or Wedding Planner or even Pretty Baby instead Lyric had rented several horrible movies featuring werewolves, vampire demons, explosions and speeding cars, Diera took a deep breath to steady herself.

"Do you have anything else to watch other than wimmin kickin ass?" She drawled.

"Well I got If these walls could talk two it's got Sharon Stone and Ellen De Generes and the girl at the rental told me You would love it. It's a collection of stories just in case you were in the mood for something a little slower."

Diera sighed and gave thanks to God for the girl at the rental. Dinner was fun, Lyric was in a playful mood and Diera rather enjoyed seeing this side of her. Most people saw the powerful brooding lawyer and were intimidated by her. After they finished eating they made their way over to the couch where she cuddled up into Lyric's arms.

They had flipped a coin to see who would get to win first choice and Lyric had chosen a terrifying movie called "Drag me to hell" which Diera couldn't even watch and found herself hiding her face in Lyric's neck and then she felt something hard against her belly as she lay on top of the older woman.

"Lyric?"

"hmm" Lyric answered distracted by the movie.

"What's this?" Diera whispered against her ear as her hands slid down to her crotch.

"Well I was rather hoping to surprise you at work today but I never got the chance." Lyric turned down the t.v. volume and turned her attention from the screen to look up at Diera. The little blonde sat up and undid Lyric's belt and trousers slowly all the while watching her black haired captive with her piercing blue eyes.

Diera bit her lower lip and lowered herself onto Lyric's stomach so the other woman could feel her womanly heat sear her stomach like a burning brand. Lyric completely lost all interest in the television as Diera slid her hands up Lyric's body and cupped her breasts through her clothes before pushing her sports bra upwards to reveal her large brown nipples which she rolled none to gently between her fingers.

"Now that I have your undivided attention I would like you to make love to me." Diera said in that sweet way that just made Lyric's insides melt. She lowered herself down on the hard jutting artificial appendage and gasped as it slid inside her smoothly like a knife through a golden slab of butter.

Lyric slowly removed her girlfriend's negligee and began to suckle on Diera's hard red nipples. Diera moved excruciatingly slowly at her own pace enough to rub against Lyric's clit and to bring her English lover ever so slowly to the edge of desire. She was so hot and wet that each time Lyric moved within her she could hear their juices mingling together it was like sweet music to her ears.

The film forgotten Lyric picked her up and continued moving within her and kissing her. Diera loved the feel of her lover's muscles straining beneath her fingertips as Lyric carried her and made love to her, sweat poured off their bodies and Diera took off Lyric's shirt and bra by the simple expedience of ripping off the shirt and pushing up the bra.

Lyric placed Diera on the sofa and buried her head between her legs. She needed to taste her lover, love every inch of her inside out from head to toe feel her thighs grip her head and watch her toes curl into the carpet with debilitating need as she whimpered out her pleasure and screamed her orgasm.

Diera grasped Lyric's head and writhed beneath her lover's tender touch. She could barely stand it she was so sensitive now and so close to falling over the edge. She wanted Lyric's fingers inside her now bringing her fulfilment but at the same time she was not ready to give up the caress of her tender tongue as it rolled over her sex bringing with it waves of pleasure. Lyric turned her around so she faced the sofa with her bottom temptingly displayed in front of the dark English woman.

Lyric touched her flanks with trembling fingers spreading her bottom cheeks and began to tongue fuck her vulnerable sex. Diera shuddered with each deliberate thrust pushing herself backwards against Lyric and she felt almost bereft when Lyric pulled away and then Diera sobbed as she was once more penetrated from behind. Lyric's thrust was slow deep and sure and Diera arched back into the embrace. Lyric cupped her breast as she held her with one hand and kissed her again thrusting her tongue into her mouth whilst her other fingers stimulated her sex with each thrust.

Diera thought she had died and gone to heaven caught between Lyric's exploratory tongue, questing fingers and sure thrusts her body began to tremble with the intensity of her emotions and touch till all she could do was hold on to her dark lover for the rest of the wild ride till finally she simply exploded into oblivion and fell limply into her lover's arms sobbing and whimpering. She cuddled into Lyric's arms not caring who had initiated what till she calmed down and got her breath back.

"Lyric...did you...?"

"Did I come? Several times." the English woman grinned happily "Whilst I do not seem to get the long intense ear shattering orgasms that you do I do get off in a way that I have never done with anyone else." Lyric assured her with a kiss.

"Baby could you get me some ice cream from the ice box." Diera asked kissing Lyric's jaw. "I'll change the movie over."

"Hey I was enjoying that till you distracted me." Lyric pouted.

"Hmm and you didn't like the distraction?" Diera teased brushing her lips against Lyric's.

The English woman grinned stupidly "Oh I like!"

"Well if you want some more of that then go and get the ice cream from the ice box."

Lyric went and got a big bowl of ice cream from the ice box and they settled down to watch If these walls could talk. Lyric rarely let her guard down and when she did Diera cherished such

moments she cuddled up into Lyric's arms sitting in her lap whilst she ate alternately spooning some into Lyric's mouth.

She felt Lyric stiffen beside her as they got into the story. The two characters played by Sharon Stone and Ellen de Generes played a Lesbian couple trying to have a baby using artificial insemination. Behind her she could feel Lyric stiffen but she did not say anything and instead tried to sooth her partner with gentle caresses.

In the film the character played by Ellen de Generes confessed to her partner "I wish I could make you pregnant."

Behind her Lyric kissed her ear and whispered "I wish I could make you pregnant too."

Diera felt tears come into her eyes and it was in that moment she decided to take up Artemus on his offer. She turned over to face Lyric "Do you mean that?"

"Yes." Lyric whispered hoarsely

"So you wouldn't mind going through invitro-fertilisation."

"Diera my Dad's a fertility Doctor I've already given him my DNA and one egg extraction procedure was enough trust me I am not going through another one. Nor am I going to put any man's spunk inside you. You are mine and I am not going to share." Diera realising how sensitive the subject was with Lyric did not pursue it. "Come on let's go to bed."

The next day she rarely saw Lyric and when she did it was to snatch what was in Diera's opinion an inappropriate and very public kiss that left Diera blushing. She fully intended to tell her lover off for such behaviour but in the meantime she had guests coming over namely Lyric's parents.

Lyric's parents disapproved of them sleeping together without the benefit of marriage and Allegra made that clear on several occasions. Lyric did not defy her mother but made several unsuccessful attempts to creep into Diera's room all of which were thwarted by Allegra who kept an eagle eye on her errant offspring so that by Thursday Lyric was a wreck.

It did not help that Diera chose to wear provocative clothes around the flat and the office all the time. Mini-skirts, hot pants, figure hugging full length trousers, low cut tops that showed off her cleavage Diera seemed to take great delight in teasing her unmercifully.

Lyric had tried to get her alone at work but with the trial coming on and Bradley Smith moving to L.A. her work load increased and more and more people wanted her attention. On Thursday she sat at the breakfast table watching Allegra and Diera bonding even more and decided she did not like it one little bit. Her mother getting on with her girlfriend was a scary thought especially as her mother never got on with any of her girlfriends.

"I thought I would take Diera shopping on Saturday," Her mother was saying "I wanted her to try out the new MACE line of lipsticks that just came out."

"Oh that sounds great Mrs Black."

"Please stop calling me that it sounds so formal why don't you call me Allegra?"

Diera blushed "I'm sorry I couldn't my uncle Paul taught me to respect people of seniority."

"Well you can call me Mom. Everyone else does except for my little tyrant over there." She blew a kiss at Lyric who scowled back.

"Mom it is then."

"Aren't you supposed to be going shopping with Sabrina and Eden?" Lyric said gently sipping her coffee.

"Yes and you are more than welcome to come Sabrina and Eden always bring their mom so you can be my surrogate mom for the day. I'll just go and tell Eden to make reservations at La Cachette for one extra."

"You make reservations for La Cachette now?"

"Yeah go figure!" Diera shrugged on her way out to get her mobile phone.

Lyric watched her go and then turned around and scowled at her Mother. "Mother I was rather hoping to spend quality time with Diera on Saturday."

"Quality time is that what you're calling it now?" Allegra gave her daughter a knowing look.

"You know Mother this is my house and I should be able to set the ground rules in my own house and decide on who I want to sleep with and when."

"Are you familiar with the phrase familiarity breeds contempt?" Allegra asked archly and Lyric steeled herself for one of her mother's famous sayings.

"No mother I am however familiar with the phrase Familiarity breeds children. Don't you want grand-children Mama?"

"I do but I would like you to do things the right way. Besides abstinence is good for the soul darling it teaches one to appreciate relationships."

"I already appreciate Diera a lot." Lyric grated angrily.

"Sure you do but when you marry that lovely girl and commit your life to her I will believe you but until then no more nookie for you." She touched her daughter's nose "At least not while I am around. It shows a distinct lack of respect and I did not raise you that way."

"Mama we are hardly living in Victorian times don't you think you are being unreasonable?"

"Nothing is ever accomplished by being reasonable darling and I have my sights on getting you married you know that."

When Diera returned with her mobile phone Lyric stared at her longingly and tried again.
"Mother don't you have other children you could be harassing?"

However the matriarch of the Gaylord family was a formidable opponent and simply gifted her daughter with a smile. "Don't you have an eight am meeting to attend?"

"How did you know?"

"I overheard Diera reminding you about it now off you go. You and I can have a quick chat at lunch I have a few things I need to talk to you about." Allegra smoothed down the lapels of her daughter's jacket.

Lyric kissed her mother goodbye her father and brother had been scarce lately which was not like either of them. She turned around and defiantly gave Diera a long deep thorough toe curling kiss.
"See you later sweeting."

"That child is a handful." Allegra said darkly.

When she left Diera got ready for work and Allegra drove her to the office. She actually got on extremely well with Allegra. She reminded her a lot of Naseera, Eden's mother. She did not have Lyric's overtly domineering character, that she was quite sure Lyric inherited from Artemus but she could see where Lyric got her Machiavellian skills from.

Fortunately for her she was immune having been on the receiving end of many of Lyric's antics. She politely declined to answer Allegra's questions or simply re-directed any personal questions she did not want to answer with a sweet smile.

Allegra did not know whether to be impressed or exasperated. The girl had told her a lot of things without actually telling her anything. Diera made her way upstairs to her office and was surprised to bump into Kieren Beaste again.

"Well this is getting to be a habit."

"Lyric isn't here at the moment she'll be back in soon."

"That's nice to know but I didn't come here to see Lyric I came to ask you out to lunch."

Diera shook her head "And do you have any ulterior motives for this lunch date?"

"I just thought I would enjoy the company of a pretty girl." Kieren grinned wolfishly and Diera shook her head.

"I would love to but I am busy. Some other time perhaps?"

"Well I know you have to eat sometime so I'll order in some lunch now what would you like something spicy or something creamy." She gave Diera a suggestive look.

"Ugh Kieren" Diera made a face and went to sit at her desk. Kieren laughed at the expression on Diera's face as she followed her into her office. Diera found that she actually liked Kieren. There was something about her that reminded her of Rage.

They both treated her like a baby sister except Kieren took every opportunity to provoke Lyric where possible. She knew they were good friends and she knew that like Lyric, Kieren was very well to do but the tall redhead with her ebullient character was more often than not a very straight forward person.

"What would you like for lunch? A big juicy steak with fat fries or has Lyric spoiled you completely and introduced you to the world of smoked salmon and caviar with champagne." Kieren hopped onto Diera's desk playfully.

Diera shook her head "Actually I was going to get a Caesar Salad and a fruit bowl from La Cachette's."

"Well then consider that Lunch will be on me we'll get Lyric a sandwich too what do you think she would like Crayfish and Rocket or Smoked Salmon and cheese? You're the one who's got to kiss her."

Obviously Diera surmised Kieren knew Lyric very well. "Well lately she's into this thing of damson jam and brie sandwiches."

"That woman will never change." Kieren shook her head and ordered for Diera, a philly steak sandwich for herself and then gave the man Lyric's order. Cola for me, Lyric drinks alcohol all the time so we'll get her a small bottle of wine and what will you have Diera?"

"Strawberry and banana smoothie will be fine thanks."

Whilst they waited for the food to arrive Diera and Kieren talked about Diera's favourite topic, Lyric. Kieren was telling her what an adventurous soul Lyric was and their adventures in Brazil, Tunisia, New Zealand and Zimbabwe to name a few countries. Kieren was American and had met Lyric when she was sixteen and went to seek her fortune in the world.

"Even then she was a spoiled brat, a genius but a spoiled brat. Her nickname used to be "Cash" because of the way she used to make money hand over fist whether it was gambling or just sheer luck and we were always getting into trouble because Maxi always wanted to take up the cause of the underdog and Lyric always had a complicated plan to inflict some diabolical revenge which invariably went wrong."

"And you?"

"I was always after the bottom line." Kieren replied biting into her steak this is absolutely delicious. She licked her lips and offered some to Diera "This is fantastic you must try it." She did and it was good too. She drank some of her strawberry and banana smoothie to wash it down and Kieren used her forefinger to clean the corner of Diera's mouth before playfully putting it her own mouth.

"Kieren," A cultured voice spoke from the doorway, "You might hold a black belt in the martial arts but if you do that again so help me god I will kill you where you stand."

Kieren looked up from her desk guiltily. "What can I say I couldn't help myself your girlfriend is gorgeous and anyway is that any way to talk to one of your best friends? I even got you lunch."

"Hello to you too baby." Diera blew Lyric a kiss.

Lyric scowled at the redheaded American and Kieren started singing *"Lyric's hungry, Lyric's hungry, when she's hungry she is angry, fire fire, fire fire, feed the beast! Feed the Beast!"* to the tune of the nursery rhyme "London's burning."

"Am I that bad?" Lyric came forward and wrapping an arm around Diera's waist she lowered her head and kissed the blonde woman very thoroughly "hmm strawberry and banana I like."

They sat down to finished their lunch and Diera sat on Lyric's lap as there were only two chairs in Diera's office whilst Kieren sat on the other. When they finished eating their sandwiches and salads the three friends shared a bowl of mixed fruit salad with Diera and Lyric taking it in turns to feed each other.

"Oh by the way." Kieren held up a bundle of papers "Your Dad sent me these it's regarding that vineyard in Tuscany that he's selling to me. He says it's not worth the hassle. Could you just sign off on these and give it back to him something about you guys being co-owners."

"Sure. Lyric wiped her hands and signed the papers glancing through them quickly. It's not really profitable but it's a great hideaway and if wine-making is a hobby it's good to have. We already have several of these on our list so it's good to have."

"So why are you selling?"

"Well the overseer Mr Dubois is an ornery old soul and won't make changes. He's worked there for over forty years and Dad refuses to fire him and we all know how ruthless you are Kieren." Lyric finished.

"Yes and proud of it too. Well kids lunch has been good. I gotta go Diera I trust you to keep Lyric on the straight and narrow and look forward to seeing you in London next week." Kieren left waving goodbye.

"Next Week? We are going to London next week?"

"Actually you are going to London with Dad mum and Concerto next week. I have this trial remember. I wanted you to meet my family. I know before you get upset with me I spoke to HR and you have leave and they arranged for your passport and everything. You leave a couple of days just after the trial and I will join you when I get there okay."

Chapter 14

The judge made an entrance and everyone got up.

"It's show time!!!" Lyric muttered under the breadth and adjusted her jacket.

Pamendra Kulkani decided to call the State's first expert witness from the coroner's office Dr Diandra Huffmann MD. It was obvious from the beginning of the examination- -in-chief that Dr Huffmann did not think much of Mr Kulkani.

Eden was sitting next to Lyric and wondering how the hell they were going to pull this one out of the bag. Lucy had taken leave because she was upset with Mercy, Bradley Smith had been posted to Los Angeles and she was the only counsel available that day to take up the case and murder was not a specialism of hers.

"Oh look it's good old Diandra." Lyric whispered under her breadth.

"You know her?"

"Hmm very well." Lyric replied with a mischevious twinkle in her eyes as Diandra Huffmann was sworn in.

"You and Diandra Huffmann?" Eden squeaked hardly believing that the elegant white haired well coiffed looking grandmother looking elegantly composed in the witness stand with her pearls could possibly have anything to do with the black haired rascal sitting beside her.

"Yep she gave me my first kiss."

"But that means she's..."

"Family and Kulkani is about to get his ass handed to him by his own witness."

Pamendra Kulkani cleared his throat and began his cross-examination.

"Now doctor, isn't it true that when a person dies in his sleep, he doesn't know about it until the next morning?"

"Did you actually pass the bar exam?"

"Answer the question please Dr Huffmann."

"How do you want me to answer?"

"Well you could give a stupid answer to his equally stupid question." Lyric muttered under her breath.

"What was that Ms Black?"

"Nothing your honour."

Kulkani tried again and cleared his throat. "Doctor, how many autopsies have you performed on dead people?"

"All my autopsies are performed on dead people Mr Kulkani."

Eden snorted. "Oh this is going to be so bad."

"Where exactly are you going with this Mr Kulkani?" Judge Fairweather asked tiredly.

"I am trying to establish the Witnesses expertise."

"OK. How many autopsies have you performed?"

"Many." Diandra Huffmann said shortly.

"Do you recall the time that you examined Mr Delaware's body?"

"Yes the autopsy started around 8:30 p.m."

"And Mr. Delaware was dead at the time?"

"No, he was sitting on the table wondering why I was doing an autopsy." Dr Huffmann said with a mildly sarcastic drawl.

"So, before you performed the autopsy, did you check for a pulse?"

"No." Dr Huffmann said shortly.

"Did you check for blood pressure?"

"No."

"Did you check for breathing?"

"No."

"So, then it is possible that the patient was alive when you began the autopsy?"

"No."

"How can you be so sure, Doctor?"

"His brain was sitting on my desk in a jar."

"But could the patient have still been alive, nevertheless?"

"Yes, it is possible that he could have been alive and practicing law as the Assistant DA in Ravendale."

Eden couldn't help it her fit of giggles became apopleptic and uncontrollable laughter and she was not alone. Eventually the judge banged her gavel and called for order.

"No further questions for this witness Your Honour."

"You may step down Dr Huffmann. Ms Fenton-Payne kindly control yourself this is a court of law!" Eden was eventually able to stop laughing and Lyric handed her a navy blue handkerchief to wipe her eyes.

Eden glanced over at Lyric who looked cool calm and collected. Her short black hair as usual looked as though she'd just gotten out of bed. Her make-up was minimalist, she didn't need much though because her complexion was flawless. Today she was wearing a black Armani suit and a white round necked shirt with beautifully tailored trousers and as usual she was looking elegantly expensive.

She liked Lyric even enjoyed flirting with her she was nothing like Rage. Rage was straight forward, wore her heart on her sleeve Lyric was more complicated, intimidatingly intelligent and endearingly arrogant she had a dry sense of humour. If there was a chink in that cold armour of polished urbanity and civility she wore she'd never seen it.

Eden had known Diera since she was a little girl who had lost her mom and came to live with Paul Delaware. Their families were very close and lived next door so Diera was the closest thing she had to a sister well outside of Sabrina off course. Diera had an independent streak a mile wide and a yearning to be part of a family. She was even surprised she had allowed Lyric to get so close to her.

She could remember the two of them talking about having children and now that was a reality for her and Diera had confided that she would also be having the same fertility program that Rage and Eden would be undergoing. Maxi and Erienne were actually the first to try out the procedure and they had two very healthy and adorable twins. It would be nice to do the procedure with Diera instead of on her own although Rage would be there it wouldn't be the same since she would be carrying the children and not Rage.

Almost as though the other woman could hear her Rage turned her attention to Eden and winked Eden blew her a kiss and Rage pretended to pluck the imaginary kiss out of the air and place it against her lips.

As the trial got under way Eden crossed her fingers. She did not truly believe Penny was capable of killing anyone but the truth was with her delinquent background and the circumstantial evidence which all seemed to point one way, it was getting difficult to believe in Penny.

Lyric had not admitted any evidence to controvert the theory that Penny's finger prints were found beside the murdered man. So when she called Dr Beauregard Lane (the expert engaged by the prosecution) to the witness stand she wondered what sort of game Lyric was playing now.

It was no secret that Dr Lane absolutely loathed Penny, they'd all witnessed the punch up at her engagement party and Dr Lane had also figured prominently as an expert witness against Penny but his evidence had been unshakeable Lucy had started cross-examining him when he had to leave the stand due to the altercation in the court room caused by one of the jurors who had been sick and suffering from food poisoning.

"Your Honour might I humbly request that the accused stand over there we shall call it the dock shall we?"

"Thank-you Ms Ice."

When Lyric called Dr Lane to the stand Eden sincerely hoped that she was calling him to controvert his own expert testimony or pull a Batavinsky as they now called it in the office. However her first question came as a complete shock and Eden sat up engrossed in the court room drama that played out.

Lyric came to stand in front of the witness box. "Were your relations with Delaware pleasant?"

"Entirely so." Beauregard Lane replied smoothly.

"Did you not in fact propose marriage to Miss Delaware some time ago?"

"I did."

"And you were told she was a Lesbian and dating the defendant."

Dr Lane paused and glared at Penelope Ice "Yes."

"Was it not you who told the deceased that Ms Ice frequented the disreputable stews of the city?"

"Stews?"

"You know driving through insalubrious areas and soliciting for prostitutes and such like?"

Kulkani got up and glared at Lyric "Objection! Your Honour relevance?"

Goes to motive I am just laying a foundation."

"Overruled." Replied the Judge. "Continue with your examination Ms Gaylord-Black."

Dr Lane took his cue from the judge and spoke haltingly. "I might have said that, I did not think Ms Ice was done sowing her wild oats."

Lyric continued with her line of questioning "Yet Ms Ice maintains that Mr Delaware says you were his accuser."

"I don't know about that besides Delaware is dead and cannot speak for himself."

"Where were you on the night of the murder?"

"At my office all evening. I called several people on the phone."

"Your Mobile Phone?"

"I might have taken some calls on my cell phone."

"And you also received calls on the same phone did you not? Calls that were diverted from the land line in your office to your mobile phone?"

"What the devil are you driving at?"

Lyric ignored him and turned to the court orderly, "Please darken the room. You have told the court that there can be no possible error in the identification on the thumb prints found on the sheets of Mr Delaware's bed with those of the Defendants. Is that not so?"

"Yes no two thumb prints are the same and the prints on the sheet are remarkably clear. There is no room for error."

"I wish to make a thumbprint." Lyric did so and Dr Lane put it on the screen so it was clearly visible by the whole court."

Lyric used her friendly reasonable tone. "As you can see that is not the least like that of the accused."

"Not in the least even a lay man can see the difference."

"But if you let me have another slide." Lyric pressed her thumb on the glass and as it flashed on the screen a gasp ran through the room as they realise that the two prints are unlike.

"Is that like the others Dr Lane?"

"No Not at all."

"Is it like the print you made of the hand of Lambert Dryden?"

Dr Lane fumbled in his case and threw a second point on the screen. They were identical."

"Let's have a third . Please make sure that the glass does not pass from your possession. Dr Lane."

Everyone in the court room pressed forward to see the test. This too was thrown on the screen.

"Is that not the print of the accused's thumb?"

There was a loud murmuring in the court room. "The prints are the same." Eden gasped

"Order! Order!" The Judge and banged her gavel.

"That is the print of the accused's hand. I would know it amongst a thousand."

"And yet the accused has not left the dock."

"I cannot understand it. It is not reasonable that you should be able to change the prints at will."

"Lights please and I will enlighten the court. It is all perfectly simple."

The lights came on and Lyric began to address the court. "You will all recall that some few weeks ago an estimable citizen of this town was accused of burglary Lambert Dryden I believe his name was. A safe had been broken into and on the window sash were found prints of a finger stained with oil and dust from the boring. These prints were found to be those of Lambert Dryden, who has since been acquitted of that offence.

Mr Dryden was acquitted because he was in fact nowhere near the scene of the alleged burglary that night. He was an old friend of Mr Delaware but he did consent to aid us in an experiment. Because no finger print is ever duplicated by nature there was existed no doubt but that Mr Dryden was the offender.

Yet the real offenders, if they are such are Miss Eden Fenton-Payne, co-counsel in this case, Miss Delaware and myself. I needed to show that whilst the peculiar markings of the cuticle of the hands are never exactly duplicated, it is entirely possible to take advantage of this fact to fasten upon entirely innocent persons the blame for a crime.

It is well know that for several years, Dr Lane has had a fad for studying finger print identifications. He has been called as an expert witness in numerous cases in this and in other states and it was to him I first turned for information-when I returned home and found that the accused had been put in jeopardy of her life on account of a few fingerprints on a bit of cloth.

However, I also found that Dr Lane carries his studies further than most. He not only makes collections of prints, but of the fingers making these prints. He did not call my attention to them, but I perceived that he had a large collection of casts of hands. This is a notorious fact which was also inadvertently put in evidence by the Assistant DA Mr Kulkani.

From the accused, I learned that she had given Dr Lane permission a few months ago to make a cast of her hand, but only the thumb had come out clearly.

From the experiments made, I found that it would be entirely feasible to reproduce these casts in other materials than plaster in the composition used by printers to ink their forms, for instance.

The prints made by me before this court were made from these casts, just as were the prints on the lines placed in evidence. Dr Lane admitted on the stand that he was refused by Elizabeth Ann Delaware. With her father dead and her lover hanged for murder there might have been a possibility of her returning to him and accepting his proposal. But more importantly he also supposed that the death of Delaware would free him from the payment of certain obligations contracted which he supposed were in the possession of the deceased.

But which were put in evidence when we put evidence before this court to show that several people had motives to kill Mr Delaware. Dr Lane did in fact owe Mr Delaware three hundred thousand dollars that we knew about and evidence of that is before this honourable court but there is also evidence before this court that at the time of his death Colonel Payne had paid off the fifty thousand dollars he owed Dr Lane as had the other investors in their circle and that in fact the money had been loaned to Dr Lane who owed Mr Delaware close to Five hundred thousand dollars.

Mr Delaware was unwilling to let the investment club take the hit since Dr Lane was his personal friend so he actually paid off the club and Dr Lane's debt became a personal one due to him alone. Dr Lane needed to make the debt disappear since he had used it not for investments but to pay off his creditors.

He therefore prepared a composition hand made of rubber which carried the accused's fingerprints and carefully left behind evidence. The green material found in the back of Mr Delaware's throat did indeed come from the scarf found in the possession of my client Ms Ice.

However the scarf came into her possession One hour after Mr Delaware died, previously the scarf had belonged to Dr Lane and it had his family crest on it with the infamous baton rouge, very few European families carry the baton rouge but the blue and white line across a family crest signifies bastardy and it is very rare. It usually signifies some tie with the royal family but also that such a person is by reason of bastardy an unacknowledged heir to the throne.

An English Aristocrat like Dr Lane would therefore never have parted with such a family heirloom. Now after planting the evidence that would incriminate his rival he established a telephone alibi which again fell apart because the call he received was actually diverted from his work phone to his mobile phone. I therefore demand the arrest of Beauregard Lane for the Murder of Paul James Delaware.

Dr Lane clapped his hands. "I would have got away with it to because none of these Yankees could have caught me great minds think alike."

"hmm more like fools seldom differ." Eden muttered

"But you will never get me!" Dr Lane hissed and pulling a box out of his jacket pocket he tossed a pill into his mouth and swallowed. There was turmoil in the court room by the time they could reach him he was dead.

"It smells like Hydrocyanic acid."

The judge glanced at the prosecuting attorney who sank down helplessly in his seat as a Doctor one of the people seated in the gallery diagnosed the cause of death the judge's gavel fell.

"The accused is discharged, the jury is dismissed the case has been taken to a higher court."

The press rushed out of court to be the first to give the news. Lyric rubbed her eyes and ran her hand through her hair wearily. "I feel like a murderer." She turned to Eden "Where is Diera? I need her."

"She's at home, she wanted to start her vacation early so she could go shopping with your mum before she travelled do you want me to drive you home? I can get someone from the office to bring your car."

Just then Penny reached them and leapt into Lyric's arms "You are fucking fantastic!!!"

"Penelope Ice you will detach yourself from my person." Lyric spoke in her clipped British accent.

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"Well done darling I heard you won your case it's been all over the news."

"Thank-you Mater." She hugged her mother back and gave her father and brother hugs back as well.

"Where is Diera?"

"In the kitchen making dinner." Concerto replied helping her with her pilot case which had her books and files.

"The poor darling was so stressed out that half-way through your cross-examination she went to the kitchen and started cooking up a storm."

"Diera!" Lyric dropped everything and headed to the kitchen.

"Lyric you're home...oh my baby's home!" Diera wound her arms around Lyric's neck and pulled her head down for a kiss and a hug. Lyric clung to her holding her tightly against her and returned her passionate kisses fervently then to Diera's amazement Lyric fell to her knees and buried her face against the smaller woman's belly. Diera had never seen Lyric like this before and she was quite alarmed.

"Lyric? Are you alright?" She asked running her fingers through the other woman's black hair.

"I killed him!"

"You killed who?"

"Dr Lane he committed suicide in the dock. He swallowed some acid and then he started foaming at the mouth and writhing and before anyone could do anything he was dead."

"Oh baby Dr Lane was well not quite alright was he? He murdered Uncle Paul when he didn't need to and tried to date Elizabeth when we have all known since Elizabeth was seven years old that she's only ever been into girls you can't blame yourself for that." Diera stroked her head. "You got Penny off, you did good girl." Diera pressed a butterfly kiss against her head.

"You know I really really want to make love with you right now I think that's why I'm so emotional. I'm feeling deprived Sweets and I need my Diera fix."

Diera laughed "You know that's not going to happen. Allegra is sharing a room with me, but for the record I wanna make love to you too. I missed you."

"Why don't you pack a bag and I'll check us into the Ravendale Inn."

"I'll go and pack."

"On second thoughts forget it lets just go!" Lyric got up and tugged her along.

"What about dinner?"

"Trust me on this Mother's got it covered."

Lyric checked them into the honeymoon suite at the Ravendale Inn. It was a beautiful room with red roses everywhere even the bed was covered with fresh rose petals and a complimentary magnum of ice cold champagne and Diera's favourite dessert of fresh strawberry cheesecake with white chocolate and strawberry ice cream, fresh strawberry slices, strawberry sauce and whipped cream.

Diera had just finished eating when Lyric slid to her knees and removed her shoes and proceeded to give her a foot massage and it felt heavenly. The massage continued up her shins and calves till Lyric was pushing her skirt upwards with her hands.

"Diera?"

"Hmmm yes Lyric."

"Will you marry me?" Lyric asked staring intently into the unbelieving eyes above hers.

"I...I..."

Lyric froze "You don't want to marry me."

"No baby I...I don't know what to say."

"Say yes."

"Yes! Yes! Yes!Yes!" Diera punctuated each word with a kiss and Lyric appeared to pull a ring from the air above her right ear.

"Oh baby it's beautiful." Diera wept and Lyric looked even more alarmed.

"I'm sorry I didn't mean to make you cry we can always exchange the ring. If you hate it so much."

"No the ring is beautiful. I just I wasn't expecting all this and I Lyric I love you so much."

"I love you more Sweets and I can't wait to show you how much."

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They returned to her apartment the next evening "Diera and I are getting married." Lyric announced to her parents and brother. Allegra and Artemus gave Diera a hug even Concerto who she had only just met. He looked like Allegra but where Allegra was blonde and petite, Concerto was a great big hulking man with long shaggy hair and a neatly trimmed beard. He had a wicked sense of humour and an easy going smile.

"But first she is coming home to England to meet the family. Before either of you start bullying her Diera gets to pick where she wants to get married and when she wants to get married."

"I won't bully her really Lyric. Diera you really must get married at Blandford castle it is absolutely beautiful."

"Mother I thought we agreed you wouldn't bully Diera."

"I'm not bullying Diera I am persuading her."

Diera enjoyed going back to England she had not been back since she was teenager and London had changed. She did not spend long in the city however but was driven in Lyric's Ferrari to Blandford castle.

Chapter 15

It was a real castle with a moat and a dungeon and everything. Although it had been modernised it was huge. She also met all of Lyric's siblings, their wives and husbands and partners and nieces and nephews. Allegra's father had named all their children with music in mind so that almost everyone in the Gaylord clan some sort of musical name, instrument or association. Even their partners had the same musical affiliations it was almost eerie.

Cymbal, Melody, Clef, Descant, Concerto and Symphony were Lyric's siblings but Symphony's partner Key, Descant's boyfriend and long term partner Waltz, Concerto's wife Vibratta, Melody was actually Melody Williams her husband Vaughn Williams was named after the British composer. Cymbal was married to Sheherazade who was named after a musical piece by the Russian composer Rimsky-Korsakov and finally Clef whose wife was called Vivaldi or Vivi as she preferred to be called.

It continued on into the next generation since Cymbal's daughters Minim and Harmony, Melody's sons Mozart and Elgar, Descant's son a charming boy with blue eyes and a ready smile was gifted the name Falsetto but his cousins preferred to use the name Fallie, then there were the twins Major and Minor. Clef's son was called Sharp and his sister Timpani (timi). They were all fun and she was always getting their names mixed up.

In fact the only dot on Diera's horizon that she could see was Cecily Harlowe. Cecily Harlowe was Descant's friend and business partner she was rich, tall, beautiful with black hair and a very curvy body and a face that reminded her of Catherine Zeta Jones.

She was confident and an investment banker with her own very successful business. She rode very well, played the piano like a maestro and was incredibly clever. If Diera did not already have a ring on her finger she would have felt extremely intimidated by her and she was always touching Lyric. It seemed she was not alone in her distaste for Cecily, Harmony Lyric's favourite niece shared her dislike as well.

Harmony had brought her girlfriend Margot Chanson and was introducing them to the family. Margot was a shy girl compared to the more bubbly and vivacious Harmony.

"So Maggot however did you meet Harmony? You certainly don't look like you move in the same social circles?"

Margot smiled shyly "At a Speed Dating night?"

"Speed Dating? Sounds more like slumming to me."

"Cecily!" Harmony fumed.

"So how did my rascally niece convince a person with such beautiful brown eyes to go out with her." Lyric wanted to know.

Harmony scowled but at the same time she appreciated the compliment to her shy girlfriend.

"Are you flirting with my girlfriend Aunty Lyric."

Diera slapped Lyric's thigh "You just behave yourself."

"You were saying?" Diera smiled encouragingly at Margot.

"She told me that there is a family tradition that members of the Gaylord family always marry people whose names are associated with music and that since my name is Chanson we were bound to be together."

Cecily interjected rudely "Chanson? I thought your name was Maggot?"

"Harmony I never had you down as a sweet talker." Lyric teased

"Oh Aunty dearest I learned from the best."

Cymbal rolled his eyes "Why do I find the thought of my daughter learning love advice from my evil genius of a baby sister frightening."

"Because it is frightening but then I think that the family tradition might have a grain of truth in it." Vivi replied.

"Well in that case Lyric and Diera are going to have a short engagement cos unless I am mistaken Diera's name has nothing musical in it." Cecily grinned widely and leaving no one in any doubt that she did not want the relationship to succeed.

"Actually I think Diera is a beautiful name and I do believe that with her last name being Voicemail she is eminently qualified unlike some people I could name." Harmony rose to Diera's defence and smiled sweetly at Cecily.

"Well Chanson might be French for song but you gotta call a spade a spade and your girl friend's name is Maggot and there is nothing musical about that!"

Diera fed up with watching Cecily pick on Margot all night finally lost her temper. "Her name is pronounced Margo, Cecily not Maggot, the t is silent as in Harlowe."

"Oh dear!" Melody sighed

"Miawo" said Clef

"Go girlfriend" Harmony said with glee.

It took all of five seconds for the insult to sink in by then the conversation had moved on for everyone else except Cecily who stuttered belatedly "Did you just call me a prostitute?"

"Why yes I believe I did." Diera replied "What of it?"

Just as it appeared things were about to get very messy there was a commotion in the hall and the butler stepped into the drawing room and announced "The Duke of Blandford and his lordship Leweson Gower-Blandford."

The arrival of the Duke of Blandford or Bartholomew Black, Artemus's Father also heralded a change in their daily routine. When she had first arrived everyone was relaxed some people having breakfast-in-bed and most of the socialising and eating being done in the living room. Grand Pa Barty however believed in doing everything right.

So now they had to dress for breakfast and lunch which was now served in the great dining room. It was an elaborately decorated table which seated fifty people on a long table with gold filigree and marble sculptures on the wall. It was like the set of a Hollywood movie from some ancient film like the palace at Versailles. At dinner Lyric formally presented her to her Grandfather as her fiancé and the soon to be Lady Blandford.

The other thing Diera found disconcerting was that only Lyric's family actually called her Lyric everyone else called her the Marquis or Blandford or Blackie or even Black Blandford. It seemed instead of using her surname they preferred to address her by the name of the area she came from.

Lyric didn't seem to mind but she did ask Symphony why they called her Blandford.

"Well they can't very well call her Lady Blandford because you are going to be Lady Blandford."

When they'd arrived in England, Allegra had enforced her rule that unmarried couples did not share a room. Lyric had lasted all of three days before she started scaling her bedroom walls to come and visit her at night.

"Lyric that's dangerous and irresponsible."

"I know sweets." Lyric replied shrugging out of her jumper and t-shirt to hold onto Diera. I just hate the thought of leaving you unprotected from the ghosts."

"Ghosts?"

"Oh yes we have a ghost a regular howler who haunts this particular room whenever a woman stays here alone at night. Only the sound of hot wild uninhibited sex drives her away."

"Hot wild uninhibited sex huh?" Diera replied playing along. "Why don't I believe you?"

It was a particularly windy night and the sound of the wind howling through the trees was spine-chilling especially since Diera had rarely spent anytime in the English countryside. The eerie sound was disturbing and coupled with the cold she snuggled closer to her amorous fiancée who

proceeded to make love to her all night long. In the morning Lyric was about to climb out of the window.

"Baby it's been raining all night it's dangerous. Why don't you just go down the stairs?"

"I'll be fine I've done this before lots of times." Lyric replied stealing another kiss before climbing out of the window.

The next morning everyone, even Cecily who normally had breakfast-in-bed was downstairs for breakfast. Breakfast was a large buffet consisting of eggs, bacon, porridge, black pudding which was some sort of blood sausage, white pudding which was another type of sausage made from fat and gristle or something equally horrendous.

There were devilled kidneys, liver, grilled steak, kippers (a sort of smoked fish), smoked salmon and scrambled eggs, fried eggs, boiled eggs, poached eggs, eggs Benedict, soda bread, potato bread, toasted crumpets, olive bread, sundried tomato bread, baklava (a favourite of Leweson's), fruits, coffee, tea, fruit juices, fermented herrings, cold meats like salami, chorizo, sacucisson and large slabs of cheese and a selection of olives. It was a veritable feast which somehow always got demolished.

Diera settled for a bowl of porridge which was served with fresh strawberries, a sort of strawberry syrup and lashings of full fat thick cream which she found absolutely delicious.

Lyric was a carnivore with a healthy appetite as were the rest of her family who all seemed to have big appetites she soon found out why they also burnt it all off. She normally went for a morning run on weekends with Lyric but the older woman also worked out for an hour at work as well as playing badminton and football alternating the sports in the evenings.

Diera preferred to do aerobics in the evenings and alternate her dance workout with a game of tennis to keep fit and she was happy that she found someone who was as interested in exercise as she was even though they played different sports. Whilst Blandford Castle afforded her the opportunity to continue her workout she noticed they were always doing an activity.

In the morning they went hunting. Well it wasn't a real hunt Lyric assured her they were merely going to chase down the fox and then let it go. In the old days they would have killed it because foxes were considered vermin. After riding like crazy through the woods and running up and down like maniacs they went off and had a shower and then they had lunch by which time Diera was hungry enough to eat anything.

However since Lyric did not see her nephews and nieces often enough they all decided they wanted their aunt to take them to the local race track and none of Lyric's siblings complained which was how she found herself with 5 pre-teens 4 teenagers and 4 children between the ages of 3 and 7 but she loved every moment of it.

They went go-karting in the local town and also on the bumper cars Lyric tossed the children up and down and blew raspberries on their bellies. By the time they got home it was dinner time and

though it had been an exhausting day the younger children had their meal in the nursery whilst the teenagers and adults dressed for dinner with Grand-Pa Barty and Great Uncle Leweson in the main dining room.

The uncles and the parents retired to the library and Lyric and her siblings retired to the drawing room which was much cosier and since Blandford castle actually belonged to Lyric herself it was quite modernised they watched television after dinner together chatted and played board games it was a nice relaxed atmosphere.

Lyric was lying on the sofa, Descant, Cymbal, Clef, Concerto, Symphony's husband and Key, Melody's partner had tossed their bow ties, jackets and waist coats all over the drawing room and were in various states of undress.

Symphony had taken off her shoes, Descant's partner, Waltz had gone up to change and come down in his pyjamas as had Cecily who was wearing her baby dolls. Harmony was in her boxer shorts and t-shirt, Concerto's wife Vibratta had gone to bed, Sheherazade and Vivi, Cymbal and Clef's wives like Diera were still in their evening gowns but had taken off their shoes wraps and other accessories.

They started off playing a very loud and boisterous game of scrabble which Lyric won when she scored 120 with her first word, then they decided to play Monopoly which also looked like Lyric was going to win as well.

"You know there is a reason why we used to bully you when Symphony was not around." Clef glared at his baby sister in disgust when she ruthlessly foreclosed on one of his houses.

"Don't mind them baby I'll protect you from the big bad wolf" Symphony stuck her tongue out at Clef.

Diera knew that they were adults with children, some were CEO's others Doctors, Concerto was an architect and Key was an accountant but they all seemed to revert to childish behaviour giggling and teasing each other with the ease born of long acquaintance. She liked that they included her in their teasing and she liked them all.

Especially the two eldest Symphony and Concerto who seemed to have a witty comment to everything and also managed to keep the peace. Concerto the architect was the eldest followed by Symphony who was a diplomat came next, then Clef and Cymbal the twins then Descant, Melody and Lyric.

Meanwhile in the Library Bartholomew Black and his son Artemus were plotting a diabolical scheme. Only they were not expecting that someone would be in the library listening to that plan.

"I don't have long father?" Artemus said morosely.

"Neither do I?" Barty said with a rasping cough.

"As in my cancer is terminal I will be dead before the end of the year." Barty sighed. He didn't say anything but water pooled in his rheumy eyes and he sniffed.

"Does Lyric know?"

"I haven't told her yet."

"Allegra?"

Again Artemus shook his head.

"What do you want to do?"

"As you know I have Lyric's DNA and her fiancé is quite keen to have her baby."

"What's the problem?"

"The whole marriage thing, Allegra wants to plan a big wedding with 350 people in Ravendale city, Lyric will give Allegra and Diera anything they want but it will take three months to plan and execute. I don't have three months. Then there is the problem of Lyric taking the title. Her children can only get it if they marry and they may not marry timeously to suit my needs or even worse they may postpone having children."

"They may never forgive you for interfering?"

Artemus smiled sickly "I'll be dead by then."

"I will disavow all knowledge of whatever it is you are about to do but you will have my blessing."

"I will need more than your blessing father, I need your help."

"What do you want me to do?"

Artemus sat down and crossed his legs elegantly. "Tomorrow, I will convince Diera to come with me to the fertility clinic. The same fertility clinic that I am running a treatment for Rage and Eden Fenton-Payne. By sheer coincidence I obtained a semen sample from Aidan Voicemail, Diera's brother who died tragically in a car accident.

She will not remember him she would have been too young. When Allegra told me excitedly about Diera I decided to visit and encouraged the relationship between them. It didn't occur to me that they were related till I went to Paul Delaware's funeral at the Firestone Cemetery and saw his picture. Always a beautiful boy his parents had kept his memory alive by putting the picture of him before the drugs not when he became a walking cadaver on his tombstone. "

"I remember Aidan Voicemail, too much money didn't he die of a drug overdose?"

"Yes Paul cut him off when he broke into the house and held up his parents at gun point. He was ready to do anything for money. I offered him some money in exchange for a semen sample. I thought that I could combine it with Lyric's, it was my hope that I could persuade her to have children to carry on the line."

"Even I know that my grand-daughter has a pathological fear of childbirth, that is never going to happen."

"I tried to force her and it backfired. She refused to have any children at all until Diera. By sheer coincidence, Diera is friends with Eden Payne and she grew up with the Paynes. When Eden got married to Rage she asked if I could help them to have children. I saw it as a challenge you know the first man to accomplish cross-ovular fertilisation."

"Is it possible?"

"Yes and I did it. I still needed a male semen in there to spark conception but yes the child carries the DNA of both female parents all that would be needed now is implantation. Eden Fenton-Payne is due for her implantation session next week and will be arriving from America the day after tomorrow. I wanted to take Diera's DNA and do her implantation on the same day and I don't foresee that will be a problem."

"Then why do you need my help?"

"English law allows a civil joining between same-sex couples but I am quite sure that they do not enjoy the same protection as heterosexual couples."

"What are you planning Artemus?"

"I want to marry Diera."

"She's a bit young for you don't you think?"

"I am serious."

"Oh my god! Artemus you have totally lost your mind."

"It is the only way to make sure she inherits the title!" Artemus said in anguish.

"It would kill her! Her father and her erstwhile fiancé? It would destroy her, it would destroy anyone. Lyric is head over heels in love with that girl. I have never seen her like that in my life she would kill you."

"You and I both know that I am right."

"You are taking a gamble Artemus."

"I don't care." Artemus said stubbornly. "I will be long gone by the time she finds out."

"Why don't you marry her by proxy on behalf of Lyric."

"I had considered a marriage by proxy as a viable alternative but what are your reasons for considering it?"

"Firstly, it's a fine legal point and if we get a good Silk, it could be argued all the way to the House of Lords. It could take a hundred years like one of those land cases if it ever became a point of law and by then the law would have changed as well as public opinion or we can just let the later generation worry about it."

"So you'll help me?"

"Yes I believe I will. What do you want me to do?" Bartholomew raised his hands "Bearing in mind that I will be living long enough to see the end of the year barring any unfortunate circumstances."

"I need to get Lyric away from Diera long enough to do the evil deed."

"Evil deed? Impregnating her?"

"No marrying her or rather convincing her to marry Lyric, and soon."

Bartholomew held his chin for awhile and then looked up. His glowing opal eyes so very much like Lyric's caramel coloured ones burned with a brilliant intelligence as he outlined a diabolical plan. "I believe Lyric has business interests in Cascia, it's a little known principality off the coast of South America, it used to be under the Portuguese crown before it gained its independence. Whilst she was there she stumbled on a child trafficking racket. Little boys and girls were being sold to underground gangs who groomed the children and sold them on for use in paedophile rings."

"Yes! Yes! I know about that. She is posing as a man Lyric Blandford who buys such children and then puts them in an orphanage where they are educated, rehabilitated into mainstream society or absorbed into her business."

"I have contacts in Cascia. All we have to do is lure her to Cascia, tell her the orphanage is in danger. She has Allegra's caring nature so I have no doubt she will rush there to save those children. Whilst she is there I will arrange to have her arrested in Cascia."

We then tell Diera that the only way to get Lyric out is for you to marry Lyric by proxy and send evidence of her wedding and medical evidence of Diera's pregnancy to the South American authorities. This should be evidence to show that she is a he and moreover not a defiler of young boys but a legitimate businessman since drag queens, gays and women dressed as men are forbidden in Cascia. She will do it because she loves Lyric and mission accomplished."

"And if she doesn't?"

"Then we'll have to find another person who will wed our little tyrant otherwise the Marquis of Blandford will be spending three years in a Cascian Jail." Bartholomew drawled and inhaled at length on his pipe. "There is going to be one little problem though, how to get Lyric's signature on the proxy form?"

"Oh that I took care of. Lyric and I have interests in a vineyard that I recently sold to Kieren Beaste, I simply slipped the consent form for the proxy wedding in the bundle of consent forms. Our Marquis signed it and Kieren unwittingly forwarded it to me."

"You always were a clever little bugger!"

Artemus grinned "I take after my old man."

Rupert Miller did not betray his hiding place by a flicker of movement till the two men had left. Rupert was actually Allegra's lover hired by Bartholomew Black to give the Black's heirs to inherit the vast funds of the Gaylord estate. Bartholomew knew that his nephew had fertility problems and that the Estate of Blandford did not have much in the way of funds especially with the governments taxes. He therefore arranged for him to marry the very wealthy and very fertile Allegra Gaylord, her father wanted her to marry someone with a title having just obtained a title himself to help his business ventures.

Unfortunately Allegra loved her husband and hated Bartholomew Black and when she discovered that in actual fact Rupert had been paid to be her lover and that all three men were aware of the scheme she was furious. She could understand that her husband's pride was at the root but it galled her that the three men had played with her life and body in such a manner.

Allegra's revenge was to insist on all her children taking her own surname which was Gaylord all except Lyric who was actually her daughter by Artemus and who took the name Gaylord-Black. Eventually they were reconciled and she and Artemus fell in love and she had Lyric. Allegra then divorced Artemus, but continued to live with him. Rupert returned to his role as Chauffeur and for his pains was given a pension.

Allegra refused to speak to Rupert Miller when she discovered that he never loved her but only seduced her for money. Now he only came to the house to collect his monthly allowance. The family secret remained just that a family secret and it was in Rupert's interest that it remained so because he had his own plans for revenge on Bartholomew, Allegra and Artemus.

Rupert had his own connections in Cascia and he was going to make sure that Lyric Gaylord-Black the Marquis of Blandford never returned from Cascia. Bartholomew and Artemus Black loved manipulating people well this time he Rupert Miller would have the last laugh. This time he would win, his son Concerto would inherit Blandford, that was the original agreement he had made with Bartholomew before Lyric was born and he would have the last laugh.

The next day they went to watch the Horses Racing at Epsom and the day after that they went to a regatta on the Blandford river. It was beautiful to watch although Artemus was furious because Diera had missed her fertility appointment. She had spent a very enjoyable day with Lyric until the taller woman had received a letter which seemed to put her on edge.

Now as she sat with Lyric in Blandford gardens she snapped at everyone and was even short with little Timpani. Diera picked up the little girl and dried her tears.

"Don't cry Timi baby Auntie Lyric didn't mean it she just doesn't want you to get hurt." Diera picked up the little girl and gave her a kiss. Timpani always an affectionate child wrapped her little arms around Diera's neck and presently subsided.

"Sowwy will you sing me a song?" The little girl sniffed.

"A song?" Lyric raised her eyebrows. "Auntie Lyric is craaa..."

Diera interjected before she could complete the swear word. "Lyric!!!"

"Not very good at singing songs." Lyric corrected herself.

"Puhlease pretty puhlease with ice cream and cherries on top?"

Lyric started "Mary had a little lamb..." and then for the life of her could not remember the next line to the song. " - and the midwife fainted?" She hazarded a guess.

"Lyric!" Diera smacked her on the forearm which set the little girl to giggling. "Auntie Lyric that's not how the song goes." Timi said.

"Oh why don't you teach me smarty pants!"

Diera and Timi sang the nursery rhyme together and when Symphony came out with a tray of jelly and ice creams she squealed ran for it as fast as her little legs could carry her. The two adults watched her go and slipped arm in arm into the gardens surrounding the castle.

The smell of lilies, roses, and daffodils perfumed the long lazy afternoon. Diera was feeling mellow and relaxed after the wine they had all drank at the picnic.

"So what's going on with you?"

Lyric shook her head. "Just business." Lyric sat down on one of the love seats.

"You wanna tell me about it?" Diera curled up in Lyric's lap and caressed the line of her fiance's collar bone.

"I have to go to Cascia." Lyric said shortly.

"Cascia in Italy or Cascia in South America?"

"Cascia in South America, how do you know about oh Kieren. That woman has a big mouth."
Lyric scowled.

"You wouldn't have told me?"

"I would have. I do have several business interests in Cascia."

"Cascia is a notorious tax haven for drug lords and crime bosses. I hope you are not going to put yourself out for Santiago Martinez he is the only other client I know who has going business concerns in Cascia."

Lyric frowned "I am not going to Cascia because of Mr Martinez, I am going for my own personal business concerns."

"What business concerns?"

"Nothing you need concern yourself with." Lyric said dismissively.

"Lyric, we are going to be married and share our lives together that means you should be able to tell me everything. The good things the bad things everything, I am not some mindless barbie, nor I am some delicate little flower that you need to protect."

Lyric smiled "I know you are not a mindless barbie but having almost lost you in that fire at Elizabeth's flat forgive me if I am feeling a little protective. It's actually nothing particularly important."

Lyric took a deep breath. "As you are aware Cascia is indeed rife with drug lords and crime bosses it is a haven for money laundering and other debauched activities. Prostitution is legalised and because of the poverty on the island child prostitution especially so.

I run an orphanage there for young boys and girls whose parents sell them at the bazaar to the prostitution houses. We buy the children place them in an orphanage educate them so they can earn a living and support themselves. Unfortunately because of the wild wild west mentality of the Cascians, they have no respect for women I have been posing as a man so that I can get out some of the older children.

The Cascians have a form of ah traditional wedding like a handfasting. You give the parents a goat, some cacao leaves and 12 cola nuts and they give their daughter in wedlock. After marriage for a year you can divorce if you don't have children and you can marry as many wives as you want."

"So you're married Lyric is that even legal? Is it going to affect our wedding?"

"No because none of them are or were registry weddings and Cascian law allows men to be polygamous." Lyric continued speaking quickly. "After a divorce I am honour bound to care for the young ladies who range from age 5 to 17 for a year and a day before I return them to their parents.

Normally I just educate them and set them up in a business. I have to go back because well there's been a problem with my paperwork that could affect everyone, nothing major and I will be back within a week though."

"A Week? You'll miss the trip to your father's fertility centre. He's already really upset that we had to cancel the last one, unless of course you really don't want this baby?"

Lyric closed her eyes. "I want the baby, I do, I just, this trip is important people's lives are at stake and I really have to go."

"Artemus will be furious."

"Oh I am quite sure he can handle the disappointment of my absence." Lyric drawled.

Chapter 16

Lyric had been gone for a week and Diera was already missing her. Eden and Rage had come to stay in the castle and to her relief Cecily Harlot as Margot and Harmony now fondly referred to her left with Descant.

Rage had taken her and Eden to the Opera, which was surprisingly entertaining they went to watch Bizet's Carmen which Rage actually managed to stay awake to watch. They got home late and were surprised to find everyone still up and looking desolate Allegra was crying her eyes out on the sofa.

"Allegra? Are you alright?" Diera went to the woman she was rapidly beginning to love as a mother.

"Lyric's plane went missing it's..." She shook her head, "they just called."

Diera screamed and then she fainted. When she woke up she was upstairs in her bedroom with Rage and Eden at her bedside. The next few days went by in a daze. She remembered going to the fertility clinic with Artemus. She desperately wanted this part of Lyric forever so that when he convinced her to have Lyric's baby she agreed. Artemus offered to marry her and even pay her expenses and bills.

Allegra, Harmony, Symphony they all rallied around her and then to her horror the extent of Artemus's illness became obvious to all. By the end of the month they had still not heard from Lyric and Artemus was almost bedridden. The good news was that she was definitely pregnant but it did not bring her as much joy as she thought it would without Lyric to share it with her.

She was sitting at Artemus's bedside with Allegra holding his hand when he turned to her and said.

"Diera, I'm dying. I don't have much time left, a week a month if I am lucky."

"Artemus don't..."

"I want you to marry me."

"What!"

"Artemus No!"

"It's the only way Allegra. I want you to marry me by proxy. We have not heard from Lyric and you know and I know that the longer it takes before we hear any news the more likely it is that she is presumed..."

"Don't even say it." Allegra hissed.

"If you marry me by proxy, I marry you on behalf of Lyric before she's declared dead the marriage will be legal and your child will be the next Marquis of Blandford that is my last wish. Please Diera will you do this for a dying man?"

Diera bit her lip and looked at Allegra who nodded back with tears in her eyes. So they were married but Diera could no longer stay at Blandford castle. Every night she expected Lyric to climb in through her bedroom windows and touch her, she wanted Lyric's moans of pleasure to drive away the constant eerie howling of the wind which sounded like a widow in mourning.

Eventually she decided to return Stateside. Artemus and Allegra insisted on pressing money on her so she would not have to work. She refused to stay in Lyric's apartment because it reminded her so much of the other woman and she felt her absence the most keenly whilst she was there so she decided to move back into a flat share with Elizabeth much to Allegra's annoyance.

The Gaylord-Black clan called her often to make sure she was alright and one or the other of them was always around to offer emotional support or financial support they were like the family she never had, Allegra called her everyday and Concerto and Symphony often came to visit, Descant and Vibratta sent food parcels but without Lyric everything just seemed so dull and lifeless.

Her career was going quite well she had just left Barton Ellington and Black and Kieren gave her a job with Beaste Corps. working as P.A. to the Finance Director Marta "Screaming Eagle" Cigarini.

Her new boss was an intriguing mix of native American and Italian with beautiful black hair and dark brown eyes. She did not have Lyric's elegant languid grace but she had a powerfully muscular build and that calmness solid sense of security about her that reminded her of Lyric.

She was not as domineering or as arrogantly aggressive as Lyric. She sighed because she compared every potential lover to Lyric, not that she was planning on going into any relationship with Marta although the other woman had asked her out on a date a few times Diera had politely refused and that seemed to be an end to the matter.

She was just making her way back when she thought she saw a familiar person walk into her office. She could not see the person's face but she knew was not expecting anyone. She walked into her office shut the door behind her and was about to challenge the person when her heart skipped a beat.

"Lyric!" She gasped.

Lyric's voice was hard and cold. "Artemus is dead and he left you everything in his will. He cut off my mother, my siblings, my nephews, my....Diera!"

Diera the room seemed to spin and Lyric rushed forward and caught her before she could slump to the floor. When she regained consciousness she found herself lying on the couch in her office. She struggled to sit up and found Lyric kneeling before her holding a glass of water in her hands.

Lyric tilted the glass against her lips ignoring her sullen resistance and a trickle of water repelled by the compressed seam of her lips snaked down the corner of her lips. To her absolute shock Lyric licked the droplets off her chin before they could fall onto her silk blouse.

"Stop that!" She gasped wiping the back of her hand where Lyric's moist tongue had just flicked at her skin. "What the hell do you think you are doing?"

"Well I didn't want you to become a contestant in a wet t-shirt competition." Lyric lifted her head so Diera could see the sexual taunting in her honey coloured eyes. She hated the way Lyric effortlessly disrupted her senses.

"I find it extremely interesting that your boss kept referring to you by your maiden name, could it be that you have been deliberately vague about your husband, Mrs Gaylord-Black, like the fact that he is my father, hmm were you ashamed that people would find out you had whored your body out to an old man my darling Step-mama?

"Don't call me that!"

"Why not you married him!"

"Lyric that's"

"Distasteful?" Lyric paused and leaned forward "Obscene?"

"Ridiculous!"

"Hmm but technically correct and Papa was always big on ridiculous technicalities."

"Yes he was and He did not marry me for himself, He married me on your behalf."

"What!" Lyric stared at her in abject disbelief "He did what?!"

"At the ceremony he said he was representing you and since you could not be there you were marrying me by proxy We thought you were dead!!! He produced all the documents and the marriage was conducted and signed at the registry legally."

"So you married me without my permission?"

"No your father married me without your permission." Diera said reasonably "I didn't expect him to leave me anything in his will." She meant it. If he had stuck to his original agreement there would have been no reason for Lyric's anger.

Lyric's cynical laughter cut her off. "Off course why bother with the small change when you've already got your hot little hands on the main prize. She drawled planting her hands on either side of Diera where she sat in the leather chair.

"I don't know what you are talking about."

"No? Do you honestly think that Papa would have allowed any child of his to go financially uncared for? This little scheme that the two of you cooked up so that the child you carry inherits everything to the total exclusion of my mother and my family is absolutely untenable.

I have my own means so I do not worry about that but even the controlling interest in my father's company would go to this child of yours to be held in trust by you? That makes me extremely uneasy."

"What exactly are you implying Lyric? Because if you have something you want to say I'd rather you said it instead of all this cryptic nonsense"

"I am talking about you and my father having a baby."

"Lyric!"

"Artemus is a cunning Machiavellian devil. He wanted me to have children to carry on the precious family name. When I started dragging my feet he had me shipped to Cascia and detained in a Cascian prison whilst he paid you to undergo artificial insemination in his newly developed IVF procedure with a high rate of success. Naturally this happened weeks before your wedding because he wanted to be sure you were confirmed with a viable pregnancy."

"You are mad! I don't know where you get your ideas from I am not pregnant with your father's child! Why would he marry me on your behalf and then have a baby with me?"

"Papa was always a stickler for details and back up plans you could be carrying anything from twins to quads. He would have wanted the procedure to be successful."

Diera blanched but Lyric continued blithely on "Multiple births often feature in fertility treatments." Lyric's words were incisive and direct like a surgeon's scalpel.

Diera became aware she was still being held in Lyric's arms. She struggled out of the embrace.

"How dare you burst in here with all these wild and crazy accusations? Let me go!"

Lyric finally let go of her captive hands and slid her hands down to rest on her lower belly. She glared defiantly at the black haired witch who hovered above her confident that there was not even a swell in the waistband of her corporate skirt. She would not let Lyric goad her into giving anything away.

Lyric splayed her fingers on the silky fabric of her blouse. "So do you often faint like that at the drop of a hat or was it my bombshell good looks that felled you."

Diera rolled her eyes. That was the Lyric she knew and loved confident and arrogant to a fault. She pursed her lips refusing to say another word.

"Aren't you even the slightest bit interested in how I got the juicy details?"

"There are no juicy details. What you have just described is not true and highly speculative, this is all about you and your sick fantasies."

For some reason Lyric seemed to find her words highly amusing and a smile played about her lips. She seized advantage of the dark woman's lightened mood.

"So would you mind letting me up? Some of us actually have a job to do."

"Actually I do mind." Lyric's hands moved to the pearl buttons on her silk blouse and Diera slapped the determined swarthy hands away.

"Don't you dare!"

One dark knife shaped brow rose up mockingly. It was the wrong thing to say to a woman who lived life on her own terms at break neck speed and to whom the word impossible was nothing but a phrase used by other people.

Diera gasped as Lyric calmly shackled both her wrists in one dark swarthy hand and proceeded to loosen the buttons on her blouse. She was even more annoyed when Lyric then leisurely transferred her attention to her heaving breasts cupping and lifting them for her bold appraisal with gleaming eyes.

"Is it my fertile imagination or are your breasts more lush than they were three months ago?"

"Lyric!"

Lyric seemed to be in a world of her own as her hand gently closed round the firm mound of Diera's right breast. "I understand pregnancy makes them more sensitive too..." Lyric said as she rubbed her thumbs teasingly across the turgid tip and lowered her head to taste her taut upstanding nipple.

Diera felt her tingling touch as her nipples pushed eagerly against the lacy constrictions of her bra, her treacherous body responded to Lyric's sensual assault. Her pupils had dilated so much her caramel eyes were black with passion and a heated smouldering lust that echoed in her own body.

She heard herself moan and Lyric raised her head so their eyes met, a triumphant smile hovered on her sultry lips. Lyric kissed her and let her hands go.

"Touch me sweeting, I need you to touch me." Lyric whispered against her lips. Diera groaned and slid her arms around Lyric's neck, her fingers sliding through her thick black hair. Lyric nuzzled her neck and her hands fumbled for the clasp of her bra.

"Lyric we need to stop this."

"Now that you are pregnant your hormones will be going crazy and I read somewhere that pregnant women need lots and lots of sex."

Any moment now Lyric would have her writhing on the floor begging to be made love to and the fear of her vulnerability exploded away her sensual enchantment, she slapped the dark head above hers.

"Take your hands off me!" How many times do I have to tell you that I'm not pregnant with your father's child! I thought I was marrying you and that I was going to be your wife I never slept with your father and I am not pregnant with your father's child okay I am not!"

Lyric moved away from her and sat up to stroke her cheek reddened by the outline of Diera's angry fingers. Diera sighed with relief as she finally had a chance to do up the buttons of her blouse with shaking fingers.

"Are you trying to tell me my father was not entirely truthful with me? Even though he was on his death bed?"

"Death bed? Artemus is dead?"

"He told me...." She paused and said the last word slowly softly so it was loaded with meaning and very clear, "Everything." Lyric's softly spoken words were more devastating than the slap Diera had inflicted on her ex-girlfriend.

"In hospital. We talked, He wanted to clear his conscience. How he'd hated the fact that I was gay and he was infertile, he'd become impotent from the drugs he was taking for his cancer. He

did not want his legacy to die out. As my father's only child he envied my mother her six children by her lover and he tried to get me to marry and have children.

I decided the best way to get him off my back was to donate some eggs to his IVF clinic and then I told him to go ahead and populate the world with his genes and leave me alone. I didn't think the old boy would do it though.

In hospital he told me how he'd taken my eggs and DNA and combined them with your brother's, Aidan Voicemail not knowing the donor was even related to you, something about the baby being special, he wanted me to forgive him and he was worried about you told me to protect you and then went off on one saying I should take responsibility for once in my life, for you, for our baby."

"And you believed him?" Diera asked incredulously

"Not at first. I checked the records at the clinic though to see if you or your brother had ever been there for treatment."

"How? there's no way you could have legal access to that sort of information."

Lyric shrugged "Who said anything about legal. Besides it's my name on the door."

"Lyric you didn't!"

"It is our baby."

"No it's my baby Lyric! Mine!" She cried and closed her eyes as she heard herself make the admission. Lyric was an excellent lawyer cross-examination was her forte she could get blood out of a stone if she wanted. How many times had she seen her do just that in court.

"So Diera you and I are going to be parents it appears you will be having my baby, I'd say that makes us intimately connected don't you."

"There is no We. I underwent a medical procedure which had nothing to do with you."

"Nevertheless I am responsible for you and this child."

"Lyric you do not need to feel responsible for me."

"I don't? There's also the matter of my son or daughter to consider."

"But you told me you never wanted children!" She accused.

"Yes I did. But you and my father took that decision out of my hands when you both decided on this course of action."

"Lyric I don't need anything from you I will sign anything you want me to, give your mother back her life interest in the estate anything just leave me alone."

"And what will you live on when you can't work? Who will help you out with the baby? It's not easy being a single mother you know. That is why where possible, couples even gay couples co-parent"

"I have a network of friends I can rely on and besides there are lots of single parents in the world and they manage alright"

"You're extremely emotional aren't you? I always had you figured as this icy cool and extremely sensible person. Maybe it's all these hormones raging through your body." Lyric's hands slid up under her blouse to the silken skin of her belly and Diera jumped.

"What are you doing?"

"I just wanted to touch my wife and feel my baby."

Her use of the word my and the possessive way she was looking at her made Diera very nervous. Her hands were gentle and faintly warm. "Would you stop that you are making me feel nauseous."

"Oh have you been suffering from morning sickness?" The unrelenting brown eyed gaze studied her thoughtfully.

"No I am as healthy as a horse which is why I don't need you."

The black eyebrows darkened and drew together in a black scowl. "We'll soon see about that!"

"Lyric I would like you to leave."

"But I just got here."

"Now!" She insisted "I have a job to do and a baby to support."

"Well I am at least glad you admitted you were pregnant but did you tell your boss I am sure she is not going to be happy when you tell her you are about to go on maternity leave."

"Lyric I am working for Kieren and she is a very considerate boss."

"Oh how considerate?" Lyric's eyebrows drew close together into a scowl.

"Lyric just go." Diera played her trump card "You're raising my blood pressure and that is not good."

"Very well I will come and pick you up tonight for dinner."

"Lyric just go!!!"

One week later and Diera had still not called her and Lyric had no idea where she lived. Eden and Rage refused to talk, Mercy and Angel did not want to get involved and Kieren simply wasn't taking her calls. Finally Lyric had enough and stormed into Eden's office angrily.

"Where is she?"

"She does not want to see you right now. You need to give her more time."

Lyric folded her arms across her chest and scowled her foot tapping a rapid staccato on the stone floor. "Fine when you see her you tell her this. I will file for divorce and arrange for her to be served with divorce papers and if she is not at work I will apply for substituted service and name Kieren as one of the people responsible for the divorce then I will have it pasted at Kieren's offices as her last known address. I will also be making an application for the return of my DNA. You can tell her that under the law the baby she is carrying is 100% mine.

The father is deceased and the child's DNA is mine which makes me its mother with all the attendant rights. She only has the rights of a surrogate and I will drag her through a very long and nasty custody battle if she does not agree to see me in her lawyer's office within the next seven days. You are a good lawyer so I imagine that you will tell her that I can not only have her prosecuted for conspiracy for abduction, theft of my DNA and whatever else my nasty little mind can come up with I will make sure I personally conduct her cross-examination myself."

"Lyric, Diera just needs time to come to terms with the fact that..."

"I am no longer interested in what Diera wants. If she doesn't want a war on her hands she better be at the meeting with me."

When Lyric left Eden relayed the message Lyric had given her to Diera.

"Can she do that?"

"Diera, Lyric is a brilliant lawyer. I think that if she can prove that the baby is indeed hers and that the process was completed without her permission that you could indeed be facing criminal charges amongst other things. Look Lucy and I will go with you just listen to her."

"If you and Lucy are going with me who's going with her?"

"I think she said she would be representing herself."

"That's hardly fair aren't you lawyers always saying that you shouldn't represent yourselves?"

"Lyric is a big girl and besides you are both my friends. If I feel things are getting out of hand I will make her bring another lawyer and cut short the meeting. I have a feeling though that she just wants to talk to you."

Meanwhile at the Ravendale social club Lyric had decided to go and work out. She had done a two hundred lengths of the swimming pool after a bout of fencing to take the edge of her aggression. She was feeling pleasantly mellow after her massage but as she formulated her plan to win back Diera she brooded over her brandy. She'd only had a glass when she saw a young woman with short red hair and a provocatively short skirt approach her.

"Lyric?"

"Who wants to know?" Lyric fairly growled back at her.

"It's me Bianca you know Cassandra's friend from the auction. You bet on and won Diera Voicemail. Bet you lucked out there. Diera was always such a prude in high school."

Lyric's brows cleared as she remembered the face. "So what are you doing here?"

"I heard you were single and decided to come and ask you out."

"I am not in the market."

"Not even for a one night stand?" Bianca moved forward trailed her finger down Lyric's neck, she tugged at the collar of her t-shirt with her index finger before letting it go abruptly.

Lyric scowled "There's only one woman I want right now and you're not her."

"You could pretend I was her."

"I don't..."

"Hush!" Bianca leaned forward and kissed Lyric's chin. "Just close your eyes...that's my girl."

Bianca moved into Lyric's body and plastered herself to the woman on the barstool. However Lyric was not interested, there was only one woman Lyric wanted and she was not the woman standing before her. Lyric snatched the woman's hands and leaned forward speaking softly into her ear.

"I am not interested." She re-iterated the last three words and grabbing her gym bag and stormed off slamming the door of the bar behind her.

She heard someone clap their hands behind her and she turned around to see Rage, Mercy and Kieren standing behind her. Kieren was not surprised to find that Lyric had a bland inscrutable expression on her face but her stance was aggressively hostile as though she was looking for any excuse to explode into action. Rage stopped clapping her hands cleared her throat and folded them behind her back.

"You! What the hell are you doing here?"

"We're here to help." Kieren said quietly.

"I don't need your kind of help Kieren, tell me how long have you been sniffing around Diera's skirts?" Lyric went and stood toe to toe with Kieren invading her personal space. "Did you kiss her yet?"

Kieren looked away guiltily. "This is insane. I have no idea what you're talking about."

"No? You gave her a job and then told security not to let me into the building?"

"What did you want me to do leave her to starve on the streets so you can bully her into moving in with you on your own terms?"

"I know you very well Kieren, you've wanted her since you set eyes on her and I am not going to give her up without a fight."

"Oh please what are you going to do pistols at dawn?"

Lyric's eyes narrowed. "Maybe you forgot that when you almost lost your business last year you asked me to take out a personal guarantee on a hundred million dollar credit guarantee bond on your last LPO believe me when I say that right now I am quite ready to sell that risk to the van Buren Corporation." Lyric took out her mobile phone

"All it takes is one phone call." Lyric finished softly.

The others were shocked when Kieren paled and licked her lips nervously. "Ah Lyric I swear I haven't touched her."

Lyric raised an eyebrow and Kieren hung her head in shame. "Alright I tried to kiss her and she gave me a dirty slap for my efforts and before you hit me you should know that I was wearing her hand prints for a week."

A little smile played about the English Woman's lips. Diera had never slapped her when she attempted to kiss her. Instead she'd moaned, melted deliciously against Lyric's body and wound her arms around Lyric's neck and...

"Hello earth to Lyric..." Mercy was waving her hand in front of the English woman's face.

Lyric cleared her throat. "I want a meeting first thing on Monday morning, with Diera and her lawyers or whoever it is you guys decide is stupid enough to take me on."

"Lyric this isn't a you against the world situation you know we are all on your side we know you and Diera love each other we just don't want you to hurt each other unnecessarily." Mercy said quietly. "Look instead of bringing in lawyers why don't we bring in a mediator or a therapist someone more likely to take a holistic approach instead of an adversarial one."

"Hey Diera wants to fight me I'm gonna fight back." Lyric shrugged and picked up her bags. She made a writing motion in the air and a waiter appeared with her bill. She paid and snapped her wallet shut.

Rage shook her head. "It doesn't have to be this way Lyric."

"Monday, Kieren you just make sure she's there."

Kieren watched her go and turned to the other two "I am so not looking forward to Monday morning."

Monday morning dawned bright and early, Lyric strode into Kieren's board room alone. On one side of the table sat Diera with Eden and Lucy and on the other side sat Kieren. At the head of the table was a woman in a powerful red suit with blonde hair that Lyric realized was in fact Judge Merilee Fairweather.

"Let the games begin." Lyric smiled ferally.

"Before we begin could I talk to Lyric alone?" Diera said tentatively.

Lyric nodded and followed her into Kieren's inner sanctum. Diera took a deep breath she had never realized how intimidating Lyric could be and in her black trouser suit and white shirt she looked very powerful and sexy and hot. She licked her lips nervously and Lyric fairly shivered from the smouldering hot gaze of Diera's cerulean eyes.

Normally when Diera looked at her like that Lyric's pants would be round her ankles her shirt open and her bra pushed aside whilst the sexy little blonde had her wicked way with her dark haired lover.

"What do you want Lyric?"

"World Peace would be nice."

"Lyric..."

"What do you want Diera?"

"I want this baby." Diera placed her hands on her stomach protectively and Lyric felt her heart shatter inside. Diera did not want her she just wanted the baby so once more she would be on the outside looking in second best. Lyric was tempted to just give up and go somewhere and lick her wounds on the other hand she was so angry she wanted to annoy and vexate the other woman and get in her face so she would be forced to acknowledge her feelings.

"Alright. How about we spend two weeks together you and I in my cousin's hotel in Lincoln Woods. I want to make sure you would be a good mother to my child, children and if I am

satisfied I will sign papers so that we share custody and you will return my father's estate and inheritance to my mother."

"Lyric I can't just take off two weeks off work?"

"Believe me Kieren will give you two weeks off if I ask her. She does not want to get on my bad side just now."

"And you will leave me alone."

"I will never darken your door again fair lady."

"Alright." Diera sighed and then squeaked when Lyric neatly pinned her back against the wall of the conference room and then lowered her head. She held her Diera's chin in one hand.

"We'll seal it with a kiss shall we?" Lyric drawled capturing her lips and kissed her deeply and thoroughly. Diera responded wrapping her arms around her tall dark lover and sighed she felt like she was coming home.

Rage opened the door to reveal the two lovers engaged in a torrid clinch, it took a while for her to realize what was going on and she hurriedly shut the door.

"I think that the negotiations have been successfully concluded at this point." Rage informed the others.

Chapter 17

Erienne and Angel had helped Diera pack her bags out of the car when she arrived at the hotel in Vermont. It was cold and the snow was falling thickly during the Christmas season. The long ride to the cabin was made in a relaxed atmosphere as the three friends caught up with each other.

Although it was ostensibly a hotel they were more like self-catering apartments. Angel had originally planned to stay with them before Diera and Lyric's break up because she was still feeling very raw over her break up with Sabrina and Erienne had, one of her infamous quarrels with her wife Maxi. Their children were staying with Maxi's parents as they did at that time of the year and then usually they all just congregated for Christmas. This time however Erienne needed a breathing space to decide what to do about her relationship.

Lyric greeted them all at the door with a hot drink whilst herself and Angel carried the rest of the bags into the house. Erienne and Diera made a simple but warming dinner consisting of a casserole some salad and bread with some red wine for everyone but Diera who had some sparkling grape juice.

At first the conversation started off sporadically because the cold mountain air made everyone ravenous but as they relaxed into their conversation Diera found herself glaring at Lyric.

The dark woman had been making sexual innuendos all night making her sexually aware of her at every opportunity teasing and flirting with her and driving her to distraction.

"I find my preferences are changing." She was talking to Angel but all her attention was focused on Diera and left her in no doubt to whom she was referring to. "These days I've developed a taste for something really plump and juicy that I can really sink my teeth into."

"Plump!" Diera slammed the dishwasher shut as she remembered the conversation. Naturally everything had gone right over Angel's head Erienne however had been had put to stop laughing throughout the meal.

"I think I might join the army do a tour in the Middle East."

"Wow Angel that's like straight out of left field."

"I think I may need to get my priorities straight. I loved Sabrina and I thought she loved me, I think my judgement is not what it should be."

Erienne shook her head. "Sabrina has always had issues with commitment, you are probably the longest relationship she has ever had in her life and she panicked."

"I don't know Sabrina that well but I rather think the problem is that she likes her home comforts. You know a regatta on the Lagoon, first class tickets to Paris, champagne all the way some people just can't live without those things." Lyric shrugged.

"You think Sabrina is one of those people."

"I don't think Angel I know."

"That's a bit uncharitable Lyric." Diera interrupted.

"Don't mind Diera she always sees good in everybody even a debauched reprobate like myself."

"I think Lyric is right, I think Sabrina just panicked. Rocco is not exactly the richest man on earth and everyone knows he is tied to Kate's apron strings and Kate is the one with all the money."

"Well," Angel got up "I don't want someone who wants me for my money I will just join the army see the world maybe come back and set up my own business. I hope I can always count on you guys."

Lyric nodded and held out her hand which Angel shook. "You know you can."

"Great! How about a game of scrabble? All of us against Lyric." Angel grinned and rubbed her hands together.

"That's hardly fair." Erienne giggled.

"Oh it's more than fair she's that good." Diera grinned joining in the fun of teasing Lyric.

They played a boisterous game of scrabble and as night came on Lyric stretched and fell asleep with her head in Diera's lap. The other two finished watching the movie Goldheart and they all decided to return to their rooms.

Once the decision was made Lyric's tiredness miraculously disappeared as did the cloak of restrained civility which she wore like a thin veneer whilst in the company of the other women. When she returned to the room they shared she expected Lyric to be stripped and she readied for another sensual battle.

However now they were alone in the bedroom they were to share Lyric was at once back to her restless and openly aggressive self, only now it was colored with a primal possessiveness in her frankly leering gaze that made Diera's spine tingle with apprehensive excitement.

Lyric stood scowling blackly watching Diera open one of the wardrobes and start busily folding spare blankets and a quilt on the floor. Her arms folded across her chest wherein beat her blackheart. She did not let her finish making her makeshift bed but petulantly grabbed the bed clothes from Diera and tossed them onto the sofa.

"I am not sleeping on the floor!" Lyric growled at her.

"And I am not sleeping on that bed with you. This is for me. You are bigger and stronger than me Lyric and I am under no illusions that I can keep you out of that bed."

Lyric's eyes narrowed then she started taking off her clothes angrily. The black suit jacket was the first to hit the floor as she kept her dark gaze trained on Diera. She stepped out of her hand made Italian Bruna Cacciatore shoes and threw them across the room. Lyric's eyes never left Diera's wide eyed cerulean gaze as she slowly undid the studs and cufflinks on her shirt tossing them negligently into the sterling silver container made to hold them.

Diera whimpered with the dawning comprehension that the English woman was going to strip naked right before her eyes and she fled to the bathroom to the sound of dark mocking laughter.

She deliberately took as long as possible to shower and clean her teeth, scrubbing as she had never scrubbed before, washing and drying her hair and even giving herself a manicure and pedicure hoping that by the time she got out Lyric would have gotten fed up and fallen harmlessly asleep.

She moisturized her skin and then groaned when she looked at the subconscious choice of nightwear she'd packed for the trip. She wished she owned a prim cotton nightdress or a pair of passion killing pajamas.

She'd always worn efficient corporate suits to work but the linen and wool fabric required for the corporate world was often rough against her skin and she preferred to wear soft silky blouses and satin and lace next to her skin ditto for the slinky sexy nightwear she often wore in bed.

She slipped on her green satin dressing robe which Lyric had bought for her on one of their shopping trips over her nightwear, a dressing robe she rarely used and opened the door of the bathroom gingerly.

She almost sighed with relief when she opened the door and saw that Lyric had turned off the main lights but left the bedside lamps on. Lyric was lying on her stomach, her face half buried in the pillows and more importantly she wasn't moving which could only mean she was fast asleep. Diera brushed aside the faint twinge of disappointment she felt and went over to the sofa to arrange the meager bedclothes Lyric had tossed in her fit of temper.

They were not there. She clenched her fists and turned around to find Lyric regarding her challengingly. The wretched woman was now propped up on her pillows and watching her lazily from under long thick black lashes. All Diera could think was how beautiful she looked and wonder if she was naked under the bed clothes.

"You're supposed to be asleep." Diera said curtly belting her robe defensively around her.

"Well I'm not." She cocked her head to one side and regarded her mockingly "Did you think I would make it easy for you?"

Diera no longer had any illusions on that score. She had hoped she would have time to repair her defences before another confrontation. She ignored Lyric's taunting reply and looked around for the missing bedclothes.

"Where are they?"

"Where are what?"

"Don't pretend you don't know what I am talking about, what did you do with the spare bedclothes?"

Lyric shrugged nonchalantly and nodded tossing her head at the open window as she spoke. "I threw them out of the window. Why don't you come to bed so we can discuss this like mature adults."

She ignored Lyric's innocent expression she had a very good idea of the kind of discussion that Lyric Gaylord-Black had in mind.

"I am not getting into bed with an immoral womanising lecher like you."

"That's a bit rich coming from you. First there was Nigel or was it Lucy then there was Bradley..."

"How dare you! I am nothing like you. You have had more lovers than I have had hot dinners!"

"The rumours of my sexploits have been greatly over exaggerated I assure you. The truth is I have always been extremely selective about my bed mates."

"I am not interested in your sex life!"

"Yes you are." Lyric drawled "Otherwise you wouldn't have brought it up,"

Lyric moved shifting the bedclothes which fell down to her waist and Diera realised she was not wearing her pyjama top. Her perky breasts stood to attention her dark nipples were large and hard signalling her arousal beckoning, enticingly. Her flat stomach was beautifully muscled begging to be stroked and caressed by Diera's eager fingers which fairly itched and tingled to touch her.

The maddening woman sat back confidently on the bed her arms now folded behind her head. Her thick black hair looked as though it had been mussed up by a passionate lover in a word she looked gorgeous.

"You should know that there is absolutely no way on God's green earth that I would allow my pregnant wife to sleep on the sofa or the floor for that matter. Apart from anything else it can't be good for the baby."

"What the hell do you care!" Diera barely managed to bite back a sob of frustration, alarmed by Lyric showing any potential interest in her baby and yet at the same time feeling warmed by Lyric's possessiveness.

"Why don't you come over here and find out."

Her heart fluttered in her chest. She was not going anywhere near that lithe golden body she wouldn't be able to resist the temptation. As long as Lyric stayed far away she could maintain her anger and distance. She tossed her head defiantly.

"Fine I'll just get myself another room." She turned to leave prepared to dash for the door if necessary. There was no explosion of movement from the dark woman and when she got to the door she soon realised why Lyric remained so relaxed. She rattled the door handle in frustration and eventually whirled round.

"Where is the key?"

Lyric grinned smugly and spread her hands out. "I'll give you a clue. It's somewhere in this bed. Why don't you come over here and feel around. I'll let you know when you're getting hot."

"You Lyric Gaylord-Black are the most infuriating person I have ever met. Sometimes I think I hate you!"

"Evidently not enough to have a baby with, unless of course you have changed your mind about that too and are planning on doing something about it."

"That's a terrible thing to say!" Diera gasped

"I would never hurt our baby. However what you fail to realise is that once you and my dearly departed Papa hatched the plot to manipulate me by using my DNA to make this child you chose me as your forever after."

Lyric's eyes flared with a barely suppressed anger. "Now are you coming to bed or do I have to come and fetch you?"

Diera shook her head when Lyric started to get up and squeezed her eyes shut. She could feel Lyric getting closer with every nerve in her body. Her imagination went into overdrive. If she moved her hands a fraction she would be touching hot smooth satin skin.

"You can look you know." Lyric drawled sardonically in her sexy cultured English drawl. The one that sent shivers down Diera's spine making her think all manner of sinful thoughts and delicious deeds. She licked her lips nervously and whimpered.

"Lyric please..." She raised her hand to ward her off.

Lyric took her hand and placed a soft kiss on her palm then kissed her fingertips one by one so that Diera felt every little scorching kiss sear a path to the centre of her being culminating in a tingle between her thighs. She placed Diera's hands on her shoulders and then taking Diera's apprehensive left hand, dragged it down her body, over her chest, over her breasts, over her stomach and abdomen before finally leaving it to rest on her hip.

Diera's eyes flew open and she looked down in disappointed relief when she realised Lyric was wearing a pair of black shiny satin pyjama trousers loosely belted at the waist by a draw string.

They settled low on her hips dipping on her muscled belly suggestively hinting at the way to the short dark hairs that Diera knew covered her sex. Diera tried to ignore the sight of her golden tan breasts and the dark brown and large hard nipples that were straining out for her touch.

"Disappointed?"

Diera shook her head unable to speak as Lyric attempted to ease the satin dressing robe off her shoulders. After undoing her belt, which slid to the floor, her robe barely stayed on, precariously revealing the pink straps of her night dress.

Diera raised her head up to protest and then shockingly their lips met. Totally unprepared for the sensual assault, Lyric's tongue slipped moistly past the guard of her teeth and stroked the inside of her mouth.

Her body was like an addict craving a drug it had been denied for so long and she moaned opening her mouth to deepen the kiss. Her hands thrust into Lyric's thick black hair and Diera unashamedly did some ravishing of her own plunging recklessly into the inviting moistness of Lyric's mouth as their tongues flickered over each other in a compulsively erotic mating ritual as old as time.

It was when she felt Lyric's hand trying to slip off the straps of her shoulders that she pulled away.

"We can't!" Diera turned her head away with a sob.

"We can't what?" Lyric muttered her voice clouded with passion as she sought access to Diera's mouth across her averted cheek.

"We can't go to bed together."

Lyric raised her head her stormy eyes sultry beneath long thick black eyelashes.

"Why the hell not? We've done it before."

"We just can't!" Diera whispered and swallowed hard. She could literally see the impending storm gather in Lyric's narrowed honey eyed gaze. Diera was surprised when Lyric did not degenerate into a sulk or explode into a furious temper tantrum. Her lover appeared to have learned some measure of self control because she actually managed to hold her emotions in check.

"How much? Would you do it if I paid you?" She asked softly kissing her temple. "Would you take your clothes off for me? Touch me? How much did you charge my father to carry my baby inside you? How much would you charge me to touch you tell me Diera..."

By the time she'd uttered the last word she had pinned Diera to the door, trapped between the wooden door and 6'0 of English black haired raging cold fury. She was conscious of Lyric's trembling frame as her thigh slid insidiously between Diera's legs, whilst her burning questions battered her horrified emotions.

"It wasn't like that!" Diera gasped.

"Did the money really mean that much to you? Hell Diera I was, am crazy about you all you had to do was ask I would have given you anything you wanted."

"Would you stop talking about money!" Diera yelled back and hit her on the shoulder. Not that it mattered Lyric hardly seemed to feel it.

"Then why? What could you possibly have to gain?"

Lyric was so smart but it still hadn't occurred to her because it had never mattered to her but it meant everything to Diera.

"Your baby! That's what I had to gain your baby, I wanted a part of you that would always love me, a part of you that would always be mine, ours, you and me together. I only took part in the wedding ceremony because your father insisted. He said he was old fashioned and he wanted our baby and I to have your name."

Lyric stared speechlessly at her wife.

Diera folded her arms defensively under her breasts. She'd already let slip that she had wanted Lyric's baby something of her when Lyric got tired of her and left. She herself knew she could only ever love Lyric and no one else. She did not want the Englishwoman to know how much she loved her. So she tried to divert her attention away from the words she had inadvertently let slip.

"I wanted a baby of my own. Artemus promised me one I never intended to inherit a trust fund or take your mother's money." She watched the expressions on Lyric's face change from stunned incomprehension to utter incredulity.

"Well what was I supposed to do? I am not married and not into boys." She grimaced. "There was no way I was going to get pregnant naturally unless I picked up a man for sex" She shuddered.

"Not to mention the risks involved but I wanted a child so much. You drove off Bradley and Nigel and every time I tried to discuss having children with you, you told me in no uncertain terms you did not want to be burdened by any children. After we were told that your plane went down and you might be dead your father saw me crying and we agreed to go ahead even though we both thought you were gone.

He said we should do the wedding quickly before you were officially proclaimed dead and that he could arrange for me to marry you by proxy. You know how old fashioned your parents can be I did not see anything wrong in his request that we marry so that your children would have your name, he made it all sound like a sensible and logical thing to do."

"All?" Lyric drawled "So it never bothered you that you would be married to my father whilst having my baby."

"I did not marry your father, I married you besides, He told me he was going to give your child to another woman to carry and that if I did not agree another woman would and that woman would be in your life in a way that I never could. I should never have left the way I did but I thought you were dead I didn't even know about Artemus death I was so hurt and lonely and so very confused."

"Oh Diera." Lyric gathered the sobbing woman into her arms smoothing her hair and letting her sob out her repressed anger. Comforting kisses became hot kisses, hot kisses became long hot kisses then long hot languorous kisses and then...

"Lyric?"

"Diera, take me, let me make love to the mother of my children...please." Shaken by the intensity of the need in her voice Diera returned Lyric's kisses.

Lyric groaned when she felt Diera's response she wanted to taste her and draw out their love making as long as possible she could spend the whole night getting lost in Diera, just exploring her, arousing her, tasting her, touching her making her sob with desire, whimper with pleasure and orgasmic delight. She'd been a fool once, not again. She was not going to let Diera leave again at least not without a bloody good fight.

"One night Lyric. Just one night." Diera said between their kisses.

"Yes one night." Lyric agreed and Diera sighed with relief. She would not have been so relieved if she had glimpsed the victorious smile on the English woman's lips.

Lyric carried her to bed and slipped off the annoying robe and just stared. Beneath the shapeless robe Diera wore a shimmering wisp of pink silk that fairly skimmed her body to the top of her thighs. Spaghetti straps held up a plunging neckline that exposed most of the upper curves of her breasts and the bodice stretched provocatively between the two concealed peaks and then fell away to follow the indentation of her waist before falling away at her hips.

"You sexy little witch. You wore this for me." Lyric rasped staring at Diera intently her yellow flecked brown eyes dilated till they were almost black with lust. "You knew all along you were going to say yes." Her voice trailed off into a hoarse whisper.

Diera shook her head entranced by the rapidly darkening all consuming look in her smoky brown eyes. "No...I... all my nightclothes are..." she swallowed unable to finish the sentence hypnotised by the raw need in her lover's eyes.

"Sexy, very sexy." Lyric purred, rolling the words at the back of her throat like a well satisfied cat inching the silky confection up her thighs. Diera kissed her closing the distance between their bodies unable to take the separation from Lyric much longer.

Their bodies moved together as they made love and shuddered their release together. She basked in the light of admiration she saw in Lyric's eyes and gloried in the power she held over her sleek, sexy, sophisticated lover shuddering in her arms and begging for her touch, trembling under the lightest stroke of her tongue, relishing in her possession and being possessed in turn with savage abandon.

The next day brought with it blue skies and a bright sunny morning. As sunlight streamed through the windows Diera bathed in the heat of the sun stretching her body like a satisfied cat,

she arched her back and pushed her toes out towards the bottom of the bed, stretched out her arms and pushed her shoulders back as a delicious sense of well being permeated every pore of her.

She nestled on her side against the warm body beside her and a satisfied smile curved her lips as she drifted off on the wings of a fantasy where Lyric was lying on her back tied to the bed and begging Diera to take her back, offering to do all sorts of lovely things to her body and the sensuous assault on her senses continued drifting up her belly to her breasts encircling her soft white globes and...

Diera's eyes popped open when she realised Lyric was gently suckling on her breasts. The dark woman then kissed her lips possessively as though she had every right to do so.

"You were having an erotic dream." Lyric grinned and Diera flushed as the English drawl continued ruthlessly, "You were squirming and sighing and calling out my name."

"That's probably because you were touching me!" Diera accused Lyric could hardly deny it when her hands were still cupping Diera's breasts.

However the Englishwoman was totally unapologetic "I couldn't resist. You're so sexy when you're asleep all soft and pliant and innocently arousing. I love the roundness of your bottom and I like the way your nipples fill my mouth..." Lyric's hypnotising words were soon followed by her actions and Diera moaned as they fell into another session of slow languorous limb melting love making.

Finally utterly sated and satisfied Diera managed to drag herself out of bed. She picked up the discarded bathrobe and belted it about her person determinedly. Unconsciously running her hands through her mass of blonde wavy hair she turned round to face Lyric.

"I acknowledge that I can't make you disappear out of my life but from tonight things will be different."

"Okay." Lyric agreed and held her hands up "Now that we have made love every which way and you have got all those uncomfortably lusty feelings you have for me out of your system we can relax into total physical indifference."

Since Lyric had said more or less what she was about to say Diera had no right to feel disappointed and hurt but she did.

"This may be easy for you Lyric but it's not for me. I do not indulge in one night stands."

"I know you think of me as your rampant sex fiend but I do not generally indulge in one night stands either. In fact I have not had sex with anyone but you since I started working at Barton, Ellington and Black ."

"You haven't?" Diera didn't want to acknowledge the warm fuzzy feeling that was melting away her defences towards Lyric.

"Just because I am good in bed does not mean I am profligate with my talents. Besides once you've had the best sex of your life with the right person you get bored bonking the fluff."

"You weren't bored last night!" Diera replied stung by the implication that she was a bit of fluff and all they had shared was nothing more than a "bonk".

"But you're not a bit of fluff are you Diera. You're still my wife and you are going to be the mother of my children." Lyric drawled possessively.

Diera slammed the bathroom door on the hearty chuckle that followed her into the bathroom and muttered angrily under her breath as she tried to contemplate many ways to kill Lyric Gaylord-Black and which one would bring her the greatest satisfaction.

She showered and dressed in jeans and a pink sweater when she came out of the bathroom Lyric was on her cell phone, her eyes lazily regarded her from under long thick black lashes as she brushed her hair and put on her make- up. She decided to make herself scarce before Lyric finished her call.

She went down to make breakfast in their chalet and decided not to join the rest of the guests in the main dining room. She was later joined by Angel who steadily made her way through the breakfast that Diera decided to make. Angel rolled her eyes as she bit into perfect blueberry pancakes and streaky bacon, scrambled eggs and even some strawberry and custard cream concoction. She was later joined by Erienne who moaned at the scent of the coffee Diera set in front of her.

"Oh my god Diera you gotta marry me!!!" Angel moaned licking her lips.

"I saw her first!" Lyric growled as she came down the stairs in black jeans and a v-neck sweater.

She kissed Erienne on the cheeks, hugged Angel and stole a short sweet kiss from a blushing Diera.

"So what distractions do you have for us today?" Erienne asked after rubbing her belly contentedly.

"Well I thought we could attend the jazz festival and then meet up with one of my clients she..."

"Oh no Lyric no work." Diera shook her head. She'd worked and lived with Lyric before and she had a typical type A personality if left to her own devices Lyric could easily spend the entire holiday working and rope her friends into helping her out as well.

"I heard Lincoln Woods also has some really good fishing."

"Fishing?" Erienne looked at Angel in horror "I am not going fishing how about we go shopping." she smiled winningly at Angel.

They went to the Jazz Festival and then they went shopping, it was an easy day especially with Angel and Erienne who got on surprisingly well. They found out Erienne was actually a very good Trombonist and Angel could sing boy could Angel sing. She wowed the audience with her singing and brought them to their feet clapping an encore. After the singing there was dancing and it was actually a fun time. The four friends retired to the chalet for dinner this time Erienne and Angel cooked whilst Diera and Lyric washed up and they settled down to watch a hilarious romantic comedy.

By the time the film was over they were all feeling relaxed and giggling as they recounted their favorite parts of the movie. Angel got up and stretched and Erienne and Diera went up to bed. Lyric was the last up so she made sure that the chalet was locked up and there were enough logs in each of the rooms to last the night.

When she got to their room Diera was already taking a bath. Lyric stood outside her door contemplating whether she should join her or not and then decided to have a shower. A hot one with lots of steam, she figured that by the time she got off in the shower fantasizing about her wife it would take the edge off her need.

So that when Diera came out of the bath it was to find Lyric freshly showered and smelling absolutely divine. She was dressed in her silk satin pajama trousers and a black muscle t-vest. However to Diera's rapidly irritating annoyance before she could remind her dark lover that they could not share a bed Lyric had neatly made herself a place on the sofa.

Diera stared up at the dark visage and panicked. Had Lyric already gotten her out of her system? "You don't have to sleep on the sofa. I am sure the bed is big enough for both of us to sleep in without encroaching on each other's space."

"Well in other circumstances it would be if the two people sharing a bed were not you and I, however I don't think that is a viable solution."

"I don't understand." Diera clenched her fists and held her breath almost afraid to hear Lyric's next words.

"I mean sweetheart that I don't trust myself when I am around you and you certainly shouldn't either. If I got into bed with you there is absolutely no way I will be able to keep my hands off you. I'm already struggling to stop myself from dragging you to bed. God forgive me but all I have to do is look at you and I start thinking lustful impure thoughts."

Diera trembled as Lyric's voice roughened to a dry hoarse whisper and her lazy cool façade evaporated into taut desire as her swarthy hands closed into clenched fists at her side. I can't stop thinking about what we did last night and if you were laying next to me I don't think I could stop myself from seducing you and..."

"But this morning you said we were going to subside into physical indifference."

Lyric laughed harshly roughly running her hands through her short dark locks. "Diera you cannot be that naïve. You are a beautiful sensual passionate woman and what we had going on last night was a lot more than meaningless sex. What we have always had between us has always been more than just sex and subconsciously you know that.

You know me, from the moment we met I have never been able to keep my hands off you, wanting you, touching you, hell just needing to be near you, you know that. That's why you're running scared and trying to set limits on our relationship.

You're afraid because you know I am dangerous to you. You know I am not going to let you push me away again, you know I would disrupt the nice well ordered life you have planned with our baby. And Sweeting I want to disrupt you, because I need you to see me Lyric, not Artemus and Allegra's daughter, not your baby's parent but me Lyric your lover and your wife."

"I should have told you this a long time ago but I was scared. You met my family you know I am the youngest and yes as Concerto and Melody never tire of reminding me I was spoilt rotten. I was also the only one of the Gaylord-Black children to attend an English boarding school. I was also the only one not fathered by Rupert Miller, Mom's lover. Artemus was my father and Artemus is the Count of Blandford. I was the only legitimate child in the household. Rupert made me feel like I was the bastard.

Mom and Dad were separated and I lived mostly with mom, my brothers and sisters were actually alright they protected me from Rupert when they could but I just rebelled against authority and pretty much ran wild. Artemus's father, Grand Pa Barty Blandford insisted I attend boarding school.

I felt like an unwanted mistake and I just avoided any attempts at family life, I made sure I was always absent for family events unless I was literally dragged there by my nieces and nephews.

I know it is totally irrational but I just thought if we had a family I would be once more on the outside looking in. I just wasn't ready to deal with that. So I shut you out but the truth is I don't just need you I love you with every single breadth in my body and I'll take you anyway I can."

Lyric's words demolished her defenses and as she stared into the vulnerable whiskey brown eyes cloudy with emotions that she normally hid behind a droll façade Diera realised that Lyric needed her and that gave her the courage to make her decision.

"Come here." She said softly then she commanded her more confidently "I said come here Lyric." Lyric strode hesitantly over to her Diera kissed her dark lover pulling her down to her smaller height for a scorching kiss. She could feel Lyric's frantic heart beating beneath her fingertips hear her sibilant hiss in her ear as she raked her nails down her taut lithe body and over her turgidly erect nipple.

"I love you. Lyric." Diera stared into dark brown whiskey coloured pools and watched the fear dissipate with the rest of her words. "I want this baby because I want to carry a part of you inside me and I wanted the baby to be a symbol of our love for each other to remind you of how you once loved me because I thought that once you tired of me you would leave. I am not experienced like you and I thought you only wanted me for sex." She cupped Lyric's head in her hands and caressed her jaw with her fingertips.

As she said the words she realized she had never said them before, told Lyric she loved her yet she expected the other woman to bare her heart. "Now I know better, now I know you love me and I want you to know that I love you too." She whispered her words against her lips before standing on her toes and pulling her lover's head down for a gentle romantic kiss it almost brought tears to her eyes.

"So will you stay married to me?" Lyric asked in between kisses.

"Are you proposing? Again?" Diera grinned happily "Cos if you are, aren't you supposed to go down on bended knee or something?"

"Sweetheart you are already my wife. My Manipulating Machiavellian late father of blessed memory married me to you by proxy remember what I need to do now is persuade you to stay married to me and I can't do that on bended knee."

She gasped as Lyric lifted her up in her arms. "Lyric what do you think you're doing?"

"I'm taking you to bed where I can bring all my powers of persuasion to convince you to stay married to me."

"All your powers of persuasion?" Diera asked demurely.

"All my considerable powers of persuasion." Lyric replied firmly.

FIN
