

~ Burned ~

by Shea K.

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General warning: This story will eventually involve a sexual relationship between two women. There will also be some extreme language.

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1: Perfection

The scene outside of the chic restaurant known simply as *Donnie's* was surprisingly quiet. Usually, there were fancy cars and limos pulling up to the elegant restaurant with valets moving like clockwork to get folks out of their cars and get the cars into the garage while an amicable doorman ushered the customers in where they rarely had to wait long for a table-and even if they did, there was plenty to do. The bar always had the best liquors and there was a dance floor where customers could go and wait until they were called for their table. If drinking or dancing was not to one's liking, there was an open garden that could put any city park to shame for the patrons to wander with fountains and sculptures for people to admire; and the garden was open to the public. There were even benches to sit and take in the atmosphere. On certain days, waiters would go into the garden and take orders right there for people sitting in the colorful yard. It was not uncommon for couples to picnic right out in the garden on Spring or Summer days. On the second floor of the restaurant, a terrace offered a lovely view of the lush garden and it was a favorite place for diners, who often needed reservations a couple of months in advance to sit out there.

Today the place was nothing like that. The front was free of cars and the gardens were void of people. The bar was open, but there was not the typical crowd. There were only a few people lined up by the neat, well-stocked bar. There was a gathering of people that mingled together, talking and laughing, on the dance floor. They were all very well dressed for the formal event that did start, but would not be official until the guests of honor showed up. The assembly was not made to wait long.

"Tegan, what the hell, man? You sure you can't handle this one your own? I leave in charge for one night and you can't handle one night?" a low, slightly deep voice huffed.

"Don, I can handle it! I've got no problem with handling it!" more high-pitched whine, replied.

"If that's the case, why I am here instead of out on the town with my damned beautiful wife while she's looking her sexiest?"

"You'll get to that soon enough. Why the hell are you complaining, anyway? You didn't even plan anything for tonight!"

"I didn't plan anything because Rae said she had it all under control, right, baby?"

A new voice, softer than the other two responded. "I *did* have it all under control, but I did not plan for Tegan."

"To hell with both of you!" the whiny voice declared.

The argument went on while everyone got in place, going into the main hall of the restaurant. The voices got closer and then the owners stepped through the large doors from the foyer. As soon as the trio stepped into view, their discussion was halted by the loud shout of "happy anniversary!"

Two pairs of eyes looked up in shock while spring green eyes danced with smug glee. Those first two pair of orbs turned to the owner of the green eyes. A grin also spread out on the owner's peach-colored face.

The two pairs of eyes, one light hazel and the other deep brown, turned back to the gathering, trying to take in everything. The sharp hazel eyes belonged to Donatella Bonaventure, better known as "Donnie" or "Don." She was an imposing figure with a demeanor that commanded obedience and attention. She stood five foot nine inches, but something about her always made it seem like she was more than six feet tall. She had an athletic build, almost as thick as a sprinter. Her hair was cut stylishly short, barely going to the nape of her neck and there were rust-colored highlights going through the dark brown strands. Her tan skin was dull and she often described it as being "dusty." She was dressed for a night on the town, wearing one of her favorite cream-colored pant-suits.

In contrast, the owner of the deep, caring brown eyes was short woman, barely five foot three. She was Rae Bonaventure, Donnie's beloved wife. She was petite with light, creamy skin and ebony hair that was curled and fell to her shoulders. She was dressed in a sleek powder blue dress that fell just below her knees with high heels that almost placed her at Donnie's height. Contrasting with Donnie's aura, she gave off comforting vibes that drew a lot of people in to her for advice or just to unload their troubles. Donnie often described her as a "cuddly person," not because Rae liked to cuddle, but it was easy to see that a lot of people wanted to hug her.

"Tegan, what's this?" Donnie inquired, somewhat demanding since she really did not know how to ask a question unless she was talking to Rae.

"Uh...an anniversary party, duh! Are you this dense, Don?" Tegan, the green-eyed woman, answered with an impish smile. She was almost Donnie's height with a little less weight and muscle on her frame, making her body a bit more average. She had hair the color of blood, which seemed almost on fire against her fair skin; it went just past her shoulders. She was dressed in a black suit with the jacket open, showing her form-fitting mint green shirt. Her ebony high-heeled boots were brand-new for the occasion.

Hazel eyes immediately went to Rae. "Did you know about this?" Donnie asked curiously, searching for some hint that she was not the only one in the dark about all of this.

Rae shrugged and shook her head. "I didn't know a damn thing. I was planning to take you to that dance show you've been dying to see."

"Oh, damn, you got tickets for that?" Donnie asked incredulously, staying focused on her wife instead of the crowd of people that were there to celebrate.

"It's all right, babe. They're open seats. I wasn't sure if you'd be able to get away from the restaurant tonight," Rae explained.

"Of course I could get away from the restaurant. It's our third anniversary and this is the reason I haven't killed Tegan yet," Donnie remarked while motioning to the green-eyed woman with both hands.

"Ha, ha. If you haven't done it in the thirty years you've known me, I don't think you're ever going to do it. Now, come on and help us celebrate! I had the staff cook up all of your favorite things...or at least things they're good at. I handled the main course, of course, and Ran was here for-fucking-ever to make the desserts. Your eyes are going to fall out of your head when you see the cake she made!" Tegan declared, bouncing around in a manner that Donnie was all too familiar with.

Donnie and Rae turned their attention to the people that showed up for the celebration. They smiled at everyone...Donnie looked a little more awkward than Rae. Donnie was just as flattered, but she really would have liked to go to the dance show since she had been dying to see it for a year now. Instead of complaining, she kept her awkward smile and allowed Rae to lead her into a crowd of friends and staff.

Once Donnie was in the crowd, her mood cleared and her smile changed into something more genuine. Rae stuck close to Donnie's side as they circulated through the crowd. Donnie's mood lightened even more as they came across one of her best friends.

"Spain, girl, did you know about this shit and didn't bother to tell me?" Donnie asked, speaking to her friend.

Spain was a woman that stood roughly six feet tall. She had rich chestnut skin with dark brown hair that was almost always done in a ponytail; that night was the exception and she had it styled hanging down past her shoulders. She wore sleek spectacles over her coffee-colored eyes. Like everyone else, she was dressed formally; her outfit consisted of black slacks with a matching vest and midnight blue silk shirt. Just from the way she stood, people always got an idea that she was physically powerful, even though they could not see her ripped muscles thanks to her flowing clothing. She did have broad shoulders, which added to the strong energy.

"Don, I barely knew this was happening. I didn't think Tegan had it in her actually," Spain remarked with a chuckle. Her eyes swept across the crowded hall and she nodded to herself, approving of the nicely done celebration.

"I agree. This shit seems a little too elaborate for her to pull off on her own," Donnie quipped, looking around at the elegant setup. It was something that she had seen many times in the restaurant, except she usually arranged it. Tegan rarely wanted to be involved in putting together parties, unless they included the press and cameras.

"I just hoped she remembered it was Rae's anniversary too," Spain commented, shaking her head. She then turned her attention to the aforementioned woman and engulfed her in a hug that was equally returned. "How're you doing? You look really good," the giantess said with a look of approval in her eyes.

"Is that your professional opinion, doctor?" Rae teased as they released each other.

Spain laughed a bit, thinking that joke would probably never get old to her. She was indeed a doctor, and whenever she offered her opinion on just about anything, her friends asked if that was her professional opinion. Never mind the fact that she was a surgeon and not a psychiatrist. A lot of the time, she felt it was her professional opinion because she feared that she might be the only one in their clique with any common sense.

"She's right and Tegan had help," another woman informed them as she came over and attached herself to Spain's side.

"Of course." Donnie nodded. That made a lot of sense to her. "It would be impossible for her to do this by herself."

"How are you doing, French?" Rae said to the newcomer, who was now glued to Spain.

"I'm good! I've been able to get Spain away from the hospital for a little while and I was able to help Tegan put together this little shindig for you two! You should've seen her, Don. She actually did some work!" French, the newcomer, remarked with a big grin. Her face was lit up with happiness, which was typical for her.

"I hear you guys talking about me!" Tegan huffed, a smile brightening her face as she strolled over and completed the group.

"We're saying better things than usual," French assured the fiery redhead.

Tegan stuck her tongue out at the short woman, who seemed even smaller standing next to Spain. They all thought it was funny that the smallest amongst them was paired with tallest in the group. They also thought it was funny that Spain was able to find a woman with a name that was of a similar nature to her own.

French was a petite woman with a round face. She was very clingy, which also something that made her seem like an opposite of Spain, who usually liked her space; it was trait that she shared with Donnie, and Rae surprisingly enough. French was fair-skinned with curly blonde hair and blue eyes that always seemed to shine; her eyes had a way of lighting up a room when she walked in. She was wearing a bright yellow dress that screamed "happy," which her friends expected of her. The dress hugged her just enough to turn heads, but it left a little to the imagination.

"You should be saying good things! I threw all this together!" Tegan declared with a grin, motioning for a server to bring over some champagne.

"You threw all this together?" French inquired with an arched eyebrow.

"Uh...with help!" Tegan added in as she grabbed a glass of champagne for each other them, handing them out. She then proposed a toast between the five of them. "To my dear, best friend and her wife for keeping up the perfect relationship for five years, and being happily married for three of those years."

Glasses clanged to that and they each took a little sip of champagne. The party went on and was pretty much a success. Tegan took all the compliments for the setup, which they expected, even though French did help her. The one thing the friends always agreed on was that the thing Tegan was best at was taking credit. They doubted that she even realized that she was doing it.

As the night went on, everyone had dinner, which was great. This time when Tegan took all the compliments, they were well deserved because food was the one thing that she could and did handle on her own. After dinner, dessert was served. A huge cake, one that would easily feed the large crowd, was wheeled out. The cake was covered in a white and tan frosting, a special concoction from the resident baker, a Japanese woman named Ran. Yellow trim and multi-colored flowers decorated the tasty treat. The top simply read "Happy Anniversary Donnie and Rae!" The celebrated couple was led to the cake in order for them to cut it and share the first slice.

"Before we cut the cake, Rae and I would like to make an announcement," Donnie informed the guests that were gathered around the monster-sized dessert.

Rae looked up at her spouse and smiled brightly; the expression earned her a smile in return. The guests were now intrigued. They figured that Donnie was about to say something that involved whisking her wife away from an extravagant vacation to celebrate their third anniversary. Donnie was the indulgent type, loving to spoil her wife.

"Now, Rae and I have been together for five years, the best five years of my life. Of three of those years, we've been married and you all know just how much I love that," Donnie declared quite seriously.

She took Rae's hand in hers and looked lovingly down at her spouse. They smiled at each other again. The crowd-used to such spectacles-knew that if they were patient Donnie would get back to her point before making someone vomit with the lovey-dovey mess between her and her wife.

"We've been so happy together for all these years and we've decided to share that happiness by starting our own family," Donnie announced to everyone, grinning as she spoke. Her eyes sparkled as she thought about having her own family.

"Family?" French echoed with a smile while Spain just smiled.

"Rae's pregnant!" Donnie announced and she threw her arms around her spouse. She pretty much engulfed Rae, seemingly swallowing the smaller female.

"You go, stud!" Tegan remarked with a grin and then she whistled loudly.

Donnie snorted as she laughed. "I'm going to take credit for this too because this is my baby Rae's carrying," she proclaimed with a bright smile of her own.

"And how's that, stud?" Tegan inquired, wondering what secret her best friend had been keeping from her now.

"We had my egg implanted into Rae's body. This wonderful woman here is carrying my baby!" Donnie held Rae tighter. Rae laughed heartily while pressing herself into her larger-than-life spouse. She laughed even more when Donnie started placing light kisses behind her right ear.

"Did you know about this?" French demanded to know, turning to her doctor girlfriend.

Spain chuckled a bit, but held up her hands in surrender. "I didn't have a damn clue. The most I ever got in this was a couple of years ago when Donnie once randomly said 'it would be so cool if Rae could have my baby.' And that was it," she swore, not wanting to suffer the wrath of her woman.

French smiled. "Okay, I believe you for now. You're lucky you don't lie well, babe."

Spain chuckled again; she supposed that was a good trait sometimes, although there were times when she would like to get away with something. They turned their attention back to Donnie and Rae as they finally cut the cake. The guests cheered as the couple shared a bit of the first slice.

After making sure everyone had cake and talking with a few people briefly, Donnie and Rae went to take a walk in the gardens. Deep brown eyes wandered the area with amazement and awe coloring them while hazel eyes focused on the svelte body pressed against Donnie. Rae loved it out there; her love of the garden had inspired Donnie to expend it and open it to patrons a few years ago. Rae cuddled so close to Donnie that it seemed like she was trying to merge their bodies.

"This was very nice," Rae commented, speaking almost in a breath. There was a peace in her tone that relaxed her spouse all the way to the center of her being.

"Yeah, Tegan went above and beyond for once in her life. She also gave us a great forum to announce that we're pregnant," Donnie replied with a soft smile, gently rubbing her wife's shoulder with one hand.

"Yeah, everyone was very supportive of that," Rae said, putting her hand to her still flat stomach.

"I can't wait. Seven months seems like such a long time," Donnie sighed impatiently, moving her hand to cover Rae's hand that was resting on her belly. Then she nuzzled the smaller woman's neck.

"It'll go by fast since you stay so busy. Besides, when all of the hormones and stuff start kicking in, you're not going to want to be around me anyway!" Rae teased.

Donnie laughed and placed a few more kisses to her wife's ear. "I'm always happy to be around you. I don't care how grumpy you get. We're going to have a baby. I can't wait!"

Rae smiled; she could not help believing that her spouse was as happy as a person could be about expecting a child. Ever since they had gone through the procedure, Donnie spoke about their baby, whom she affectionately referred to as "Lil Donnie," as if the child was already there. Rae was just as enthused and usually went right along with Donnie whenever she started up about the baby.

"Do you want to sit down?" Donnie asked cautiously as they continued through the garden, walking on the narrow cobblestone path that cut through the lively green landscape.

Rae giggled. "Baby, I'm not that big yet. We haven't been pregnant long enough for me to need to rest every couple of minutes," she lightly taunted.

"Oh...right...But, if you do need to sit down, you make sure you tell me!" Donnie ordered.

A small smile made its way onto Rae's face. "Of course, Don."

They strolled on quietly until they came to Rae's all-time favorite space in the garden. There was a fountain that looked like it had been plucked from ancient Rome with lights in that made the water glow an electric blue and circled by perfectly cared for flowers. They sat down on a marble bench next to the fountain, sighing as cool air came off of the flowing water.

"I remember years ago when I saw this in a magazine article about *Donnie's*. I always wanted to come here," Rae said, grabbing on Donnie's hand and giving it a light squeeze.

"Now, you never want to come here," Donnie pointed out with a teasing smile.

"It's not that. I love this spot and you run a damn nice restaurant, baby. It's pointless to come here because I want to be on a romantic evening and what the hell is romantic about the restaurant for you?" Rae countered, leaning against her spouse's side.

"This was romantic, but I can see your point. I wouldn't want to come here for a date."

"You know you're the only person in this state that can say that, right?" Rae remarked, teasing grin in place.

Hazel eyes were rolled and she leaned down to kiss her petite wife. Rae returned the embrace with a deep passion that she was sure she only ever felt for Donnie. It was Donnie that always engulfed her, taking over her senses, filling the air around her with her own energy. Donnie felt the same about Rae, like Rae seeped into every piece of her and occupied her entire being, especially when they kissed.

"God...I love it when you do that..." Rae whispered as she pulled away to take in oxygen. She felt like she was breathing her spouse in as she caught her breath.

"I love you point blank," Donne commented, earning a very sweet smile.

"Then take me home."

Donnie was standing in a flash and helping her wife to her feet. Rae smiled more, pleased with Donnie's manners. They went back into the dining hall, planning to thank everyone for coming and bid everyone goodnight. They were not surprised when Tegan popped up and tried to hold them up with idle conversation.

"I can't believe you didn't tell me you were trying to get Rae pregnant!" Tegan said, throwing her arm around Donnie, who grimaced and groaned.

"It might have a little something to do with the fact that you have a big ass mouth and I didn't want to jinx it or have the world know before we were sure she was pregnant," Donnie explained with an annoyed grunt.

"I don't have a big mouth!" Tegan proclaimed, thoroughly offended that her friend would suggest such a thing.

"No, just a loud voice," Donnie quipped, earning a chuckle from her beloved. After laughing, Rae gave Donnie a downright sexy look, reminding Donnie that she wanted to go home. Donnie turned her attention back to her best friend. "Look, Tegan, is that Jeff over there?" she asked, pointing to the far side of the room.

"Nice try, but I'm done with Jeff," Tegan commented with a smirk, wagging a finger at her friend.

"Damn it. Look, you threw a great party, but it is our anniversary. We don't plan to spend the whole night here," Donnie stated bluntly.

"You're just going to run out of my wonderful party?" Tegan inquired, as if she was totally crushed. She put on this fake pout and forced her eyes to water, like she was going to burst into tears any second.

"Will you let them go already?" Spain huffed as she approached the scene.

"I'm just saying that I went through all of this trouble to throw this together. The least they could do was stick around and experience it," the redhead argued quite seriously.

"They've experienced it enough. They've got other things to do with their anniversary. Let them go," Spain practically growled, glaring down at Tegan. Hard green eyes stared back with just as much seriousness as the coffee-colored ones.

Donnie rolled her eyes and took the moment to lead her wife out of the room while Tegan was otherwise occupied. She helped Rae into their car, a mid-sized red sedan. Rae breathed a sigh of relief as soon as they were moving. Donnie wanted to do the same thing, but she held it in because she knew her wife would tease her if she did.

The drive home was spent in silence, but Rae held onto Donnie's hand for the entire trip. They lived in a professional part of town, on a hill that over looked the city and also gave them a lovely view of the ocean, which was not too far away. There was a gate, which they actually just put up; Donnie thought it would be a good idea for when "Lil Donnie" was old enough to play in the yard and would not be in danger of running in the street. The house was large by most standards, especially for two people, but they were happy the population of the house was going to increase soon. Still, three people in a five-bedroom house seemed excessive to some.

After parking in the driveway, Donnie helped Rae out of the car and they went right up to their bedroom; they did not even bother turning on any lights in the house, except for the ones that they always left on when they were out. They did turn on the lights when they hit their bedroom, bathing the gigantic room in light.

The room was decorated in calming, earthy tones, mostly light tan and beige. The carpet was a sandy color while the walls were beige. The dressers were a smooth, tawny wood. There was a vanity that matched the dressers with rows of different beauty items lined up. The king-sized bed set up against the middle of the back wall was covered in a clay-colored spread that had a cube-design on it that matched the pillows perfectly.

"Baby, can you unzip me?" Rae requested as she slipped off her shoes. She turned her back to her spouse, expecting to have her dress slowly peeled from her body.

"Wait," Donnie begged, even though her fingers itched to do as requested.

"For?" Rae asked, turning again to face the taller woman.

"Your anniversary gift. I have to give it to you while it's still our anniversary," Donnie pointed out with a smile.

"Oh, yes, my dear, that you do," Rae remarked with her own delighted smile. She had given Donnie her present much earlier because Donnie really needed the gift. Damn it, the woman could break a watch with an ease that baffled her small wife. Rae wondered how long the watch that she bought would last Donnie. She suspected she would be buying another one next year.

"This is for the best five years of my life. I look forward to a lifetime of this. Thank you for being the mother of my child. Thank you for just being with me," Donnie said in a sexy purr, reaching into her pocket. She pulled out a black velvet box.

"You do know you can't propose to me again, right? You already married me," Rae joked, still smiling.

"This has nothing to do with proposing..." Donnie opened the box and pulled out a gold locket on a matching chain. "You can open it. I was hoping you'd put Lil Donnie's picture in here when she's born."

Rae's face light up like a box of fireworks as her beloved eased the necklace on her neck. "You know I am!" She then launched herself at her spouse, going in for a deep kiss.

Donnie knew what the kiss was for, so she decided to get to the finale of their anniversary. She wrapped her arms around Rae's lithe form, pressing her closely. Rae listened to her lover's heartbeat as she anticipated her spouse's next move. Donnie's nimble hand wandered Rae's back, trying to locate a certain zipper that was no longer needed. When adroit fingers finally found the zipper, she dropped it slowly, which Rae expected; Donnie was always into being sensual-or a tease as Rae liked to think of it.

The restaurant owner generally liked to go at a pace that simply made Rae beg for her after a while. Rae sometimes suspected that Donnie actually liked to hear her beg, but Donnie never admitted to that. The tanned woman always said that she wanted to make sure every inch of her wife was sizzling before she put out the fire.

"Please, baby, don't tease me like this tonight," Rae begged in a whisper as she clung to Donnie.

The taller woman shrugged and a sexy smirk conquered her face. "Your wish is my command."

The happy couple curled up together after a couple hours of coupling. They were ready to just fall into a deep, coma-like sleep, but a thought hit Rae. She turned up to Donnie, who was a mere millisecond away from being knocked out for the night.

"Babe, is your friend coming tomorrow to start working on the nursery?" Rae asked curiously, voice low from being drowsy.

"She's not really going to work tomorrow. She just wants to see the room again and 'visualize' or whatever the hell she does when designing crap," Donnie answered.

Rae took a mock-hit at her spouse, only caressing her arm. "Don, don't make fun of her. Do you think she says that when she comes to your restaurant on nights where you're the head chef?"

"Uh...yeah, she's my friend, babe," Donnie answered with a chuckle.

Rae decided not to argue since she knew how Donnie and her friends were. "Did she say when she was coming by?"

"Knowing her, it'll be sometime in the afternoon. It's okay. I'll be here for it, so you don't have to deal with it all by yourself."

Rae smiled a bit and then cuddled into Donnie's warm form even more. They then drifted off to sleep, very satisfied with their anniversary. They were looking forward to getting things ready for when their baby arrived too.

2: Hot cakes

"Rae, you want me to handle breakfast?" Donnie offered as she watched Rae move around their large, well-stocked kitchen. She was dressed in her pajamas, which consisted of a white tank-top and shorts that used to be sweatpants until she took a pair of scissors to them. Her hair was sticking up in every direction it could, silently begging for Donnie to use a brush soon. Lines underneath her hazel eyes showed that she was still partially asleep, but she wanted to be up for pancakes.

"Why would I want you to handle breakfast?" Rae inquired curiously, making pancake batter for their breakfast. She was also dressed in pajamas, which were a tee-shirt that was too big for her because it was actually Donnie's. She looked a little more presentable than her spouse, having her hair brushed back into a ponytail and her face washed.

"So you don't have to be on your feet," Donnie reasoned, sounding like it was the most logical thing in the world to her. She moved a little deeper into the kitchen without being very obvious about it. It seemed like she was trying to get a closer look at Rae, wanting to make sure her wife did not hurt herself somehow or strain herself in any way.

Rae turned to her beloved to give her an incredulous look. "Sweetheart, I am two months pregnant, not two weeks past due. If you're going to act like this now, what're you going to do when I'm showing and look like I'm ready to pop?" she asked in disbelief.

Donnie had the decency to appear embarrassed, blushing a little and putting her head down. She sat down at the island in the middle of the kitchen and watched Rae do what she did every morning-fix breakfast. Donnie, though a world-class chef, had no control over the kitchen at

home. If she was going to cook, she had to take her butt down to her restaurant or her café; Rae told her as much whenever she found Donnie making anything more complicated than a bowl of cereal.

"I'm not going to let you leave the bedroom and I'm going to give you sponge baths-" Donnie started in, but Rae cut her off.

"And play doctor while I'm in labor, right? I can see you now with Lil Donnie, 'baby, I yanked you right out of your momma because I'm insane and also good at everything and know everything.'" Rae put on the most adorable, teasing smile, which got her spouse out of her chair.

Donnie went behind Rae and embraced her, love coming through the simple touch. "You know me so well, don't you?" she purred before placing a kiss to Rae's cream-colored neck.

"I know you well enough to know that you're going to be sorry if you make me burn these pancakes," Rae teased, still smiling. She gently patted the restaurant-owner on the butt to get her to back off.

"I would just have something else for breakfast then...and then make sure we went out for brunch," the tan woman remarked with a grin, placing another sweet kiss to Rae's neck. She was not pleasant to be around when she missed meals and they both knew that. She would never purposely make Rae suffer through her when she was hungry.

"We can't go out for brunch. We have to be here when Trisha shows up," Rae reminded her spouse, turning around to tap Donnie on the nose.

"Oh, right! Damn Trisha. She should've just come this morning," Donnie grumbled, a frown marring her face.

"She knows how you are in the morning," Rae chimed in, motioning to the way her spouse looked at the moment. It went beyond the wildness of her hair, but the fact that she was eagerly waiting for breakfast and implying that she wanted more than just food for her morning meal.

The taller woman snorted, getting the hint. "Okay, fine, I will leave you alone. I'm going to go call Jake and find out how things are running down at the café. You know how nervous he gets when I haven't jumped down his throat in a few days."

Rae chuckled a bit and turned her attention back to the pancake batter as Donnie exited the kitchen. She was very aware that Donnie was telling the truth about Jake, the manager of Donnie's café, which was located across town from her restaurant. Donnie checked in on the café almost daily because that was her baby and she hated that she could not be there as often as she was at the restaurant. While the café was her baby, the restaurant was her legacy and she believed that it deserved more of her attention because it was like the Bonaventure family jewels.

Donnie had inherited the restaurant, her grandfather signing it over to her a little less than ten years ago. She started out as a chef there, like her father and his father and his father and his

mother. She worked her way up to being the head chef, even when her grandfather was still cooking there. Then, just like her grandfather had been given the restaurant, he did the same with her, retiring and leaving the whole operation in her capable, eager hands. The restaurant was the crown of the family and everyone that owned it made sure to take extra-special care with it, especially since it had been in the family for five generations. Every Bonaventure loved the establishment too, treating with the utmost respect all of the time and adding a little something of their own to it, making the place an extension of every Bonaventure that owned it.

She did a grand job with the restaurant. She always felt like the restaurant was such a huge success that she wanted to do more. The more involved opening a café that was more affordable than eating at the five-star restaurant, but also gave the patrons a touch of the *Donnie's* experience. The café was a hit almost immediately, earning Donnie all sorts of praise from her grandfather, which she just ate up.

By the time the food for breakfast was done, Donnie was standing behind Rae, just waiting for the go-ahead to dig in. She undoubtedly smelled the food and just ended the call with Jake, who was always fine anyway-according to him anyway. One day soon, Donnie knew that she was going to have to go to the cafe to make sure. Rae put most of the pancakes on a plate for Donnie while keeping three for herself. Along with the pancakes, there were scrambled eggs, bacon, and hash browns.

"You make the best breakfasts," Donnie declared with a happy smile as she proceeded to dig in.

Rae smiled, always glad to hear a compliment from Donnie. She especially liked to hear compliments on her cooking considering who Donnie was. Donnie was one of the world's most sought after chefs and people traveled from very far to visit her restaurant on nights when she was in the kitchen. It would surprise them all to know that Donnie almost never cooked at home; Rae handled it and Donnie always loved what her wife served.

"You say that about every meal," Rae teased.

"I mean it every time I say it. I love your cooking!" Donnie proclaimed with a honest grin.

"I know. So, how was the café? Jake holding everything down well?"

"Yeah, he's got it under control as usual. Well, that's what he likes to tell me anyway. I still need to get down there soon for my inspection of the place. Last time I had to send Tegan down there because something came up at the restaurant. Tegan called me and she didn't sound too happy about what she saw, so I'm starting to wonder if Jake's blowing smoke up my ass or if Tegan overreacted," the master chef explained.

"Well, Tegan doesn't usually overreact on these things. Other things maybe, but not restaurant things," Rae replied.

Donnie nodded in agreement. "I know, which really worries me. But, I'm not going to think about that right now. Today is about getting things ready for Lil Donnie. How is Lil Donnie this morning anyway?"

Rae rubbed her stomach. "She feels fine so far. I think she'll stay that way as long as her mom doesn't get on her momma's nerves."

Donnie offered up an innocent smile before diving into her breakfast with typical enthusiasm. Eating was Donnie's second love; her first was Rae and her third was cooking. Rae watched her spouse eat for a moment because it was one of the rare times she was certain she could see what pure bliss was supposed to look like. Donnie did not just eat, but she experienced food, all the time. It was sight to behold, like watching a person go through a wonderful religious experience.

"So, are you going to be home tomorrow too or were you just taking the weekend off?" Rae asked curiously, eating her breakfast too. She could not recall the last time that Donnie took a whole weekend off, so she doubted that she was going to get another full day with her spouse. The look in her eyes showed that she was hoping deeply for another day, though.

"I'm going in late tomorrow. Tegan hasn't blown the place up yet, but she is scheduled to be in the kitchen tomorrow night, so I have to be there while she's heading up the kitchen," Donnie explained.

Rae only nodded. When breakfast was done, Donnie did try to do the dishes, but she was shooed out of the kitchen by her wife. Rae went so far as to swat Donnie with the dishrag to get rid of her. Donnie yelped as the rag smacked her on the butt and she ran out of the kitchen like a scolded child, as she always did when Rae kicked her out of the room. She decided to go handle some business and then waste time in front of the television, a luxury that she did not get to indulge in as often as she liked. Rae eventually joined her, which made her morning perfect, especially when her wife curled into her and wrapped her in a warm hug.

By noon, the couple decided to change into some proper clothing since they were expecting company sooner or later. Donnie, true to her lazy nature when at home, just threw on some black sweat pants and a tee-shirt. Rae went for something more outgoing, throwing on a pair of jeans and a lavender polo shirt. After they dressed, they went back to the sofa and got to watch a movie before the doorbell went off, alerting them that someone was at the door.

"I got it!" Donnie shot up like an enthusiastic child to get the door.

Rae sighed and shook her head, trying to fight off a smile. It was not because she thought Donnie was treating her delicately, but because of the child-like behavior her spouse exhibited. She thought it was adorable and that was why she could not keep the smile off of her face. She hoped that Donnie stayed like that, even when the baby came. Sure, it would be like having two kids around sometimes, but she thoroughly enjoyed it.

"Babe, it's Trisha!" Donnie called to her lover.

"Okay, but what have I told you about yelling through the house?" Rae scolded her spouse, even though she was yelling back in order to answer.

"She's got you on a rightfully short leash," Trisha remarked with a teasing grin on her face as she spoke to Donnie. Trisha stood eye to eye with Donnie, but was a more slender build than the master chef. She was dressed in tailored pinstripe suit and wearing her signature fedora, not caring how much she looked like an old-style gangster.

Hazel eyes rolled. "You're about to be on the same leash. You're about to work in her domain." With a sweep of her hand, she motioned to the inside of the house.

"Oh?" Trisha sounded very intrigued, arching a slender blonde eyebrow. "I never would've thought that from the first time I decorated."

"It was a different time then."

"I'm so sure." The sarcasm was so thick that Donnie would not have been surprised to actually see it spill from her friend's mouth.

"I can still fire your ass, you know that? In fact, I'd be happy to do it because I'm not interested in dealing with your shit," Donnie commented, sounding serious.

Trisha rolled her eyes now; they were an odd shade blue, so dark that they almost looked black. Her sleek blonde hair was cut short and almost hidden completely under her favorite hat. She stepped inside, her heeled boots making a little noise on the wooden floor in the foyer. She was trailed by a woman and that got Donnie's attention.

"You bringing women to work now? You are a sucky date!" Donnie remarked with a teasing grin, pointing at her friend while she spoke.

"Woman?" Trisha echoed and then she glanced behind her. She brushed the comment off with a wave of her hand. "Oh, no, that's just Audrey, my new assistant."

Donnie shrugged, accepted that, and did not give the other woman-Audrey-a second thought. The business-owner led Trisha into the house and Audrey followed silently behind. They went right to the living room where Rae rose from the sofa to greet them.

"Rae, I'm glad to see this big idiot didn't wear you out too much after that great party last night," Trisha remarked, going in to hug the petite woman. The embrace was very brief with Rae pulling away as quickly as she could.

"Donnie hasn't managed to do it yet," Rae replied, giving her spouse a teasing smile.

Trisha laughed while Donnie did not look amused by the remark at all. Rae ignored her spouse's sour look and then noticed Audrey. Rae did not need an introduction from Trisha, preferring to

do it herself. She went right in to introduce herself to the stranger. Audrey smiled as they shook hands.

"I'm Rae Bonaventure," the ebony-haired woman said, pulling her hand back as soon as it was appropriate to do so.

"Audrey Miller," Audrey replied in a polite tone, still smiling.

"Audrey's my assistant," Trisha added in before Rae got around to asking. She sounded bored and uninterested in even saying that, but knew it was necessary.

Rae nodded to show that she understood. She was about to offer the two women something, but Donnie jumped right into work. The restaurant owner motioned to the stairs, silently saying that they should go to the room that would become the nursery.

"You do know we're going to have to child-proof everything too, right?" Trisha pointed out as the four women started up the stairs.

"I figured you'd do that too. You can, right?" Donnie inquired.

Trisha scoffed and rolled her eyes. "Can you make a roasted chicken?" she countered.

Donnie rolled her eyes too, making sure to look like she was sick of Trisha. Trisha, on the other hand, made it a point to not pay Donnie any mind at all. Rae noted the exchange and did not think anything of it, believing that Donnie had strange relationships with all of her friends. Audrey also saw the exchange, but she did not say anything; she also noticed the small, amused smile that Rae was sporting and how Rae's eyes twinkled when she smiled.

"Okay, so, for the nursery, we're going to use the room right across the hall from us," Donnie informed her friend as they came to the top of the stairs. They walked off to the left and were at the room in a few steps.

"This is a good choice for the room, but I figure you guys are going to give the spud a real room in a few years, so call me then too," Trisha commented as they stepped into the room.

"We're actually going to keep her in our bedroom for the first year," Rae chimed in.

Trisha glanced over at Rae and nodded, making sure to store that information away for when she started designing the room. She then took in the room, expecting it to be the size that it was, even though she had never been in it. No one really wandered around the upstairs of Donnie's home unless the person lived there because there was no reason for it. Donnie always made sure that her guest stayed on the ground floor, not wanting anyone nosing around her and her wife's personal space.

"What did this used to be before you emptied everything out?" Trisha asked curiously, doubting that the couple just had an empty room convenient for the arrival of their first-born.

"Nothing actually. We just used to throw shit in here," Donnie remarked with a little laugh.

"It was hell cleaning the place out," Rae added in.

Trisha nodded. "This is a good space. I can work with this. I think you guys will be very happy with what I do with it." She then snapped her finger and Audrey was instantly at her side.

Donnie and Rae eased out of the room as Trisha started riffing off things to her assistant. They knew that she would come and tell them all of her ideas once she was done with the space. They went back to the couch and after about a half-hour Rae got up to make lunch while Trisha returned to the living room. Trisha flopped down onto one of the very comfortable recliners and Audrey stood next to her, in case she needed her notes.

"So, what do you got?" Donnie asked curiously, regarding Trisha out of the corner of her eye rather than turning her whole head. Hey, she might miss something good on television and Trisha might make the mistake of thinking Donnie respected her if she actually turned to look at the blonde.

"Hmm...I think we can do a lot with the space. Are you two sure you're having a girl?" Trisha counted, putting a finger to her chin in thought.

"We only just found out we're pregnant, so we're not too sure yet. No matter what, we're naming the kid Donnie, right, babe?" the chef called, leaning toward the kitchen to make sure her wife heard her.

"You know we are," Rae replied, turning around so that her lover could see the smile on her face.

Trisha laughed a bit and shook her head, not surprised by the name at all. She turned her attention back to Donnie and started going over the things that she wanted to do with the room and child-proofing the house. Rae came in the middle of the conversation with sandwiches, simple tuna melts on toasted rolls, but enough to get a big grin out of Donnie. Trisha grabbed one too without missing a word in her discussion with Donnie.

"Do you want one, Audrey?" Rae inquired, soulful brown eyes locking onto sky blue eyes that seemed a bit cloudy.

"Um...sure, thanks," Audrey answered and moved to grab a sandwich.

Rae kept things moving and did not sit down until everyone had fries and drinks to go with their sandwiches. Donnie and Trisha did not miss a beat in their talk and Rae chimed in every now and then while curling up to Donnie on the sofa. When the food was gone, the conversation continued. Rae cleaned up the remnants of lunch and, by the time she returned to the living room, Trisha was ready to go.

"So, I'll be back tomorrow. One of you will be here, right?" Trisha asked the couple.

"Rae'll be here, of course...taking it easy," Donnie replied, glancing down at her wife to make sure Rae knew that second part of the statement was directed toward her.

"I'll be here," Rae agreed with a playful smile. She was tempted to tease her spouse, but she knew that any jokes about her running a marathon or something would not go over well now that she was pregnant. She then turned her attention to Audrey. "It was nice meeting you. I hope you enjoy working with us." She then put her hand out for the assistant to shake.

Audrey smiled and shook the offered hand. "It was a pleasure meeting you too. I'm sure I will like working with you."

With that said, Trisha and her assistant were gone. Donnie shut the door and then impulsively grabbed her petite wife into a tight hug. She picked Rae up off of her feet, earning giggles from the smaller woman.

"How's lil Donnie doing?" the chef asked before kissing her spouse on the cheek.

"Lil Donnie is fine. Now, let me go, you brute. What would you grandfather think he saw you acting like such a knucklehead?" Rae answered with a chuckle.

"He would be happy that I'm so happy!" Donnie replied and then she took a deep breath. She sighed into her wife's soft hair, her whole body relaxing as she felt totally at peace. "Baby, I love you so much. I'm so glad we're pregnant." Her voice held deep sincerity and a high level of tranquility that touched her wife's soul.

"I love you too," Rae stated. To Donnie, that was a signal that it was time plant an adoring kiss to her wonderful wife. The kiss was full of affection and passion. The kiss made Rae moan into Donnie's mouth as she clung to the taller woman. She could practically taste the bliss in Donnie that was caused by the pregnancy.

The next day when Trisha and Audrey arrived, it was late in the evening. Donnie had already left to take care of her restaurant, so Rae was home by herself when the pair showed up. The greetings were quick, Trisha wanting to get to work right away. Rae expected that; it was habit that Donnie and all of her friends shared.

Rae, ever the polite hostess, offered the pair snacks and drinks. Trisha was all-business, though, and Rae eventually got the hint to just let the woman work. This was a dance that they did before when Trisha was helping with the house when Rae and Donnie first moved in. It was something that Trisha always seemed to win because when she was on the clock, she never strayed from her tasks. Rae still tried her best to make sure Trisha had anything that she might need, including food-food that Trisha never touched.

It would take a few days, but Rae found that Audrey was not very much like Trisha. Audrey arrived at the house one morning, on her own. Rae was shocked to see the assistant by herself, but she did not say anything about that. Instead, she went right into her polite hostess mode.

"Hey, Trisha sent me in ahead with a few things to set up around the house for the child-proofing. Is that all right?" Audrey inquired, standing on the front porch with a bag in her hand.

"Perfectly fine. Come on in," Rae said, using a sweeping motion of her hand to welcome the redhead into the house. "Can I get you anything? I just finished having breakfast with Donnie. There's still food left over."

Audrey was set to decline, but her stomach growled. She glanced down, embarrassment coating her sky-colored eyes and a sheepish crimson coloring her cheeks. Rae flashed a warm smile and laughed a little bit.

"Come on, you can eat before getting started. I'll tell Trisha I forced you to if she comes in while you're eating," Rae proposed.

"Sorry about that. I didn't get a chance to eat breakfast because I went to pick up all of the child-proofing things we would need," Audrey explained.

Rae waved her off. "No need to explain. If Trisha is anything like Donnie when it comes to work, I'm surprised you ever have time to eat."

"Oh...did you used to work for Donnie?" Audrey asked curiously while following Rae into the kitchen.

"No, it's just that being with her for so long I know how she is when it comes to work. Do you like pancakes?" the petite woman asked.

"Um...yes..."

"Good because I still have a few left over and I know they're still warm. Donnie practically swallows the damn things. But, then again..." Rae paused to laugh. "Donnie just loves to eat."

Audrey did not say anything and took a seat on a stool that was pulled up to the island in the kitchen. She was barely in the seat when there was food in front of her. A stack of four pancakes, sausage, and scrambled eggs. She was then handed silverware so that she could dig in.

"Orange juice, coffee, or tea?" Rae offered.

"Orange is fine," Audrey answered. "So, you're the one expecting?" she asked, wanting to make small talk with this friendly soul before her.

"Well, really, we like to say 'we're expecting,' but if you mean I'm the one carrying the little bundle of joy, then yes," Rae confirmed as she went to the well-stocked refrigerator to retrieve the orange juice.

Audrey nodded and regarded Rae with curious blue eyes. "You don't look pregnant."

"I'm not really that far along, just eight weeks. I can't imagine what things are going to be like when I actually look pregnant. Donnie's head is probably going to explode," Rae remarked with a giggle as she poured the redhead a glass of juice.

"That's cute how you're going to name the baby after her," Audrey commented as her drink was placed in front of her.

"Well, it's really a tradition in her family, going pretty far back. They name the first-born kid something that can be shortened into 'Don.' Donnie's name is actually Donatella. Her father's name is Donald the second and her grandfather's name is Donovan and his father's name was Donald and the start of the whole mess would be his mother also called Donatella. I think it's cute," Rae explained with a smile as she took a seat across from the redhead.

Audrey laughed a little, more to be polite than anything else. "Strange tradition. I've never really heard of anything like that before."

"I hadn't really either. I mean, I know some families where the father passes his name down and everything, but nothing like where you just give the first born a name that can be shortened into something."

"Do they all answer to Donnie?"

Rae shook her head. "Actually, her grandfather calls her 'junior.' They're very close. Other than that, her grandfather answers to 'Don' while her father answers to 'Donnie.' Her great-grandfather and so forth aren't alive anymore, so it's not too tough. I guess this one is going to have to answer to lil Donnie," she commented while rubbing her stomach.

"What do you want to have?" Audrey asked curiously while continuing to eat.

"I never really thought on it. I don't mind either way and I don't think Donnie cares either. We're just ready to start a family."

Audrey nodded. "You're sure you're ready?" she asked, voice ever curious.

"Yes, and if I wasn't, it's too late to take back now," the smaller woman quipped with a smile. "Why do you ask that?"

"I don't know. You look pretty young to be settling down with a family and everything."

"Thanks for the compliment, but I think it's about time and my family does too. I just turned thirty."

Audrey looked shocked. "You're kidding me!"

"Honest to God, I'm thirty."

"You're as old as I am," the redhead commented.

Rae laughed. "I prefer to think of it as mature, but considering that Donnie is older than I am and doesn't act very mature makes me think I need to find a better term."

Audrey chuckled a bit. "I like that. I think I'll start saying I'm mature."

The pair continued with their small talk until Audrey was done with her food. Audrey decided that she had better get to work before Trisha showed up. Rae agreed with that.

"Well, if you need anything, let me know. You don't have to act all robotic like Trisha does," Rae informed Audrey while gathering up the used dishes.

"I will if I need anything. Thanks for being so nice to me," Audrey said.

Rae nodded. "Hey, that's no problem. My mother did drill some manners into me," she commented with a smile.

Audrey nodded that time in response. She was a bit stunned by the hospitality that Rae came at her with because she had been around Trisha and knew how curt the blonde woman could be. She assumed that anyone that personally knew Trisha, as Rae and Donnie did, would be the same way. From what she could tell with Donnie, that was a correct assumption, but it did not fit Rae at all. Rae was a doll from what she could tell.

"I think I'm going to like working around here," Audrey muttered to the air when she was alone and she decided to get to work.

3: Going with the flow

Rae was not sure how it happened, but over the next couple of weeks, she had become friends with Audrey. She could trace how it gradually occurred, but it still seemed a little weird to her. Maybe it was just because she had someone around the house who was not Donnie. She did wonder how Donnie was going to react when the master chef found out that she had befriended the redheaded woman. She was sure that Donnie was going to find it a little weird to come home one day and find someone other than Rae in the house.

"I can't believe you're a Scrabble nut too!" Audrey declared with a chuckle as Rae brought out her Scrabble board one day. She was not sure how they got on the topic of games, but eventually they started talking about how they both liked Scrabble and then the housewife went to fetch her game.

"I actually like everything with words. I like crosswords, jumbles, word search, things like that. I'm usually here by myself, so I don't get to play Scrabble too often," Rae explained, setting the deluxe board down on the glass coffee table.

"You're usually here by yourself? Donnie does live here too," Audrey commented innocently. Of course, having spent enough days there, she noticed that Donnie was not around very often during the day.

"Indeed she does, but there are a few reasons I don't play Scrabble often. One-Donnie's not very good at it. She'll force herself to play with me, but she doesn't really like it. Two-it gets boring to play the same person over and over again when she doesn't want to play in the first place. I don't want to torture the poor thing. Three-she actually doesn't play well, probably because she doesn't want to play, so I beat her a lot. She pouts when she loses." She smiled a bit as she thought about her wife pouting like a sad child because she lost at something. She did think that Donnie was adorable when she pouted.

Audrey nodded. "Donnie sounds like a big baby sometimes," she quipped, smiling and laughing a bit.

"Sometimes, she is. She's under a lot of stress with her restaurant and her baby, *Don and Rae's Café*, so when she comes home, all she wants to do is whine and laze around. She needs to be pampered sometimes," Rae defended her spouse, even though she did not think that Audrey's words were a malicious attack. It seemed like a good-natured tease, which did not bother Rae.

The redhead tilted her head curiously. "Oh, does she own that café?"

"Yup, that was her baby before this one came along." Rae patted her stomach. "She wanted to open some place that all people would feel comfortable in and not think about how much their meal cost."

Audrey nodded. "Yeah, I hear that restaurant of hers is freaking expensive."

"It's not that bad anymore. She's been trying to add things to the menu that don't cost an arm and a leg, but it is a world-class restaurant and has two of the best chefs in the world working there much of the time. And even when she and Tegan aren't in the kitchen, they have some of the best people on staff working for them." Rae continued to set them up to play Scrabble as they conversed.

"Still, it always seemed a little pretentious to me. Maybe because everything was so damned expensive last time I checked." Her comments were said as if they were mere observations, so they did not bother the housewife.

Rae nodded in understanding. "I used to feel the same way. Before I met Donnie, though, I always wanted to go there."

"And now?"

The ebony-haired woman shrugged. "I never really want to go there. It's not romantic for Donnie. It's always business for her, even walking in the garden. She always sees things, things that she wants to change or improve or she finds out that there's stuff she needs to yell at people for because something's not quite right. It's just stressful for her to be there because it's always work."

A rust-colored eyebrow arched in bewilderment. "So, what do you two do for a romantic night out? What if you want to go out, does Donnie have a problem with visiting the competition?"

Rae chuckled. "Donnie doesn't mind going out and she'll eat just about anywhere. She knows how to make food to her liking with simple things. Plus, she eats just about anything too. Surprisingly enough, she's not very picky. As far as romantic nights go, Donnie would much rather curl up with me on the couch with popcorn and nachos than go out for a night on the town. She doesn't like dealing with people when she doesn't have to."

"And what about you? Do you like nights out on the town?" Audrey inquired, leaning forward a little. There was a slight twinkle in her eyes, but it went by Rae.

Rae's face lit up just for having a chance to talk about her face for the first time in a while. "I've been known to get a little wild when I want to. It's hard to get out much because Donnie doesn't like clubs or dancing. She swears she's the only Black person on the planet without rhythm," the petite woman remarked with a giggle. She silently admitted that she agreed with Donnie. Watching the poor girl even try to dance was painful sometimes, but most of the time she found it sweet (though embarrassing) that her beloved would try just for her.

"Well, I've been known to dance a little myself. Maybe we could go out club-hopping one night," the redhead proposed in a warm tone with a friendly smile.

"Sure, but I don't know how much fun I'll be. I haven't been out in a while and we're probably going to have to go before I start showing with the baby," Rae replied, rubbing her stomach again.

"Whenever you're free, I'm ready to go."

Rae nodded and their conversation was interrupted by the sound of the front door opening. "Hey, sweetheart!" Donnie merrily called as she stepped into the house.

"Baby, what have I told you about yelling through the house?" Rae countered in a semi-stern tone. It was not lost on her that she was doing the same thing that she was scolding Donnie for.

"I just want you to know it's me and not some robber breaking in through the front door," Donnie answered as she made her way into the living room. She stopped short and blinked in surprise when she saw that Rae was not alone. "Oh, didn't know we had company," the chef said.

"Baby, I'm sure you remember Audrey," Rae said, motioning to the redhead sitting across from her.

"Uh...sure..." It was clear on her face that Donnie did not remember Audrey at all. She had only seen the woman once and that was a few weeks ago.

"She and Trisha are doing a wonderful job on the nursery. You should go up there and see the room. It's almost done," Rae said, basically filling in her lover as to who the redhead was.

Donnie nodded and hazel eyes locked on Audrey for a moment before turning back to her wife. "I'll go look when I head up to change and everything. You made something for dinner?" she asked curiously, patting her stomach. She was lucky to lead an active life, which kept her stomach flat, because Donnie loved to eat.

"I didn't get a chance. I spent most of the day just talking to Audrey," Rae answered honestly.

Donnie nodded again and her eyes shifted to the redhead, who was watching her intently. Hazel eyes then went back to Rae. "So, babe, you want me to order something?" Donnie asked curiously, scratching the back of her head.

"That would be good. I'll take whatever you're going to have. Audrey, do you want something?" Rae inquired, glancing over at her guest.

"Where're you ordering from?" Audrey asked.

Donnie shrugged. "I don't know yet. You think you'll be around for another hour or so?"

"Depends on how many games of Scrabble we're going to play," the redhead answered. She leaned forward, almost as if she was anticipating something from the businesswoman.

Donnie shrugged again, as if she did not have a care in the world. "I hope you're ready for weeks then. Rae can play that damn game nonstop with no sleep or anything for days," she remarked with a fond smile.

"I love this game," Rae declared with a cheerful grin.

"I know you do, sweetie." With that Donnie disappeared upstairs.

The first thing that the tall woman did was go in the nursery and see what Trisha had done with the room in the couple of weeks that she had been working on it. First, it had been painted and Trisha thought that a soothing yellow would be good, especially since they did not know the sex

of the baby. Donnie did not think it would turn out well, but Rae gave her okay and now looking at, Donnie was glad that she got out-voted for once.

The yellow was warm and calming; Donnie looked forward to spending hours in it, holding lil Donnie. The furniture in the room was a smooth and off-white. They had rocking chair and several empty bookshelves, waiting to be filled. They had not made the time to go out and buy any baby books that they wanted to read just yet, but Donnie was sure they would do that soon, as well as any other purchases that they needed to make. They had not brought a crib yet, wanting to wait and see what Trisha was going to do with the nursery. Also, it was purchase that the couple wanted to take time on and go out a few times together to see what was out there.

A smile graced Donnie's tan face before she moved on, going into the master bedroom's bathroom. She felt light as she went to go take her shower and wash away the stress of the day. Her head filled with thoughts of cuddling with her wife and talking about their baby filled her head, causing her smile to turn into an absent grin. Hurrying through her shower, she rushed into the bedroom, wanting to get to cuddling with Rae as soon as possible. Her scurrying was halted as she recalled that they had a guest downstairs. She then threw on some plain clothes as her smile dropped a bit, but she tried to shake the disappointment off since the guest seemed to be Rae's friend and Audrey was just over for one night. After putting on a white tee-shirt along with some gray sweatpants, she returned to the living room with the intense Scrabble play going on. She grabbed the phone on the stand by the couch and then took a seat next to Rae on the couch.

"Baby, I was thinking," Rae said, focusing more on her letter tiles than her lover.

"Hmm?" Donnie replied, the simple sound coming out rich and smooth. A little shiver went down her wife's spine thanks to the little noise.

It took a Rae a moment to remember what she was going to say. "Do you think you could just order a pizza? I want to get in some junk food before you start going nuts about our diet and everything," the petite woman commented.

"Okay, no problem. Your friend want anything special on her pizza?" Donnie asked, going through the phone to get the number of their favorite pizza parlor.

Rae hit her spouse lightly on the leg. "Baby, you can ask herself. She is right here."

"I could," Donnie replied with a wide, teasing grin. This just earned her another hit from her wife.

"Audrey, is there anything you want on the pizza? Usually, we get half vegetarian and the other half meat lovers," Rae explained. They generally did that not because one of them liked one and the other liked the other, but they both liked to have at least a slice of vegetarian pizza to feel like they were eating healthy.

"That's fine," Audrey answered with a wave of her hand. She glanced up for a moment, taking in the couple's position before turning her attention back to her letters. She saw Rae was leaning

back against Donnie, who had her arm wrapped around Rae's waist. One of Rae's hand caressed the limb around her while her other hand moved around letter tiles for the game.

Donnie ordered the pizza and had no problem retrieving it when it was delivered, even though she made a whimpering sound when she felt Rae lift off of her, so she could get up to get the pizza. While Rae and Audrey continued their seemingly endless game of Scrabble, Donnie occupied herself with food and playing around on her laptop, first doing work and then taking a few minutes to play some games. This prevented her from cuddling into Rae since that was really what she wanted to do, but figured it would not be appropriate with Rae's company right there. She remained like that until Rae decided that it was bedtime and Audrey went home.

Donnie yawned and sighed when they entered their bedroom before merrily stripping out the tee-shirt and sweatpants she had put on because of the company. She dived to the bed while Rae took time to go shower and brush her teeth. By the time Rae crawled into bed, she thought that Donnie was sleeping. She learned otherwise when powerful arms wrapped themselves around her waist.

"How was your day, sweetie?" Donnie asked, pulling her wife to her. She pressed herself into the petite woman's back and then rested her head on top of Rae's soft, ebony mane. She inhaled the fresh smell of lilac from her wife's shampoo and soap. Several soft kisses had to follow because of how the aroma delighted Donnie's nose.

"It was good. Um...how did you feel about coming in with Audrey being in here? You didn't mind, did you?" Rae countered, voice quivering just a bit and Donnie had a feeling that had nothing to do with her kisses and caresses, but it did not stop her from continuing the display of affection.

"No, I didn't mind. I don't mind. She's keeping you company, that's good. Heavens knows I can't play Scrabble worth a damn enough to keep you entertained. I hope she plays all of those other games you like too," the chef commented honestly. Her mouth then went right back to placing small kisses on her wife's neck.

Rae smiled a bit and tilted her head, giving her lover better access to her neck. "She said she does like word games too and Scrabble is her favorite, like me. So, it's all right for her to stay over more?"

"Of course, babe. You two go ahead and play those word game things to your heart's content."

Rae smiled even more, purring slightly before continuing their conversation. "So, what would you think if she and I went clubbing sometime?" she asked, hoping that the positive feedback that she was getting would continue.

"Clubbing?" Donnie echoed like she did not know what that was and that paused her other activities. She leaned over and glanced down at her love, who looked up at her. They stared at each other for a few seconds. "You mean like on a date?" she asked in a puzzled tone with an expression to match.

Rae laughed out loud. "Of course not, baby! She's my friend, silly."

"Oh, well, if two friends are going to go clubbing, that's fine. I mean, not like I could take you out and dance with you or nothing. I hate clubs anyway. All of those damn people and crap. It's like chaos in those places. You shouldn't suffer because I can't dance and don't like being around people if I don't have to."

"You mean that, baby?" Rae inquired, shifting her body some and turning around. She was now halfway lying on top of Donnie and looking into deep hazel eyes.

"Yeah, of course. I want you to have fun and everything. I know it can't be fun staying inside all day, everyday. I'll miss you while you're out, though," the tan chef replied, poking her bottom lip out in order to look pathetic. It worked.

Rae sat up to kiss her spouse lightly on the lips. "Thank you, baby."

"I don't know why you act like I don't want you to have fun. Go out and have a blast. I'm happy you found someone that can dance and everything, just don't dance too close and be careful."

"Baby, I'm not going to dance close with Audrey. I'm a married woman, after all!" the smaller female declared with a grin.

"*Happily* married woman," Donnie corrected her wife, moving her hands to caress Rae's back. A shiver raced through her as she moved Rae's tank top out of the way to feel her soft skin.

Another smile lit up Rae's face. "Yes, happily. I will be careful too and I'll try to get it out of my system before we start noticing lil Donnie. Okay?"

"Sounds very good. Remember, no drinking when you're out."

Rae chuckled a little at her lover's overprotective nature. "I know, I know. I know what I can and cannot do now that I have lil Donnie taking up residence in my body, okay?"

Donnie looked away and had the decency to appear embarrassed for making such a big fuss. "I just get worried sometimes..." she mumbled, sulking just enough to get a kiss for her troubles. Of course, the kiss straightened out her features.

"I know, baby. You don't have to worry about me, though. You have so many other things in your life to worry about. I'm not one of them," Rae assured her spouse.

Donnie nodded to show that she understood. She held Rae closer to her and tried to get a little more cuddling in, knowing that she would not be able to stay away for anything more than some heavy petting. Donnie was able to go to sleep peacefully after a couple of minutes of light kissing. Rae gave her sleeping spouse another kiss before settling in for sleep herself. She looked forward to being able to go out with Audrey and do some dancing. She missed dancing, she realized as she drifted off to sleep.

"Hey, Don, what're you still doing here?" Tegan asked as she poked her head into Donnie's office at the restaurant. The redhead was dressed as fashionably as always, but she had to change out of those clothes since she had been on duty as a chief chef that night. The smile on her face was so broad it was amazing that her cheeks did not split open; working in the kitchen would always be her first love.

"I'm catching up on some paper work," Donnie answered, glancing up at her friend for only a moment before letting her eyes fall back to her paperwork on her meticulously clean desk.

"Shouldn't you be getting home to the little woman?" Tegan inquired curiously. It was not like Donnie to stay so late anymore because she tended to worry herself sick, thinking about Rae being alone at their house. In fact, she often got on Tegan's nerves with it, which was why the redhead wanted to know why her best friend was still there.

"Rae went out with a friend tonight, so I've got nothing to get home to for now. She said she'd call me when she was headed back, so I figured that's when I'd head out," Donnie explained as if it was nothing.

Tegan blinked hard from the surprise. "Rae went out? Is this friend another woman?" she asked, sounding suspicious. Green eyes narrowed as the wheels in her head began to turn. Donnie did not bother to glance up to see her best friend's expression.

"Yeah, apparently she's Trisha's assistant. I guess they hit it off while Trisha was doing the nursery."

Tegan nodded. "Trisha was telling me about her. She's not too sure if Audrey's working out. Something about Audrey seems a little off to her."

Donnie snorted. "Something always seems off to people with Trisha. She's paranoid."

Tegan shrugged. "You're right about that. Hell, she still watches French as if she's expecting her to strangle Spain or something. Still, you should watch Audrey around Rae. You don't want to come in one day and find her with her hands places--"

Donnie snarled, the noise cutting her off mid-sentence. "Rae is not like that! Don't you dare even suggest it!"

Tegan threw her hands up, in a gesture of giving up. "Okay, okay, okay."

"Audrey's harmless. They're just friends."

"Okay." Tegan decided that she needed to get going before she said something that really upset Donnie. The last time she upset Donnie, she ended up with a black eye... Sure, they had been ten at the time, but that still stuck with her. "I'm heading out, boss. You're going to be all right?"

"I'm fine. I needed to catch up on this stuff anyway. Not like I can count on you to do this junk." The business-owner motioned to the paperwork in front of her.

Tegan stuck her tongue out at Donnie. "Later, Don. Don't stay too long and don't let all this paper junk bug you."

Donnie nodded and waved her dear friend off. Tegan was gone on that note, sighing once she was out of the office. The restaurant owner was able to catch on her paperwork before her cell phone started ringing. She dug around her pockets for it, but did not find it until she noticed it was sitting on her desk, where she left it in case she got a call.

"Hey, sweetheart," Donnie answered when she saw it was Rae that was calling her. She smiled widely and her eyes twinkled when her wife's voice came through.

"Hey, baby! I'm just calling to let you know I'm all right!" Rae informed her spouse, shouting over the music to make sure she was being heard.

"I'm glad you did. I was just about to start worrying," Donnie said. She could not recall recently when Rae had been out past midnight and she was not with her wife. It did cause little butterflies to flutter in her stomach.

"I figured you would. Don't worry. I should be home in a couple of hours. Okay?"

Donnie sighed. "Yeah, okay. I'm going to try to eat something and then get back to this paperwork."

"Don't stress yourself out, baby. Make sure you eat," Rae ordered. She was stunned that she had to give that command since it was not like Donnie to miss a meal. "Did you eat dinner yet?"

"Um..." Donnie searched her memory. "No, I don't think I did. Guess I should, huh?" she asked with a slight blush. She sounded as embarrassed as she looked. She could not believe that she had forgotten to eat, but all she kept thinking about that day was how Rae was going to be going out and she was not going to be by her side. Her mind kept asking *what if something happens to Rae and I'm not there to do something?*

"Please do. I'll call again in a little while. Do me a favor and be home the next time I call you. I don't want you to wear yourself out and worry yourself sick."

"Okay. Love you."

"Love you too."

The call was disconnected. Donnie turned her attention back to her work for a moment, but a grumbling from her stomach reminded her that she was supposed to eat first. She got up and went in search for something to munch on.

Rae swayed to the music while keeping an eye on Audrey, who had drifted away from her as the music continued to pump through the dimly lit, highly packed club. She checked her watch after a while and saw that it was getting on in hours; it was almost three in the morning. She made her way over to Audrey.

"Hey, Audrey!" Rae shouted over the music, speaking into Audrey's ear.

"Yeah?" Audrey answered, smiling. Her face was obscured by the shadows of the club, but Rae suspected her face was flush because she could smell the alcohol on her friend's breath.

"I need to get going!"

Audrey pouted. "Sure, you can't hang out a little longer? You don't have anything to do tomorrow."

"I know I don't," Rae replied, but tomorrow was Saturday, which meant that she could spend some time with her wife. "But, Donnie'll worry if I don't get home soon!" *Although, Donnie is probably worrying herself sick right now anyway.*

A snort escaped the swaying redhead. "Live a little, Rae! Donnie'll live if you stay out for a little longer!"

"But..." The housewife glanced away and frowned a little.

"C'mon! Have some fun before you have to go back to staying in the house by yourself all week!"

Rae opened her mouth to argue, but quickly closed it. She was going to be stuck in the house by herself for the rest of the week. This might be the last time she went out like this in a long time. Hell, this was the first time that she went out like this in a long time. *I should live it up*, she told herself.

So, Rae continued to dance until another hour passed. By then, she noticed that Audrey was having some trouble moving to the beat; hell, the redhead was really having trouble staying straight up. Rae decided that it was time to get her friend out of there before something horrible happened. Leading Audrey out of the club, Rae could smell the alcohol coming from her companion through her sweat from dancing all night.

"Audrey, I need you to tell me where you live," the short female said as she eased the intoxicated woman into her car.

"Ohhh! Rae's going to come home with me!" Audrey cooed, a goofy smile conquering her face.

"I'm going to take you home," Rae corrected. She could see now by the car light that Audrey's face was very flushed. Her cheeks were stained with a deep red hue, so she clearly had way too much to drink.

"That's so nice..." Audrey hummed, smiling like a content kitten.

"So, where do you live?"

Audrey never did answer. Rae had to dig around Audrey's purse for her wallet. She had to put up with driving with a lot of pointless giggling and other nonsense things coming from Audrey. Halfway there, the redhead thankfully passed out and Rae was able to drive in silence. She was also thankful that she knew the area and could find the apartment building with no problem.

"Audrey, I need you to wake up," Rae said, shaking the passed out woman.

"Hmm..." the blue-eyed woman groaned.

"Come on. You're home, but there's no way I can support you to get you to your apartment," Rae explained. *It's at times like this that being short sucks!*

Audrey made a noise that probably chased off any creatures of the night that were around them, but she did seem to understand what was being asked of her. She pulled herself out of the car and stood up on her own. Rae tucked herself underneath the taller woman to help keep her up and they entered the building. A light touch brushed her hips, but Rae ignored it, figuring it was just Audrey trying to keep herself from falling over. The ebony-haired woman got enough out of Audrey to find out what apartment to go to and she was able to find the keys in Audrey's purse. It took her a few tries to find the right key.

Inside of the apartment, Rae patted against the walls, hoping to hit a light switch while Audrey took in where she was and pushed away from Rae. The redhead made it the short distance to her leather sofa and flopped down. Rae paused for a moment, thinking that maybe she should just go, but she did want to put the purse and keys down some place that Audrey would be able to find in the morning.

"Rae, come here," Audrey purred, trying to beckon the smaller woman with a come-hither stare, but she could barely open her eyes. She just appeared to be in a drunken daze.

"No, Audrey, I can't stay," Rae replied as she finally got discovered the light switch. She flicked the switch and the apartment was bathed in gentle light. She took a moment to glance around the apartment, taking in the warm blue and eggshell white colors that decorated the place. Tasteful art hung on the walls and eye-catching furniture was set up around the apartment. It was clear that Audrey had taste, which Rae never doubted since she worked for Trisha.

"Please," Audrey whined.

Rae shook her head and put down the purse and keys on the nearby coffee table. Audrey reached for Rae, who gently pushed the redhead back. Audrey did not put up a struggle and eased back on the couch completely. Her head fell to the side and suddenly she was sleeping again.

Rae breathed a sigh of relief; she was not having much fun dealing with a drunken Audrey. She went in search of the linen closet and found it next to the bathroom in the short hallway. She grabbed a blanket and covered Audrey with it. That deed done, she left the apartment, pausing only to find out if Audrey's door locked when it was shut. She was satisfied with that and then took her drive home.

She yawned as soon as she stepped in the door. Rubbing her eyes, she made her way upstairs. She was worn out and was very tempted to skip taking a shower until the morning, but she knew that she would not be able to sleep with such a grimy feel on her body. After all, she was sweaty and suspected that she smelled like liquor thanks to being so close to her drunken friend. She sighed in relief when the hot water of the large, three-headed shower poured over her body. *Yes, showering was definitely a good idea.*

After the shower and brushing her teeth, Rae wandered into the bedroom wrapped in nothing but a towel. She decided to crawl into bed like that, not wanting to bother with the trouble of putting clothes on after such an active night. She was not surprised when two strong arms embraced her as soon as she hit the mattress.

"Good night out?" Donnie inquired in a low voice as she positioned herself against Rae's back.

"S'okay. I'll tell you about it in the morning. Right now, I just want to go to sleep," Rae answered with a yawn.

"Wore yourself out, huh?" Donnie asked with the hint of a laugh buried in her voice. Rae nodded, which Donnie more felt than saw due to the darkness of the room and the closeness of their bodies.

"You stayed up waiting, didn't you?" It was more a statement than anything else and Donnie nodded to confirm it. Rae sighed and laughed a bit. "You turned the bedroom light out as soon as you heard my car pull up?"

"I did. I was worried."

"Sorry I worried you. Sleep now, talk later?"

"Okay. Love you."

"Love you too."

With those words said, the couple drifted off to a peaceful sleep. Rae had time to forget about her mini-adventure and Donnie able to put off worrying herself sick. They did know that they were going to have to talk in the morning, but for now they were thankful for a peaceful slumber.

4: Something about her

Rae woke up to the feel of kisses floating against her neck. She smiled and cooed while pushing closer to the familiar, adoring lips. After a few kisses, she turned her head and tilted it downward, leaning in to steal the next kiss meant for her neck. She moaned as soon as Donnie's sweet lips touched her own.

"Ready for a nice quiet Saturday together?" Donnie asked in a whisper as she pulled away. She sat up a little, the shift being felt in the mattress.

"Sounds good, but how quiet are you going for?" Rae countered with a devilish smile. The twinkle in her chocolate eyes set her spouse's heart to flutter.

"I love it when you give me that look. I don't think quiet was the term I was going for," Donnie remarked, an impish sparkle in her eyes now.

"Oh?" Rae went in for a deep kiss, which was returned with great passion.

"Quiet definitely was not the term I was going for," Donnie corrected herself as she pulled away for a breath. Her hand went to her wife's hip and she began unconsciously caressing the curve. It felt so good that her other hand wanted to get in on the action.

"Then what were you going for?" Rae asked, biting back a soft moan as she felt hands wandering her body, which was nude already. Apparently, the towel that she went to bed in had come undone sometime during the night.

"Um...possibly busy, or loud, maybe both. You know how I am when I get confused." The smile that went with that statement got a giggle out of Rae that quickly transformed into a moan as Donnie went in for more.

Rae made her way downstairs to fix breakfast after an eventful morning that she spent shouting to the ceiling and taking the Lord's name in vain. She was dressed for the first time in eight hours, wearing a white tank-top that was way too big for her and very skimpy mesh shorts. Before she made her way to the kitchen, the phone rang and interrupted her task. She quickly grabbed the phone.

"Hello?" Rae greeted the caller, sounding as friendly as always.

"Rae?" Audrey's pained voice inquired.

"Yes."

"I'm sorry about last night..." Audrey whimpered, sounding quite pathetic and sincere.

Rae shifted and bounced on the balls of her feet for a second. "...It's fine..." she lied. While she had had a good time last night, it was a little unnerving to be out with someone that was so drunk. Not to mention, someone that she had to carry home and that seemed to be making a play on her. She was a happily married woman, after all!

"No, it's not. I didn't mean to drink that much. I thought I would be fine, but I got carried away because I was having so much fun. I haven't been out in a long time and I just let that get to me," the redhead explained in a low voice, sounding like a child that was apologizing for causing mischief.

"Oh..." Rae could understand that, especially since she would have liked to have at least one drink last night. *Who's to say that one wouldn't have turned into more, especially if I didn't have someone like Donnie waiting for me at home?*

"I hope...I hope this doesn't change your opinion of me. I don't want us to stop hanging out..." From the way she sounded Rae could picture the pout and sorrow on her face.

"No, something like this wouldn't change that," Rae assured the nervous redhead.

"That's good." The smile she was sporting and instant relief that she felt could be heard in her voice. "And, I'm very sorry about that. Thank you so much for helping me home."

A small smile tugged at Rae's thin lips. "Hey, what are friends for, right? We're friends, so of course I'm going to help you."

"So...we'll hang out again sometime?" Audrey asked shyly. She sounded almost like she was blushing, but Rae could not be sure.

"Of course. I just hope you don't drink as much."

"I promise. I swear to you, I usually don't drink that much!"

"It's fine. Listen, I have to go and make breakfast. Talk to you later?"

"All right. Does Donnie ever cook at home?" Audrey asked, giggling a bit as the question left her mouth.

Rae laughed too. "Hardly ever. I'm sure she would if I asked, but I don't want to burden her with that. Besides, I don't mind."

"You're too kind, Rae. Way too kind."

"I don't know about that. Okay, I really have to go. Not feeding Donnie can be ugly."

Audrey laughed again; the sound was light, but not airy. It was clearly happy, but something else was buried underneath it. "All right. See you later."

Rae smiled as she disconnected the call. She breathed a sigh of relief as she walked into the kitchen to start breakfast. She felt better about last night now because Audrey did not purposely get so intoxicated. It made her feel better because she knew that when she told Donnie about the night, she did not have to include feeling just a little disgusted and disappointed in her new friend for her behavior. She did not have to include those things because Audrey did not mean for them to happen. Hey, it made sense to her.

"Something smells good," Donnie commented as she entered the kitchen. She was dressed in a black tank-top with matching shorts. Her eyes fell right on her wife, moving around the stove and kitchen counter. "Something looks good too..." the taller woman said, coming up behind Rae and putting her hands directly on Rae's ass. She groaned as she squeezed the perfectly rounded bottom.

Rae squealed in delight, but then quickly swatted at the distracting hands. "Baby, you're going to make me burn the omelets at this rate!" she scolded her amorous spouse.

Donnie flashed her a charming grin. "You always know how to back me off. What're we having besides your fabulous omelets?" the taller woman inquired, backing up all the way to the island. She pulled up a stool next to a cup of juice that was waiting just for her.

"I'm going to make some waffles too."

"Yes!" Donnie cheered, much like a child, going so far as to throw her hands up in the air. Once her arms were down, she settled into her seat and focused her attention directly on her wife. Adoration shined in her light brown eyes. "So, how was your night out? You got in so late," she commented, pouting a little.

"I know. I'm sorry about that. I didn't want you to stay up and worry. It seems that Audrey gets out as much as I do and once we got there, she didn't want to leave. I didn't want to leave her there by herself," Rae explained. She tried not to think of what might have happened to Audrey if she had left the redhead at the club by herself.

Donnie nodded. "Good idea. If you go out with her again, maybe you guys can agree on a time to leave."

"That's a good idea. It would've saved us some trouble if we had done that this time out. I think I'd like to go out again. You don't mind, do you?"

A shake of the head was the response. "It's all right. You like dancing and I can't do it. You shouldn't have to stop just because I can't. I don't want you going out a lot, though. You have to remember you do have lil Donnie in there," she remarked with a soft smile.

"I know." Rae knew that once she started showing that was going to be the end of going out because Donnie was going to worry about every step that she took. She could only imagine the stress she would put her poor partner through if she did go out once she was seven or eight months pregnant. Donnie would probably end up in the hospital. "So, did you catch up on all your paperwork?" she asked, changing the subject to get off the train of thought that she was having.

"Most of it. Talked Ran into working a little more, so now I can start selling her pastries down at the café. She put up such a fight on it," Donnie answered, shaking her head a little in amusement as she recalled her head pastry chef making a huge fuss over where she wanted to use her talents.

"I'm shocked she didn't pull a gun on you to get out of that one," Rae commented with a chuckle.

"Extra money amazingly enough goes a long way with her," Donnie laughed.

"I never would have guessed!" Rae said sarcastically.

The couple joked around for a while as Rae finished up breakfast. They were never short on things to talk about, despite the fact that Rae rarely left the house. They picked each other's brains, just finding out what the other was thinking. They ate and lazed around the house, cuddling on the couch until nighttime fell. At that point, Donnie had to go to work; she liked to keep an eye on the restaurant on weekend nights. One of the things that people liked about going to *Donnie's* was that on any given day they could meet and converse with the owner. Donnie liked going to the restaurant because she could catch problems quickly and fix them before they got out of hand, and the weekend was never short on problems. She also did not mind having one-on-one conversations with patrons; she was much better with individuals than with crowds.

So, Rae was alone again that night. For some reason, the silence that she should be so used to seemed bothersome now. Echoes whispered to her that she did not have to be alone, that Donnie would not mind her doing something with her time, like Donnie did not mind when she went out last night. So, she called up Audrey, who was eager to come over. Rae did set one rule, which happened to be no drinking, even though she did not know that Audrey drank liquor anyway until their little outing last night. Audrey agreed to that and came over for movie night and Scrabble play.

"You got here pretty fast," Rae noted as she opened the door to let Audrey in.

"Oh, it was no traffic coming this way. Everything's going downtown," Audrey pointed out, making a meaningless hand gesture.

Rae nodded. "Oh, right. Come on in. I made dinner."

"Oh, that's nice," Audrey said with a bright smile.

"Well, I like to send Donnie off to work with food in her belly. If I don't, she'll be grumpy for the night or stay in the kitchen half the night eating everything in sight," Rae commented with a warm smile of her own.

A light laugh escaped the redhead. "You make it sound like you should have to roll Donnie down the street with how much she eats."

"She does eat a lot. But, she's pretty active and she works out whenever she gets a chance. She more than likely stays in shape from running around at work, though. She's never still once she gets in the restaurant," Rae explained.

Audrey nodded and they went to the living room. Rae already had the Scrabble game out and waiting for them. While Audrey made herself comfortable, Rae went to go make her a plate of food. When Rae came back into the living room, she handed the plate to Audrey, whose eyes almost fell out of her head when she saw how much food was on the plate.

"Oh my. I don't know if I'll be able to eat all of this," Audrey commented, shaking her head a little.

"Oh, sorry," Rae apologized, sheepish smile on her face and a slight blush on her cheeks. "I'm so used to making Donnie's plate that I forgot most people don't eat like they've been starving for four weeks. Well, eat what you can. Those were the leftovers anyway."

Audrey nodded, smiling a little from the adorably rueful look in the deep brown eyes across from her. They got their night started after dinner, deciding to play their favorite game and watch some DVDs at the same time. Rae found a movie for them to watch and was surprised when Audrey said it was one of her favorite movies. Rae smiled.

"Really? It's one of mine too. Donnie hates it, though," Rae said.

"Does Donnie like anything aside for food?" Audrey asked with a laugh. Silently, she noted that Donnie did not seem to like anything that Rae liked and she could only wonder how they became a couple. Not only that, but how did they manage to stay together?

Rae giggled. "I make it seem like she doesn't like much, huh? She's more than a glutton, really."

"It doesn't seem like you two have much in common. How'd you two get hooked up and everything?" Audrey asked curiously. This might give her some insight on the couple and what kept them together, or at least explain why Rae put up with Donnie.

Rae was silent for a moment. She guessed that it would be all right to tell Audrey how she met Donnie. It was not like it was a big secret or anything. Actually, most people involved in their lives knew how they met.

"Well, we met almost six years ago, in Donnie's restaurant of all things..." Rae started.

----(Flashback: five years ago)

Rae blew out a breath and tried her best to keep her jaw from dropping as she entered the city's most famous restaurant, *Donnie's*. She did not want to come across as immature or unsophisticated, but it was a sight to behold and she felt very fortunate to be there. It was as amazing as she thought it would be with perfect marble statues and fountains, looking as if they were plucked out of Rome itself. She glanced out into the garden, hoping that they would have time to go for a walk through the small, but praised area.

"April, I can't believe you brought me here," Rae said in a hushed voice, speaking to the woman that she was accompanying into the restaurant.

The woman, April, smiled. April was a statuesque blonde with an air of sophistication around her that was unmistakable. She held her head high all the time, usually with a tilt in her chin, often making her literally look down on people. She was dressed in a black pants' suit with a grey shirt underneath and heeled boots that made her dwarf her petite girlfriend, Rae.

They were seated immediately at a quaint table by the wall. Rae took a moment to scan the pieces of art that decorated the place and wondered how expensive the frescoes were. They added to the classical feel of the restaurant and she was surprised to find that there was also a comforting feel about the place too. Something about the pastel colors and warm scenes soothed and scrapped away the daunting, pretentious atmosphere she expected.

"Order whatever you want," April told Rae when their menus were brought to them. Her voice had a smokey quality to it that made her younger girlfriend want to melt much of the time whenever she heard it.

Rae nodded, but then winced when she saw that there were no prices next to the items on the menu. She was pretty sure that was not a good thing. It seemed like one of those if-you-have-to-ask-then-you-can't-afford-it deals.

"Are you sure about this, April?" Rae asked, even though she was used to April letting her order whatever she wanted when they went out. The aristocratic blonde had the money for it; it was something that she never let Rae forget.

"It's perfectly fine. Get whatever you want," April insisted, steely blue eyes pinning Rae to get her point across.

Rae nodded again, looking almost like a puppy, and turned her attention to the menu. While her attention was on the menu, there was attention on her. She was aware that April was looking at her, but there was also another pair of eyes on her.

"Don, what's up?" Tegan asked when she noticed the boss staring across the floor.

"I don't know. I guess I just thought that girl was cute," Donnie answered, discreetly pointing across the room.

"You think a lot of girls are cute. You don't usually stop and stare like that."

Donnie shrugged. She did not have much of an explanation for her behavior. She and Tegan continued on their way after a few seconds, but the short, ebony-haired woman stayed on Donnie's mind for a moment longer.

Rae had no idea that she was being watched from afar and was only focused on April, who was being surprisingly quiet. April usually talked a mile-a-minute about her business conquests or how great her staff had been that day or even what the traffic was like. She just enjoyed talking, so it was unsettling for her to be so silent. Rae tried coaxing her lover into conversation several times, but nothing seemed to be working. After a few minutes, their food was thankfully delivered and Rae had a reason to stop trying.

"You having a good time, honey?" April inquired out of the blue. Her eyes pinned Rae again; there was something odd about her gaze tonight, the younger woman noted.

Rae nodded. "Yes."

"Your food good?"

Rae nodded again. "Yes." Actually, the pasta that she was having tasted bland and she knew it was not the chef's fault. It had something to do with her company and the strange vibe coming from April.

"Is the wine good?"

Rae nodded again. "Yes."

April snorted. "Well, then could you take the time to look happy about things then? What the hell is the point in taking you some place nice if you're going to look like you're at an execution?"

A frown cut across Rae's soft face. *Where the hell did that come from?* "Sorry...it's just you're acting strange."

"I'm acting strange?" April looked like she was on the verge of being outraged. Her features hardened like stone and her face twisted for a moment, making her look like a cartoon version of herself. She then took a breath and calmed herself down. "You know what, I'm not even going to get into that. I'll tell it to you straight, Rae. This isn't working out."

"What's not working out?" Rae asked with a quiver in her voice. Her eyes were wide with shock, showing that she had a clear understanding of just what was not working out.

"You know what's not working out. We're just not compatible. I've already moved your things out of the apartment. I put them in storage for you," April said in a calm tone that Rae was very used to hearing. It was a tone that made her feel childlike and childish in the face of the worldly April.

"But...why...?" Rae managed to squeak out. She thought that things were going well for the most part. Sure, they had a few fights, but that was with any relationship. Things had always been consistent, though, so this was really coming out of left field to her. Unfortunately, it was a field that she was used to playing in.

April shook her head and waved a finger at the short woman. "That's neither here nor there. The point is this is over."

"But...but...but..." Rae was at a loss for words. She did not understand what was going on, why April was just giving up on the relationship.

April did not stick around to explain either. She put down a few bills, sure they would cover the meal, and left Rae sitting there with an audience watching her. Her lips, moist thanks to her light pink lip-gloss, trembled as tears slid down her face. She buried her face in her hands, muffling the sounds of her crying. She leaned against the table and bawled into her palms.

"Hey," a warm voice said and she heard something put down on the table.

Rae put her hands down just enough to see what was going on. There was a distinguished looking woman sitting across from her, Donnie Bonaventure. Between them was a large ice cream sundae with the works.

"Ice cream always cheers me up," Donnie explained with a small smile when she noticed watery brown eyes focused on the dessert.

"Thank you..." Rae muttered and sniffled.

"Here, try it. It's made from the best stuff on Earth," Donnie remarked, passing a spoon over to the crying woman.

"I thought that was Snapple," Rae mumbled.

A wide grin was her answer. "How can you claim you're made from the best stuff on Earth if you don't have ice cream or chocolate in you?" She then laughed a little and got a small chuckle out of her sorrowful company.

"I don't think I could eat all of this..." Rae said.

"You don't have to eat all of it. Just try some of it. I'm telling you, you'll love it."

Rae sniffled again and she dropped her hands. Her makeup was simmered thanks to her tears, but Donnie did not mention anything on it. She smiled when Rae picked up the spoon and eased her hand toward the mountain of ice cream in front of her that was covered in hot fudge, nuts, strawberries, a banana, and cookie bits. Rae took a small bite, but that was enough for Donnie, who then started up a conversation with the stranger across from her. It was so easy to do that it secretly stunned both of them.

Donnie made sure to keep the topic away from the scene that just happened minutes ago. She did not even talk about the restaurant. She brought up other things, hoping to get the young woman to forget about the disrespect shown toward her, talking about sports and the zoo of all things.

"I love the seals," Rae said, as they continued talking about the zoo and she continued to eat her sundae.

"I used to try to go swimming with them when I was little. My grandfather hated taking me to the zoo. I was always running everywhere and trying to climb over the guardrails and everything," Donnie replied, earning another laugh from Rae.

"You sound like a hoot. I was nothing like that. My brother was, but me and my sisters were good girls. When we went to the zoo, we always made sure to hold each other's hand and never get separated. My parents never lost us, but they almost always lost my brother."

"That was me and my granddad. I was always into something and I always lost track of him when I started up. You'd think it be easy to spot a guy that's six foot five and everything, but when you're five all those knees and ankles look the same!" Donnie quipped with a happy smile.

"Sounds like you and your grandfather are pretty close."

Donnie nodded. "Yeah, me and him were definitely a duo. No matter how much I got on his nerves, he always had time for me and he always made sure everything was okay with me. He's still like that actually."

"Did he raise you?" Rae asked curiously, intrigued by this stranger who came to her rescue with delicious snacks.

"It's complicated," Donnie answered and usually she did not say more than that, but her mouth kept going for some reason. "My dad and my grandfather never really got along, so when I was born it was sort of a second chance for my granddad I guess. My dad didn't really care too much about me one way or the other. I really don't know why. Sometimes, I figure it was just because my grandfather liked me. I don't know." She shrugged.

"That's sad. I can't picture my dad not liking me."

Donnie waved it off. "Your dad's probably not an asshole."

"Not to my knowledge, no," Rae admitted.

"That explains why you can't picture it then. How's the ice cream?"

"It's really good. Thanks for bringing it to me." Rae then suddenly paused, looking as if she had a realization. "I'm not keeping you from anything, am I?"

"No, nothing important. I'm having a good time here with you."

A light nod and a light blush accompanied a low, shy response, "Me too."

They continued on conversing until Tegan came over and interrupted. "Uh...sorry to butt in, but I need to borrow this one," the redhead said while pointing her thumb at Donnie.

"What's wrong?" Donnie asked, glancing up at her second-in-command.

"I'm going to wrap my hands around Ran's neck and not stop until I see her eyes roll up in the back of her head," Tegan explained.

Donnie sighed and turned her attention to Rae. "Excuse me for just a couple of minutes. Is there anything you want while I'm gone?"

Rae shook her head and with that Donnie ripped herself away from the table, walking off with Tegan. She was not gone for long and returned to see that Rae was starting to leave. Donnie rushed over to the table.

"Wait, are you leaving already?" Donnie asked, sounding close to panicking. Her light brown eyes appeared alarmed and distressed by the idea of the petite woman leaving.

"I didn't want to take up anymore of your time," Rae explained.

"You're not! I was having a really good time talking to you," Donnie replied with a pout.

"I don't want to keep you from whatever it was you're doing," Rae said, suspecting that Donnie worked at the restaurant in some manner. "I don't want to get you in any trouble with your boss..."

"Don't worry about it. You're not in any trouble of doing that," Donnie tried to assure her, throwing in a charming smile too. "Come on, let's sit back down. I can get us some more ice cream," she offered.

"That's all right. I need to start looking for a place to stay tonight anyway. Sitting around here and having a nice conversation isn't going to solve that problem," Rae pointed out, her expression falling into one of despair.

Donnie's face dropped like a thermometer in the arctic. "Oh...do you think I could get your number and call you sometime? Just to check on you and make sure you're eating ice cream?" she remarked, a sparkle of hope in her hazel eyes.

"Well, I don't know how long my phone'll be on. April handled that..." Rae admitted, eyes watering and face falling even more than before. Donnie decided she disliked that very much and quickly went to correct the look.

"It's okay! I'll give you my number and you can call me about anything. We can talk about the zoo again," Donnie offered. Rae hesitated, which Donnie noticed. "Seriously, just talk and be friends. Nothing beyond that."

"Oh, okay," Rae nodded and smiled.

"Cool. Can I call you a cab or anything too?"

"Well, first I have to find out where I'm going. Give me a moment."

Donnie nodded. Rae pulled out her cell phone and called a friend. Donnie busied herself by pulling her wallet out of her pants' pocket. She pulled out one of her cards and then took out a small pen held in the spine of her wallet. She wrote her home number on the back.

"All right, my friend is going to let me stay with her for the night and pick me up. I'm glad she doesn't live too far. I can't wait to get out of these shoes," Rae said with a little huff, obviously directed at the footwear.

Donnie glanced down at the shoes. While she was willing to bet they were uncomfortable, they were sexy as hell and drew a lot of attention to Rae's legs...which Donnie thought were beyond sexy and the rest of Rae was even hotter. She could not believe that idiot blonde walked out on Rae.

"April liked me to where these damn things," Rae grumbled. "I guess that's the one good thing about her being gone. I never have to wear these damn things again."

"That is a bright spot."

Rae chuckled a bit and they went on talking while strolling outside to wait for Rae's friend. When the friend finally arrived, the new associates were about to bid each other farewell when Donnie realized that she was still holding her card in her hand. She quickly handed it to Rae.

"Please, don't hesitate to call me," Donnie said, eyes begging for Rae to understand.

"As soon as things settle down," Rae replied. "Oh, I'm Rae by the way. Rae Harrison," she introduced herself. She almost laughed aloud as she thought about how she had been talking to a stranger for most of the night and neither of them thought to introduce themselves.

"Donnie Bonaventure," the restaurant owner replied and they shook hands.

"It was a pleasure to meet and spend time with you, Donnie."

"The pleasure was all mine."

Rae then climbed into her friend's car and was gone. Donnie stood there and watched the car disappear down the street, a goofy smile on her face.

-----(end of flashback)

"And then you lived happily ever after, right?" Audrey asked as they continued their Scrabble game. They had started the game while Rae was telling her story. Their dinner plates were cast aside at the end of the coffee table; Rae planned to get to them as soon as the game was over.

Rae laughed, a hearty sound that lit up her eyes. "No, no, no. After April broke my heart I swore off spoiled, rich girls and Donnie's card pretty much made me think that was what she was. I wasn't about to call her after I found out that she owned *Donnie's*. The woman is persistent, though. I don't know how she managed to find me, but she did and she sent flowers and little gifts. I treated her like shit for months, but she never gave up."

"Sounds kind of like a stalker to me," Audrey commented, glancing up from her letter tiles to gauge Rae's reaction to her words.

Rae shrugged. "I guess it does a little. Maybe there's a thin line between stalker and persistent. Besides, it wasn't like she was hiding in my bushes or anything. I always knew when something was from her. She never 'surprisingly' popped up anywhere I was or something like that. She never called my house and hung up or send weird text messages or anything like that. So, it wasn't really creepy."

"You didn't think it was creepy for her to just sit down with you after your girlfriend broke up with you?" Audrey asked incredulously.

"I did think it was a little weird back then, which is another reason why I never called her. But, it turns out that she does that a lot. Surprisingly enough, a good amount of people do break up with people at fancy restaurants. It sort of acts as a way of minimizing the chance of a scene and helps the jerk breaking up with someone feel less guilty about it. Also, sometimes proposals go wrong and people bolt. Donnie doesn't like to let people just sit there being heartbroken and embarrassed, so she tries to distract them with conversation and desserts."

"Do you think that she might...you know...pick people up like she did you?" the redhead inquired, leaning forward a little and speaking in a low tone as if she was suggesting something scandalous.

Rae's forehead wrinkled in thought and then unconsciously a smile works its way onto her face. "I don't think so. She says that I just caught her eye differently from any other woman on the planet. It started out with her being her usual friendly self and then turns out that she really liked me."

"Well...that's sweet," Audrey said with a somewhat forced smile.

Rae did not seem to notice the expression, focusing more on her letter tiles. She smiled again before making a word on the board. Audrey raised an eyebrow to the look in those brown eyes not the word.

"So, I guess you're happy with Donnie, huh?" Audrey asked, which did earn her a look from Rae. Chocolate eyes gazed intensely at the guest for a long moment.

The answer was short and to the point. "Very."

The redhead nodded and smiled a little. "You're lucky."

Rae nodded and internally breathed a sigh of relief. She guessed that she took Audrey's question the wrong way. She offered up a smile as an apology. The game continued on.

Donnie entered the house a little after midnight. She went to the living room to find Rae leaning against the couch sound asleep while Audrey was up, looking at the entertainment system. Donnie cleared her throat, which caught Audrey's attention.

"Hey, she just drifted off to sleep after a few rousing games of Scrabble. I was trying to figure out how to turn your DVD player off," Audrey explained, glancing back at the entertainment center and then eyeing Donnie again.

The tawny-skinned chef was silent for a second. She looked at Audrey and then back at her wife before focusing on Audrey yet again. She then waved Audrey's words off.

"You can't keep her up past midnight twice in a row. Her body refuses," Donnie commented with a chuckle. "I'll get this stuff. See you around."

Audrey knew that she was being dismissed and she decided to take off without further ado. Donnie turned her attention back to her wife and easily picked the pregnant woman up. A slight frown overtook Donnie's face, but she shook that away as she started for the stairs. She put Rae down in the bed before going back downstairs to turn off the DVD player, which was accomplished with the simple push of a button. She noticed the case of the DVD she suspected the friends were watching.

"Ew. Glad she got somebody to watch this movie with her again. You couldn't pay me to watch this thing twice," Donnie remarked to the air.

She went to go set the house alarm system before returning upstairs. She took a quick shower while trying to ignore a strange feeling that was wiggling at the back of her mind. She did not know what it was and was able to shake it away once she crawled into bed and wrapped her arms around Rae.

"Perfection," Donnie thought to herself as she rested her head in Rae's ebony mane and placed one of her hands on Rae's slightly swollen abdomen.

Next time: perfection starts to look just a little flawed.

Shea K's Scrolls
Index Page

~ **Burned** ~
by Shea K.

Disclaimer: Welcome to an original story by this lunatic. The story and the characters are mine. Do not use them without my permission. Also, any and all characters, events, and situations found in these stories are fictional. If there are any similarities between these things and real people, events, and situations, it is purely a coincidence.

General warning: This story will eventually involve a sexual relationship between two women. There will also be some extreme language.

Special thanks to my beta, Ken-zero.

5: Talk is cheap

Donnie walked into her house, almost expecting to see Audrey there, as she was a common fixture around the place now. But, the house was empty and for a moment, she reveled in that. Barely a second after that, her mind jumped to wondering where her wife was and panic took over her heart, flashing in her light brown eyes. Before she could act on that panic and make herself sick with worry, Donnie remembered that Rae had gone out with Audrey to the movies. She sighed in relief, thankful that she recalled where her spouse was and thankful that she did not have to go.

Rae had been hinting for a couple of weeks that she wanted to go see a particular movie. Donnie did not understand why her wife did not just come right out and say that she wanted to go to the flick, but that was neither here nor there. As long as Rae only hinted-no matter how strongly the hints were-that she wanted to see the movie, Donnie countered with hints of the exact opposite. She wanted nothing to do with the "chick-flick" and she had no plans on it if Rae was not going to come right out and ask her to go. She was saved from attending by Audrey.

Audrey heard Rae talking about the picture one day and had come right out to say that she wanted to see it. She invited Rae along with her and Rae accepted. Rae had requested that her spouse to come, but Donnie made up the excuse of having work to do. Deep chocolate eyes had appeared thoroughly disappointed and Rae had to practically pick her face up from the floor when Donnie declined. Audrey had almost looked relieved, even smiling a little with a twinkle in her sky-colored eyes. Donnie had noticed the expression, but she did not say anything about it because she was not looking to start anything with her wife's close friend.

The business-owner muddled about the house, trying to keep busy while waiting for her wife to return. Eventually, she gave up on trying to find something to do and went to take a shower. Changing into some comfortable house clothes of sweat pants and a tee-shirt, she went back to searching for something to do to keep busy. She settled in the living room and was about to see if something was on television, but something else caught her eye. There were baby magazines on coffee table, so she decided to flip through those. She noticed that Rae had already marked some things in many of them. She grabbed a pen of her own, making sure it was a different color from the one Rae used, and started making her own marks, many of them corresponding to items that Rae already showed an interest in.

"Rae's picked some good stuff. Maybe we can go shopping or something this weekend," Donnie said to herself.

She and Rae planned to shop for everything that their baby needed, so they were not going to have a baby-shower-much to Donnie's friends' dismay. Donnie was the first one to have a child out of her friends and they had all been looking forward spoiling "lil Donnie," so they were a bit upset that they were going to have to wait until the baby showed up. Donnie was first in line to spoil the baby and she made that very clear.

"Oh, this is a nice crib!" Donnie grinned when she saw the crib that Rae marked. They had not purchased a crib yet, even though they did pick out much of the furniture for the nursery. They were saving that bit for last to make sure that they got it right.

The chef's eyes lit up every time she saw something that Rae wanted to get for the baby and she had a feeling that they were going to be buying a bunch of things that they did not need. Hell, they were probably going to buy some things that they did not even use. She did not care, though. These were for their baby, after all.

Thinking about the baby caused Donnie's mind to drift to Rae. She glanced up from the magazine and looked around the silent house. She sighed, wishing that Rae was home now. She wanted to cuddle against Rae's small body and rub her belly, which was getting bigger by the day. She was showing now, but not by much, but enough for Donnie to stop and stare at her every-so-often, amazed that that was their baby in there.

"We have a baby..." Donnie smiled, her entire face showing so many delighted emotions. The very idea that their child was growing inside of Rae tickled her, even now when she had months to adjust to the fact.

Her thoughts were interrupted by the sound of the front door opening. She smiled to herself and was tempted to dash to the door, but she retrained herself. She tried to focus on the magazines that she had while waiting for her spouse to come in. She figured that they could go through the magazines together and pick out things for the baby while cuddling on the sofa. Those thoughts were shattered for a moment as she heard Rae talking to someone, and she realized that Audrey had come back with Rae.

"That movie was better than I expected," Rae commented as she stepped into the house.

"It was great. The company made it better, though. You're fun to watch a movie with," Audrey replied as she came into the house too.

"I learned from the best. Donnie is a hoot to sit through a movie with," Rae said, shutting the door behind them and making sure it was locked. They started toward the living room.

Audrey nodded. "Shame she didn't come," she stated, shaking her head a little.

It was then that they noticed Donnie sitting on the couch in her pajamas. They noticed the magazines out too. Rae smiled softly when she saw all the stuff out and went to her lover immediately. She hugged Donnie and then made herself comfortable against the familiar weight.

"From what I heard, you liked the movie," Donnie pointed out with a teasing smile. This earned her a kiss on the mouth, which was more of a greeting than anything else.

"It was great! You should've come!" Rae declared, face shining with a bright smile.

Donnie snorted and rolled her eyes. "You know I don't like those kinds of movies."

"You could've come and made fun of it, like you always do." Rae curled in closer to her mate, caressing the chef's bare forearm.

Donnie shrugged. "You're right. But, I had a good time sitting here and going through all these baby magazines. I see you've gone through most of them and know what you want to get for lil Donnie."

Rae nodded and smiled impishly. "Yup!" Donnie could not help thinking about how utterly adorable her wife was from just that one word response.

The brown-haired woman was about to go on about the baby, but then she realized that Audrey was still there. The redhead had sat down and everything, as if she planned to be there for a while. Donnie looked at her and then looked at Rae, who was busy scanning through one of the opened books to see what Donnie had picked out. Donnie poked Rae to get her attention to remind her that she had company. Rae looked up at Donnie, who casually nodded toward Audrey. This caused a laugh to escape the petite woman.

"Audrey, why don't you tell Donnie about the movie while I make us some dinner? Baby, did you eat?" Rae asked.

"I did, but you know I always have room for your cooking," Donnie answered with a grin.

Rae smiled and went off to cook dinner. Audrey and Donnie sat there in awkward silence, making sure not to look at each other. Although Audrey was at the house often, Donnie did not feel particularly close to her. She did not see the point of trying to get to know Audrey since Audrey was Rae's friend and not hers, but she would give it a shot since Rae gave all of her friends a shot.

"So, how was the movie?" Donnie inquired, forcing herself to look over at the redhead.

"It was good. You should've taken Rae. It seemed like a date movie kind of thing," Audrey answered, making a meaningless gesture with her hands.

The chef nodded, but shrugged right after. "Probably was. Rae loves those kinds of movies, but I can't stand them. I talk through all the time and make her miss the whole point of the movie," she explained. Sometimes, she felt like a little child and could not sit still, especially in the movies. She would run her mouth from start to end and she did not think that was fair to Rae, who really wanted to see those movies.

"Can't keep still, huh?" A smirk looked like it was tugging at Audrey's lip. There was a strange glint in her eyes, but Donnie did not see because she was not really looking at the shorter woman.

"Nope." The tan woman leaned her elbows on her knees and put her hands together.

Audrey could not help chuckling a little. "So, when was the last time you went to the movies?"

Donnie shrugged again. "No clue. Work keeps me pretty busy."

"Yet you're about to have a baby. Are you sure you've got time for a baby?" Audrey inquired, concern coloring her sky blue eyes.

The question caused Donnie to turn in face their guest. She stared directly at Audrey at that point and her voice was steady when she responded. "I'm sure I'm ready. I've got everything planned out."

An airy, but odd snicker escaped the redhead as she nodded. "That's good. Rae shouldn't have to raise the baby on her own."

Donnie arched an eyebrow to that statement, thinking that was a bizarre thing to say, but she did say anything about it. "That wasn't something that Rae ever had to worry about," she replied, brushing it off with a wave of her hand.

Audrey looked skeptical and Donnie wondered if that was a serious fear for her wife. She knew that she worked a lot, but she was doing that to avoid having to work so much in the future. She figured that it was something that she would discuss with Rae later on, for now she was going to continue to try getting along with Audrey.

"So, Audrey, what do you do in your spare time, aside for play Scrabble and junk with Rae?" Donnie asked, wanting to get the subject off of herself. Now that she thought about it, she was a little curious about her wife's friend. Audrey seemed to have a lot of spare time on her hands and most of it seemed to be spent with Rae.

"Hang out with friends," Audrey answered.

"Yeah? That's cool. What do you do with them?" the chef continued, nodding a little as she spoke.

"The usual stuff. Why? You want to hang out with them too?" A teasing lopsided grin accompanied the inquiry.

Donnie scoffed and resisted the urge to roll her eyes, not wanting to offend Rae's friend. "Nothing like that. It's just that Rae said it seemed like you didn't get out often one time."

"You think I'm spending too much time with your wife or something?" Audrey inquired in a suspicious tone. Her face hardened a little, looking ready to do battle.

A blithe snort and a blase wave sort of defused the situation. "I've got no problem with that. Rae likes hanging out with you and all of that. I have nothing against that. If you like hanging out with Rae that's cool and you don't have to put up a front with me that you have a bunch of friends. I figured if you had a bunch of friends, you wouldn't be over here so much."

"I do have friends. I just happen to like Rae's company more than my other friends. They're all idiots. I'm sure you've had a group of friends like that at one point in time. You look around and wonder why the hell you're hanging out with them. It's not like that with Rae," Audrey explained, sounding a little defensive. Her posture remained tense, even though Donnie was calm.

Donnie nodded and accepted that reasoning. She tried to find out more information of Audrey for a few minutes, but nothing really came from it. Audrey kept trying to turn the conversation back to Donnie, who in turn was trying to keep things about the redhead. Their chat went nowhere until Rae finally returned, reporting that dinner would be ready in about fifteen minutes. From there, Rae and Audrey talked about the movie that they had seen while Donnie made herself busy by holding Rae and caressing the "bump" in her stomach that was their baby. Audrey occasionally glanced at Donnie or her hands, but she did not say anything to the chef.

Donnie had hopes that she and her spouse would be able to look at some stuff for the baby, but Audrey stayed for a few hours and by the time she left it was time for bed as far as the couple was concerned. Rae had to take a shower while Donnie gathered up the baby magazines, taking them into the bedroom. She thought that they might make sometime in the morning to go through them now.

The businesswoman went to brush her teeth and then climbed into the large bed. Rae exited the shower and walked into the bedroom wearing nothing but her towel. She glanced over at Donnie, who was flipping through a magazine, but suddenly paused. Donnie turned to her wife and then went over to her.

Rae held her breath as Donnie peeled her out of the towel and let it fall to the ground. The ebony-haired woman smiled a little to herself and waited for Donnie to touch her. When the taller woman finally did, Rae was a bit surprised where Donnie's hands ended up. Donnie gently caressed the noticeably bulge in her wife's abdomen.

"I can't believe we created a life here," Donnie whispered. Her hazel eyes showed that she was drowned with delight and wonder.

"You can't seem to get enough of touching lil Donnie," Rae pointed out with a small, pleased smile. It seemed like the bulge was the first place Donnie's hands went now whenever she embraced Rae.

"I can't. I just can't believe we're pregnant and having a baby," Donnie replied, leaning down to rest her head in Rae's hair. She nuzzled her spouse's scalp and breathed in the sweet smell of her shampoo.

"You really want this baby, don't you?"

Donnie thought that was a weird question and she pulled away a little. She looked down at her wife, baffled by what she was hearing. Rae appeared innocent, like she did not think there was anything wrong with the question.

"Of course I want this baby. Don't you?" Donnie countered. What was the point of doing all of that planning if they were not ready for parenthood?

"Of course I do!" Rae insisted.

"You're not worried about anything with the baby, are you?" Donnie asked curiously. She remembered her conversation with Audrey and how the redhead hinted to Rae being scared that she would be raising their baby alone.

"Of course not. I know we're going to have a healthy, energetic baby that'll drive us up the wall if she's anything like you describe yourself to be as a child," Rae answered with a teasing grin.

"My granddad'll love that!" Donnie remarked, rolling her eyes.

"He'll say you had it coming to you. Have you spoken to him recently?"

"Of course. He wants to know how the restaurant is doing all the time and gives me advice how to get more customers and junk like that. Mostly now, he wants to talk about his great-grand on the way," Donnie answered and she shook Rae a little, getting a giggle from the dainty woman.

"What did he think about your idea to try to get more middle-class and working-class people to come to Donnie's?"

"Well..." Donnie paused. "Let's get you under the covers first before I go into that. I don't want you to catch cold or anything."

Rae nodded; that was a great idea since she was feeling a little chilly already. Donnie then had to show off how strong she was and she scooped up her wife in her arms. She carried Rae over to

the bed and gently placed her down. She made sure to cover Rae with the blankets before she laid down herself. Rae cuddled into her.

"So, you were saying?" Rae prompted her spouse to finish talking about her restaurant plans. She purred a little as Donnie moved her hand to caress the small of Rae's back.

"Granddad likes the idea. He said it's always nice when everyone can enjoy something. So, one of the things I was thinking about doing was coming up with three different menus," Donnie replied.

"One with prices on it?"

"Well, two with prices actually. I figure we'd do a silver, gold, and platinum menu. They'd all look the same, so people don't have to worry about other people minding their business. The silver and gold menus would have prices on them."

A little wrinkle appeared in the middle of Rae's forehead. "Are you sure you need three menus? Wouldn't two be enough?"

"Hmm...Can't honestly say I've thought this whole thing out," Donnie replied with an amused grin. "I guess two would be good. One with prices and one without."

"Babe, why don't your menus have prices on them anyway?" the younger woman asked curiously.

"Hell if I know. They were like that when Granddad gave me the place. I never really thought about it."

"I always figured you were sending the message that if you needed to know the price, you couldn't afford to be in the place," Rae commented.

"Maybe that is it. I don't really know. I just kept the menus like that because they didn't seem to really affect business."

Rae nodded, knowing that when Donnie made any changes to the restaurant or the café, the changes were put in place to bring more business in. She could not see how changing the appearance of the menus would bring in more business. Donnie knew what she wanted to do anyway; it was just about making it happen.

"Baby, you know I'm doing all of this stuff for us, right? I want to get the restaurant set up to make sure we have enough money to raise a family and spoil the crap out of them," Donnie pointed out.

Rae was silent for a moment, which did not go unnoticed by her spouse. Donnie peered into Rae's cocoa eyes, trying to convey all of her thoughts and feelings in the still of the night. Rae's own gaze softened and placed a soft kiss to Donnie's mouth.

"I know. I also know you work so hard because you want to keep your family legacy going," Rae pointed out.

"Damn straight I do. I have to make sure the restaurant is still there to pass down to our lil Donnie. Granddad would whip my ass if I didn't!" Donnie joked, large grin on her face.

"I can see him now. 'Junior, if I wanted to run the restaurant in the ground, I woulda left it to your daddy,'" Rae quipped with a gruff voice.

Donnie broke out into a boisterous fit of laughter. "You do him so good! I'm glad you understand."

Rae smiled and snuggled even closer to Donnie. She placed her hand on Donnie's thigh and drew little circles on the cloth-covered muscle. Donnie wrapped her arms tighter around Rae, placing one hand on her abdomen and keeping the other on her back. The taller woman fell asleep almost instantly. Rae sighed and shook her head; she guessed she was going to have to try to get Donnie in the mood in the morning. She adjusted her body a little, wanting to rest more on her side, and she fell asleep too.

Donnie yawned as she pulled herself up from her desk and stretched; between her busy morning and her mountain of work, she figured that she was going to need a nap sometime soon. Tegan poked her head into the office, as expected. The redhead smiled at her dear friend, who smiled back.

"You ready for your big interview tomorrow?" Tegan inquired with amusement dancing in her green eyes.

"Why did I decide to do this again?" Donnie asked with a dejected sigh.

"Because you're the big boss with all of the elegance I lack and you really want to get new people in here. Too bad this asshole you have to sit down with is the outlet to a lot of those people."

Donnie nodded. "I find it hard to believe that the people I want to come in here actually listen to this fucking asshole."

"People like to be entertained and he's entertaining...in the same way that a four car pile-up is entertaining to passersby. Good luck tomorrow. What time are you going to come in after the interview?"

"You know what..." Donnie threw her hands up. "...you handle tomorrow. I'll come in at night to run the dinner selection in the kitchen, okay?" the boss proposed.

"Oh, I need to put the sign out. 'Donnie's cooking tonight!' We'll get a bunch of walk-ins, begging for takeout orders," Tegan grinned, looking especially evil. She liked taunting walk-ins, trying to insult them into making reservations next time and actually taking in the atmosphere of the restaurant.

Donnie shook her head. They did get a lot of takeout business whenever it was advertised that she or Tegan was cooking out of the blue. In fact, she was the one that started a takeout end of the restaurant when she noticed the flood they used to get when it was made known that she or Tegan was going to be in the kitchen. It tickled them because they never got such a rush of business when they used to work as chefs fulltime, back when Donnie's grandfather owned the restaurant.

"Well, get 'em, tiger!" Tegan said before waving her farewell.

Donnie chuckled a bit and decided to take her leave. She was not surprised to find Audrey in the house with Rae when she showed up at the house. She greeted her wife with a kiss on the cheek while offering Audrey a lazy wave. The duo went back to playing Scrabble while Donnie went to wash away the grim of the day. She returned to the living room with food on her mind, scratching her belly.

"Baby, you made dinner?" Donnie asked curiously, coming up behind her wife.

"We got take-out. We just came in ourselves," Rae answered, focusing on her letters rather than on her lover.

Donnie blinked in surprise. "Where'd you go?" She glanced at Audrey and wondered if she was imagining the ghost of a smirk that she saw on the redhead's face.

"To a movie. We didn't want to stay in all night and I knew you'd be out for a while thanks to work. There's food in there for you, though. You know I wouldn't forget you, baby," Rae replied, smiling at her wife and turning just enough to pat Donnie on the arm.

Donnie smiled back and went to go see what types of food there were waiting for her. She tried to ignore the gnawing her gut about Rae going out without telling her. She could not recall when something like that happened and she tried to convince herself that that was what made her uneasy. It had nothing to do with the fact that Rae had gone out with Audrey and had not told her, Donnie silently assured herself.

While she was eating, she thought about the things that Tegan had been saying about Audrey, ever since finding out that Rae was friends with her. Tegan spoke to Trisha more often than Donnie did, so she seemed to know more about Trisha's assistant...well, ex-assistant. According to Tegan, Trisha let Audrey go as soon as the pair was finished with the nursery in Donnie and Rae's house. That was the first that Donnie heard anything about it, but had not bothered to ask her wife about it. Rae did not say anything about Audrey's employment status while Tegan volunteered what she knew.

Tegan did not go into details around when Trisha fired Audrey, but Donnie did not doubt that their friend had let Audrey go since Trisha hired and fired assistants like people changed pants. Audrey had not said anything about being let go and did not seem bothered by it. Donnie considered one of the reasons that Rae did not say anything about Audrey being fired was because the redhead had not said anything, but she was not sure of that. Donnie shook those thoughts away as she spotted the food and began to dig in.

After eating pretty much everything that was in the food containers, Donnie went back to the living room, finding the friends just as she left them almost thirty minutes ago. She sat down next to Rae, wrapping her arms around the shorter woman. She rested her head on Rae's shoulder and cuddled into her lover's neck a little.

"Baby, why don't you just go to bed? We're going play a few more games before I do," Rae explained, gently rubbing the restaurant owner's forearm.

"A few? You're all right to stay up that late?" Donnie asked curiously. Usually, by midnight the smaller woman was done for the night.

"I got a lot of sleep this morning. I'm sort of wired right now."

Donnie nodded to show that she understood. She gave her spouse a short kiss on the lips before retiring for the night. She glanced at Audrey as she was going to the stairs and once again thought that she saw the ghost of a smirk playing in those sky-colored eyes. She ignored the look at went to bed.

A couple of hours later, Donnie was taken from her sleep as she felt Rae lie down. Her arms automatically went around her petite wife. Rae snuggled into the solid form against her.

"Sorry I woke you, babe. You've got that interview tomorrow, don't you?" Rae asked.

"I do," Donnie confirmed. She sounded like she was not looking forward to it and really she was not.

"Can I come?" Rae requested. She would like to spend sometime with her wife outside of the house. They had not been out together since their anniversary, which was a couple of months ago. She did not count the couple of little shopping trips that they went on for baby things since those were necessary, and as she recalled Donnie did not like shopping much anyway; the chef did hold up well for short periods of time when they were out looking for stuff for the baby. Other than that, they had not been out since Donnie never wanted to see any of the movies she and Audrey did or she did not have time to do other activities. It was like Donnie did not have time for her anymore, she thought.

"I would rather you didn't come with me," Donnie answered honestly.

Rae swallowed hard, trying to keep down the sudden hurt that was flooding her system. "Why not?" she asked in a whisper of a voice.

"This DJ is a real jerk. He's a wannabe shock-jock. I don't want you there when he starts calling me a rich bitch or a dyke or anything like that."

Rae gasped, mouth falling open as soon as the sound escaped it. "Would he?"

"More than likely."

"Oh, my god. Baby, why are you going on a show like that then?" she inquired, distress painting her deep brown eyes as she cuddled closer, as if that would help protect her mate.

Donnie appreciated the concern, but did not cause her wife any stress, so she started caressing Rae in a tender manner while answering in an equally considerate tone. "A lot of his listeners are the people I want to bring into the restaurant. Young, middle class folks. I want to let them know that it's a new era for Donnie's and they're part of the change."

"Do you think adding a new element to Donnie's is going to chase off the big money-makers that like eating there?"

Donnie shrugged. "We'll find out. Even if they don't make it to Donnie's, I would like them to know that the café has food that's just as good and not nearly as expensive. In fact, I'd probably eat at the café more than the restaurant if I had a choice."

Rae laughed. "And you'd eat in our kitchen more than both of those combined if you had the chance."

"And soon I will," Donnie vowed.

Silence reigned over the room, which caused Donnie to shift uneasily. For her, it seemed like disbelief hung in the air. She adjusted her body to look her wife in the eyes. They stared at each other for a long moment.

"You believe me, right?" Donnie inquired, but from the look in her eyes, it was that she was begging.

"You know I do," Rae replied, voice low and eyes locked on her lover.

The chef leaned down, going in for a kiss. Rae accepted the show of affection, wrapping her arms around Donnie and pulling the taller woman closer to her. Donnie could not pull away until Rae released her, which was long enough to almost have Donnie pass out from a lack of oxygen.

"I think I know where you're going with this," Donnie remarked, panting and trying to catch her breath.

"Donnie?"

"Yes."

"Shut up." Rae attacked before the chef could say another word.

Rae glanced at the radio as she went into the kitchen to get some more tea. The radio was not on any more and had not been for a couple of hours. She was surprised that she had been able to even keep it on at that time, but she had wanted to hear Donnie go toe-to-toe with that shock-jock. She was willing to bet that he still did not know what hit him, hours after the fact. She had smiled when she heard the interview, but that smile was long gone and replaced with a tense frown.

"She should've been here by now," Rae said, speaking to herself as she poured two cups of tea. Her hand shook as the liquid flowed into the cups, which rattled when she picked them up. She walked out into the living room, where Audrey was lounging on the couch with the television remote in hand.

"You ready to finish watching the show?" Audrey asked as Rae sat down on the foot of the couch. She handed one cup of tea to the redhead, who nodded her thanks.

"I suppose. What time is it?" Rae inquired curiously.

Audrey glanced down at her watch. "A little after noon. Why?"

"She should've been here already. She said she was going to come home after the interview. Even if she went to the restaurant to blow off steam, she should've come in by now," Rae said in a distant voice. She stared out to the front door, which was blocked by a wall.

Audrey turned her gaze to Rae. "Well, maybe she went to some other haunt. That interview was pretty brutal. Does she have friends that she could go to?"

"They're all working right now..." Rae answered, biting her lip. The only place that Donnie would go was the restaurant or the café and she would have called if she went there. "Why didn't she call?" she asked the air with a sorrowful pout.

Audrey leaned over and put her arms around Rae. She pulled the petite woman to her and hugged her. Rae curled into her shoulder. The redhead rubbed Rae's back.

"It's probably nothing. You shouldn't get worried about it. It's not like she's cheating on you or anything." Audrey pointed out in a casual tone.

Rae flinched and tried her best to not to allow that seed to be planted. She tried to tell herself that Audrey was trying to cheer her up, so she should not allow innocent words to trouble her. Still, she found herself holding to Audrey and praying that it was not true.

Donnie entered the house with a relieved sigh, sounding as if the world just got off of her shoulders. She was so happy to be home. She marched into the living room, planning to cuddle the heck out of her wife, only to find out she would have to wait in line for that. Rae was on the sofa, sleeping on Audrey with her hands thrown loosely around the redhead. The television was on, watching the snoozing friends.

"Since when does Rae just sleep on people? She usually hates to even be touched by people," Donnie muttered, voice hard from confusion and slight anger. *Hell, Rae still flinches when French went to give her a hug most of the time and now she's just lying on people.*

Donnie shook it off, reminding herself that Rae and Audrey spent a lot of time together, so it was only logical that Rae was comfortable around her friend. She was not sure if she should wake Rae up or not. After going to the kitchen and getting a banana, she decided to wake Rae up and tried to convince herself that it was because she did not want Rae to stay up late again; it had nothing at all to do with the fact that she disliked how close her partner was to Audrey. *Audrey is just her friend, after all.*

Donnie carefully shook Rae with one hand while eating her banana with the other. Rae mewed a complaint before her eyes fluttered open. The first thing that came into focus was Audrey and Rae did not know it, but a tiny smile came over her face. She then turned to see who was shaking her and saw her spouse, which turned her smile into a grin. Donnie grinned back.

"You're home," Rae said with a yawn. She rubbed her face with her hands to wake herself up completely.

"Yeah, sorry it took me forever," Donnie replied in a soft tone.

"What happened? Why'd it take you so long to get home?"

Donnie glanced over at their company. "I'll tell you about it later. Did you make any lunch? You made sure to eat, right?" she asked, hand going immediately to the bulge in her lover's belly.

"Of course she ate. I take real good care of her," Audrey commented as she opened her eyes.

Donnie bit back a snappy retort, deciding it would not be a good idea to insult her wife's best friend. Instead, she smiled tensely at the redhead. Audrey smiled back, having the nerve to look like chocolate would not melt in her mouth.

"We listened to the interview. I kept screaming at the radio," Rae reported with a laugh.

"I told you it would be better if you stayed here. Had you gone with me to the station, you'd have wrapped your hands around that jackass' neck and never let go," Donnie remarked. She could just picture her wife, standing up for her and trying to kill the radio host that she had just spent a horrible morning with.

"Didn't he make a few good points, though?" Audrey asked curiously.

"If you mean calling Donnie's a place for wealthy faggots to go, no, he didn't make a few good points," Donnie snapped, going so far as to growl.

"Of course I don't mean that, but isn't your restaurant just for rich people?" Audrey asked, tilting her head slightly to the side, doing her best to look sweet and innocent.

Donnie ground her teeth together for a moment. "If you bothered to go in there, you'd find out there's a little something for everybody there as long as you don't come in wearing street clothes and you can behave," she replied in a tight tone.

"Baby, don't get bent out of shape," Rae said, shocking her partner by defending Audrey. "She doesn't know what the place is like because she hasn't been there recently. She doesn't mean anything by it."

Donnie had to take a deep breath to keep from losing her temper. "I'm going to take a shower," she declared and marched off. She could not believe that she had to spend her morning defending her restaurant and lifestyle to an idiot radio host and had to come home to almost the same crap.

Making matters worse, when she got out of the shower, Audrey was still at the house. Donnie did not feel like seeing the redhead anymore for the day. She called Rae into the kitchen for a moment, pretending to want something to eat.

"Babe, can you ask Audrey to go home?" Donnie asked, going through the fridge because now she really did want something to eat.

Rae appeared lost and confused by the request. "What? Why?" she begged to know.

The chef turned to look at her spouse. "Because I've had a tough day and I'd like to be alone with my wife for a little while."

Rae frowned a bit, which Donnie did not expect. Rae was about to snap, but she swallowed down the harsh words. She glared at Donnie, though; her eyes were so clear that Donnie could practically read her mind.

"Baby..." Donnie said, daring to take a step toward her lover, even though she could tell that she was one wrong word away from losing her head.

"I just can't have anything, can I?!" Rae screamed at the top of her lungs before storming out of the kitchen.

Donnie sighed and scratched her head, puzzled as to what just happened. She marched out of the kitchen and was going to go apologize, even though she did not think she did anything wrong. She stopped dead in her tracks when she saw Rae was crying on Audrey's shoulder. She was very tempted to go rip her wife away from the redhead, but she knew that would be a bad idea. It would more than likely set Rae off even more, which she could not and would not do.

"I'm going for a walk," Donnie announced loudly, so Rae knew that she was leaving.

The chef stormed out of the house, slamming the door loudly on her way out, and drove off. She went to go get some work done at the restaurant and when she came back, she frowned because Audrey's car was still there. She sat in her car for a long while, just staring at the house and she tried to ignore a gnawing sensation in her stomach.

6: Shot down

As night set in, the darkness mirrored the sensation growing in Donnie's stomach. The air in her car felt hot and heavy around her, crushing her, scorching her. Gripping the steering wheel, she wrung her hands on the firm material, taking deep breaths. They were not helping and she knew that she could not stay in the car forever, but she did not want to go into the house in her current state of mind.

Donnie finally got out of her car and marched toward her house. Her stride was so tense that it seemed like a person could break a board on her back. She entered through the front door and walked to the living room as always. She was far from surprised that Rae and Audrey were sitting there, playing their usual game. They looked up at her, but no one said anything. Donnie opened her mouth, a breath away from telling Audrey to get the hell out, but she knew that would not solve anything. If anything, that would only cause more problems.

Instead of starting any trouble, Donnie marched upstairs, figuring that she might as well go to bed. It was the only way to make sure that she would not blow up on the duo at an inappropriate time. Before going to the bedroom, she made up a stop at the nursery.

A smile worked its way into her face as she took in the nursery, which was still under-construction as far as she was concerned. There were a few books on the shelves now, but not many. Most of the books that were there had to do with parenting, but they still needed to go out and buy baby books to read to lil Donnie when the baby showed up.

There was a dresser for the baby's clothes, which did have a few items of clothing in it from their last shopping spree. She walked to the dresser and opened the top draw, which had clothes in it. She lifted a one-piece outfit and felt a warmth overcome her.

"A few more months, lil Don, just a few more months. I can't wait to meet you," Donnie whispered into the cloth, taking in the new, soft smell. She could not wait until the clothing held the aroma of their daughter.

She snuggled into the cloth for a moment before putting it back. She placed a hand on top of the dresser, enjoying the cool, smooth surface under her fingertips while imagining pictures of her, Rae, and the baby up there. The image brought a smile to her face.

"We'll be fine and ready for you, Don. I promise," the chef vowed to the air.

She never did make it to the bedroom. She sat in the rocking chair, waiting to hear Audrey's car leave. She was not sure how long she sat there, but it felt like an eternity to her. That meant her wife had been upset with her forever, which made her body tense and frustrated tears flowed down her cheeks.

The lights went out one by one and darkness slowly blanketed much of the house. Light footsteps sounded into the room, going across the hall. Donnie could hear Rae calling her, but she could not will herself out of that chair.

"Donnie? Baby?" Rae said, poking her head into the nursery. She noticed the door was wide open, so she figured that her spouse was hiding in there since she was not in the bedroom. Her slow approach was halted when she noticed the rigid form of Donnie at the end of the room, still in the rocking chair. "Baby...it's late," the petite woman pointed out in a shaky tone. She had never seen Donnie like this and did not know what to make of it.

"Eh," Donnie muttered. She brought her hand up to wipe her face, finally realizing that she was crying. Her tears stopped as soon as she realized what she was doing.

"Baby, are you just going to sit in here all night?" Rae asked in a low, quiver of a voice. She pressed her palms together and rubbed her hands against each other as she took a brave, quiet step deeper into the room.

Donnie did not answer immediately, causing Rae to gulp. The insides of the petite woman shook and it had nothing to do with her pregnancy. She took another step into the room, feeling as if the atmosphere was getting heavier with each step. For a moment, she worried that the pressure might crush her before she reached her beloved.

"Sweetheart, we need to talk," Donnie said, surprisingly climbing to her feet. Rae yelped and jumped back, not expecting her spouse to move.

"For a second, I thought you weren't talking to me," the smaller woman commented in a low, scared voice.

"Never that," Donnie replied, walking over to her wife and gently putting an arm around her. She escorted her lover out of the room across the hall to their bedroom.

"What were you doing in the nursery?" Rae asked curiously, allowing Donnie to direct her to one of the armchairs in the room. She sat down and Donnie sat down across from her.

"Waiting," the chef answered as if that was the most logical response ever.

"Waiting? For me?" Rae asked, eyes glistening, tears ready to fall at the first negative word to come from Donnie. This let the businesswoman know that she had to tread lightly around Rae's feelings. The last thing she wanted was another hormonal outburst, especially since she was still smarting from the first one.

"For you, for lil Donnie, for my family. I think it's been a long day and I just needed to cool down," Donnie explained as best she could, making sure to speak in a calm, tender tone. She was still a little annoyed by the fact that she had to leave her home in order to cool down. As far as she was concerned, she felt that she should be allowed to mellow out in her own home with her own wife without anyone else around if necessary.

Rae nodded and looked down for a moment, taking this time to wipe her eyes. When she looked back up, she stared Donnie in the eye as she responded. "I could've been a little more supportive when you showed up. I mean, I listened to that damned radio show and how the guy kept trying to bait you, talking about your sexuality, your money, hell, even me! I wanted to talk to you about it, but you just blew me off."

Donnie scowled, but bit back any snappish comment. "I didn't blow you off," she said through gritted teeth, keeping her tone even at the least. "I was trying to talk to you, but Audrey butted in."

"She was just teasing, Donnie. Usually, you can take a joke," Rae argued.

"Baby, it was a tough day," Donnie insisted, even though she did not think that Audrey was making a joke to her earlier.

Rae pulled herself out of the chair and went to Donnie. She sat down on the taller woman's lap, making herself comfortable. She took one of Donnie's hands and put it on the bulge in her stomach. This action got a small, content smile out of the chef. Making her even happier, Rae placed a tender kiss to her forehead.

"That DJ pissed me off so much, but I couldn't show it," Donnie sighed, shaking her head a little.

Rae leaned in and kissed her wife gently. Donnie relaxed into the sweet show of affection. Rae smiled this time as she pulled away, caressing her spouse's head and shoulders.

"You did very well against him," Rae declared proudly. "I think that people will at least go to the restaurant or café out of sheer curiosity. They'll try to get a glimpse of this crazy woman that takes radio DJs apart with elegant speech and a sharp wit."

An amused smile tugged at one side of the taller woman's face. "I hope so. I still want to get new business in the restaurant or down to the café. I just feel like if we don't grow, we'll die. *Donnie's* has been the same for about a hundred years. Could you imagine something being the same for a hundred years? My granddad was practically doing CPR on the thing when he inherited it."

"Well, he breathed new life into it and you're doing a good job keeping up his good work. We're not hurting for money or anything, are we?"

Hazel eyes rolled and a scoff escaped Donnie. "Like I would screw up so bad to mess things up when we're about to have another mouth to feed. *Donnie's* is as popular now as it was the day

Granddad handed me the reigns. In fact, it's probably a lot more popular now considering how everyone loves that damned garden and the take-out area."

Rae laughed and playfully swatted at her spouse. "Hey, I like that damned garden!"

"I've got to take you for more walks through there. You can help me redesign it. I don't want it to get too stale," Donnie said, taking the assaulting hand into her free hand. Gently, she stroked the back of Rae's hand.

"You're such a perfectionist. What're you going to do if this interview idea and whatever else you have planned for advertising to middle-class people doesn't work?"

Donnie smiled in a way that made her eyes sparkle, looking almost like an embarrassed child; this was an adorably sheepish and unique expression that people rarely got to see from her. "I actually don't know what I'll do if this doesn't work. I'll think of something else, though. This was just phase one of my plan anyway."

"I figured as much." There was a silence between them and it seemed like everything was all right between them. Rae was the one that interrupted the silence. "Where'd you go after the interview? I thought you'd be here well before noon."

"I went for a walk... a very long walk." The chef took a moment to rub her forehead, keeping her frustrations at bay. "I was so wound up after that damned interview that I didn't want to come back here like that. I thought that after answering all of his questions and having to smile in his face while he called me a dyke had me so tight that I would've blown up if you'd just ask me how I was doing or something just as crazy. It took a long time for my guts to get themselves out of a knot, but I guess not enough."

"I should've been a little more supportive. Sorry I wasn't," Rae said. The apology was followed by a soft kiss to Donnie's forehead.

"It's okay. Let's go to bed, huh?"

Rae nodded, liking that idea. Donnie stood up, making sure to hold into her wife tightly. She then carried Rae to the bed and gently laid her down. She also put Rae under the covers before crawling into bed herself. Rae leaned over and kissed Donnie, but resisted a little when Donnie wanted more than a kiss.

"Sorry, baby, but I'm really tired right now," Rae explained with a yawn.

"I'm a little drained myself," Donnie replied with a tired smile. "I guess I'll give it a try again in the morning."

Rae chuckled a little. "That's something I can sign up with."

The couple fell asleep easily, but they both sensed just a little tension between them. They figured that they could correct that in the morning. Everything should be all right, they both thought.

Donnie decided that whenever Audrey was over the house, she would work late. The arrangement worked out well for her since Audrey had the bad habit of showing up at the house early some days, which made Donnie leave and gave her time to check on the café. She found out that café did need checking too since it turned out her manager had been blowing smoke up her ass as she long suspected.

"Tegan, you're going to have to hang out down at the café more. I'll handle things around here," Donnie informed her friend while they sat in her office, going over paperwork.

"I told you that kid was a fuck-head to begin with. You don't mind me bum-rushing the kitchen while I'm down there. I hate not being able to cook for a few days," Tegan answered.

Donnie shrugged. "That's fine. Hell, you might drum up some more business if you put up a sign that you're cooking. People might come in wondering if you're the same Tegan from down here."

"Is the café really doing that bad?"

Donnie thought on it for a moment. "I wouldn't say it's doing bad. It's not like we're going to have to close it or anything. But, I know it could do better if I had someone who's not afraid of me down there running things. Also, someone that's not scared to give employees a kick in the ass if they need it," Donnie explained.

"Sounds like you should hire Spain then."

"Please, I'd have to use the jaws-of-life to get her out of the hospital. It's a good thing that French is a nurse or she'd have forgotten what the hell Spain looks like," Donnie remarked with a laugh.

"French should just take your approach and make Spain quit her job when they get married."

Donnie's brow wrinkled. "I didn't make Rae quit her job."

"No? Did you notice it was a pattern with you, though? Whenever your women moved in with you they were suddenly unemployed?"

Hazel eyes rolled. "Those bitches were gold-diggers. Rae's nothing like that. I promised to take care of her and obviously she trusted me. She hated that stupid job at that dive she worked at."

"I remember that place. I felt like I need five tetanus shots just from looking at the place. You know, I hear they went out of business not too long ago."

Donnie paused and looked like she got hit in the head with a hammer. Tegan smirked, knowing what that look meant. It always amused her when Donnie got an idea; in school, their teachers used to think that Donnie was about to be sick.

"That's a good location," Donnie said and her best friend read her mind for the rest.

"It would be good for this thing of getting more people in here. Instead of them thinking they have to come here and put up with snubs, they can go there. It could be like a regular family-type restaurant...but, with *Donnie's* flare!" Tegan grinned.

"That could work. Or do you think I'm just taking the name down by doing this?" Donnie asked with a curious look on her face.

"Hell, no! I think it would be a blast!" Tegan declared, throwing her arms out to the side for a moment. "I'd like to see younger people and families and stuff in the place every now and then."

Donnie smiled. "I'm glad you're behind this. When I first got this idea, I thought you'd be against it. I thought you liked being surrounded by all of those stiff-shirts."

Tegan rolled her eyes. "Hey, I like rich guys as much as the next girl, but also I like variety. You get the best of things when you have a lot of choices. To me, you get to meet the best people when you have a lot of choices and I don't even mean that as far as dating goes. I like meeting people." A rare, purely innocent smile graced her creamy face.

"I know you do, Tegan. Thank God one of us does."

"Please, no one would suspect how much you hate crowds of people if they saw you floating around here. People get the impression that you like them and they come back for more," the redhead pointed out with a smile. "You don't know it, but you've brought in a lot of business with your weird habit of going to sit down and dine with people. Don't even get me started on your habit of keeping people company when their date has run out on them."

Donnie waved that off. "That's nothing." Even though it had never happened to her, she could just tell how horrible it had to feel to have a date bolt from the look on people's faces. She could not stand to see those expressions; no one should have to feel like that, especially on a night that was supposed to be special.

"I think that's one of the things that draw people here. But, anyway, I came in here before to tell you it was getting late and now that we've sat here and talked business for about an hour, it's even later. You ready to blow this popsicle stand?" Tegan asked curiously, jabbing her thumb toward the door.

"I'll leave in a bit. I've got all this paperwork to go through and I need to order stuff..." Donnie dismissed the suggestion with a flick of the wrist and turned her attention back to the work on her desk.

Tegan arched an eyebrow and then scratched it a bit with one finger. "Shouldn't you try getting home earlier to your pregnant wife than later? I mean, that's how you were before. You were sickeningly insistent about it. Hell, there were times when your behavior made me picture you as one of those anxious expecting fathers. You know the ones that are in the supermarket at two in the morning in their pajamas with pickles, peanut butter, and rocky road ice cream while wandering around wondering why watermelon isn't in season yet?"

Donnie laughed, sounding very close to amused, but her eyes showed sorrow and pain. She had always planned for that to be her. If Rae craved watermelon at two in the morning, then damn it, she would have flown some place where they were in season to get some for Rae. But, right now, she just did not want to be home because she did not want to see Audrey. She did not want to chance another fight, which she knew would happen because she was tired of Audrey always being at the house.

"Go home, Don. Drive your wife crazy about the kid," Tegan said, shooing her boss away.

The taller woman smiled and stood up. She followed Tegan out of the office and out of the restaurant. Donnie went home and *that* car was in the drive. Instantly, an acidic sensation flared in her stomach and a taut frown appeared on her face. She pushed that feeling down and walked in, pausing before she went to the living room.

The pair of friends were sitting on the couch, laughing it up while watching a television show. Donnie did not even bother to glance at what they were watching. She went over to Rae, leaning down for a kiss. Rae gave her a quick peck on the lips before moving to see if anything funny happened on TV.

"There's dinner in the fridge," Rae informed her lover.

Donnie frowned and glanced at Audrey, who was very focused on the television. "I'm not really hungry."

"That's a first," Audrey remarked, showing that she was not as focused on the show as she seemed to be. Another show had her attention.

"You know what would be a first too? You being at your house at this time," Donnie countered in a tight tone.

"Baby," Rae scolded her spouse.

Donnie growled, deep in her throat. "I'm going to take a shower..." she trailed off and bit back the desire to tell her wife that Audrey better be gone by the time she got out. She did not want Rae to blow up on her again, especially not in front of Audrey. So, she trotted off before any other words escaped her mouth.

"I don't know what's gotten into her," Rae muttered, shaking her head.

"She's upset because she doesn't have control over you anymore," Audrey pointed out with a smug look on her face.

Rae's mouth curled up. "Donnie's not like that..."

"Yes, she is. She's just like all of those rich brats you said you dated before her," Audrey gently insisted.

The ebony-haired woman paused and thought back to her other relationships before Donnie. She had told Audrey about them over the past month or so. For some reason that was beyond her, she always attracted wealthy women to her, which would have been fine if only they were not also spoiled brats that wanted a pet more than a girlfriend. They wanted someone that followed and obeyed. Someone that could answer at their beck and call whenever. For a while, she was always that someone.

"No, Donnie's not like that," Rae argued again.

"Oh, no? Then why did she make you quit your job? Why doesn't she like you having friends? She wants you here all time for her. You're like a puppy, Rae. She's walking all over you," Audrey stated soundly, but keeping her tone even, so not to start a fight.

Rae shook her head. "You don't know Donnie. You don't see her as often as I do."

Audrey scoffed. "I see her just about as much as you do."

"She's busy. She wants to make sure everything is perfect for when the baby arrives," Rae said, putting both hands on her stomach.

"That's what she says."

"Audrey, why are you being like this?" Rae asked with a tearful expression.

"I'm sorry. It's just the way Donnie came in that sort of bugs me. I mean, she barely acknowledged you. You deserve better than that," Audrey huffed, folding her arms across her chest and scowling, apparently offended for her friend.

"Donnie's really good. She's just trying to do a lot right now. You'll see, so you don't have to worry. Hey, how about we go out? We should take advantage while I'm not waddling around yet," Rae remarked with a smile, putting her hands around her stomach again. She was showing now, but she still had months ahead of her before she would give birth to the baby. She was not as mobile as she used to be, but she could still move at a good pace.

Audrey smiled. "All right. Where should we go? Not too many places are open that would be good to take a pregnant woman."

"Let's go bowling! I haven't done that in a long time and I'd like to do it before it feels like I'm carrying a bowling ball," Rae explained, a sparkle lighting in her eyes.

Audrey agreed and the duo left the house without another word. When Rae returned to the house, she was not surprised to find the lights on. She was also not surprised that Donnie was sitting up in bed waiting for her. Donnie said nothing, reading a book, until Rae was ready to crawl into bed.

"Where'd you go?" Donnie asked curiously, eyes still focused on her book, but not seeing any words. She managed to keep a quiver out of her voice, but she still sounded worried and somewhat miserable.

"Bowling. That all right with you?" Rae countered, snapping a little, thinking about Audrey's earlier words.

The chef sighed and rubbed her face with one hand for a few seconds. "Fine by me. I wish you would've told me, so I at least knew where you were."

Rae snorted and then sneered. "Why? I'm a grown woman."

Donnie sighed and turned to her wife. The small smile that graced her tan face made Rae's heart thump in her chest. And when Donnie took her hand, her body warmed instantly.

"I just like to know where you are because I love you. I thought that was a given," Donnie stated, her smile fading a bit. She looked a little confused. *Why is Rae acting like she doesn't know I worry when I don't know where she is? Why is she acting like she doesn't know I worry when she doesn't answer my calls? Why is she acting like she doesn't know I worry because I love her?*

Automatically, Rae's body relaxed and any tension that she was feeling drained out of her. "Oh, baby, I'm sorry. I'm being such an idiot. I guess I'm on edge because it was like you came in angry and I don't want you to direct that anger at me."

A dark brown eyebrow arched. "Have I ever directed my anger at you when I've come in the house?" Concern poured from her tone, practically cascading from her mouth. Hazel eyes begged to know when she had ever done such a thing and they promised that she would change immediately if she did do that.

A slender hand curled in the hand holding onto it. "No. I was just being silly, I guess. Like I said, I was on edge when you came in her because of how upset you seemed. I'm sorry I worried you over where I was."

"It's fine," Donnie lied. "In the past, you would've asked me if I was angry..."

"But, you always say no, even when you are..."

Donnie shook her head and embraced her wife, pulling the petite woman as close to her as possible. She rested her head in sweet-smelling raven locks. Rae sighed and felt content as she felt Donnie's heart beating against her cheek.

"I'm never angry with you. I might come in tense or frustrated, but holding you is always enough to make that go away. You make everything better," Donnie promised in a low tone.

Rae smiled. "Hey, Donnie, what do you say we go out and do some shopping for the baby tomorrow? I think lil Donnie would be upset to find out we haven't gotten bottles yet."

Donnie laughed. "I'd love to!" And with that, all of the frustration that she had been feeling through out the day was gone. Her body felt light and her soul felt easy, but her gut wanted to know how long that would last.

Donnie smiled to herself as she pulled into the driveway of her house. She was ready to click her heels together. Today, she and Tegan had gone to look at a building for sale where they might open up another restaurant. The thing that made her really giddy about it was not that she was looking forward to make another restaurant, but this would be the first time that she would be able to go into business with her best friend. As annoying as Tegan could be, Donnie knew that Tegan loved *Donnie's* as much as she did and they both believed they would enjoy being equals in a business for the first time.

She glided into the house, grinning like the cat that got the cream. "Sweetheart..." she called out in a sing-song voice. Smelling food cooking, she headed straight for the kitchen where her spouse was chopping vegetables for what Donnie hoped meant they were having stew.

"Babe, you're home earlier," Rae commented with a smile as Donnie came up behind her for a hug.

"I've got exciting news and I just have to share it with you!" Donnie declared, sounding like a happy child.

"What happened?"

"Tegan and I went to look at this property near your old job and we're thinking about buying it together to open another restaurant!" Donnie reported, still sounding like a kid that got all A's on her report card.

Rae bristled and stiffened in her lover's arms. Her hands immediately halted from chopping vegetables. Donnie instinctively knew to back away and did so just in time to avoid being cut open. Rae spun around, apparently forgetting that she was holding a knife...well, Donnie hoped that she forgot and that was not an assassination attempt.

"How the hell can you even think of doing something like that right now?! You barely have time for me with the restaurant and the café, but we're about to have a baby in less than four months and you have the nerve to be talking about starting another fucking business?!" Rae demanded to know in a shrieking voice.

"Babe-" Donnie started, but her wife was on a roll.

"How the hell can you be this insensitive?! Do you really think you could do that?! Or did you just think I'd raise this fucking baby by myself since I'm in the fucking house all day anyway?!"

"Babe-" Donnie tried once again, but made just as much progress.

"You're such an asshole!" Rae dropped the knife and rushed out of the kitchen.

Donnie sighed and rubbed her head while bending down to pick up the knife. Part of her wondered if her spouse had a point or if those were her hormones talking. Her gut told her that whatever the hell that was, hormones had nothing to do with it. She decided to go after Rae, figuring she ran up the second floor. She was more than surprised to find her wife crying in the living room; the where was not shocking, but who she was with was.

Rae was wrapped in Audrey's arms, crying on her shoulder. Donnie felt the urge to throw up, but swallowed it down as a flare lit in her stomach from seeing her wife in the arms of a woman that she was almost certain was a bitch for the second time in as many months. Once was more than enough, twice was unbearable and unforgivable.

"Audrey, how about you give us a minute," Donnie ordered in a tense tone. The stony glare in her eyes was bordering on violence.

"Why, so you can hurt her some more?" Audrey huffed, scowling at the taller woman. She held her head up high, as if silently daring Donnie to hit her.

A tan hand made a tight fist. "You don't have any business here."

"Rae, do you want me to stay?" Audrey inquired.

Donnie never felt such anger rip through her when she noticed her wife nodding in another woman's shoulder. She felt strangled by the fury tearing at her insides and she did the only thing that she could do to avoid doing something that she regretted-she left. She once again found herself having to leave her own home at a time she needed a sanctuary.

"This is such bullshit!" Donnie hollered in frustration. She sat down on the porch because she did not feel safe driving while in such a funk. It would not do anyone any good if she wrapped her car around a tree because she and Rae had a fight. Instead, she pulled out her cell phone and dialed her best friend.

"What's up, Don?" Tegan's voice greeted her.

"Rae just shut me down on starting a restaurant with you. She pointed out that I'm barely home now, so I might never be there with another restaurant under my belt," Donnie explained.

"What! You're the juggling master! You'd figure out how to do it!"

"I haven't been doing it well lately, so I think she has a point. It would've been nice to do a family restaurant, though, wouldn't it?" Donnie forced out a laugh, not really hiding her sorrow, but covering it up just enough.

"That does suck! But, ah well. I guess that's just the way things go sometime. We'll just have to try harder to get people into *Donnie's*. There has been a little trickle of new people in since your radio interview. I think we just need to do a few more gimmicks. The café business has really got a kick in the ass, though!"

Donnie chuckled a little, sounding much happier that time. "I noticed. I also noticed you like hanging out down there."

"I never took the time out to appreciate the café. It's really nice there. Different types of people and not this air of snobbery that you run into at the restaurant most of the time. Don't get me wrong, I like the shit out of the restaurant too, but I'll stay down at the café for as long as you need me."

"I figured," Donnie answered and they continued talking business.

"I can't believe she'd even think about doing something so stupid!" Rae screamed into Audrey's shoulder.

"It'll be fine," Audrey whispered, holding Rae close to her.

Suddenly Rae ripped herself away from Audrey and started pacing the living room. "Does she think I'm just a mat that she can walk all over?!"

"She just doesn't appreciate you or even the baby it seems. She's probably just trying to play house," Audrey said.

Rae was about to bark an agreement to that, but was suddenly hit with a wave of memories, all involving witnessed interactions between Donnie and her grandfather. She knew then that Donnie would never "play house." Family was way too important to Donnie because of the situation that she experienced while growing up. She would never bring a child into the world to "play house."

"She's not like that," Rae declared, pausing in her steps.

"Rae, she's just a spoiled rich brat. You've seen-" Audrey tried to argue, but she was cut off by the fiery little woman.

"No! Donnie isn't like that! She's not!"

"Yet she goes out to buy another business, knowing she already doesn't have time for you as it is. You said it yourself, that was inconsiderate of her. Inconsiderate and thoughtless. She doesn't think of you at all from what I can tell and she damn sure isn't thinking about that baby," Audrey pointed out, motioning to the pregnant woman.

"She does..." Rae sniffled and wiped her eyes, even though new tears replaced the ones that she dried. "You don't know what she's like! She's usually sweet and thoughtful, always thinking of me..."

"And that's why she's about to start a business without asking you? Is that why she made you quit your job? Is that why she doesn't want you to have any friends? She's a spoiled brat, Rae. You need to accept that."

Rae was about to say something else, but she heard the door open. Donnie marched back into the living room, barely noticing the tense silence between the friends. Donnie did not even bother to look Audrey, knowing she would not have the good manners to leave and allow the couple a private moment. She also knew that there was no way she could tell Audrey to leave without having to endure more of her wife's wrath. Hazel eyes locked on Rae's small, swollen form.

"I would like to apologize, but I think I'll do it later," Donnie commented before retreating upstairs. Her shoulders were slumped and she looked defeated for the first time that her wife had ever seen.

Rae watched her spouse go upstairs and wondered what was wrong with Donnie. She turned her attention to Audrey, who was watching Donnie too, glaring at the chef. Rae cleared her throat to get Audrey's attention.

"Let me take you back home, Audrey," Rae said. She had picked her friend up earlier in the day because she had to go out grocery shopping.

"Are you sure you'll be okay?" Audrey asked, concern painting her sky blue eyes.

"I will. I just think me and Donnie have to have a long talk to get back on the same page because right now it doesn't seem like we're in the same damn book," the petite woman commented with a sigh.

"Donnie, baby?" Rae called as she ascended the steps in their home. "Please don't make me look for you."

"I'm in the bed," Donnie answered.

Rae went into the bedroom and saw her spouse laid out on the bed, reading a book. "You look comfortable." The simple comment was said with so much disdain that Donnie almost flinched. A deep breath kept her calm, though.

"Looks can be deceiving. Would you like that apology now?" Donnie asked in a low voice. She knew that if she allowed just a little more volume in her tone, they would end up fighting again.

"Is it going to be sincere?" Rae riposted with a sneer. While driving Audrey home, the redhead kept telling her that Donnie was probably apologizing to appease her and Donnie was trying to keep her under her thumb.

"When the hell have I ever been insincere with you?" Donnie demanded to know, body rigid and her face tense from that insult.

"Oh, I dunno, maybe when you said you're ready to settle down and have a family and then you're talking about opening another restaurant with Tegan!" Rae snapped.

Those words practically slapped Donnie across the face and she looked away in shame. "You're right. You're so right about that. It was stupid of me, but me and Tegan got wrapped up in the idea and hyped each other up. I'm sorry I got carried away. I'm glad you said something too before this went any further than us looking at a location. It was so stupid of me."

Rae was dumbfounded from the words, but there was more. Hazel eyes suddenly looked up and locked with her own. The eyes were as Rae remembered, endless, boundless, and seemed to look deep into her, touching parts of her that she did not know existed before meeting Donnie.

"Donnie...I shouldn't have screamed like that..." Rae's apologize was low and her own voice sounded small and shameful to her own ears.

"It's fine. I'm glad you did." Donnie smiled.

Rae blinked a few times, thoroughly puzzled by that statement. "Glad I screamed at you?"

"You shared your opinion and the way you shared it made me hear it immediately. I can't be mad at you for that and that's why I apologized," Donnie explained.

Rae laughed. "I can't believe you're happy I screamed at you. You're a nut, you know that?"

"Come here and I'll show you just how much of a nut I am," Donnie suggested with a smile.

Rae wasted no time climbing into her partner's lap. "Now, what are you going to show me?"

Donnie cuddled her face Rae's neck and kissed the area. "You reminded me of where my priorities are. You and our family is what's important. Right?"

"Of course," Rae confirmed.

"So, like I said, this was all my fault and you were totally right."

Rae giggled. "I like being right."

"I figured as much. So, I'm guessing you took Audrey home since I didn't see her car here when I drove up and that's what took you so long to come up here?" Donnie asked.

"Yeah, we were palling around in the same car today. She came with me food shopping. I was glad not to have to go by myself. It kinda reminded me when we used to go together."

Donnie smiled, even though was a bit tight. She wanted so badly to ask Rae to stop hanging out with Audrey so much, but she would feel like such a jerk. Rae obviously wanted and needed a friend. Donnie used to be that friend until she started working more often. She supposed that she was just going to have to live with Audrey being around until she had a chance to be home more often and become that friend again.

7: The flames of Hell

"Donnie don't forget we have Lamaze class tonight," Rae told her spouse as she turned off the kitchen sink. She sat down next to Donnie, who was eating breakfast. She sighed loudly, happy to be off of her feet now that she was twenty pounds heavier than usual. A smile came automatically after the long sigh of relief.

"I know. Did I forget before?" Donnie asked curiously, mouth turned up a little with genuine concern.

Rae could not help laughing. "You are too cute, Donnie. You've never forgotten, but I like reminding you. How are things going at the café and the restaurant?" she asked to make conversation and to find out what was going in her lover's life. She rested a hand on Donnie's leg, getting a smile out of the professional chef.

Donnie took a moment to bask in the warm contact before replying in a content tone. "Tegan smacked the café into shape quickly. The business there is doing good and Tegan really likes it over there, but she whines every few days to come back to the restaurant. So, we've started to trade off on who's going to go where. *Donnie's* is doing great, as usual. We still haven't gotten that many new people in there like I hoped, but I've come up with another idea to get new people in."

"Oh?" Rae's eyes shined with curiosity. "What idea?"

"I'm going to give away free tickets to a ball at the restaurant. I figure about a hundred and fifty tickets. What do you think?" Donnie asked, eyes begging for her wife's honest opinion.

Rae's head bobbed from side to side, like she was bouncing the idea around in her mind. "Sounds nice, formal, but nice."

Donnie frowned a little, not liking the bland tone her wife used. "Would you go for it?"

A small, sincere smile graced the shorter woman's face. "Five years ago, I would've been trying to kill people for one of those tickets. So, yes, I would go for it and I think it's a good idea. I don't know if you should call it a 'ball.' That sounds so upper-class and pretentious, which you're trying to get out of the reputation of being."

Donnie nodded. "Do you think calling it a banquet would be better?"

"Still has the same feel, but it does sound more like there will be food, so I would go with that over ball," Rae answered.

"Thanks, babe. You're plenty helpful, you know?" Donnie grinned, putting her arm around her beloved and pulling Rae into her side.

Rae smiled, happy that she could be of some use. She ate her own breakfast, exchanging a few words with Donnie, but she was mostly thinking about Lamaze class. She was looking forward to that, which she always did. Donnie never missed a class and it was great to have Donnie by her side.

"So, what do you have planned for today, babe?" Rae asked curiously once she was able to get her mind off of their appointment in the evening.

"I'm going to scare employees around the café for the afternoon and pop into the restaurant just to make sure Tegan and Ran aren't going at each other with knives again and then back here for Lamaze. Sound good?" Donnie answered with a bright smile. That was usually her plan on days that they had to go to class.

Rae's eyes sparkled and an impish, tiny smile worked its way on her face. "It would sound perfect if you could sneak in picking up a carton of strawberry sherbet."

Donnie leaned over, unable to resist that expression, and kissed her wife's cheek. "Okay, this one time, consider it done! I'll get some orange and lemon just in case too."

"You are too good to me!" Rae grinned, clapping wildly. She loved sherbet these days, along with a lot of sweet things. Much of the time, her spouse would not give into her on her sweets request, reminding her that she needed to eat healthy for the baby. Her taste buds and stomach did not seem to get the memo, always craving bad things that she was not allowed to have.

"So, what're you going to do while I'm gone?" Donnie asked, even though she could guess.

"I don't really know. Would it bother you if I go get some clothes for lil Donnie? I know we decided not to know the sex of the baby and everything, but I still want to go out and buy pants or something. I figure a boy or a girl could use some pants every once and a while."

Donnie smiled. "I was a little girl and wore pants my whole childhood!"

"According to your granddad, putting you in a dress never turned out well, although I'm sure he laughed every time you mooned someone," the petite woman remarked with a giggle.

"That he did."

Another giggle escaped Rae. "You can't do anything wrong in that man's eyes, Junior."

Donnie chuckled, loving the way her wife sounded when calling her "Junior." "I've been yelled at a time or two by him and spanked a few more times than that. He knows for sure I was never an angel. So, what else are you going to go shopping for? You should get more than pants while you're out."

"I don't know. I don't want to stay out too long since my feet'll undoubtedly end up hurting. Audrey hates hearing me whine about my feet," Rae commented.

"Oh, so you're taking Audrey," Donnie said in a deadpan tone with an expression to match. *I should've known!*

"Yeah." Rae put her arms around her lover and cuddled against her, wanting to take away the look of disdain in those beautiful hazel eyes. "Babe, I know you and Audrey don't get along well, but I wish you would give her a chance. She's been a very good friend to me and I appreciate her company."

Donnie sighed, sounding as guilty as she felt for behaving as she was. "I know, I know. I'll try harder," she vowed with a sheepish grin.

"That's all I ask," Rae replied with a smile. "If I can get along with Tegan, you should be able to get along with Audrey."

Donnie nodded to that one. The fact that Rae had not taken a pipe to Tegan's head through out the time they had known each other was a testament to Rae's patience. Tegan never really warmed up to her best friend's wife, mostly because of the way Rae treated Donnie in the beginning when Donnie was trying to court her. Rae tolerated Tegan while Tegan did her best to ignore Rae whenever possible. They did not fight or anything; hell, they could even manage a few civil sentences toward each other.

"Okay, okay, okay. My little peacemaker, I will try my best," Donnie promised. She supposed that she was just going to have to take a page out of Tegan's book and learn to ignore the hell out of Audrey. *I wonder if Tegan gives lesson.*

"Lemme go! I'm going to strangle that little Japanese wench!" Tegan declared, struggling to break away from Donnie, who was calmly dragging the redhead out of the kitchen...by the ankle. The restaurant owner did not look amused as the fiery redhead twisted and turned, trying her best to break free, so she could go back into the kitchen and teach Ran a lesson in humility.

"I'm not dealing with a double-homicide scene in my kitchen. Now, stop acting like a complete idiot. I have to get home to get Rae for Lamaze tonight, so I need you and Ran to act like responsible adults for once," Donnie commanded in a firm tone, shooting a glare at her best friend.

"Oh, yeah, that shrimp's been an adult for all of fifteen minutes, right?! You just let me go and I'll show her how an adult acts!" Tegan proclaimed, shaking her fist violently in the direction of the kitchen.

"Tegan, you can kill Ran later on when I have time to sort out of the mess and her father isn't in town anymore. Unless of course you've figured out how to kill a former Army Ranger," the taller woman commented in a dry tone.

Tegan calmed down a bit. "Hmm...you might be right. Fine, she gets a stay of execution for now."

Donnie sighed and let go of Tegan's ankle. The redhead quickly climbed to her feet. She dusted herself off and turned her attention to her boss. They chuckled a bit, finding the situation all too familiar.

"We're getting too old for this, Tegan. I can't keep dragging you places to make sure you don't get into trouble," Donnie said, shaking her head a little.

"I know, but Ran just pisses me off so much. She had the nerve to threaten to quit today!" Tegan reported, punching her fist into her palm.

"Yeah, I heard it was after you threatened to hang her out of the second floor window and dump her in the fountain underneath it. Ran's a kid, Tegan. Leave her be," Donnie advised, shrugging a little. She really did not understand why Tegan continued to fool around with Ran, knowing that the Japanese chef loved to be confrontational and get into heated arguments.

"Fine, but the next smart thing that comes out of her mouth, I'm putting my foot down her throat," Tegan replied with conviction, nodding to seal the promise.

Donnie rolled her eyes and decided to leave things to Tegan, figuring that everything would be fine for now. She had to get home to make sure she was on time to pick up Rae and get to Lamaze on time. When she pulled into the driveway, she sighed and smiled when she saw that Rae's car was the only one there. It seemed like the first time in forever that she and Rae would be in the house alone in the evening.

"Baby, you ready to go?" Donnie called out as she entered the house.

"I don't want to stand up anymore!" Rae whined from the living room. She was reclining on couch with her feet propped up at one end.

"Sorry, baby, but I don't think I can pick you up anymore to carry you around," Donnie apologized with a pout as she came onto the scene.

"Should me feet be swollen already? I mean, geez, how big is this kid?!" the small woman continued, flailing her arms and fighting back tears. Donnie made sure not to laugh, even though she thought her wife looked so adorable.

"Come on, sweetheart. You're just cranky. How did shopping go today? You had a good time?" Donnie asked tenderly, sitting down at the end of the couch. She propped Rae's feet into her lap and began gently massaging them. A shamelessly loud moan escaped the pregnant woman seconds after the businesswoman started caressing her throbbing feet.

"It was so much fun!" Rae purred and her eyes drifted shut, enjoying her spouse's practically sinful touch. "You're good at this. Better than Audrey..." she muttered, yawning a little in the end.

Donnie growled. "Audrey gave you a foot massage?" There was something about a foot massage that seemed very intimate to her, especially since she knew that her wife did not like to be touched by just anybody, so the fact that Audrey gave Rae was enough to make Donnie want to break something. Instead, she continued on like her insides were not churning and boiling, not even changing the pressure of her rubbing on Rae's tender tootsies.

"Earlier today. My feet were really hurting. She volunteered to give me a foot message. I think I fell asleep after that. I think I might fall asleep now..." She yawned and her eyes drifted half-way closed.

"Oh, no. No falling asleep, young lady. We have Lamaze class to get to and we're going," Donnie declared, lightly tugging on her lover's big toe. This did not get those deep brown eyes to open.

The chef was tempted to try picking her spouse up, but the twenty extra pounds added on by the baby made that too risky. She managed to coax Rae up with the promise of tasty treats and got her into the car. They were off to Lamaze class.

Rae was happy to hit the bed after they got home from Lamaze class. Donnie made sure to fluff the pillows for her and covered her with just the right amount of blankets; Rae had a habit of getting cold in the middle of the night now. As soon as Rae was tucked in just right, she was asleep. Donnie watched her for a while, happily smiling at the sight of her wife.

"My baby," Donnie sighed, tugging her arm underneath Rae's large belly. She kissed behind her wife's ear and fell asleep, dreaming about her family.

Donnie was looking forward to the next Lamaze class since it seemed like the one place she could be alone with her wife. Unfortunately, even that domain would not remain hers for long. The next time she had her usual schedule set up for Lamaze class when she got to the restaurant, things went sour and for once it had nothing to do with Tegan and Ran. There was too much smoke for it to be one of them, and the smoke was not coming from the kitchen.

"Shit, there's a fire in the garden! Call the fire department!" Donnie ordered, rushing into the lush, green area to make sure all of the patrons got out as quickly as possible and there were no injuries to any of the customer.

Tegan could not believe her eyes and forgot how to speak for a critical second. "Don, don't run into the fire, you fucking idiot!" she screamed when her voice returned, but her best friend was already gone. "Rae's going to kill you if you die!" Eyes going wide, she yelped. "And then she'll kill me for letting you run to your death! Come back, it's Lamaze night!"

The redhead sighed when her last ditch effort of getting Donnie to turn around did not work. She guessed that she was just going to have to wait for her impulsive best friend to return on her own because she damn sure was not running into a fire...not yet anyway. If Donnie took too long in there, then she would have to run into the fire to save her best friend or to die with her. Thankfully, the fire department showed minutes later and dosed the fire in no time at all. No one was seriously injured since Donnie was able to rapidly clear the garden. The problem after that was they had to figure out what happened and they had a lot of questions for Donnie since she was in charge.

"I guess I need to call Rae. Maybe she'll go to Lamaze without me or it'll be okay for us to miss a class," Donnie muttered to herself, shaking her head a little bit. She sighed as she grabbed her cell phone. She called Rae's cell phone first, but it went straight to voicemail. She growled and called the house phone.

"Hello?" a suspiciously familiar voice greeted her.

"Audrey, what the hell are you doing answering the phone in my goddamn home?" Donnie demanded to know with a snarl. *I'm going to hurt this bitch! I just know it!*

"Rae asked me to answer the phone. What do you want? Oh, lemme guess, you're not going to be able to make it here on time," Audrey commented, sounding way too happy and much too smug.

"Put Rae on the fucking phone," the chef ordered in a hard voice. Her eyes flashed with intense, blazing anger, hating how comfortable *that* woman was in her house.

"Oh, quite the little foul mouth on you. I can see you'll be an excellent mother," the sarcasm almost dripped through the phone. "Rae's taking a shower right now, wanting to be ready when

you come in, but you're not coming in, are you?" Audrey accused the restaurant owner. Her tone was still so smug that Donnie could hear the smirk on her face.

"What're you doing there anyway?" Donnie inquired. She did not feel comfortable getting off of the phone with Audrey, knowing that her wife was somewhere in the house possibly naked. It felt like the only thing she could do to protect her spouse for the moment.

"I'm hanging out with my friend, like always."

"Cut the bullshit."

"It's no bullshit. I like hanging out with Rae and we're very good friends. Better friends than you are with her from what I can tell. You don't even have anything in common with her. I don't know how the hell a spoiled brat like you landed such a nice girl-" the rest of the barb was cut off by the outraged businesswoman.

"Audrey, I promise you, the next time *my wife* isn't looking, I'm leaving my boot print on your ass," Donnie snarled.

Audrey laughed, so confident and sure. "Does Rae know how violent you are?" she asked in a near whimsical fashion.

"Who's that?" Rae's voice called in the distance.

"Your spouse is threatening to put her boot in my ass for answering your phone," Audrey answered.

"Donnie!" The reprimand was from a distance, but still made Donnie wince. It did not get any better when Rae was on the phone. "Donnie, why are you saying mean things to Audrey? Didn't you make a promise to me?" she demanded.

Donnie yelped. "Uh...I...she...I mean...Uh, anyway!" She let loose a nervous laugh, knowing this conversation was not going to get any better, not with the raging-walking-hormone that was her wife. "I'm not going to be able to make it to Lamaze class tonight..." she admitted and then braced herself for the screech that she was sure to come.

"What! Why?!" Rae screamed. The chef flinched hard from the sound and moved the phone from her ear for a moment.

"Because-" Donnie did not make it passed that one word.

"God, you're such a fucking asshole, Donnie! I bet you're fucking working right now! Why don't you just marry your fucking restaurant! You can have a bunch of fucking little café babies!" Rae shrieked and ended the conversation by hanging up the phone.

Donnie stared at her cell phone and the image her wife crying on Audrey's shoulder burned across her memory. A scowl tore through her face, hardening her eyes. She was tempted to run out to her car and blaze off to her house, but just then one of the investigators pulled her aside to start questioning her. She was stuck.

"Thanks for coming with me, Audrey," Rae sighed as she and her good friend drove back home after Lamaze class. She tried her best to look fine, but on the inside, her heart was cracked. *Why doesn't Donnie care about me anymore?*

"No problem. Glad I could help," Audrey answered with a smile, not taking in Rae's solemn demeanor. Since they were in her car, she was driving. She also did not want Rae driving since she thought it might be uncomfortable for the heavily pregnant woman to drive.

"I can't believe Donnie. Damn it, she never misses Lamaze and now all of a sudden something's wrong with the restaurant. It's always something with that fucking restaurant!" Rae huffed, hitting the dashboard with her palm.

Audrey glanced over and she would not have been surprised to see furious crimson waves radiating from her companion. "She's pretty unreliable..." the redhead commented.

Rae sighed, sounding fed up and tired. "She wasn't always like this. She's been so wrapped up in the restaurant. I mean, the restaurant was always a top priority, but lately it's been her *only* priority. I don't matter to her anymore."

Rae's eyes dropped and misted over. Audrey reached over and took one of Rae's hands in her own. She held it tightly, but did not look over at Rae. Rae did dare to look at Audrey and then held her head up to look in front of them too. Their hands remained link for the entire ride.

When they arrived at the house, Donnie's car was parked out front. Audrey went in anyway, standing by Rae's side. Donnie was sitting in the dark in the living room, staring off into nothingness from what they could tell when they turned on the lights. They jumped a little when they noticed Donnie on the sofa, but the surprise was quickly hidden under biting words.

"Oh, wow, she does remember where you live," Audrey remarked in a bitter tone directed at Donnie.

"Probably wants dinner," Rae jibbed with a cruel sneer.

Donnie nodded slowly and threw her hands up in defeat. "Nope, just wanted to see where I stand. Goodnight."

Rae was tempted to call out for her lover, but then she remembered that she just spent Lamaze class with Audrey while Donnie undoubtedly ran around at the restaurant. So, she swallowed her words and offered a loud scoff to show her indifference to the hasty exit as her spouse

disappeared upstairs. She flopped down on the couch, not caring about the fact that her wife was throwing a temper tantrum.

"Want to play some Scrabble? We haven't done that in a while and its something to keep you off of your feet," Audrey suggested, voice warm and soothing.

"That sounds nice," the shorter woman replied with a smile.

And so, they played Scrabble. Rae did not think it was odd that there was complete silence upstairs, figuring that Donnie had gone to bed. She was surprised to find the bedroom empty though when she retired for the night. The bed was how she left it earlier, neat, made, and completely undisturbed.

"Donnie?" Rae called, checking the bathroom that was adjacent to their bedroom. That was also empty. "Donnie?" her voice quivered a little this time.

The next place to check was the nursery. She thought that Donnie might be in there again, but she when she went across the hall, she found that room to be empty as well. Her heartbeat felt heavy, pounding in her ears and making the silence surrounding her deafening. Her stomach dropped as she turned, retreating back downstairs as fast as she could without risking an injury. She looked out the window and saw that Donnie's car was still there.

"Donnie, this isn't funny!" she called through out the empty, dark house as she went back upstairs.

She checked the bedroom and the nursery again. They were empty just as before, which made her feel overwhelmed and strangled by the darkness. She called out for her spouse again as she marched through the halls, searching, scanning, *needing* to find some sign of life from her lover. She noticed the door at the end of the hall was slightly ajar; it was guest bedroom. Usually, they kept all the doors to the guestrooms shut because they never really had reason to go in those areas.

"Donnie?" Rae gently pushed the door open. She could make out a distinct lump in the bed. "Donnie?" she whispered, voice trembling, bottom lip quivering, eyes glistening. "Baby...?"

Something inside of her told her that Donnie was not sleeping, but ignoring her. The very idea made her sick immediately and she put one hand over her mouth and one on her swollen stomach. She dropped to her knees, the noise turning hazel eyes to her instantly.

"Sweetheart," Donnie gasped, launching herself out of bed and falling to Rae's side. She resisted the urge to put her arms around her wife, just in case the small woman was hurt. "Are you all right?" she begged to know, holding her hands in front of her, wanting to do something as soon as she could.

"Why are you doing this?" Rae asked with a sob, hand still over her mouth.

A frown cut across Donnie's smooth face. "I could ask you the same thing. Do you really want to sleep next to a fucking asshole? I thought it would be better this way," she answered in a hard tone.

"I just wanted to go to Lamaze class with you! Is that so wrong?" Rae inquired, tears pouring down her face while a fire burned in her eyes.

"No, it's not and you know I was looking forward to that with you-"

"Then why the fuck did you stay at your fucking restaurant?!" Rae screamed. Her voice cracked because of her volume.

"Whoa, babe, I think you need to calm down first and foremost. You're not supposed to get worked up. You know that," Donnie said, wrapping her arms around her wife now that she knew it was safe to do so. The embrace immediately calmed the fiery female.

Rae curled into Donnie. "Why?" she whimpered, sniffing like a lost child.

"Babe, there was a fire in the garden. I had to stay to answer questions and make sure everyone was safe..." Donnie explained in a low, gentle voice. She slowly caressed Rae's head and kissed her cheek.

Rae gasped and clutched onto the front of her spouse's tee-shirt. Sorrowful and apologetic chocolate eyes locked with hazel orbs. "God, baby, I'm so sorry. I should've let you explain. It's just that I look forward to this time with you and when you called...I just lost it! To me, it wasn't you just missing the class, it like you were missing everything..." she explained, voice getting lower and lower through out the speech.

Donnie placed another soft kiss to her wife's soft cheek. "It's okay. Your hormones are whacky and sometimes it makes you irrational. That's fine. It's fine," she promised.

"How is it fine? God, you could've been hurt!" The speed with Rae was excitable and sorrowful was incredible, but she did not seem to notice.

Donnie bit back the words of truth, not wanting to say that she had been hurt. She had been so very hurt by this sweet, loving creature in her arms. And she had a feeling that she would be hurt again by this same person, but she could not bring herself to say that. It would hurt the one she loved.

"I'm all right. You know my skin is thick. Nobody got hurt in the fire. The inspectors think some idiot decided to have a smoke in one of the bushes. It wouldn't be the first time we've had idiots smoking back there, but it would be the first time that the idiot proved itself to be an idiot. I think I have to find out more for what we're using to keep the bugs to a minimum because I think that might have helped start the fire from the cigarette."

"I'm glad you're not hurt. Um...will you come to bed?" Rae requested in a shy voice.

"Of course," Donnie answered and despite a gnawing sensation in her gut, she stood up to go to their bedroom. She even helped Rae to her feet. She kept any thoughts about who took Rae to their class to herself and walked down the dark hall, feeling as though it was the longest walk that she ever taken in her life.

Despite the tears, the next day, Donnie felt like things went back to business as usual. She literally almost ran into Audrey on her way out of the house. She was tempted to say something, but Rae practically cheered when she saw the redhead. Donnie's body tensed so much that she was not sure how she was even going to drive to work, but she managed because she had to get away from the house.

"So, what happened between you and Donnie?" Audrey asked curiously as she sat down at the island in the kitchen, eating a plate of waffles that Rae had made for breakfast. The friends often spent their first hour together in the kitchen, talking while Audrey ate breakfast.

"Turns out, she had a decent reason for missing the class. The garden caught fire at the restaurant and she had to stay over," Rae reported as she sat down with a glass of orange juice. Her breakfast had been taken with her spouse about thirty minutes ago, but she always had juice with Audrey while the redhead ate.

Audrey arched an eyebrow, sneering a little. "Really? I didn't hear anything about it on the news. Weird, I figured they would report if a famous place like *Donnie's* almost burnt down," she commented with a bit of a shrug.

Rae paused for half-a-tick. "It probably wasn't a big fire. Donnie really didn't go into detail."

Audrey's mouth practically hit the floor as she leaned forward and stared hard at her good friend. "You mean she acted like this sort of thing was normal? What sort of days does she have at work if this is normal? What has to happen for you to get details, a fucking dragon attack?" she asked incredulously, throwing her hands out to the side.

Rae was silent again for a few seconds. Her eyes fell to the floor, as if searching the area for the truth. "You think she lied, don't you?" Cocoa orbs locked onto sky-blue ones.

Audrey sighed and reached over, putting her hand on top of Rae's hand. "I think she just wanted you to stop being mad at her and she went for something like that to make it happen. You stopped being mad at her, didn't you?" the redhead asked, tenderly caressing Rae's hand with her thumb moving in slow circles.

Rae sighed deeply, glancing down again for a moment. "Well...yeah. After that I was just really concerned for her."

"See?" Audrey mildly pressed.

"I guess..." Rae muttered, sorrow clouding her eyes. Her bottom lip trembled a bit as she wondered if it was true that Donnie just lied to her to get her to stop being angry. If that was the case, then she wondered why Donnie missed their class night? *Why does Donnie keep running out on me?*

"Hey," Audrey said in a semi-upbeat tone, like she was trying to lift her friend's waning spirit. "How about we go catch a movie or something to take your mind off of things?" she suggested, patting the top of Rae's head to help soothe her.

"Okay," Rae answered and forced out a smile. That got a grin out of Audrey.

Donnie massaged her temples while sitting at her desk, which was buried somewhere under stacks of paper. Tegan was sitting across from her, trying to find a place that she thought was safe to place her cold drink. It seemed like no matter where she put it, she was probably going to have to move it because they would need the paper. Instead, she just put it on the floor next to her chair.

"Okay, so all of the contest tickets are out. I hear people were trying to kill each other for one, so the promotion was good and everything. Now, we just need to plan a knockout party in two weeks to make all of those attempted murders worthwhile, but we've done that in two days before," Tegan pointed out with an easygoing smile.

"Yeah, and then we had to take a week vacation or let Spain commit us to the mental ward. I'd rather not go through that again," Donnie countered drolly.

The redhead let loose a snort and a playfully brusque wave. "Okay, fine, so we'll waste two weeks on it. It'll give me time to drum up a respectable date," she declared with an impish grin.

Hazel eyes rolled right on cue. "You have a one-track mind."

"Hey, we can't all be married and know who the hell our date is every freaking time something comes up. I can't wait to see how big lil Donnie's made Rae. She probably looks like a ball now because she's so short!" Tegan giggled, struck by the mental image of Rae being totally round and her bouncing the pregnant woman like a basketball.

Donnie sighed, wondering if it was safe to unleash her hormonal spouse on an unsuspecting public. Even if Rae did not devour the souls of her guests, there was no guarantee that Rae would leave her untouched. She was still raw from their last major bout. But, ah well, that was the risk. She did not like the idea of not going anywhere without Rae.

"We're going to have to buy her a new dress. God, I hate shopping for stuff like that," Donnie said, shaking her head in despair. Clothes shopping was often the bane of her existence.

"You really have no fashion sense at all when it comes to dresses, but that doesn't surprise me considering what you used to do whenever your mom tried to stick you in a dress. Remember you rode your bike through that thorn bush with your church dress on?" Tegan asked with a laugh.

"Yeah, Mom beat my ass so badly I couldn't sit on that fucking bike for weeks." Donnie lowered her head for a second and her voice dropped. "That was the last time you ever dared me to do something..."

Tegan's eyes fell to the floor and quiet reigned over the office for a long moment. "Honestly...I thought she was going to kill you when I saw the look in her eyes. I didn't want to ever see her look at you like that again. But, you were nuts and went after her with that crazy boldness of yours a lot of the time." Looking back up, a smile graced her face. "You're just nuts!" she giggled.

Donnie scratched her head. "Common sense, I don't have. Okay, back to business..."

Tegan grinned and nodded. They went back to figuring out how they wanted the large, anticipated banquet to go in order to get new blood into the business. They wanted everything to be perfect. They wanted to leave everyone talking about this event for months. And they were extremely determined to make it exactly that way.

By the time they finished planning everything-with only a few days to spare-Donnie was giddy, practically glowing. She almost danced into the house, not even caring that Audrey's car was in the driveway. She glided into the living room, grinning from ear to ear.

"Baby," Donnie hummed, going to the sofa and hugging Rae close to her. She planted several feather soft kisses to her lover's cheeks.

"You're in a good mood," Rae stated the obvious, laughing a little from the delightful attention. She would not have been surprised if a halo of sunshine surrounded her spouse.

"The banquet's in a few days. When you see what Tegan and I have done with everything, you're going to love it! Now, we need to go out and get you a dress. I know it's short notice, but it should be fine-" Donnie's spirited rant was suddenly cut off.

Rae raised a hand to her spouse, silencing her with the move. "Whoa, wait, we need to get me a dress?" inquired the petite woman with an almost scathing look.

"Yeah. You're not going to be able to get your other dresses around lil Donnie," the chef pointed out, motioning to her wife's massive stomach. So high was her mood, she actually missed the pointed gaze in cocoa eyes.

"You're not even going to bother asking her if she wants to go, are you?" Audrey asked in an accusing tone with her own burning expression. "You're just going to push her into going to this thing because you want her to!"

Donnie blinked hard and then glared at Audrey. "Hey, she's my wife and she loves these sorts of things! Of course she's going to come with me!" the restaurant owner declared with the utmost confidence. She went so far as to puff out her chest a little, just knowing that she was right for the first time in a long time about Rae.

"As your arm candy, right?" Audrey said, pulling on a teasing grin.

"You fucking bitch!" Donnie snarled, flexing her hand into a fist for a moment. A well-cared for finger pointed at the pregnant woman. "She's my wife!"

"You treat her like your property!"

"Both of you stop it!" Rae shouted before Donnie could get another insult in.

Both women closed their mouths. The air was tight and tense, waiting for Rae to break it. The ebony-haired woman knew it was up to her, so she weighed her opinions. She did like going out to parties with Donnie, but she did not want it to seem like she was going because Donnie ordered her to. She was her own person, not a puppet for Donnie to pull the strings on. Besides, if she went, she would have to be on her feet all night and her feet were not looking forward to that torture.

Worse than the fact that her feet would hurt or Audrey would think that Donnie controlled her, there was the fact that she was like Doctor Jekyll and Mister Hyde lately. She did not want to go to this important event with Donnie and do something crazy to embarrass her spouse. Or maybe even ruin the evening. That would hurt a thousand times more than being on her feet all night.

Rae turned and the look in her eye said more than she would get to say. "Baby-"

"It's all right," Donnie said quickly with a forced, quivering smile. She figured her voice would cover up the sound of her heart shattering and her guts being ripped out. Her voice would cover up the noise made by her fleeing good mood...right? Her voice would cover up the sound of her soul screaming as it died-at least she hoped her voice had these powers. "...I have to take a shower..."

"Baby," Rae repeated, reaching out for Donnie as she pulled away. The taller woman dodged the contact, certain that Rae's touch would scorch her peeling flesh. Rae flinched, not sure how to react to such a blatant brush-off. Donnie disappeared upstairs like a shadow in the night without another word.

"Good job standing up for yourself," Audrey congratulated her friend, patting the shorter woman on her shoulder.

Rae smiled, even though on the inside it did not feel like she did a good job of anything except hurting her wife's feelings. But, it was necessary. She knew that she would not be any fun at the banquet. Now, Donnie was free to have fun and she would not ruin the night for anyone...right?

8: Hot grits

"Somebody's looking fancy," Audrey commented as Donnie walked into the living room from upstairs. Audrey and Rae were camped out in the living room, doing their usual. Donnie ignored the redhead.

"Audrey, hush," Rae softly reprimanded her friend before turning her attention to her spouse. "You look nice, baby," she said, smiling sweetly at her spouse.

Donnie's expression was impassive. She did not hear any words and she did not care to. Her eyes did not see anything; the world around her did not exist. She lucked out on what she was wearing, grabbing the first thing that her hand touched in the closet; it just so happened to be her best cream-colored suit. She then repeated that process for her shirt, managing to snag a pale orange blouse. The suit complimented her figure well, not that it mattered to her, fitting as if it was made especially for her, even though she never had it altered and it was not tailor made. The pants hugged her hips, causing chocolate eyes to linger there. Donnie did not notice.

Audrey curled her lip in disgust and shook her head at the chef. "I can't believe you're actually going to go to this thing without your wife. Did you manage to catch a date or something?" she inquired with a sneer.

"Audrey," Rae hissed.

"I'll be back late. If something happens, call my cell," Donnie stated in a dead voice before continuing on her way. She exited the house before she broke down into tears. She cried hard in the car and had to force herself to pull out of the driveway. *Why? Why is this happening to me? Why can't I have just one moment of peace?*

Donnie slowly sucked all of sorrow up, knowing that she had to be on her best game tonight. She wanted to get more customers for the restaurant. So, she was going to put on a nice show, smiling warmly and being personable with everyone that she came across that night, and hopefully she would not have to do it again for a long while.

She put on a good act when she arrived at the restaurant, meeting people almost immediately, but she barely took in the atmosphere. Her eyes did not even take in the way that she and Tegan had the restaurant set up; it looked like a blockbuster movie premier mixed with formal gala. She made sure to avoid her friends, all of whom were there and looking for her. She knew they would want to know where her other half was and she was certain that if she so much as heard Rae's name at the moment, she would break.

"Donnie didn't look too happy about going to her big event," Rae muttered, staring at her Scrabble tiles, but not really seeing them. She could not form a word with any of them and it was not because they were not good letters. Her mind was on other things.

"She was just pouting because you didn't do what she wanted you to do. She'll be fine," Audrey replied nonchalantly, showing that she heard what her friend said.

"I guess. She'll be lonely, going by herself," Rae commented with a hint of sadness, glancing at the door.

"She gave up on you pretty easily," Audrey suddenly shared. "I mean, it was great that you stood up for yourself, but she didn't even argue when you turned her down. How weird is that?" she asked, looking up to stare her friend in the eye.

Rae nodded; it was pretty weird. Donnie did not make a fuss about it. In fact, Donnie had not brought it up again after that night. Usually, Donnie would have bugged her until she caved, but apparently, not this time. It was like Donnie actually did not want her to go, she thought.

"Do you think...she got a date?" Rae asked in a low, shaky voice.

Audrey shrugged. "It's possible. She didn't put up a lot of fight for you to go and then she says she'll be late. She probably moped out of here just to try to throw you off."

"...You think so?" the smaller woman inquired. Her voice was trembling because it seemed like that made sense to her. Donnie kept running out on her and this was a plausible explanation for it.

"Well, really, I think she shows the signs of a cheater. She stays out late a lot of the time while always wanting to know where you are, but never saying where she is. She blows off important things with flimsy excuses. She's almost never here, but you never know where the hell she really is, even though she might say she's at the restaurant. Sounds like cheating behavior to me," Audrey answered honestly.

Rae was silent and tried to absorb that information. It sounded so logical and damn near credible, but there were things against that. For the five years that she had known Donnie, the restaurant owner always worked hard and came in at odd hours; she just did it more often now. Donnie also never came in smelling like another woman. She never came in with strange hairs on her either. She never stepped out of the room to answer her cell phone and no one ever called the house at weird hours...except Tegan when she was drunk anyway.

"I think you're wrong. Even if Donnie went to this party with someone, she's not the type to cheat. She knows the damage that can do to a person and she's too nice to hurt someone that badly," Rae explained with a confident smile, nodding to drive the point home.

"She doesn't seem to mind hurting you. Didn't she do it countless times already?" Audrey pointed out.

Rae was quiet again for a moment. Cocoa eyes glanced down, looking at her letter tiles. "She doesn't mean to do it."

Audrey snorted and blue eyes rolled. "You're such a doormat, Rae! She's got you brainwashed. You just let her get away with anything and that's what she's doing, getting away with it."

Silence once again followed the redhead's words. Rae wondered if Audrey had a point. She was always a doormat and she always let her girlfriends get away with everything, but Donnie was supposed to be different. Donnie was different...right?

"You don't know anything about Donnie," Rae argued.

"I've known her for almost six months now, just as long as I've known you. I've got to see her and how she treats you, how she treats the baby that you're carrying. She doesn't act like a woman that cares about her wife and child. She's left you here alone countless times, she's skipped Lamaze class, she doesn't even call to check on you," Audrey countered.

Rae scoffed. "She checks on me consistently. You just don't see it. I understand that you're concerned about me, Audrey, but you don't know my wife. If you don't like what she's doing, I'd rather you keep it to yourself," she stated soundly.

"You're the one that asked me, so you're obviously wondering if something's up. Now you're just trying to cover it up, so you don't have to think about it. But, whatever, you want the matter dropped, your wish is my command," the redhead retorted.

Rae was pleased that Audrey really did not say another word on the matter. They continued on with their game; Rae was trying to stay up to wait for Donnie. But, by the time Donnie came in, Rae was sound asleep, using Audrey's shoulder as a pillow. The only saving grace about the scene for Donnie was that they were on the couch. One day, she feared that she was going to come home and they would be somewhere else in the house, somewhere not on the ground floor.

"Enjoying yourself?" Donnie asked Audrey, who was awake. She had been having a good time stroking Rae's hair before Donnie came in too.

"With your property?" Audrey countered.

"I don't know how your sick mind works, but that's not how mine does. Now, why don't you get the fuck out?" Donnie suggested, nodding toward the door.

Audrey grinned like the cat that got the cream. "Oh, do you think Rae would like to hear you talk to me in such a vulgar manner?"

Hazel eyes narrowed, glaring at the redhead. "What makes you think that you're capable of taking care of Rae?" Donnie demanded to know.

"You're kidding, right? What do you think I've been doing all this time? While you're out playing businesswoman and dancing at your fancy little parties, I'm the one that makes sure Rae eats right and takes naps to keep her energy up. I rub her sore feet and back. I listen to her wants, desires, dreams, and nightmares. I'm the one that cares about her and her wellbeing. What the fuck do you do for her beside keep her in this gilded cage? Your pretty bird. Your trapped princess. Your trophy wife not allowed to see the world," the redhead retaliated with a growl.

Donnie snarled. "She can leave whenever she wants and go anywhere she likes." *And I would've done all of those things for her if she didn't insist on keeping your grimy ass around!*

Blue eyes rolled while a snort escaped Audrey's lips. "You know that's not true and she knows it's not true."

Before Donnie could retort, Rae made a mew sound and turned in her sleep. Her eyes fluttered open and she smiled when she saw the face that she woke up to...Audrey's face. Donnie noticed, as did Audrey, so the redhead smiled; well, more like she smirked. Donnie's face fell to a deadpan expression.

"What time is it?" Rae asked in a sleepy tone.

"Almost four in the morning," Audrey answered in a gentle tone.

"Where's Donnie?" Rae groaned, sounding disappointed and worried.

"I'm home, sweetheart," Donnie replied and her partner turned to the sound of her voice. Rae threw a cute, sleepy smile her way, which got a small smile out of Donnie.

"Did you have a good time?" Rae asked, sitting up and yawning.

"Yeah," Donnie lied as she approached her wife and helped her to her feet. "It would've been better if you were with me, though. You would've loved it," she replied, leaning down to place a soft kiss to her wife's cheek.

Rae shook her head. "I wouldn't have been any fun. My feet and back have been killing me all day and I feel like I'm about to go crazy if someone as much as looks like they want to touch my stomach."

Donnie forced out a chuckle. "Cranky, huh? I'm sure you'll feel better in the morning. Come on, let's go to bed."

Rae nodded. "Night, Audrey."

The master chef took Rae upstairs while Audrey showed herself out. Rae sighed when she hit the mattress and was sleeping as soon as her head hit the pillow. She woke up for a moment when she felt Donnie settle in, but she was back out after she felt Donnie's body against her.

Donnie woke up first that morning and stared at the face of her wife. Hazel eyes glistened with unshed tears. She always thought that Rae was her soul-mate, the woman made just especially for her, and that they would together forever. A scoffed escaped her tense throat. *I'm some kind of idiot, huh?*

The restaurant owner climbed out of bed and went to do something she had not done in ages-cook breakfast for herself. She was not sure what possessed her to do it, but there was no stopping her now that she was there in the kitchen. Donnie always thought of herself a chef more than anything else. She loved cooking and had been doing it since she was started kindergarten. She knew how to make meals before she knew how to spell most of the common things that she used for them.

But, when Rae moved in, the kitchen was suddenly her domain, without much of an explanation either. Donnie conceded with some fight, but it was always nice to have Rae cook for her. As she moved around, pulling out items to prepare, she realized it felt just as nice to cook in her kitchen as it did eat in it.

Rae woke up because she smelled food cooking. For a moment, she thought that she left the oven on and the house was going to burn to the ground, but then her mind caught up with everything and she realized the smell was nothing like a fire. She was curious as to what was going on because she knew that someone did not break in just to cook breakfast, even though their kitchen was state-of-the-art.

"Baby, what're you doing?" Rae asked curiously as she waddled into the kitchen. She was so happy that lil Donnie was only going to be taking up residency in her body for another month or so because she really wanted her body back now.

"I'm cooking!" Donnie replied with a happy grin and she slid a plate onto the island counter. She then rushed over to Rae and helped her sit down in front of the plate.

Rae blinked as her butt hit the seat. She looked down at the food in front of her. Sunny-side up eggs with bits of vegetables in them, sausage slices, wheat toast, grits with cheese. Everything looked perfect, sprinkled with some spice that Rae doubted she would be able to identify. Her hand trembled as she went to pick up the fork.

"Something wrong? I probably used too much spice," Donnie commented sheepishly, blushing and looking like a total idiot. "I didn't think it would upset your stomach. I'm sorry! Want some oatmeal or something else instead?" she inquired, thinking about what her wife usually ate in the mornings now. For the past month typically, her partner had bland cereal for breakfast.

"It's fine..." Rae said in a small voice. "What made you get up and make breakfast?" she asked, her voice still low.

"I dunno. Just had the urge. You're not mad at me for invading your domain, right?" Donnie asked with a smile that she hoped would get her off of the hook in case her spouse was upset with her.

Rae forced out a smile; well, what she hoped looked like a smile. "I like cooking for you, Donnie, but I'm happy that you surprised me too."

"You don't look happy."

In truth, Rae's eyes were downtrodden and her shoulders were slumped. It was not the position of someone angry, so Donnie guessed that was a good thing. But, she did not understand why her wife looked so sad.

"If you don't want to eat it, it's okay. You're not used to my cooking, so you might not like it," Donnie said.

"I haven't even tried it yet, baby. Stop being so worried," Rae replied. She knew the food would be great; her lover was not the most sought after chef in the country for no reason. She took a fork full of eggs and felt a burst of flavor in her mouth. She knew that her eggs never tasted this good and it showed on her face. *How can Donnie always eat my food and swear it's the best when hers taste like this?!*

"I'm glad you like it. I should cook for you every now and then. What do you think?" Donnie asked with a smile.

"You don't want me to cook anymore?" Rae asked, sadness nipping into her voice. *What's with the change all of a sudden?*

"That's not it. I just wanted to do something for you, but if it's too weird, I won't cook anymore. I just thought it would be nice. Anyway, want to go out shopping today? I feel like getting some stuff for lil Don and we still haven't gotten a crib yet. We should start looking," Donnie suggested, rubbing her hands together in an eager fashion. She was bursting with energy today and she did not know why. Part of her thought that it was some crazy form of denial or a weird method for trying to get back what she knew was lost to her.

Rae nodded absently, not really paying attention to her spouse's words. She was more concerned with Donnie's bizarre behavior. There had to be some reason that Donnie was acting like a hyper jack rabbit and there had to be a reason that she cooked breakfast. Rae just could not think of what the reason might be.

"Donnie...last night...with the party...did you go with someone?" the petite woman asked curiously. She thought that might be what was bothering her, even though she was sure just the oddness of Donnie cooking was what was throwing her off.

"Why would I go with someone?" Donnie countered just as curiously.

"To have company."

"If that's the case, I went with Tegan, Spain, and French, like always. They asked about you constantly," Donnie informed her wife. They also wanted to know what *she* had done to *make*

Rae stay home and they kept frowns on their faces when they asked. *Nice to know my friends are on my side*, her mind commented sarcastically.

"They probably would've been begging you to take me home if I went. I was a crab all night," Rae replied, shaking her head ruefully.

The chef smiled a little and let out an amused snort. "They wouldn't have minded. So, you never said if you want to go shopping or not," she pointed out.

"Okay. Lemme finish eating."

The couple was off when breakfast was done. They went out shopping for the baby, but could not stay out too long because of Rae's feet and back. They did look at a few cribs and some storybooks, but they did not get a chance to buy anything. They did see a couple of cribs that they liked, but they did not really settle on which one because the baby started moving, which only made things worse for Rae.

"Sorry. I guess I messed this trip up," Rae apologized as Donnie helped her into the car so that they could return home.

"I would say that lil Donnie messed this trip up. What a bad kid! I'm grounding you the second you come out, causing your mommy all this stress!" Donnie said, pointing at Rae's stomach. That earned a chuckle from the ailing woman.

"We'll go out again soon, okay?" Rae said.

Donnie nodded in agreement with that. "Sounds good. I really liked that light wood crib we looked at. What about you?"

"That one was nice."

"Which one did you like best?" Donnie asked curiously.

"I'm not too sure. I wasn't paying much attention because lil Donnie was having a good time kicking my kidneys," Rae answered with a smile.

"You hear that lil Donnie, you are a bad kid," Donnie scolded the unborn child again.

Rae giggled once more. They went back to the house and Donnie propped Rae up in bed. She gave her hurting wife a foot rub and ordered some takeout instead of trying her hand at cooking again, not wanting to upset Rae anymore. Their time home was quiet and they stayed in bed the whole time.

"Were you okay yesterday? You didn't call me," Audrey commented as she sat down on the sofa in Rae's living room. "I was worried," she added, throwing in a concerned pout.

"That's so sweet of you." A small smile settled onto Rae's face before she continued. "I spent the day with Donnie. Well, more like I spent the day ruining things for Donnie. First, she made me this really nice breakfast and I sulked all the way through it. Don't even know if I told her how good it was. Next, we went shopping for the baby and I just kept complaining about my feet. Then the baby kept moving around and I just kept whining about it," she sighed, shaking her head, just a little disgusted with her behavior yesterday. The worst of it was that she actually asked Donnie if she had gone to the banquet with someone; she felt horrible that she would even put that out there. Donnie would never cheat on her!...Right?

"I bet Donnie told you that you ruined the day too," the redhead huffed, folding her arms tightly across her stomach.

"No, she was really nice about it," Rae said with another sigh. She had not been very nice at all yesterday, but Donnie had been perfect, like she used to be. She could not understand how Donnie managed to even put up with her yesterday now that she thought about it.

Audrey shrugged, knowing not to debate the matter or they would end up in an argument. "So, what do you want to do today? You're feeling better, right?" she asked in a gentle tone, reaching over to rub the smaller woman's forearm. The skin-on-skin contact was tender and Audrey had to fight down pleased mewl.

"Much better. I'd like to go outside while I do."

"How about a walk in the park down the street?" the redhead suggested with a happy smile. An enthusiastic nod was the response.

So, they went for a walk in the park. Rae lasted longer than they expected, but eventually had to sit down for a little while. The weather was not warm enough for them to stay out for too long and so they went back to the house, but did not stay for long. Rae was still itching to be outside. They ended up going out for lunch.

"You know, we're near the baby shop that Donnie and I went to look at cribs," Rae realized.

"You don't have a crib yet? You need to get one soon. You're about to burst," Audrey pointed out, motioning to Rae's stomach...in case the expecting mother missed her condition.

"I know. I know."

"Let's go there next since we're so close."

Rae nodded. "Okay. I didn't really pay much attention to them yesterday because the baby kept moving around. We can look around now that's settled and I can really focus on finding a nice crib."

"Okay, it'll be fun to pick out stuff for the baby," Audrey declared with a smile, which got a smile out of Rae.

Donnie came into an empty house. There was a note on the coffee table that explained why. In Rae's bubbly handwriting, the note informed her: I've been feeling really good today, so Audrey and I are going out for dinner. There's dinner in the fridge and a surprise upstairs.

As Donnie's head turned upstairs, her stomach headed south for the winter. The darkness of the second floor seeped into her, sending a chill down her spine. The silence ripped into her automatic gunfire. She peered into the bedroom, finding nothing out of the ordinary, but the ominous feelings remained. She scratched her head, wondering where the "surprise" might be.

She did an about-face and gulped as she noticed the door to the nursery was wide open, almost as if beckoning her in. Her heart thumped hard in her chest as she took slow, shaky steps toward the nursery. She silently scolded herself for her reaction, but she could not shake the feeling that she was walking into Hell. She stepped into the quiet inferno and clicked on the light.

Donnie's whole body locked up. She fell to her knees, eyes wide with horror and disbelief. Tears were falling from her eyes before she realized it. A guttural moan escaped her, like a wounded beast. Rae had purchased a crib...without her...with Audrey...*Kill me now!* Rae should have gutted her while she was at it, Donnie thought; it would have saved her so much suffering.

She had known for a while now that she was in trouble, but she did not know what to do about it. She could not say anything to Rae, not wanting to upset her, not wanting her to yell...or worse-to cry. She did not want to trouble Rae while she was carrying the baby, but now that she sat in silence for months, her worse fears were quite clear to her thanks to this late bit of disregard of her feelings.

Lately, she could do no right and there was no use tormenting herself over it. She had learned to accept things like this, she reminded herself. It happened with her father. It happened with her mother. So, it was only natural that it would happen with Rae.

"No use in living in a façade anymore. That only gets people hurt," Donnie told herself. That was also something that she knew about first hand.

So, she picked herself up and decided to give her wife what she thought Rae really needed and what Rae seemed to want. She grabbed her cell phone, started making calls, and left the house. She figured that by the time she got back, her spouse should be in and they would have to talk.

"I can't believe you're beating me this badly!" Audrey groaned, burying her face in her hand for a second to hide in shame. She and Rae were back and playing their customary game of Scrabble.

"I've picked some good letters this game," Rae declared with a proud grin.

The sound of the front door opening and shutting hit their ears. Rae smiled as Donnie walked in. Donnie paused, looking between her wife and Audrey.

"Donnie, did you see the crib?" Rae asked with a wide smile.

"Cute little thing that we picked out, right?" Audrey added in with her own smile.

Donnie lurched forward, as if she was about vomit. Her stomach felt like it was in rebellion, but she hit herself in the gut to settle things. She took a long exhale, calming everything inside of her. But, not for long.

"Baby, are you all right?" Rae asked, tilting her head as she took in her lover's green features.

"Not really. I need to take use the bathroom," Donnie replied. She took off for the ground floor bathroom. She was going to throw up, no question about that one.

"I guess she's caught a bug or something," Rae sighed. "Well, Audrey, I think you better go, so I can struggle with Donnie. She's a monster when she's sick."

"You really shouldn't be around her when she's sick. You've got the baby and everything," Audrey pointed out, motioning to her friend's large belly.

Rae smiled and shook her head. "The vows said in sickness and health. Right now, we're in a sickness and I have to take care of her. I'll call you later."

Rae ushered Audrey out of the house and by the time she got the redhead out of the door, Donnie was back in the living room. The chef was sitting on the couch with her head down. Rae went to her side and felt her head.

"Want me to make you some soup, honey? It'll make you feel better," Rae said in a gentle tone.

"I'm not sick," Donnie replied, *not in any scientific way anyway*.

"No? But, you looked so green and you threw up."

"I know, but I'm not sick."

"Did you eat something bad?" Rae asked. It was not unheard of since Donnie would try anything once as long as at least one person labeled it "food."

"No..." Donnie answered in a weak voice. Her throat quivered and she had to press her hands together to keep them from shaking. She then took a deep breath and turned her gaze directing to that her wife. "Rae, I love you so much..."

Rae's face lit up. "I love you too."

Donnie chuckled, a hollow, humorless sound. "I realized today that you don't. You don't love me. You love Audrey."

"What! How can you say that?!" Rae demanded to now, wanting to stand up and scream, but her weight kept her seated on the couch.

"I can see it in your eyes when you look at her. You're open with her in ways that you've never been with me. Not when we were dating and especially not now. You want her in ways that you used to want me. You need her and you cling to her. You might not see it right now, but when I'm not in the way, you'll see it quite clearly..." the restaurant owner explained in a dead tone. She felt dead. She wished that she was dead.

Rae's bottom lip trembled as she realized what her spouse was saying. "You're leaving me...?" she asked with wide eyes.

Tears threatened to fall from light brown eyes, but Donnie kept them at bay. "I have to. If you love something, let it go..." *I always let go.*

Rae's eyes lit up with a fury that could have engulfed the sun, but a sorrow that could have drowned the ocean. "How can you leave me now?! We're going to have a baby in a month! How can you tell me who I love? Audrey is my friend! Yes, I spend a lot of time with her and depend on her, but you're my wife!"

"You can't tell me that you don't prefer her company to mine," Donnie stated and Rae hesitated. Donnie laughed again, managing to sound even more hollow than the first time. "See?"

Rae then let loose a surprising snarl. "You son of a bitch! You're just doing this because you've found someone else! And now you're being an asshole by trying to put all the blame on me! Who the hell are you seeing?! Why is she better than me?!"

And there went that damned laugh again. Donnie climbed to her feet and kissed her wife's forehead. "No one's ever going to be better than you, sweetheart..." Tears slid down tan cheeks. "But, how can you love me if you would think for a minute I would do something like that to you? I love you and that's why I have to let you go."

A lump in her throat caught Rae's words and for a long second she watched Donnie walk to the door, only realizing when she got there that Donnie was leaving. "What about the baby...?" Rae asked in a whisper.

"I'm sorry, but when lil Donnie is born...I want the baby with me. I won't keep you from seeing Donnie, but I can't stand the thought of Audrey seeing my child more than me," Donnie explained.

"But, Donnie is my baby too!"

"I know," Donnie replied in a whisper and tried not to make anything out of her wife's words beyond what they were. *There's no double-meaning there because she doesn't love you anymore.*

Rae screamed for Donnie to come back while breaking down into soul-shattering sobs. She found herself reaching for the phone and dialed for a rescue without thinking. Not too long ago this number would have been Donnie's cell phone number; her fingers would have dialed automatically, even if they had been cut off. But, this time, Audrey's voice greeted her and her heart dropped.

"She left me..." Rae sobbed.

"I'll be right over!" Audrey assured her.

For some reasons, those words made Rae feel better and worse at the same time. *Was Donnie right? Am I in love with Audrey?*

Next time: Donnie tries to move on while Rae tries to cope with what just happened.

Shea K's Scrolls Index Page

~ Burned ~

by Shea K.

Disclaimer: Welcome to an original story by this lunatic. The story and the characters are mine. Do not use them without my permission. Also, any and all characters, events, and situations found in these stories are fictional. If there are any similarities between these things and real people, events, and situations, it is purely a coincidence.

General warning: This story will eventually involve a sexual relationship between two women. There will also be some extreme language.

Special thanks to my beta, Ken-zero.

9: Battered

"This is new," Tegan commented as she opened the door of her condo, letting Donnie come in. The green-eyed chef was dressed in her pajamas, which consisted of a crimson camisole blue roses designed into the material and short crimson mesh shorts.

"Me showing up at your door step in the middle of the night? Yeah, usually it's the other way around and you're stinking drunk," Donnie remarked, forcing out a smile that did not touch the deep sorrow in her eyes.

"This wouldn't be any fun if you're drunk. You wouldn't have your usual wit and charm. So, what happened?" Tegan asked with a sigh as she softly closed the apartment door. Focusing on her best friend, she ignored the anxious tremble gnawing at her stomach. It was not everyday that Donnie showed up at her door at night. Usually, Donnie could hold onto her emotions until the sun was at least up.

Donnie did not respond at first. She slipped off her shoes, as everyone did when entering Tegan's apartment since the carpet was the color of fresh snow. After that, she trudged into the living room, walking like the weight of the world was on her shoulders and crushing her. She then deposited herself on the pale pink leather sofa, dropping like a ton of bricks. She was careful not to bang her leg on the matching coffee table; it was a habit of hers. Tegan sat down on the armchair on the left side of the couch and just stared at her best friend. A long moment of silence reigned over the apartment.

"I told Rae it's over," Donnie reported in a small voice that she was not even sure was her own. She tried her best to ease the acidic burning in her guts and chest. She could feel it rising and wondered how long it would take to eat away at all that was her.

Emerald eyes blinked several times and a cream-colored forehead wrinkled in confusion. "Tonight?" Tegan asked curiously. It was the best thing she could think of while her brain was in shock.

"Not even an hour ago."

"Is it wise to leave the love of your life pregnant with your baby?" the redhead inquired with an arched eyebrow. It sounded stupid to her, but looking at her friend now, she was certain it was stupid for Donnie to stay in that situation. The taller woman looked like she marched through Hell and had to go back. Donnie did not deserve that.

"Wise? No. We both know outside of the kitchen I'm an idiot. After all, I let my wife cultivate a relationship with a woman I knew had a crush on her, but I couldn't do anything about it because I didn't want to hurt my wife's feelings. Rae seemed so happy to have a friend..." Donnie clutched her throat, which was now scorched by the acidic build-up in her body.

"Rae is in love with that Audrey woman? Yeah, I saw that coming," Tegan muttered to herself, shaking her head a little.

"Did you?" Donnie demanded, having the nerve to sound angry with her best friend, as if she expected Tegan to share such information with her.

"Donnie, you said that Rae spent every waking moment with Audrey. Hell, she blew off our kick-ass celebration banquet to stay with Audrey! You stopped wanting to go home because

Audrey was there. It didn't seem like Rae cared that you couldn't stand this woman, so I started thinking that Audrey's feelings must matter to her more than yours," Tegan reasoned.

And that was it, the dam broke and tears flooded out of Donnie's eyes. Hard sobs shook the master chef's strong body. The agonized wail that escaped her raw throat ripped right through her best friend.

"How could she do this to me?! I wanted to spend my life with her, give her everything, have a family with her! Instead, she brings this woman into our lives and torments me while I watch them fall in love! Calls me an asshole every time something goes wrong and she won't admit that this bitch is a demon woman! Instead, she just blames me for everything! What the fuck, man!"

Tegan sighed and rubbed the bridge of her nose. "Don, you know how I feel about your sweetie. I don't want to kick you while you're down. What're you going to do about the baby?"

Donnie shook her head and sniffled, water still cascading down her face. "I can't...I can't leave my baby with Audrey. I know in my gut that woman's a snake and I can't let her poison my baby."

"Yet you can let her poison your wife?" Tegan craned an eyebrow. That one did not make much sense to her. Not that much of this night was making sense to her right now.

"I don't know if she poisoned Rae. I know she wants to be more than friends with Rae. I don't think Rae realized it yet, but I'm sure she will now that I'm not there."

"Well, at least you don't think they were having an affair," the redhead pointed out, trying to interject some optimism into her friend's depressing life.

"Not a sexual one, but definitely an emotional one, which hurts just as much. How did I get so fucked up that my wife found that she couldn't depend on me? When did I screw up so badly that she lost faith in me?" Donnie begged to know, eyes searching the room desperately for answers. *How fucked up am I for Rae to go to Audrey for everything?!*

Tegan sighed and rubbed her face with both hands. "Don, sometimes, it's not your fault. Hell, a lot of the time it's not your fault. You know, maybe Rae just wasn't right for you. You've got..." she trailed off, not too sure if she should bring up her friend's issues or Rae's issues for that matter. It would feel like kicking Donnie when she was down.

"I'm wounded, right? Broken? I'm damaged and you think she is too. Rae's not. She's not broken or damaged in any way. Yes, she's had bad relationships in the past, but who hasn't? Other than that, she's pretty normal. She's a normal person, not fucked up like me. You know, her parents didn't even freak when she came out? Her family actually liked me..." Donnie could not help laughing. It sounded like her soul escaped her as soon as the sound did.

Tegan nodded, trying her best not to seem as solemn as she was feeling. "Right, you guys used her brother, right?"

A sniffled came before she could answer. "He was actually excited to do it. They're going to hate me for this. They entrusted Rae to me and I totally screwed up."

Tegan growled and slapped the arm of the chair with her palm. "Don, goddamn it, it wasn't your fault! She drifted from you. There's nothing you can do about that. You didn't drift from her. You were there for her-" she was immediately cut off.

"No, I was there for the fucking restaurant like always!" Donnie roared as she ripped herself from the couch and began pacing the floor. Hot, frustrated tears streamed down her face.

"Don, you have a responsibility to that place just like you do for Rae. She should understand that. Besides, you know what the hell you've been doing there these past few months."

Donnie put her hands on her head and shook her head. "Maybe I should've told her, but I doubt it would've mattered. I still would've been down there all those hours and she would've still had Audrey there. I couldn't win this fight, Tee. Not at the moment, not like I am right now. It won't go to waste, though." For the first time that night, her voice was strong, but only on that last sentence.

Tegan smiled. "Yeah, when my niece or nephew finally shows up, you'll have all the time in the world to spoil that kid."

"Even though I couldn't make it work with lil Donnie's mom, I'm going to do my best to make it work with my kid. I'll be damned if I'm going to turn into my father," Donnie vowed, making a tight fist. *No way in Hell I'll be like him!*

"You'd have to take a shit-load of bastard pills to turn into him," Tegan remarked and that got the desired laugh out of her friend. The shorter woman smiled. "Well, my friend, I can't say it'll be better in the morning, but the guestroom is all made up if you want to get some sleep."

"I guess whining to you all night about how I fucked up isn't a healthy way to spend the night."

"Not really since I don't think you fucked up, but if it makes you feel any better, I'll uncork one of my better bottles of wine and you can piss and moan all you like," Tegan answered.

"I'd rather you bring out the vodka."

"Vodka and crying coming up!"

Donnie chuckled a bit, but carried on sobbing. Tegan came through with vodka and a shot glass for Donnie, having a feeling that she was going to want hers straight. Tegan took hers with orange juice, but did not really drink anything. She just sat there for the whole night, listening to her best friend—a woman that she knew loved Rae so deeply and desperately—talk about how she had failed at marriage, how she was a screw-up like her mother always told her she was, how she was so close to being like her father that it scared the hell out of her, and how she was going to grow old with nothing to show for her life except the restaurant. Tegan was thankful when

Donnie finally passed out drunk because she was ready to cry right along with her best friend by then.

"I knew Rae would break your heart. I just didn't think a five-year relationship, three years of marriage, and a baby would be in the deal," Tegan muttered to herself as she covered Donnie with a thick blanket and left her friend to sleep on the couch. After that, the redhead retired to bed, hoping that somehow tomorrow would find her dear friend in much better spirits.

Tegan was generally a late riser...afternoon late. She never had to do anything until mid-afternoon anyway; great thing about working for her best friend was setting her own hours because Donnie knew when she was most productive. But, something was tugging her out of the bed while it was still morning.

"I smell breakfast..." Tegan muttered into her pillow and then a shot ripped through her. "I'll kill her if she's in my kitchen! I don't give a damn if the Pope dumped her for another woman!" she declared seriously, flinging her covers off of her body and charging out of her room.

She stopped in her tracks when the kitchen came into view. There was something about the way that Donnie was moving while cooking that told Tegan that she needed to leave things be. Just the aura coming from her best friend radiated something better than the vibes from last night. The kitchen was medicine for Donnie right now, so Tegan was going to let her cook her little heart out.

"What's for breakfast?" the redhead asked curiously as she pulled up a chair to the peninsula counter-top that separated the kitchen from the living room.

"French toast-" Donnie started to say, but was cut off.

"Shut up, I don't need to know any more than that. I love your French toast! I don't know what's in that batter you make it with, but just pile them in front of me!" Tegan declared with a giant grin.

Donnie did as ordered and they pigged out on a breakfast that would have easily fed a family of six. They collapsed on the living room afterward. Tegan chuckled a bit and Donnie smiled.

"You know, not counting a couple of days ago, this is the first time I've made breakfast in a regular kitchen in like four years. I gave up my kitchen to Rae..." Donnie said, resting her back against the couch. She was sitting on the floor.

"Wow. Take my heart, my money, my car, but leave me my kitchen!" Tegan mock-cried, playfully throwing her hands out as if she was wounded. But, seriously, to her, her kitchen was the most sacred room in her house and she knew the same could be said for Donnie. The kitchen was their sanctuary, their own little world to get away from the rest of the planet. It said a lot to her that Donnie would give up that holy space.

"She was the first woman that ever cooked for me several days in a row. Other women, they'd cook every once and a while if I went to their homes, but they never really liked that once they found where I lived. I wouldn't let anyone else in my kitchen. God, most of them, I would've rather they use my toothbrush to scrub the toilet than let them in my kitchen, but it wasn't like that with Rae." Donnie smiled brightly, obviously lost in a memory.

Tegan smiled a bit too and chuckled a little. "She just stormed in and took over your kitchen, didn't she? I can see her, being all short and skinny, threatening you with a mixing bowl to stay your ass out of there while she makes you dinner."

"That's almost what happened, but it was a tablespoon! I had it covered in gold and gave it to her on our six-month anniversary. She used it to pop my hand whenever I tried to eat anything while she was making it..." Donnie laughed.

Giggles from Tegan joined in. "I bet you had split knuckles on nights she made chocolate cake."

"Sometimes, it was best to just leave me and the batter in peace..." Tears started to build and flow out of the corners of her eyes. "I love her so much. Why doesn't she want me more, Tee? I gave her my kitchen, my heart, my baby! What does she want from me?!"

Tegan sighed and crawled over to her friend. She pulled Donnie to her and cradled the taller woman against her chest. Donnie wept into her collarbone, bawling as if she was in terrible agony. Tegan rubbed her back, knowing that it was not really helping. Time was going to be the only thing to truly heal Donnie's lacerated soul.

Rae could not get out of bed for a few days, unable to believe that Donnie actually left her. She tried calling Donnie's cell phone, wanting to clear things up, but it went right to voicemail. She tried the restaurant and the café, but apparently Donnie had not been in for days. Rae did not buy it, figuring that Donnie just did not want to talk to her.

Audrey was there, bringing her food and taking care of her. Rae did not talk much at first while Audrey tried convincing Rae that everything would be okay and she was better off without Donnie. She made a point to count off Donnie's flaws almost hourly. Rae listened sometimes and other times just tuned her friend out.

Eventually, Rae had to get up, if only to change the position of her stomach. She cleaned up and made her way downstairs. She found Audrey in the kitchen, working on making sandwiches for lunch. The redhead served the sandwiches with a smile and Rae accepted with an attempt at a smile.

"Thanks for sticking by me through this," Rae said in a quiet tone, eyes focused more on her sandwich than anything else.

"No problem. I like being by your side. I'm happy all of this stress didn't mess up your pregnancy or anything. Can't shocks like that force labor?" Audrey asked, putting a hand on Rae's forearm to offer some comfort.

"Donnie wasn't trying to hurt the baby."

"No, only you. So, did she tell you who her other woman is?" the redhead inquired with some bite in her tone.

Rae appeared baffled for a moment, pulling away from Audrey's touch. "Excuse me?"

"I figured she left you to be with her other woman. What other reason does she have to walk out on someone like you? Unless of course she's just some kind of idiot," Audrey pointed out, throwing her hands up a little. Of course, she did think that Donnie was some kind of idiot. An idiot that did not deserve Rae.

The pregnant woman forced out a half-smile and was tempted to tell Audrey why Donnie left her, but she was not ready to travel down that road. She also did not want to say that she did not think that Donnie had another woman on the side. Audrey would end up scolding her for being naïve and such, which she did not want to put up with.

"Donnie likes to say she's stupid in anything that doesn't involve food or business," Rae commented. *I never thought it was true until recently.* Donnie had to be stupid to think that she loved her friend instead of her spouse.

"You have to be stupid to leave your wife on her last month of pregnancy. What an inconsiderate jerk!" Audrey huffed, a scowl marring her features.

"Donnie's not a jerk. She just gets ahead of herself sometime." *This time at a very bad time.*

"So far ahead that she wants a divorce? Fucking bitch, hurting you like this," Audrey pressed.

Rae sighed and decided to eat as an excuse to stop talking. She kept her eyes on the table, not wanting to see this woman who despised her Donnie so much. This woman that her Donnie swore she loved, swore that she was in love with. She might be able to concede that she loved Audrey, but she was certain that she was not *in love* with Audrey.

"Do you want to do something today?" Audrey asked after several minutes of silence.

"You know, I'm fine by myself now. You don't have to wait on me hand and foot," Rae replied.

"I want to wait on you hand and foot. I want to help you out of all of this. I want to be there for you," Audrey said with a smile.

Rae smiled back. "Thanks. I could use a friend through this."

The redhead's smile tensed ever-so slightly. "Glad I could be here for you."

After eating breakfast, they relaxed in the living room. Everything was calm until the bell rang. Rae was about to get up to get the door, but Audrey smiled at her and waved her off. Audrey climbed to her feet from the sofa and went to the front door.

"Who is it?" Audrey called.

There was a pause for a second. "Tegan," the redheaded chef answered. She wondered who in the world was answering her friend's front door.

"Is there someone you want to see?"

"Yeah, the woman who lives here," Tegan remarked, deciding to let herself in. She had keys to the house, after all, and the okay to use them whenever she wanted.

Audrey backed up as the door swung open and Tegan stepped inside. Green eyes locked with blue ones and glared so hard at Audrey that the shorter woman was frozen in place for a few seconds. Tegan then made her way to the living room while the other redhead was glued to the floor.

"Hey, wait a minute!" Audrey huffed, whipping around to grab Tegan before she was too far away. Unfortunately, she missed on the first attempt.

"Tegan! Oh my god, how is Donnie? Is she all right? She won't answer my calls!" Rae cried as soon as she noticed the tall chef. She wanted to get up and run to Tegan, pull at her to find out information about Donnie, but she could not move quick enough to do that. Her eyes did just fine at conveying those desires, though.

"Calm down, Rae! Donnie told me you're not supposed to be worked up like that," Tegan urged the smaller woman.

"How am I supposed to calm down when my wife leaves me while I'm fucking eight months pregnant?! Who is Donnie fucking, Tegan?! Tell me!" Rae demanded, pushing herself up from the couch to now, wanting to get in Tegan's face as much as possible at the moment. Anger driving her, she stood up and made her way to the chef.

Tegan gasped and gaped at the shorter woman for a second. "You can't possibly tell me that you think Donnie would actually cheat on you. You are as fucking loopy as I thought. You've got a lot of nerve accusing her too while you're shackled up in here with Miss Pit Viper," the chef remarked, nodding toward the other redhead in the room.

Rae snarled. "She's helping me because my wife walked out on while I'm eight months pregnant!"

"I'm sorry for Donnie's bad timing. She's an idiot for that, but she couldn't take it anymore, Rae. Donnie's in serious pain, I'm talking deep-down, can't-move-doesn't-want-to-move pain. The only time she gets off the couch is to use the bathroom. I actually had to force her to eat before I left to come here! Can you believe that?! She wasn't even eating on her own! The reason she's not answering your calls has nothing to do with you. She lost her cell phone a couple of days ago. We know it's somewhere in my house since she hasn't left there, but the battery probably died. If you want to talk to her, just call my house. I promise you, she'll pick up," Tegan explained.

"That's convenient," Audrey snapped, glaring at the chef as if trying to kill Tegan with her gaze.

"Oh, wow, you are a bitch," Tegan quipped, giving the other redhead a glance, but nothing more. She turned her attention back to Rae. "Look, call Donnie. Maybe you can talk her into taking a shower. I've been tempted to just turn a hose on her. I'm going to go upstairs and get her a change of clothes because that girl had mushrooms growing on her now."

Rae practically dived at the phone while Tegan marched upstairs. Audrey watched Tegan go and then watched Rae dial the number that she obviously knew off the top of her head. Audrey was tempted to follow Tegan, but decided to stay there with Rae.

"Baby?" Rae asked with hope in her voice, speaking into the phone.

"Rae? Sweetie, you okay?" Donnie inquired in a groggy voice. It sounded like she had been gargling with granite stones.

"Come home, come home, come home," Rae begged, tears gathering her eyes.

There was a long moment of silence, as if Donnie was contemplating the plea. "Is Audrey there?" she asked.

"She's just my friend!"

"Uh...how's lil Donnie?" the chef inquired, purposely changing the subject. She had no plans to go anywhere if Rae was still around Audrey.

"Fine...but, wanting her momma to come home..."

"I can't. I just...I can't. Now, baby, I'm going to get in contact with my lawyer sometime this week. You don't have to worry about anything. You can have the house and keep your car. I promise I'll give you a good allowance-"

"How can you be so calm about this?! You're throwing away three years of marriage for nothing! God, you're just like every other spoiled brat rich kid I've ever dated! Everything has to go your way and as soon as it doesn't you run away onto your next toy!"

Donnie did not seem to hear any of that because she continued on without missing a beat. "I'll make sure you can live well. But, like I told you before, I will seek custody for Donnie. I need my baby to be close to me."

"She's my baby too!"

"Goodbye, Rae." Donnie did not wait for a response and hung up.

"Donnie!" Rae hollered, even though she knew that her wife was gone. She broke down into sobs, which got Audrey to rush to her side. Audrey wrapped her in a warmth, protective embrace.

"It's okay, it's okay. Donnie's just an idiot. She doesn't know what she's leaving behind," Audrey cooed, gently rubbing Rae's head and shoulders. Rae curled into Audrey's body, hoping to hide from the world.

Tegan wandered downstairs some minutes later with a suitcase and took in the scene on the couch. She frowned tightly, wondering if these were the types of things that Donnie used to come home to. If that was the case, she could see why Donnie left. She cleared her throat as she entered the living room. Rae picked her head up, but did not move from where she was and Audrey remained just as she was.

"I didn't get much of Donnie's stuff, but I got enough to last her for the week, especially if she's just going to stew in her clothes for days on end. If I get her out of the house, I'll call you and let you know. Until we figure out where her cell phone is, just call mine or my house," Tegan said.

"She's serious... isn't she?" Rae asked in a quiet tone.

"She has to be. She doesn't have many choices from what I can tell, Rae," Tegan answered, glancing between the two. She could see how even if they were not involved sexually, they were definitely involved emotionally. And part of her understood how that was so much worse than if they were having sex. There was an intimacy there that was something much more than friends. It was something way beyond physical pleasure.

"She could come home and discuss this like a rational adult!" Rae pointed out.

Tegan shrugged. "There's nothing to discuss if you're not in love with her anymore. All you're doing is making things worse on her."

"Oh, so now you're going to tell me who I'm in love with?" Rae snapped. Her face was turning a bright red as her emotions raged on. "What the fuck do you know about being in love? You go through men like socks!"

"I'm not here for this. I'm sure Donnie will arrange for her stuff to get picked up. Bye, Rae, enjoy living it up on Donnie's expense," Tegan retorted brusquely before storming out of the house.

"Bitch," Audrey spat, referring to the woman that just left. "Who the hell was that anyway?"

"That's Tegan, Donnie's best friend. They've known each other forever as far as I know."

"And Donnie just let's that bitch talk to you any way that she wants?" Audrey huffed.

Rae did not respond, not wanting to think about Donnie right now, but she could not help it. Donnie never would have let Tegan talk to her harshly if she was around. After all of these years, Tegan would not have even thought to say something bad to her if Donnie was around. She sighed and bowed her head, the person that protected her from the cold, cruel world was gone and was lashing out at her worse than the world ever could.

"How the hell did you find an apartment this fast?" Tegan asked in disbelief as she walked into the totally unfurnished apartment that Donnie moved into. It was not that far from her own condo.

"Simple, the rent is ridiculous," Donnie replied with a shrug.

"Can you even afford this considering you're going to give Rae your arm and leg as a monthly allowance?" Tegan asked, walking into the front of the apartment and taking a long look around. The place embodied everything that her friend was now, cold, dark, and empty.

"Don't worry about what I'm doing with Rae..." Donnie unceremoniously dropped down onto the hard tile. Tegan winced when her friend hit the floor, but Donnie did not even make a noise.

There was silence for a moment before Tegan found her voice to start up the conversation again. "Well, at least you're having papers drawn up. You're really going for custody, right?"

Donnie nodded. "I have to. I just...I..."

"You don't need to explain, Don. I think that Audrey bitch is living with Rae. I went to go pick up some more of your stuff and she was there again."

"I know...I've driven by there a few times this week..."

"Donnie! That's not healthy!" Tegan scolded the taller woman.

"I get worried about Rae! It's close to time for the baby to come and she hasn't called me much, so I don't know what to think! I want to be close to her, but every fucking time I go by the house, I see that fucking car! She's there every fucking day, every fucking second! She answers the phone when I call and I know she listens to my conversations with Rae...but, Rae let's her is what hurts the most."

Tegan arched an eyebrow. "That hurts the most? I would think the fact that the bitch stealing Rae hurts the most."

"Before I accepted that Rae was now in love with this woman...when she was just Rae's best friend, Rae would just let Audrey stand there while I wanted to have a serious conversation. She actually expected me to talk in front of Audrey. She cried in this woman's arms in front of me! Ran from me like I was the villain and Audrey was her savior. She needed Audrey then, not me. She still needs Audrey..."

"Don, stop thinking about it or you'll end up crying again," Tegan cautioned her friend. "Hey, let's go out and buy you some furniture, take your mind off of things."

Donnie would usually argue over something like that, but she knew that she needed a distraction. She allowed Tegan to drag her out of the apartment. This would become a habit over the next week with Tegan yanking Donnie around to keep her mind off of her soon-to-be ex-wife.

Rae was washing dishes since Audrey had cooked dinner for them. She wanted to feel useful. While she was scrubbing a plate, she suddenly went completely still as the front of her dress, just underneath her stomach was soaked.

"Oh, god..." Rae muttered, not believing that her water just broke. The first thing that her brain wanted to do was scream for Donnie, but she quickly remembered that Donnie was no longer with her. "Audrey!" she cried out and then suddenly a jolt of pain shot through her. She put her hand on her stomach and the other on the counter to help keep herself from falling down.

The redhead charged into the kitchen. "What, what's wrong?"

"The baby's coming and it hurts!" Rae reported with tears building in her eyes. *Oh, god, help me if I lose Donnie's baby! Please, don't let me lose my baby!*

10: Fracture

The sterile smell of the hospital was enough to send Rae into a panic, but she was there already. Agony rippled through her petite frame, originating in a very precious space-her belly. She was in labor, she knew, but she doubted it was supposed to hurt as much as it did. Fear was the only emotion touching the pain, adding to it. She felt anxious and alone, even though her best friend was at her side. It just did not seem like her best friend was there. Something was missing, causing a hollowness to open in her and start eating away at her. It was like she was losing everything every moment, confusing and frightful, making her want to tear at the bed and flee from the hospital. But, the intense trepidation also kept her anchored in place because she was scared that if she did anything aside for lie there, then she would lose lil Donnie.

Tears came easy, pouring down her shattered chocolate eyes like tragic storms. They fell from sheer distress and the underlying sensation of being abandoned. They fell from passionate desire to have the one person that made her feel safe by her side. They fell because she felt like her baby was being punished along with her for something that she was not even aware of. The whole situation felt like it was strangling her, like being buried alive, causing even more tears.

"Audrey, please call Donnie. Tell her I'm having the baby, tell her...I think something's wrong..." Rae pled from her hospital bed. She held in a growl from another jolt of pain ripped through her. A shaking hand, clutching a cell phone for dear life, shot out at Audrey.

"I will. You'll be okay, though," Audrey firmly promised, taking the cell phone. She stepped out of the room, knowing that she was not supposed to use the phone in the hospital. After a few minutes, she came back into the room. "She's not picking up," the redhead informed her friend.

"What? Try again! She might be in a meeting with her staff!" Rae said, another growl escaping her. Tossing her head back, more agony sliced through her petite form. "Keep trying!" she begged, throwing her arm over her eyes, attempting to halt her weeping.

Audrey was ushered out of the room by a nurse when Rae's condition seemed to get worse. "She's going to be all right?" the redhead begged to know as the nurse put her out of the room.

"She'll be fine, but there are complications with the baby. If you let us work, everything'll be fine," the nurse promised Audrey.

"Just keep calling Donnie!" Rae hollered, voice cracking under the stress and pain of the day. It was clear from her tone that she was still crying. A hacking cough escaped her after her yell.

Audrey nodded to show that she would obey. Rae was wheeled into an operating room, going by a very familiar form that she could not notice because of the stabbing torment tearing through her small body. The form happened to be Spain.

"What the hell...? Rae's here...so, she's probably having the baby. Where's Donnie then?" Spain wondered aloud, scanning the halls for her good friend. Her brow wrinkled when she did not spot the chef. She found it hard to believe that Donnie was not there, no matter what happened between Donnie and Rae.

Spain was painfully aware of the circumstances that Donnie and Rae were going through. It was impossible for her not to be after seeing Donnie a few times in the past month. The sight was so heartbreaking. The restaurant owner was definitely a broken woman, looking like her entire world was destroyed and set aflame right in front of her. Her usually bright hazel eyes had dimmed and it was clear that her soul was splintered, perhaps beyond repair. Donnie was a miserable-looking creature and could not disguise it, did not try to disguise it. The sight alone was enough to make her and French vow to speak to each other about any new people in their lives, so they would not end up like Donnie and Rae had.

Despite everything, Donnie was way too happy to be so close to becoming a parent to miss Rae having the baby. Spain did not even have to take into account that she knew Donnie was hopeless in love with Rae, in spite of everything that happened; that alone would have been enough to drag the hazel-eyed woman to the hospital. So, not seeing Donnie around or close to Rae was beyond weird to the doctor.

Spain walked over to the nurse's station, where French was collecting a chart. "Hey, French, you seen Donnie around here by any chance? I'd figure she'd be climbing the walls and making a scene," the doctor commented, still searching the area with her eyes. She dared to consider that Donnie might be somewhere being calm and collected and that was why she could not find the chef.

French's mouth curled up and she put a thoughtful finger to her chin. "Donnie? She's pretty hard to miss, even without the drama, so no, I haven't seen her. Why'd you ask?" she inquired curiously.

"Because Rae just got wheeled into an OR and I'm pretty sure she's having the baby. Her face didn't make it seem like she was enjoying the experience either. I know Donnie's not looking to start off a relationship with her little clone by missing the big day and I know that no matter what Rae's put her through, she'd be there for Rae in case something went wrong, God forbid," Spain pointed out.

French gasped and put her hand over her mouth for a moment to compose herself. "You don't think Rae didn't tell her, do you?" she asked with a wide-eyed, panicked expression on her face. She grabbed her girlfriend's muscular arm and clung to it for dear life, as if she was the one going through all of the drama.

"No, Rae isn't like that. She's a little confused right now maybe, but she damn sure isn't evil. She knows how much this baby means to Donnie," the tall woman reasoned.

"Then get on the phone and find out where the hell Donnie is!" French huffed, pushing her mate toward the phone at the desk.

"All right, all right, don't push me, woman," Spain joked, grabbing the phone with her free hand. French was not going to be letting go of the other limb until it was absolutely necessary. Spain quickly dialed her friend's cell phone number.

"Bonaventure here," Donnie answered her phone semi-formally since she did recognize the number calling her.

"Donnie, where the hell are you? Your wife was brought into the hospital to give birth to your child and you don't even have the decency to show up?" Spain inquired, pretending to bark on her friend.

"Wai...what?" Donnie asked and the sound of items crashing to the floor echoed through the phone.

Spain's brow creased because of the commotion. "Donnie, what was that noise?" she inquired suspiciously, thinking that Donnie knocked something over or dropped several objects from shock. This was not the reaction she was looking for from her friend.

"Nothing. I tripped a bit because it sounded like you said Rae's in labor," the chef answered in a shaky voice, forcing out a laugh to cover up her anxiety.

Spain gulped, knowing that she just delivered bad news and had to continue on. "She is. And I think she's been here a while."

"Oh, god, oh, god, oh, god. Okay, Spain, if you can, just stay with her until I get there! I'm not that far from the hospital! I'll be there in ten minutes, just stay with her, please!" Donnie begged and she disconnected the call, so it was not like the doctor could argue.

Spain gawked incredulously at the phone. "So, apparently, I'm in charge of watching Rae. Do you think you can keep an eye and ear out for Don? You know she'll come here like a hurricane now that she knows her clone is about to be born into the world."

"No problem. I just need to deliver this chart and I should be free to wander around for a little while," French answered.

Spain nodded and French finally returned her arm to her. They broke apart and went separate ways. Spain was thankful that she did not have anything to do as far as work went because she did not want Rae to go through things alone, even if Donnie was on her way. She made her way into the OR, making sure to stay out of the way. She could tell there were difficulties, but she did not ask about them at the moment. She was going to be as professional as possible, even if the person on the table was a good friend of hers.

The titan doctor watched as a cesarean was performed on Rae and she could not help wondering what happened. As far as she knew, Rae had a fairly normal pregnancy. Donnie never reported anything negative about the baby. So, based on that, Spain assumed that Rae would have a normal labor, but apparently that was not in the cards. After a while, she wondered where Donnie was since ten minutes past a long time ago and then she got a page. She glanced down at the numbers and a code that let her know the page was from French. She guessed it was important since French knew what she was supposed to be doing. She was about to walk off to find out what French wanted, but stayed put when she heard the sound of a baby's cries fill the room.

"Donnie..." Rae whispered as tears flowed down her face.

Donnie, you worthless jackass. I don't give a shit what she did. You should be here for this, you damned bastard, Spain growled to herself, making a fist. The desire to punch something was great, but only for a brief second. She was all too aware that she had better things to do with her time than punch a wall. Besides, she made her living with her hands and made other people thanks to her hands. Damaging her hand would not be a wise move.

The tall doctor decided to stick close to Rae, wanting to give her support. Rae smiled softly when she saw the familiar face, even though she thought that face was someone that sided with Donnie through out their whole mess. Spain took Rae's hand as soon as she could and smiled down at her, quietly assuring her that everything would be all right.

"Sorry about this whole thing," Spain whispered. Her eyes apologized more than her words did.

"Donnie...Donnie never came..." Rae cried, her head swaying a bit. She wanted to run, hide, and curl up into a tight ball. Anything to keep away the knowledge that Donnie totally abandoned her.

"She's on her way," Spain promised.

"She didn't answer...when I called..." Rae's tears flowed harder. Her throat felt dry and her insides felt like they turned to ashes.

Spain growled again, turning away for a moment to hide her anger from the emotionally drained woman. Thankfully, before she tensed to the point that Rae would have noticed something was wrong with her, Rae was taken back to her room. Spain followed, frowning so deeply that it looked like she might split her face open with tension.

I'll kill Donnie when I see her. Simple as that. We're in a hospital, I can just inject her with something and kill her. I don't give a shit what Rae did to her! Rae should not be going through this alone, scared and hurt! Spain screamed in her head.

The giant doctor was so wrapped up in her own head that she almost ran her girlfriend over. She stopped only because French pushed her in the stomach. She cast her gaze downward to see her lover glaring up at her.

"Why didn't you return my page?" French demanded to know.

"Because I was staying by Rae. She's scared and that fucking useless mate of hers is nowhere to be found!" Spain pointed out in a heated tone.

French frowned and reached out, pinching her girlfriend. Spain yelped and quickly put her hand over the injured space on her forearm. She swallowed nervously as she met the narrowed eyes of the small nurse.

"Well, you big idiot, if you returned my page, you'd have found out that Donnie's far from useless and she's causing a huge fuss in the emergency room!" French informed the taller woman.

Spain blinked hard. "Wait, what?"

The petite nurse snorted and folded her arms across her chest. "She got into a car accident on the way here. Some guy hit her," French reported.

"What!" Spain bent down and grabbed her mate by her shoulders. "Is she okay?!" she begged to know, shaking her lover just a little.

French put her hands on her girlfriend's arms and gently massaged her left bicep to calm her down. "Fine enough to be causing grief down there. You're better with her when she's like this than I am and I wanted you down there to help her get through this scary time. So, go down there. She should be done getting stitched up and everything," the small woman explained.

"She only needed stitches?" the doctor asked to be sure.

"Stitches and she'll probably be on a crutch for a few days. She sprained her ankle and knee on her left leg, but other than that, she's just screaming about how she needs to get to her wife and baby, so you need to go save the poor intern dealing with her."

Spain was off to do her next good deed for the day and to find out the story of how Donnie ended up getting hit by a car. She found the woman in question trying to pull away from the intern that was left to deal with "the most difficult woman in the ER." Spain shook her head, watching Donnie scream at the intern while pulling away to avoid getting stitches in her arm. The intern was attempting to gently tug the injured limb back to him, but Donnie was putting up a hell of a resistance to him. Spain figured that she better step in before Donnie actually punched the guy.

"How about you let me do this?" Spain suggested, speaking to the intern while patting him on the shoulder in an encouraging and friendly manner.

"Thank you, Spain! Tell this moron to let me go, so I can get to Rae!" Donnie hollered, glaring at the intern with hatred in her eyes.

"She doesn't have a concession or anything, does she?" Spain asked the young doctor.

"Possibly a mild one, but she hasn't been exactly cooperative to let us really find out," he answered, throwing his hands up in defeat.

"It's probably nothing. She's hardheaded, after all," Spain remarked and she dismissed the intern with a wave of her hand. She took over stitching up her friend and decided to start talking before Donnie started yelling again. "Let me fix you up before you go see your wife and daughter. If Rae sees you all messed up, it'll just panic her more," the doctor pointed out.

Donnie bowed her head and sighed. "You're right."

"What happened?" Spain asked, eyeing the deep gash in her friend's arm.

"Some punk kid had one too many beers. He clipped the back end of my car and sent me skidding. I was able to slow down enough not to get killed, but couldn't regain control of my car until it hit a pole. I got jerked around pretty good. I'm not sure what cut me up," Donnie recounted the tale as if it was nothing. She did not care about her accident. She wanted to get to her wife and child-now.

Spain nodded. "How's that knee feeling?"

A snort came before the response. "Hurts like fuck, but I don't care about that. Rae had the baby already, didn't she?" Her voice cracked and she had to swallow down a lump in her throat.

It was Spain's turn to look down and her voice was quiet when she answered. "She did. She had to get a c-section. She was really scared about the baby, but she's fine. Oh, you have a beautiful daughter with a full head of feathery black hair and smooth peanut butter skin."

Tiny water droplets dampened Donnie's bloody shirt. "...She didn't call me...she didn't want me here...?"

Spain's head popped up and she stared her friend dead in the eye. "No, she wants you here. She's been crying for you the whole time. I don't know what happened because she said she called, but you didn't answer."

"My cell never..." Donnie reached into her pocket with her good hand and pulled out her phone. She went through all of her calls. "She didn't call me. Her number's not here. What the hell?" Her mouth twisted up a little, total bewildered from what she was not finding.

"I don't know. This sounds like something you two have to work out. Did you get a crutch and everything?" Spain asked.

"Yeah, I was pretty much done by the time you got here. I've been down here for almost an hour thanks to that idiot kid. You know the little bastard kept driving too until he rammed the back of a truck with the front of his car," Donnie remarked, trying to laugh a bit to lighten the mood.

"I just hope he's in here somewhere and not on a slab in the morgue," Spain commented, looking around the emergency room.

"Nah, they brought him in a little while after me. Little idiot broke his leg from what I heard, but nothing else."

"Hopefully, he learned his lesson. Come on, let's get you up to your family."

My broken family, Donnie thought with a sigh. I'm such a fuck-up at life, just like my dad.

Spain helped walk Donnie upstairs, but did not take her to Rae's room first. Before that, she wanted to get Donnie into another shirt and thankfully she had a spare in her locker. Donnie was able to change into Spain's shirt, which was big on her, but she was still happy with it because she knew that her appearance would not frighten Rae.

"Maybe I shouldn't go in with the crutch..." Donnie muttered, glancing at the prop in question.

"You keep your ass on that crutch. You don't want to seriously mess up your leg," Spain ordered and slapped Donnie in the back of the head to make sure that message sank in.

Donnie's hand went up to hold her now sore dome. "Ow! Should you be hitting me if I might have a concussion?" the chef demanded.

"Do you think I care at this point? All this fucking drama for no reason. God, do you know how much you freaked me out today? First, I think you've abandoned your family and then French makes it sound like you died in a car accident. I'm getting too old for this shit," Spain huffed, folding her arms across her chest in a snit.

"Ah, thirty-two, so over the hill," Donnie scoffed, rolling her eyes.

"Just make sure you stay on that crutch and try to sit down and everything. Take it as easy as you can for a little while," Spain instructed her friend.

Donnie nodded to show that she understood and then they came to Rae's room. The chef paused and took a deep breath. Her stomach flipped and flopped while fear welled up inside of her. The last thing she needed to do was enter the room and see Rae in an embrace with Audrey or find out that she honestly as not wanted around. Her shaking hand gripped the doorknob and she twisted the doorknob. Her heart pounded, feeling like it was going to explode in her chest. *At least I'm already in the hospital.*

She pushed the door open and waited for her reality to shatter. Instead, a calm overcame her as she took in the sight of the room. Rae was lying in the bed, looking pale and overwrought. French was at her bedside, trying to comfort her, and French was the one that spotted Donnie at the door.

"Rae, check it out. Donnie finally showed up," French said with a smile.

"Donnie?" Rae turned to the door and a bright smile swept over her entire face. Her eyes seemed to sparkle and shine, seeing just her spouse. It did not even register to her that Donnie was using a crutch.

"Hey, sweetie," Donnie greeted the petite woman as she stepped deeper into the room.

French quickly made her exit, wanting to give the pair time alone. She quietly shut the door behind her and then went in search of Audrey. She had encountered Audrey earlier when she was going to Rae's room. She found the redhead trying to comfort Rae, but it obviously was not working, so she shooed Audrey away, making up some excuse about the patient needing rest. She knew that Audrey was "the other woman," so she wanted to make sure Audrey was nowhere around while Donnie was in the room. She decided to enlist the help of other nurses to help in her cause.

"What happened to you, Donnie?" Rae asked curiously as the chef took a seat next to her bedside. Chocolate eyes glanced at the crutch as Donnie propped it against her seat.

"A kid had a disagreement with my car. It's possible that his car was trying to mount mine from the back," Donnie answered with a shrug and a light chuckle, making sure to make it seem like no big deal. "I just have a sprained ankle and knee. It's nothing problematic. What about you? Have you seen our baby girl yet?" she asked with a giddy grin. She even bounced in her seat.

"I didn't get a chance yet. They're making sure she's stable. I don't know what happened, Donnie. I mean, everything seemed fine, but when she's ready to come, everything went wrong..." Rae said, shaking her head as tears welled up in her eyes again.

Donnie pulled up to the bed closer and grabbed Rae's hand, holding it tightly with both of hers. "Hey, everything's okay. Everything turned out fine. You're okay and we've got a baby girl. Hey, Spain said she's got your hair. I don't know what color her eyes are yet, but I hope they're a dark chocolate, just like yours," the chef said in a gentle tone before kissing Rae's fingers.

Rae smiled softly. "I hope she looks like you. I get the feeling she's going to act like you just from the difficult way she came into the world. We've got a wild child on our hands."

"You have to expect that from these kids named 'Donnie.' So, what full name were you planning to go for?" Donnie asked curiously.

"You don't want to repeat 'Donatella,' do you?" Rae countered with a teasing smile.

"Nope. It's not really a fun name to walk around with when you're a kid. I'm good enough with just Donnie. When we were picking names, you said you thought 'Donna' was cute, right?"

Rae nodded and smiled, looking like a cherub. "I like it."

"Donna it is. Donna Rae." Donnie declared.

Rae blinked hard. "Are you sure?"

"Positive. It was your courage that brought her into the world. Later on, when she's older and being crazy, we can tell her that she started out life that way. Plus, she's a part of both of us... it's only fair that her name reflect that."

Rae was ready to burst with joy. Her smile lit up the room. "I'm glad you feel that. I'm sorry you got into a car accident on the way over here. I know how much you wanted to be here when the baby was born."

"Some things can't be helped. I was driving like a maniac anyway. Who's to say if Spain hadn't called me earlier or later that I wouldn't have wrapped my car around that pole and hurt myself a lot more than just a little sprained ankle?" Donnie pointed out.

"Why didn't you answer when I called?" Rae inquired, voice slightly low.

"Rae, you never called me," Donnie answered evenly. "If you had, I would've been here in an instant. Why didn't you call me?" she asked curiously, still making sure to stay calm.

"Wait, you have the nerve to miss our daughter's birth and now you're blaming it on me?" Rae demanded, a frown rapidly conquering her once happy features. She yanked her hand away from the other woman's comforting grip.

"I just want to know why you didn't call me," Donnie stated through gritted teeth, making a fist and then releasing it.

"I asked Audrey to call you several times-" That was enough for Donnie to cut in right there.

"You trusted that bitch to call me?! What the fuck good does it do her to call me?" Donnie demanded, hitting the edge of the mattress with her palm. *How the hell can Rae be so stupid to think that Audrey would actually call me for something so important?!*

"What good does it do her not to call you? You expect me to believe that Audrey wouldn't call you just to be vindictive?" Rae countered in a harsh tone.

Donnie's entire demeanor froze over and turned to stone. She pushed her chair away from the bed and propped herself up on her crutch, standing as best she could. Her body shook, having nothing to do with the fact that she was using a crutch to stand. Hazel eyes locked onto Rae's petite form, glaring as wrathful tears limited her vision.

"You're going to take her side? Make me sound like the asshole? Make me seem like the bitch?" Donnie rushed over to the bed and put her hand in her pocket.

As she brought her hand up, yanking it upward, Rae flinched, not sure what Donnie was doing. The restaurant owner noticed the move and the tears in her eyes fell when she realized what Rae thought that she was going to do. She put her cell phone down in Rae's lap.

"I won't even touch you since you seem to think I'm capable of such evil as hitting you. Fine, I'm the bad guy. I'm the asshole. Go through the phone and you tell me where the fuck a call from Audrey is!" Donnie ordered with a furious expression. "The top call is Spain telling me you're in labor. There aren't any other unidentified numbers and you can see your fucking number didn't come up. So, you tell me where the fuck a call from Audrey came that my baby was on the way!" she demanded in a heated tone.

Rae flipped through the received calls and there was no sign of the call. "But...why would she...?" her voice trailed off as her wide eyes scanned the phone-and beyond possibly-for something. She was not sure what it was.

"Because she's a manipulative bitch who doesn't know when to fucking quit. I hope you two have a happy fucking life together since you seem to believe every fucking thing she tells you." Donnie snatched her phone back and did her best to storm out of the room on her crutch.

Rae's voice caught in her throat as she wanted to call out to her wife. She reached out, but that did not stop Donnie from fleeing. The chef almost knocked Spain over as she hastily escaped the room. Spain grunted, moving out of the way, knowing that Donnie would have plowed through her if she did not step out of the fleeing woman's path. The doctor noticed the tears oozing down her friend's face. She sighed for what felt like the millionth time that day.

"These two are really screwing up our image of the perfect couple," Spain grumbled to herself, scratching the side of her head. She sighed, wondering what she should do. She gathered her courage and ducked into the room, hoping that Rae was not crying...or screaming.

"Donnie?" Rae said with hope when the door opened again.

"Sorry, just me," Spain replied with a sheepish expression as she came in and shut the door behind him.

Rae sniffled and attempted to straighten herself out to look a little dignified. "Spain, what the hell is wrong with your friend? She keeps screaming at me for standing up for myself," she said, swallowing down a sob.

Spain sighed again and ran her fingers through her hair, forgetting that it was done in a ponytail. "Rae, I don't know the whole story here and I really only got Donnie's side. So, you tell me what happened from your perspective and I can have a better picture. Maybe an outsider to the whole thing might be a bit better for both of you."

"Why? You're just going to side with Donnie. She's the one that's your friend, after all! I don't have any friends anymore. I gave them all up because of Donnie. Just like I gave up my job for Donnie. I gave up everything for Donnie and the one time I get something for myself that makes me feel better she wants me to give it up!" Rae screeched in anger. She winced a bit, pain coursing through her from getting too worked up.

Spain noticed the flinch and decided that the best course of action would be for her to remain calm. "You mean Audrey?" she asked in a cool manner.

"She's the only friend I have and Donnie wants me to send her away just because they don't get along. I don't get along with Tegan, but I don't go around telling Donnie to get rid of her or that Donnie's in love with her just because they spend a lot of time together!"

Spain nodded sagely. "Now, not being a psychologist, but having seen one on TV a time or two, so I'll offer my two cents if you want it."

"Go ahead and tell me how right Donnie is to hate Audrey," Rae huffed, turning her nose up at Spain.

The doctor did not look very impressed. "Now, despite how much I think you still love Donnie, Donnie doesn't see it because you keep defending Audrey to her, picking Audrey over her from her perspective. She's whined about that enough. You don't see it that way. But, that could be

because Audrey is more than just a person to you from what I can tell from your screaming. For you, Audrey represents this life you think that Donnie took from you. Audrey is that independence that you let slip away when you got into a serious relationship with Donnie. But, I think you're remembering things wrong if you think Donnie 'took' those things from you, if you think Donnie 'took' your friends from you. At any time in your relationship did Donnie ever ask you to stop doing anything?"

Rae frowned, feeling as though she was being attacked by Spain. She answered anyway, "It was implied that I should be home more often, so I let my job go and my friends slip away because Donnie wanted me around more."

"But, if this example, where Donnie was able to tolerate Audrey's presence for as long as she did even though she clearly hates this woman, doesn't it show that she wants you to have friends?" Spain asked curiously.

"She was probably humoring me..." Rae huffed.

"I don't know where you've gotten this fucked up picture of Donnie from, but you need to get your act together before you let the best thing in your life get away...and the best thing in Donnie's life. You know how much she loves you and I can see it in your eyes how you love her, so why are you dragging this out? Just to prove you can and show you have control over your life? You've always had that," Spain stated.

"Donnie's the one pushing me away. I'm not the one that told her to leave-" Rae did not get to finish that sentence because the start of it made the good doctor lose her cool.

"It's not about telling! You know this bullshit with Audrey is driving Donnie up the wall, but you continue to side with Audrey instead of Donnie, so what the fuck is Donnie supposed to think?" Spain huffed.

Rae glared at Spain and the lecture was brought to an end as Audrey entered the room. The redhead glanced at Spain, taking in her white coat and nametag, so she could see that Spain was a doctor. Audrey walked over to Rae and kissed the side of her head.

"How're you feeling?" Audrey asked the new mother.

"Better than earlier. I'm glad you're back," Rae said, hugging the redhead to her. Spain shook her head and exited the room.

Donnie made her way to the nursery, wanting to see her daughter. She hoped the newborn was there since there were complications with the birth. She smiled when she saw the bassinet with the name "Bonaventure" underneath it. Her little girl-with a full head of black hair like Spain said-was sleeping, looking like such an angel. Donnie leaned against the viewing window.

"Sorry, Donna. I think that I've screwed up with your mommy enough where this divorce is going to be for real. It's okay. We both love you very much. We'll protect you with everything we've got. Still, I'm sorry for this. I wanted you to have a loving family that was together... Instead, I pushed your mommy away somehow. I don't know what I did and I don't know how I would've fixed things, but this was just my screw up. I'm sorry you're in the middle of it..."

"... You see, when I married your mommy, I thought it was going to be forever. I was so sure that she was the woman God made just for me, you know. She's got this fire in her that I don't think she's aware of. She walks around like she's scared of the world, but in truth, she could and would beat the hell out of the whole world if necessary. I know it's because a lot of women have hurt her in the past, but I thought I could heal her and be with her. But, I guess I've always just been the rebound woman. I want to be happy that she's strong now, to know I helped, but I'm just angry and sad and so many other things that I lost her and that you have a broken family. I really, really screwed..." Donnie's speech trailed off as a nurse came in and took Donna Rae Bonaventure.

Donnie suspected her baby was going to be with Rae. She shamelessly cried as she realized that she was going to miss her child's first feeding, just like she missed the birth of her little girl. Her whole world felt broken, her entire being felt cracked and crushed beyond repair. She did not know what to do about anything.

11: Cry

"Audrey, thank you for all the help these past few days," Rae said with a small, grateful smile as she and Audrey brought Donna home from the hospital. The baby was asleep in her car seat, mouth hanging open like Rae remembered Donnie's did when she was in a heavy sleep. This thought got a bigger smile out of the petite woman.

"Hey, I'm here for you. I told you that," Audrey answered with a warm smile of her own, putting her arm around the slender shoulders of her friend. Her fingers caressed small areas on Rae's arm.

"Thanks anyway," the new mother replied.

"You are just too precious," the redhead commented, still smiling with utter delight. Silently, she reveled in the feel of the small body so close to hers.

The words paused Rae for a second, but she did not say anything. They entered the house and went to the living room. The car seat, with the sleeping baby, was placed carefully on the coffee table. Donna yawned a bit, but remained asleep. Rae left the child where she was, not wanting to disturb her peaceful rest. She smiled down at her baby.

"I can't believe this little girl caused so much trouble," Rae commented, lightly dragging her index finger across the child's tan brow. That finger then traversed gently over thick, raven locks. She could not help making a little cooing noise at the napping child.

"She looks a lot like you," Audrey said, staring down at the child.

"I don't really think so. She looks like her mama, just wearing my hair," Rae remarked, smiling broadly. Images of Donnie's baby pictures sprang to her mind. The chef did not have nearly as much hair as Donna, but they did have the same chipmunk-cheeks, wide eyes, and rounded nose. With that thought in mind, she planned to put baby pictures of Donna next to baby pictures of Donnie when she got a free moment.

Audrey sighed and rolled her eyes. "We should put your bag away and then get something to eat. I'll make lunch for you, okay?"

Rae smiled again and nodded. "Sounds good. I'll put my bag away."

The pair broke away and Audrey went to make lunch, which she had done many times over the past month. She never made anything too extraordinary in the high-tech kitchen, but it never failed to amuse her that she was allowed somewhere that she knew for a fact Rae did not allow Donnie. She smiled as she worked on simple sandwiches, but then suddenly winced as a wail echoed through the entire house. She flinched as the sound shattered the peace and her idea that everything was going to go back to normal. She frowned as the noise persisted for a few seconds more than she liked. Suddenly, the crying was gone and her curiosity was won over. She went to go see what halted the bawling and poked her head out of the kitchen to see Rae sitting on the couch, nursing Donna and cooing to the suckling baby.

The image made her frown deepen. A heated flash in her sky blue eyes was missed by the other occupants of the house, who did not know that they were being watched. The aura of peace and adoration that surrounded the mother and daughter were nearly palpable to Audrey. It was something that she knew never existed between her and Rae, but damn, she wanted that. The detestable thought raced through her mind that Donnie could probably achieve or had achieved that peace and love with Rae, somehow, sometime. In fact, for a moment, the notion came to her that Donnie had that peace right now because Donna was Donnie as far as Rae was concerned. Quickly, she shook those ideas away. Turning around, Audrey retreated back into the kitchen to avoid being tormented by her brain.

Audrey returned to making lunch when a soothing melody reached her ears. She realized that Rae was singing, suspecting the new mother was crooning to the feeding child. The song was low, but sounded so sweet and touching. A mellow feeling washed over the redhead and relaxed her in a matter of seconds. A smile worked its way back onto her face while she made the sandwiches. By the time she was done with lunch, so was Donna. She gave Rae a plate with a sandwich, pickles, and fries on it. Rae smiled in appreciation.

"You've been a real rock through all of this," Rae said to Audrey before taking a big bite out of her sandwich. A satisfied groan escaped her throat as the simple, but delicious food touched her tongue.

"Well, someone has to take care of you and I'm happy it's me. You don't have to worry about anything. I'm here now and we'll be fine," Audrey proudly declared.

Audrey put her free arm around Rae's shoulders and they ate in silence. Rae did glance at the limb draped over her. She wondered again about what Donnie said, about her being in love with Audrey. She mentally insisted that was not true since she did not feel anything race through her when Audrey touched her, but then she realized how much she allowed Audrey to touch her.

Friends touch, Rae silently reminded herself. She did not think that there was anything wrong with her being comfortable with Audrey touching her, even though she generally disliked being touched so often. But, in the past, when she had close friends, they leaned on her and hugged her and things like that. It did not mean that she was in love with them. It just meant they were not total strangers or just acquaintances. They were friends and friends were supposed to be close. That reasoning helped her relax.

Audrey noticed that Rae settled into her touch. Mentally, she did a happy dance while an almost delirious smile worked its way onto her face. Her emotions clouded up her eyes and she forgot to eat. It was not until Rae moved away to put her plate in the sink that the redhead realized she had been lost in her own head for a while. She quickly finished off her sandwich, hoping to move onto another activity with Rae.

After lunch, they occupied their time with some Scrabble. They did not make it through a full game before Donna woke up, crying again. This time the newborn needed changing. Rae was on it with great haste, obviously diving into her role as a mommy wholeheartedly. Audrey left the room as soon as the game was paused, saying that she wanted something to drink. Blue eyes focused on the baby for a second, her mouth twisted a little in disgust as the diaper came off.

Rae chuckled a bit, guessing that diaper changing was not something that the redhead was going to volunteer for. She was happy to notice that Audrey did not seem to mind the breast-feeding since Audrey did not make up an excuse to leave when Donna got hungry again. Rae did not know what she would do if everything that baby did embarrassed her best friend after all.

The redhead tried her best not to stare while Rae fed the baby. She turned the television on to occupy her eyes while Donna finished her meal. Rae smiled down at the child, who looked very content. The new mother could not help leaning down and kissing her baby. Audrey tried not to turn her head to look at the pair, but she could not help it and for some reason she could not share the smile between mother and child. The blue-eyed woman could only frown.

She's holding Donnie... Audrey thought with a tight scowl that even made her eyes look tense.

Rae did not notice, enjoying being around Donna. The baby did not do much, yawning and blinking mostly now that she was full and clean. That was more than enough for Rae, who acted

like Donna moving was the greatest thing that she had ever witnessed. Not wanting to put Donna back down, the new mother rested the baby on her chest, staring down at Donna as if she was more fascinating than anything else in the world.

"Watch her yawn, Audrey. Her mouth curls up in a funny way, almost like Donnie's does when she yawns," Rae announced with a happy smile as the newborn yawned for the second time in a minute. The baby smacked her lips a little, which got a giggle out of her mother too. "Oh, god, her momma does that too right before she falls into a deep, coma-like sleep."

"Yeah, yeah, yeah," Audrey said, contempt almost finding its way into her voice. The emotion was at home in her eyes, but her friend was not paying her any mind to notice. "What should we have for dinner? You want me to make something?" the redhead offered to get the subject away from the baby.

"If you want."

Audrey got up while Rae continued on cooing over the baby, unaware of the tension coming off of Audrey. The redhead fumed as she stalked around the kitchen to find items to make dinner. *When am I going to get my time alone with Rae?! Damn it, I didn't expect the fucking kid to be Donnie junior or something! Shit!* Audrey continued to mentally huff while she put together a decent meal.

With dinner made, the adults ate while Donna amused herself by sucking on her pacifier. Rae decided to retire for the night when she was done with her food. She told her guest goodnight and then took the baby upstairs with her. Rae went into her bedroom and placed Donna down in the bassinet that was waiting by the bed. She rocked the bassinet a little and Donna smiled up at her.

"You're such an adorable little creature, Donnie. I guess I'll have to get my fill of you now before your mama decides to up and take you," Rae commented, reaching down to tickle the child. Donna giggled a bit and then sneezed. Rae smiled even from the tiny sneeze.

Audrey growled as she paced downstairs, as if she was trying to wear a path into the living room floor. She knew that she was welcome to stay the night, as she had spent many nights over the house in the past month. She had a lot of clothes in a guestroom as well as a few other knick-knacks from her home. She had informed Rae last month when Donnie left that she could stay over, just in case Rae needed anything. Rae agreed, mostly because she did not like the idea of staying in the huge house by herself.

In that month, Audrey had learned a few things about living in the big house, like there was a huge supply of very choice wine, not just in the kitchen, but in the basement. There was wine and other alcohol that she knew was very expensive and probably belonged to Donnie. She hoped one day that Donnie found out that she was taking everything from Donnie and slowly devouring it, including her stock of liquor. One of the reasons she drank it was because she was

sure it belonged to Donnie, this woman whose presence haunted her worse than any ghost. Drowning the phantom seemed logical, but then again, it always seemed logical to her, long before she even met Donnie.

It's like she's here twice now, Audrey thought as she went to go make herself a drink. "God, I need one of these after listening to all that damn crying."

She sighed, downing a glass of cognac and staring at the bottle. The burn did not make anything feel better and did not wash away the aura of the owner of the house. She frowned deeply, pouring herself another drink, almost wanting to empty the bottle in one sitting if only to spite Donnie somehow. She probably would empty to the bottle before the night was out. Things were not going the way that she wanted them to go.

"I did everything...gave her things Donnie never could...and yet..." Audrey snorted and downed that drink just as quickly as she had the first.

She had a couple more rounds before deciding it was time for her to go to bed. She staggered upstairs and turned down the wrong way if she was heading for her room. Instead, she went to master bedroom and peered inside, seeing Rae lying in bed and assuming that she was asleep. She then glanced over at the quiet bassinet by the bed and the tension in her face from before returned. A malicious glare fogged up her vision, narrowing it to one space and causing her to see red. Her top lip curled like an angry cat, promising death to its prey. Suddenly, she turned around and stumbled off back to her room, not noticing the movement in the bed.

Rae waited until she could not hear footsteps anymore and then got up from the bed to shut the door, going so far as to lock it. That was not the first time that she caught Audrey looking into her room since Audrey had been staying there. After first, she shook it off, thinking that Audrey was just being nice and checking on her...even when Audrey lingered out there for long minutes. But, right now, she knew that had not been a casual, friendly check like she thought the others were. The look on Audrey's face, even though it was somewhat veiled by the shadows, was hateful and it was cast toward her baby.

Shudders ran through Rae and a chill captured her spine. Donna started crying, which caught Rae's attention. She took the child into her arms and gently rocked Donna, whispering to the baby that "mommy's here." The child curled into her mother, seeking warmth and security. Donna fell back to sleep almost instantly, soothed by the sound of her mother's heartbeat and warm presence.

Rae held onto Donna that night because the look that Audrey gave the child stayed fresh in her mind. She watched Audrey closely the next day, wondering if she had imagined the expression last night or it was something more. She was almost ready to concede that she did imagine the whole thing, that the shadows from last night made Audrey look so ominous, but then Donna started crying.

While Rae went to comfort the baby, she noticed how Audrey was watching the child. There was no way for her to disguise it. Her sky blue eyes-eyes that Rae thought were cheerful and friendly

most of the time-were ablaze with intense hatred directed at the newborn. Rae's heart sped up as she picked Donna up and walked out of the living room.

"What's the matter with the baby?" Rae asked in a pouty tone, bouncing the wailing Donna in her arms. She glanced back at Audrey, seeing that the redhead was looking away with a stone-cold expression on her face.

Rae calmed the child down and fed her, so Donna was happy for the moment. The mother and child returned to the living room. Rae put the baby down in her car seat, which was still on the coffee table. The child smiled, liking the car seat more than any other item her mother had tried to place her since they came home. Rae did not say anything about the look, thinking it might just take a while for Audrey to get used to Donna, but after a few days of such looks, Rae actually started getting scared.

"Audrey, you know, maybe you should go home tonight," Rae suggested as they sat down for dinner one night. It had been a rather long week for her, keeping a close eye on Audrey whenever Donna got a little too noisy, and the week was not even over yet. The glares seemed to get more intense and each one was fouler than the last. Rae felt like she was going to be smothered by the heated dislike her friend was showing her child. She had taken to locking her bedroom door every night now and last night, she heard Audrey trying the doorknob, as if she was attempting to enter the room. The thought had frightened her like a horror movie and she stayed up the rest of the night, holding Donna, praying to God, and silently crying out for Donnie.

Audrey tilted her head, looking at Rae as if she was out of her mind. "What?" she asked as if she did not understand. A perplexed wrinkle creased her forehead as she tried to take in what she had just been told, but it was the hard look in her eyes that kept Rae quiet for a few long seconds.

Rae cleared her throat before continuing. "You don't have to stay here every night. I know that living with a newborn isn't something you signed on for, so you can go home every now and then. You don't need to keep an eye on me," she explained in a gentle, understanding tone, hoping it would get the angry fire out of her friend's gaze.

"What?" Audrey repeated with grit in her tone. Her body was getting tense, her grip around her fork almost turned her fingers the color of milk.

Rae's heart sped up a little, but she pressed on as diplomatically as she could. "I know you don't like that Donna cries so much. I think you'd get a better night's sleep at your own place."

"I'm not going anywhere," Audrey declared, not sounding at all like her usual friendly self. Instead, she sounded incensed and insulted, the nerve of Rae to try to make her leave!

Rae winced a bit and slumped in her seat. "It was just a suggestion." Her voice was quiet as her heart pumped furiously, not sure what to make of her friend's outburst.

"I'm not going anywhere. I'm going to stay by your side," Audrey replied, sounding like her usual self now. A smile worked its way onto her face, but it looked more creepy than anything else.

Rae smiled back, hoping that she did not look as uneasy as she felt. Donna started crying, which saved her from sitting there and fidgeting nervously. She rushed away from the table to get the baby, who was seated on the counter in her now-all-purpose car seat. Rae grabbed her and started shushing her while trying not to notice that she could feel Audrey glaring at the bawling child.

"Come on, baby, hush now," Rae cooed, walking out of the room with the child.

Audrey frowned and went to the cabinet that she knew held the wine. She cracked open a fresh bottle and poured herself a glass. She drank her wine while opening her mouth as little as possible because of how tense her face was. By the time the mother and daughter came back into the room, Audrey was done with her glass of wine and pouring another.

"You're drinking now?" Rae asked curiously.

"What, I can't have a drink every once and a while?" Audrey countered with a huff, stony expression set to conquer her features once again.

An inaudible gulp worked its way down Rae's throat. "It's fine."

"It's not like I'm a drunk or anything," the redhead continued on, sounding haughty and self-righteous for some reason.

"It's fine," Rae repeated with a forced smile. The uneasy feeling was now ever-present in her stomach, churning and whipping things inside of her.

Rae settled in, waiting to finish her food as quickly as possible and go to bedroom for the night. An overwhelming silence blanketed the room and Audrey put down her now empty wine glass. With her hand now unoccupied, she reached across the table and covered Rae's hand with her own. Rae flinched from the surprise contact, but Audrey did not move her hand and Rae did not think to pull away.

"Everything'll be okay. We're going to be okay," Audrey said softly and then she started running her fingers along Rae's knuckles.

"I'm sure we will," Rae said, trying to ease her hand away without making it totally obvious. Audrey caught her before she could completely retreat.

"What's wrong? It's not like you have to worry about your wife coming in. Donnie's gone for good." The smirk on the redhead's face was almost vicious.

Rae sighed and put her hand down. "I know."

"Then it's okay." Audrey tightly clutched Rae's hand.

Rae felt like she was going to throw up and she was not sure why. She chalked it up to being upset over the fact that she knew that Donnie was gone and never coming back, but she knew that was only part of it. She dropped her fork and put her hand over her mouth.

"Sorry, I think I'm going to be sick," Rae muttered as she hopped out of her chair. She wanted to rush off because she was certain that she was going to throw up, but she subconsciously went to Donna first. She took the baby with her to the bathroom.

Audrey poured herself another glass of wine. The liquid did not put out the fire burning in her. Instead, it fueled it and the fire begged for more. She decided to give into that since it took Rae quite a while to return.

"Sorry about that. I hope I'm not getting a cold," Rae said as she sat back down. She knew that she was not getting a virus, but she figured that she might get sick again depending on what caused that sensation the first time.

"I hope not either," Audrey replied. "But, I would take care of you, if you did." She smiled warmly.

"I'm sure you would."

"I bet Donnie never took care of you when you got sick. Someone like her probably just left you in bed and told you to get over it."

"Actually-" Rae tried to interject, but her friend continued on.

"Donnie doesn't even care. I mean, she hasn't even called here about the baby. She's a bitch and you're lucky she's gone. Now you have me," the redhead proudly proclaimed.

Rae swallowed hard and decided against telling Audrey that Donnie actually called several times a day. It was just that Donnie never called the house; she called Rae's cell phone. She also refused to talk until Rae assured her that there was no one in the room with her that could comprehend what they were speaking about. At first, Rae thought it was silly and Donnie was just overreacting to Audrey's presence, but now...she was not so sure.

The deep apprehensive feeling only grew as time went on. Rae was starting to notice that Audrey was drinking much more often and sent a text message to Donnie saying as much because it worried her. Donnie's response had asked if she wanted Donnie to do anything. She sighed while writing back: it's probably nothing; don't worry.

Even though she was trying not to worry Donnie, Rae was worried. She finally noticed her habit of not letting Audrey be alone with Donna and that did not stop her from doing it. Whenever she left the room, Donna went with her, especially since Audrey's dirty looks toward the baby got more open and blatant the more she drank. Sleepless nights were starting to become the norm as

she sat up in bed, listening for footsteps or the doorknob moving. Sometimes, when she heard them, she was fearful that Audrey would just break the door down.

"Hey, Rae, let's watch a movie tonight. We never really doing anything with just the two of us anymore, so let's watch one of our favorite movies tonight," Audrey suggested with a dazed smile. Her eyes were a little glassy, giving away the fact that she had already had more than a few drinks.

"Okay. Let me finish with Donna," Rae said.

"Always with the damn baby," Audrey grumbled while going to pick out a movie. After that, she went to get herself another drink.

Rae pretended not to hear Audrey, not wanting to get into an argument since she knew that Audrey was drunk already. Instead, she focused her attention on the baby, who was nursing. After eating, Donna fell right to sleep and Rae put her down in the car seat. She smiled while making sure to cover the baby with a soft, tiny blanket. Once she was sure that the newborn was all right, she flopped down on the couch.

Audrey turned on the movie and then sat down next to Rae while putting her drink on the coffee table, not too far from the baby. Everything seemed fine until the redhead suddenly decided to put her arm around Rae and try to pull the petite woman to her. For the first time, Rae resisted because she was finally realized this was more than just friendly embracing.

"Audrey, stop," Rae said, trying to pull away, but the redhead was not giving up.

"What? Let's cuddle," Audrey insisted with a drunken smile on her face.

"I don't want to cuddle," Rae declared and she attempted move Audrey's arm from her waist.

"Then how about a kiss?" Audrey had the nerve to pucker up.

"No! I'm not kissing you. We're just friends," Rae reminded the redhead.

Audrey growled and suddenly flung Rae away from her. Rae hit the end of the couch with wide eyes while the redhead climbed to her feet in an instant. Sky blue eyes glared down at Rae like some vengeful demon and Rae gulped. Never before had she seen such an intense look; it caused her chest to tighten and it hurt just to breathe. She was scared to breathe, considering that it might rattle her fiendish friend even more.

"What the fuck do I have to do to get beyond being friends with you?! I practically fucking live here! I cook for you! I clean for you! I go every-fucking-where with you, do every-fucking-thing, and you won't even fucking kiss me! Is it because you're waiting for your precious fucking Donnie to come back? Well, she's not! I guaran-fucking-tee that she's licking some other bitch's

cunt right this minute! I'm the only thing you have left! I've done everything for you and it's time for you to give back now!" Audrey screamed so loudly her face started to change red. The crimson coloring only made her seem even more like Satan-incarnate to the ebony-haired female.

Rae squealed as Audrey flung herself on top of the smaller woman. Rae screamed and flailed, hoping to get Audrey off of her, but her body was covered by the redhead's form. Audrey started roughly groping Rae, grabbing onto her overly sensitive breasts and squeezing to the point that Rae hollered in pain.

"Stop!" Rae cried, trying to wiggle out of the taller woman's hold.

"No, you owe me! Do you know how long I've been trying to get you to notice me? To like me! To love me! All you see is fucking Donnie, who doesn't give a shit about you! Now, just let me show you how much I love you!" Audrey snarled, clutching another handful of boob.

"Stop!" Rae pled, tears gathering in her eyes because of the harsh treatment of her body.

Audrey did not seem to hear her and leaned down for a kiss, breathing her alcohol-charged breath into Rae. The odor was enough to melt her eyebrows, but Rae honestly did not notice the stench. The ebony-haired woman hollered and turned her head, hoping to dodge those thin lips. Audrey was not deterred, going for her kiss anyway, brutally pressing her lips to the unwilling woman underneath her. She tried to coax Rae's mouth open, but the petite woman made sure to keep her lips shut. Audrey grunted in anger and bite Rae's bottom lip, cutting the flesh open.

Rae yelped loudly as blood poured from her injured lip, but Audrey did not seem to care. She was in another world, taking what she felt was owed to her. One of her hands trailed roughly down Rae's body and she savagely yanked in between Rae's legs. The small woman screamed at the top of her lungs and tried desperately to get Audrey off of her before the redhead tried to take her pants off.

The noise added a forgotten entity into things-the baby. Donna started wailing, loudly. The cry might as well have been eardrum-shattering for Audrey. The redhead viciously snarled as the crying got louder and louder. Growling like a wrathful animal, she turned her attention from Rae to Donna.

"Goddamn, I'm sick of this fucking kid!" Audrey declared, voice acidic and beyond insane. She made a move toward the helpless child.

"No!" Rae screamed and she grabbed onto Audrey. "Leave the baby alone! I'll do anything you want, just leave Donnie alone!" the mother sincerely promised. "I swear, I'll do anything!"

"I'm getting what the fuck I want anyway!" Audrey confidently proclaimed, moving again to go at the wailing child.

Rae shot up and pushed Audrey away from the table, away from Donna. Audrey was not moved far and even though she was intoxicated, she maintained her balance. That allowed her to come

back in a manner that shocked Rae despite everything that already happened. Audrey slapped the shorter woman hard across the face, drawing blood from her nose. Rae went down, stumbling to one knee, but she did not stay down. She grabbed the closest thing to her as she got up, which was an empty bottle of alcohol that Audrey had been drinking out. She tossed the bottle, barely missing the redhead and earning a devilish glare from the taller woman.

"Fucking bitch! After everything I did for you!" Audrey roared and launched herself at Rae.

Rae tried to dodge, but also felt compelled to stand her ground because she did not want to go too far from the baby. Audrey twisted and stumbled, but she was able to get Rae. She wrapped her hands around the smaller woman's neck and started squeezing.

"I did every damn thing for you! What the hell do you want from me?! Love me like you love that stupid fuck Donnie!" Audrey shrieked, apparently trying to crush Rae's throat with her bare hands. Her hands slipped, though, and her grip was not as tight as it could have been. She did not seem to know what she was doing. "You're a fucking worthless woman, Rae! You should be happy that I even give a rat's ass! No one else does! No one loves you! You should be glad I give a damn, you fucking bitch!"

Rae gagged, reaching around for something to hit Audrey with, but could only grab the throw pillows on the couch. She settled on scratching the hell out of Audrey, clawing the taller woman's face in ways that a cat would have applauded. Audrey screamed and backed away, putting a hand to her bloody cheek.

Rae shot off, pushing Audrey while she was at it. Audrey staggered and fell to the floor due to her alcoholic imbalance. Rae bolted over to the baby, thankful that Donna was already in a car seat. She grabbed her keys and ran out of the house without another thought. She got into the car and did not even bother to strap Donna in, just placing the car seat on the floor of the passenger seat.

She drove away for a few blocks before stopping to fix Donna up properly. After correctly securing the baby, she continued driving and started sobbing. She did not know where to go; she did not have any friends anymore! There was no place to go because she ruined everything! She pushed everyone away, she screwed everything up! While panicking, she continued driving until she realized that she recognized the neighborhood. She pulled into an apartment complex and got out of the car. She grabbed the baby again and rushed inside, going upstairs to apartment 2D. Her fist was pounding on the door before she even realized it.

"Hold on!" a voice called and moments later the door open. "Babe, what're you...what the fuck happened to you?" Donnie demanded to know as she took in the sight of Rae's bruised, tear-stained face.

"Donnie...can I stay with you?" Rae requested through several snuffles.

"Of course. Come in, come in." Donnie ushered the petite woman in with a gentle motion of her hand. She shut the door right behind her spouse. "Here, gimme the baby," Donnie said.

"Huh? Oh..." Rae glanced down at Donna, who was no longer crying. The child was looking around, as if she was trying to figure out what was going on. Her mother handed the baby, car seat and all, to Donnie.

"Hey, there's my big girl! How's mama's big girl?" Donnie asked with a grin, walking into the living room with the baby. She put the baby down on her sofa; the only piece of furniture in her living room. She then turned her attention back to Rae. "Sweetheart, you can come on in. Can I get you something?" she offered, trying to keep a calm voice, even though she was all too aware something was wrong.

"Donnie!" Rae ran at her wife and flung herself into the taller woman. She wept into Donnie's chest.

Donnie did not say anything. She just held onto Rae and let her cry. She caressed the small of Rae's back, hoping to soothe away any trouble in the ebony-haired woman's body. Once the weeping was over, Rae seemed to be exhausted, so Donnie picked her up and carried her over to the couch. Carefully, she sat down, not wanting to disturb Donna.

"You good now? You want anything?" Donnie asked, continuing to rub Rae's back.

"Just hold me, please," Rae answered, curling into the chef for warmth, love, and protection.

"Okay. I can do that. If you need anything, you just tell me."

Rae nodded to show that she understood. They remained like that for a while. Donnie cradled Rae to her and also paid Donna some mind by rocking her car seat just a little. After a while, Donna did start crying, letting her parents know that she was hungry.

"I'm going to feed her," Rae said as she started sitting up. She reached over for the baby.

"Okay, while you do that, I'm going to run you a bath, so you can relax. Have you eaten anything tonight?" Donnie asked as she stood up. She stretched and rolled her shoulders, trying to keep away tension.

"I had a light dinner a couple of hours ago."

"You have to keep eating to make sure Don gets enough to eat. I'll make you something, not too heavy. I think you should have the bath first, though. I'll handle it."

Rae did not have the strength to argue and knew that Donnie needed something to do in order to keep her emotions in check. As soon as Donna was done eating, Donnie took the baby and led Rae to the bathroom, so that she could have her bath. Rae did not say anything, just shut the door, stripped, and sank into the hot water, sighing as she did so.

"Come on, clone-o-mine. We need to make Mommy something light and yummy," Donnie said, bouncing the baby in her arms. Donna yawned and the proud mother smiled at her. "Okay, maybe we need to put lil Donnie to bed and then make Mommy something light and yummy."

Donnie went to her bedroom and put the baby down to sleep in a playpen that was set up next to an air mattress in the corner. She gently eased Donna down, putting her on her back, and covering her with a soft blanket. She watched the baby for a while, knowing that the moment she took her eyes off of Donna, the child would somehow end up sleeping on her stomach. Apparently, Donna did not know that babies were supposed to sleep on their backs.

Once she was sure that Donna was fine, she went and got Rae something to wear once she was done with her bath. Rae did not stay in for long and had no problem with putting on the clothing that Donnie left, a long tee-shirt with a picture of pancakes on it. She could not help smiling, remembering when she brought the shirt for Donnie. Before leaving the bathroom, she took a moment to put the shirt to her nose and inhaled Donnie's scent all over the article of clothing. A relieved and relaxed sigh escaped her as the calming aroma invaded her nose.

She then shared a plain grilled-cheese sandwich with Donnie before the chef convinced her to go lie down. It really did not take much convincing, but Rae refused to go down on her own. Donnie had to lie down too to keep Rae settled in the bed. The smaller woman cuddled into Donnie, burying her face in familiar cleavage.

"Are you going to tell me what happened?" Donnie asked in a low voice, running her fingers gently through sable locks.

"I'll tell you in the morning," Rae promised. She knew that if she told Donnie what happened now, Donnie would spring into action and all Rae wanted right now was to hold and be held by the taller woman.

"You sure?"

"Uh-huh."

"Okay," Donnie agreed. She kissed the top of Rae's head and held her tight.

Rae sighed in relief, finally able to completely unwind and let her guard down for the first time in a long time. She fell asleep totally at ease, feeling like things were going to be all right. Donnie's sleep was not quite so good, hating to think that she left her beloved in the hands of someone that would harm Rae. It only led her to believe that she was more of a fuck-up than she initially thought.

12: Work

Rae cooed contently as she woke up, embraced by familiar warmth. Warmth that surrounded her completely like a divine halo and promised her that everything was right in the world. Warmth that soothed any wounds inside and out like an omnipotent balm. A gentle, affectionate touch accompanied the brilliant warmth, loving her, assuring her that she was alive and well.

Almond-colored eyes drifted open to see Donnie. The chef was occupying her time and her mind by softly stroking silky ebony locks. Rae sighed and snuggled closer to Donnie. The taller woman pressed her hand to Rae's back, tenderly caressing the small of her back. Rae let loose a pleased mewl and a tiny smile settled on her face. The peace was broken when Donnie decided to share what was on her mind.

"I don't like the red marks on your neck," Donnie commented in a low voice. The hard look in her eye went unnoticed because Rae was trying burrow deeper into her chest, as if attempting to merge with her. The only thing keeping her from returning the gesture was the blaring maroon marks glaring up at her and marring on her lover's fair, beautiful skin.

"Donnie, please," Rae begged with a whimper, not wanting to travel that road yet. She wanted to stay blanketed in the coziness of her fantasy where everything was fine between her and her wife, where Donnie holding her lovingly was still an everyday occurrence, where Donnie still loved her from the bottom of her heart.

"I need you to tell me what happened because looking at these marks is making me crazy. My mind is drawing up a million situations for how they got there and the next one is always worse than the one before it. So, for my own peace of mind, tell me what happened or I'm going over to Audrey's place, waiting for her and stabbing her repeatedly," Donnie requested in a dead serious tone. Instinctively, she knew that Audrey harmed her beloved and a baser part of her wanted to do nothing more than slay that redhead bitch for daring to touch her mate!

Rae nodded, but she could not meet Donnie's eyes. She started talking while trying to make sure she did not cry, keeping her face buried in the safety of her lover's chest. She began her tale, talking about how Audrey was creeping her out by walking by the bedroom late at night and glaring at the baby. It got even worse when she knew Audrey would wander around outside the bedroom at night, just pacing in front of the door and sometimes trying to come in, but the door was always locked. She then went into how Audrey's drinking got out of control and how she tried to take what she wanted from Rae. And then how Audrey turned her fury on the baby, but how she did not let the drunken woman get to Donna. Her voice cracked through out the whole thing and as she got to the part where Audrey attempted to go after Donna, the tears started pouring out and her body started shaking.

"I was so scared!" Rae bawled, her voice barely a broken whisper. She felt like she was about to fall apart, but strong arms held her together.

"So, she choked the shit out of you because you wouldn't let her hurt the baby?" Donnie inquired just to be sure that she got the story right. She began contemplating how she could return the favor to Audrey.

"Uh..." Rae hesitated, not sure if that was what was going to happen.

"You're going to defend her again, aren't you?" the chef asked in a tense, exhausted tone.

Rae vehemently shook her head. "No. I really don't know what she was going to do to the baby, but I'm pretty sure it wasn't anything good. She looks at Donnie with such hatred, so I know she wasn't going to do anything good. I don't know if that's why she came at me either. She was already hurting me when she started squeezing my breasts, so maybe she just wanted to subdue me. I really don't know why she started choking me. I just know she did. I didn't know she was so unstable. She didn't seem so...well, nuts when we were just hanging out!"

Donnie rubbed Rae's back to help keep her calm. "It's okay. You didn't know, I didn't know. We both kinda fucked up here. I mean, I left you with her. I should've known something was fucked up with her. First off, I just didn't like the look in her eyes most of the time and Trisha fired her faster than most of her other assistants."

"I didn't even know she got fired..." Rae muttered. "I guess that explains all of her free time, though."

"Yeah, Trisha fired her after they finished the nursery. She said something about Audrey just wasn't right. She also said Audrey showed up to work drunk sometimes. That's why I asked you if you wanted me to do something when you said she was drinking."

"I didn't think it was going to get that bad. I didn't know her drinking was that bad. I guess she was really frustrated with me. Donnie...Audrey's in love with me, but I think of her as just as a friend. Well, not even that anymore. She really scared me last night," Rae admitted, borrowing deeper into the security of Donnie's body.

Donnie held her as if she was fragile and precious with tender care. "It's okay. First things first, we're going to go to the police and get this on record. Hopefully, we can at least get a restraining order if not press charges against Audrey. Then, we'll go to the house and get whatever you and Donna need and you can stay here for a while, so you're not alone in the house."

"I don't want to be alone in this apartment either!" Rae objected, going tense at the thought of being by herself.

The restaurant owner massaged Rae's back again, which caused her down. "You won't be here alone. I'm going to be here with you. I just don't want to chance you being in the house in case Audrey is really nuts and tries something. At least here, she doesn't know where you are, right?" She was going to kick herself if Rae told the redhead where she lived.

"Right. I never told her where you live. I knew you wouldn't want her to know and I didn't think she'd care anyway. Do we really have to go to the police?" the petite woman inquired curiously.

"Yes! I don't want her to think that she got away with this. She better hope I don't run into her or I'm going to beat the living hell out of her! I can't believe she did this to you," Donnie said, clutching into Rae tightly to keep herself calm now.

"I was surprised myself. It was scary when she jumped at me and for a minute I didn't even realize that she was choking me. Does my neck look really bad?"

Donnie was silent and her body tensed. Rae felt how stiff her spouse was and that let her know just how bad her neck had to look. When they got up to get ready for the day, Rae went into the bathroom and studied the mark. Thick crimson bands wrapped around her neck, bands that were caused by the fingers of someone that claimed to love her. That same person put a deep, nearly-black bruise on her cheek.

"Donnie would never do this to me..." Rae muttered as tears welled up in her eyes. She remembered at the hospital when she flinched because she thought that Donnie was actually going to hit her and she now realized just how stupid she had been. She had allowed Audrey to poison her mind so badly that she suspected the wrong person of possibly hurting her.

She sighed, shoulders slumping and feeling like the lowest of the low. She washed her face, hoping to wipe away the feeling and give herself a fresher start to the day. She put back on her clothes from last night and then walked out of the room, searching for Donnie. She found the chef in the kitchen, holding Donna, and pulling items out of the fridge while talking to the baby about what they were going to make for breakfast. Rae could not help smiling while watching the pair, taking in how much Donnie loved their daughter and how Donna seemed to hang onto her momma's every word, even though they knew she did not have a clue what Donnie was saying.

"Can I help with breakfast?" Rae requested, smile still lingering on her face. She really wished that she had a camera to capture the moment.

Donnie turned a little to see the petite woman. "Sure. Apparently, lil D is going to handle making the eggs while she tells me I just have to cut fruit," she joked, tickling the baby's cheek. Donna giggled, showing off a bright, toothless grin.

Rae laughed a bit too, feeling better. She helped a little bit before Donna started crying, wanting her own breakfast. Donnie was left to handle the adult meal while Donna had her own. After everyone was fed, Donnie put the baby into the car seat and ushered Rae out of the house. They were off to the police station.

Rae's face and neck were photographed, documenting the marks. Her statement was also taken, explaining what happened. She took out a restraining order at Donnie's insistence. Donnie also insisted that the police go to the house to make sure Audrey was not there. Rae was glad for Donnie's forceful personality because the cops really did not want to do it, apparently shy about getting into a domestic dispute as they put it. But, Donnie made them go up to the house, reminding them that what might seem like a simple domestic dispute could always end up as something worse. Besides, Donnie did not think of it as a "domestic dispute."

While the police scanned their home, Donnie considered having Rae press charges against Audrey. She glanced down at Rae as they waited outside in the car and decided against it. The ragged, exhausted look in deep brown eyes and worried lines that were etched into her creamy face were what caused Donnie to let it go. She did not want to drag Rae through anything further right now. Maybe if Audrey tried something else, she would press the issue, but for now, just documenting what happened was good enough for her.

Once the police made sure the house was clear, Donnie and Rae went inside. They grabbed some of their belongings and plenty of the baby's things. Then they returned to Donnie's apartment. The remainder of the day was spent cuddled together and relaxing, trying to forget the stressful ordeal that Audrey put them through.

"Donnie, what're we going to do?" Rae asked curiously, curling into Donnie's solid form. They were lying on the air mattress in the bedroom. Donna was sleeping in the playpen right next to them.

"Let's not think about it right now. Just relax a bit and we'll figure it out later," Donnie answered, resting her head on top of the smaller woman's soft ebony mane.

"Okay..." Rae sighed and nuzzled Donnie's neck. It was hard to resist the temptation of placing a kiss to the wonderful skin she was pressed into, but she managed. "Um...Donnie...?" she said the name with such uncertainty and a little quiver shook the name.

"Yes?"

"Are we still getting a divorce? I still love you and I know you still love me."

Donnie sighed this time and kissed the top of Rae's head. "Babe, let's worry about everything later on. I just want you to relax and heal up. I'm going to be here for you no matter what."

Rae nodded and decided that was enough for her right now. She fell asleep against Donnie, who was not sure what she was going to do. Right now, all she wanted to do was protect Rae, so she suspected that was definitely going to put any divorce proceedings on hold. Once that was out of the way, she would have to take a step back and figure out what was best for her.

It took a couple of weeks before they got around to talking about anything. Rae worked up the courage to bring things up again after she watched Donnie put Donna down for her nap. After that, Donnie flopped down on the bed because she liked watching Donna sleep for a few minutes. Rae ambushed her and dropped down on the taller woman. The master chef grunted on impact, but embraced Rae around the waist.

"I get the feeling you want my attention," Donnie remarked with an amused smile.

Rae was silent for a second. What she really wanted was to lean down and steal a kiss from Donnie's tempting lips, but she did not. She was not sure if Donnie still considered that they had that type of relationship, even though they shared a bed every night, held each other, and touched

whenever possible. Sometimes, Donnie even kissed her, but only on the top of the head or the cheek. They had not done anything romantically intimate.

"Donnie, I need you to tell me what're we going to do. I've had a lot of time to think about things and I really think I can explain what happened to me. Are you willing to listen and then we figure out what we're going to do?" Rae asked.

"I'll listen if we can sit up. You've got your elbow in my ribs," Donnie answered.

Rae nodded and moved off of Donnie. The chef eased back on the bed, so that her back was against the wall. Rae sat at her side instead of draping herself on Donnie like she would have done. Donnie glanced to the side and considered grabbing Rae up, but she thought that Rae might need the space to get through what she wanted. Once they were settled into their positions, Rae began speaking.

"You know, when Donna was born after you left the hospital, I had a talk with Spain. She gave me her thoughts on what happened with me and Audrey and I'm starting to agree with her take on things in a way. When Audrey came along, she was my first friend in a long time and she was like everything that I had given up when I started going out with you all rolled up into one person. I opened up to her in ways that I was sort of scared to do with you, scared that I might chase you away. So, I talked with my friend, since you know, you should be able to tell friends things, but Audrey used what I said to mess with my mind. I'm not making excuses, I shouldn't have listened to her. I shouldn't have trusted her, but I wanted a friend, I wanted *something* so badly. Something that was mine.

Something that let me know I still had a life. I'm guessing her plan somewhere along the line was to get me to leave you and go out with her, so she kept hinting that you were probably cheating on me, that you were just going to leave me anyway, that you're just a spoiled brat and so much bullshit.

"Anyway, really, I clung to Audrey because she was something that was mine. It wasn't that I was in love with her, but she was mine. My friend. The first thing I had had in years that was my own, for me, and wasn't given to me by you. I gave up everything for you, Donnie, and I don't think I really wanted to, but I thought you wanted me to..." Rae cast her eyes downward, feeling shame. A snuffle tore out of her throat, but she held in any tears that might try to fall.

"Why would you think that?" Donnie inquired, very confused. Her face scrunched up as she searched her wife's gaze for something to explain why are would feel such a way. "Okay, yes, I hated you working at that piece of shit café-diner-whatever-the-fuck-it was, but if you liked it, I didn't want you to quit."

"Yet you kept offering me a job at *Donnie's*. To me, I thought you wanted to keep an eye on me."

Donnie's eyes opened wide with disbelief. "I kept offering you a job because I wanted you some place safer than where you were working and some place with better pay!"

Rae shrugged a little. "I'm just telling you what I thought at the time and why I was open to such ridiculous suggestions from Audrey. When we moved in together, you kept saying how you wished I was around more. To me, after having to deal with other girlfriends that have plenty of money, I figured you wanting me around more often meant I needed to quit my little crappy job."

"Babe, not only were your former girlfriends rich bitches, but they were also control-freaks. You really thought I was a control-freak? Why the hell did you love me in the first place then?" Donnie asked, scratching her head.

Rae frowned for a moment, wrinkling her forehead. She leaned over a little and put her hands around Donnie, wanting to take away the pain that she knew she was causing. Tiny hands caressed a flat abdomen and Donnie sighed. Once the taller woman relaxed, Rae continued the discussion.

"Donnie, whatever notions of you I had in my head, you were still one of the sweetest people I have ever met. You're still the sweetest person I have ever met and you make it so easy to love you with every piece of me. But, I read you wrong, going by what my past girlfriends wanted and reading those things into your little words and gestures."

Donnie nodded and frowned a little, casting her eyes to look at the far wall. "So, basically, what happened to us was really inevitable. Eventually, you were going to... I guess rebel." Hazel eyes then turned sharply to focus on the ebony-haired woman. "But, sweetheart, I really don't mind if you have friends. I'm sorry you gave your friends up before. I didn't know why you did it and I really should've asked, but I was just happy to have you around more," the chef replied, almost as if she was apologizing.

"If you like being around me so much, Donnie, why did you start staying at the restaurant so much more this past year?" Rae asked curiously, eyes begging to know why her lover practically abandoned her for the famous eatery.

Donnie chuckled a little. "Oh, that. Man, I didn't think that would cause this amount of trouble, but I was setting things up to make sure I would have to be there a lot less once Donna was born. You must've notice I haven't gone anywhere in the past two weeks."

"Oh..." Rae's expression dropped and she had that low feeling again. "You know...I thought you were just putting your life on hold because of me. I felt a little bad about it actually," she replied in a small voice.

"Rae, you are my life and you have been for the past five years. Now, you and lil D are my life and you always will be. I'm taking a slightly more hands-off approach to the restaurant because of that. I've worked out how to get things done even with being there less. I want to be with you and Donna. I want to be there when Donna sits up for the first time, takes her first step, says her first word, gets her library card, hits her first homerun on a softball team, wins her first spelling bee, has her first date. I want to be here for her whole life. I want to be here for our next kid and all of that too. I won't let the restaurant or the café stop that," Donnie vowed in a strong, even tone.

"I'm so sorry, Donnie!" Rae cried, burying her face in her hands and she started sobbing. "I should've had faith in you! It's just that I felt like nothing was mine. Even when you said you were going to take the baby, I just kept thinking that you could because you have everything and I have nothing. It was like I was just your possession and you could do whatever you wanted while I had to do everything you wanted."

Donnie wrapped her arms around Rae and held onto her. "I wish you would've said something sooner."

"I know I should've. Please, Donnie, give me another chance. I'm sorry for everything. Just give me another chance," she begged, speaking into the cotton fabric of her love's tee-shirt.

"It's okay. We'll make it through all of this," Donnie promised.

"Damn, Don, it feels like I haven't seen you in ages!" Tegan declared as she, Spain, and French all entered the new house. They were all surprised when Donnie moved out of her apartment a couple of months after Rae and Donna moved in with her. They did know it was a sign that the couple were trying to work things out, though. It eased their minds to know that the relationship was not beyond repair, but Tegan was even more weary of Rae now.

"We've been way too busy around here and lil D is such a handful," Donnie replied, bouncing the three-month old baby in her arms. Donna yawned and then suckled her pacifier, not paying her mama much mind.

"Oh, she has gotten so big," Spain cooed, reaching out for the baby. Donnie handed Donna over while Tegan and French looked at Spain as if she had grown another head. The doctor noticed. "What? The Amazon can't like a baby?" she inquired with an arched eyebrow.

"No! 'Course not!" Tegan and French said, even though they both did think it looked just a little weird for Spain to be holding such a little creature.

"Just be careful with her, Spain. She likes grabbing for things that she shouldn't, like your glasses," Donnie cautioned her friend, noticing just how closely her daughter was eyeing the face of the woman holding her.

Spain nodded. "Good to know since French has been threatening to skin me alive if I ruin another pair," she replied.

French put her hands on her narrow hips. "Hey, no one should go through three pairs of glasses in a year if they're not a ten-year-old child."

Spain glanced away, looking thoroughly scolded for all of two seconds. Tegan and Donnie laughed at the giant's reaction. Once the look passed, the doctor turned her attention back to the

baby, who was still watching Spain's face-possibly looking for an opportunity to reach for her specs.

"Come on in. I'll give you guys the nickel tour since we have some time to kill before dinner," Donnie explained, waving her friends deeper into her humble home.

The new house was very different from the old house that Donnie owned. It was a ranch-style house and smaller than the other, but it seemed much more like Donnie than the other one did. It was impressive, but it did not scream "wealth and status" in loud tones like the other one did. It was a more simple, warm style. The furniture were done in light colors and light wood. There was a little artwork up, but definitely not as much as the old house had, and definitely items that Donnie and Rae truly liked, such as woodland scenes.

"Donnie, this place really is way more you," Tegan commented with an approving nod.

"You think so? I didn't have any say in decorating it, but then again, I didn't have any say in the other house either," Donnie pointed out with a little laugh and shrug.

"Your mom did your other house, right?" Spain asked, adjusting the baby in her arms since Donna seemed to be falling asleep now.

"Well, she didn't set foot in there, but she did tell me everything to buy and like an idiot I listened. I thought she might visit or something, but that never happened. Whatever I didn't follow up on, Trisha just filled in based on what I was already doing. It was almost like living with my mother again from the way the place looked. Just a little creepy," Donnie replied.

The friends nodded and decided against saying anything about Donnie's mother since this was supposed to be a pleasant, friendly visit. They went through the house fairly quickly. There were five bedrooms of impressive size in the house, a small office with plenty of books and a desktop computer, two and a half bathrooms, a large basement that they were planning to turn into a game room, and of course, the kitchen was the most breathtaking room in the place. There was a pool out back, but it was too cold to go for a swim. After the tour, the crew settled into the living room and Spain put the baby down on a blanket that was laid out on the carpet just for her.

"So, where's Rae?" Spain asked curiously.

"She's at work. She should be here in a little while. She called just before you lot showed up, looking for you guys," Donnie explained, leaning back into the beige sofa.

"How's she liking her new job?" French inquired with a smile. She remembered how excited Rae had been when she got a job. It was not the most glamorous or high-paying job in the world, but one could not help share in her happiness. Rae always beamed and glowed whenever she talked about the fact that she was working again.

"She's loving it. She's good at it too. I've never brought so many books in under an hour in my life," Donnie remarked with laugh.

"Well, you're her wife, so I think you're obligated to do that," Spain teased.

"That and every time I go in there, she swears there's this book I'd like. Damn it, she's always right!" Donnie pretended to whine.

"Rae's always been like that when it comes to you, so I don't know why you're so surprised," Spain pointed out.

"I'm not. That woman knows everything about me. I'm glad she's liking her job at the bookstore. She seems a lot happier now, even if it's just part-time," Donnie said. Her wife had been more relaxed and smiled much easier now that she was working. Rae even seemed to have more energy and was more open, which Donnie attributed to the job because it gave Rae something to talk about when she came home, which led to them having long conversations about any and everything.

"I can't believe you actually took her back after all of the crap she's put you through. I don't understand how you can forgive her," Tegan said, shaking her head in bewilderment.

"Well, for one, I'm partially to blame by telling her who she loved in the first place. But, mostly, I love her, Tegan. I'm deeply, madly, honestly in love with my wife. I always will be. I'm miserable without her and you know that. And she's in love with me. Why should we break apart if we're in love with each other and want to be together? We both want this badly. We're working through things, which is why she went out and got the job. We're going to do some couples' therapy too once everything is settled," Donnie explained.

"What's this thing with the job have to do with anything anyway?" French asked curiously.

"Rae felt like she didn't have her own life before, like she was just a possession of mine since everything was mine...technically anyway. I mean, for me, I feel like everything was ours, but I did buy it all, so she didn't feel the same. This is a step toward her getting a life of her own instead of being an installment in mine. One of the things we're going to work on in therapy," Donnie answered.

"Has she made any new friends yet?" Spain inquired with an arched eyebrow.

"She's a little trigger shy about that so far. She's still a little freaked about Audrey and everything," Donnie replied. That got a round of understanding nods.

"Well, at least she's okay with being away from you now. Before, you said she was sort of glued to you, right?" Spain asked.

Donnie nodded. "The first few days, she wouldn't let me out of her sight, except to shower. Then, she got really shook up when we saw Audrey outside of the old house not too long ago when we went to make sure we got everything we wanted from there. She's far from okay and the only reason she's good to go to work is because the café isn't too far away, so some of the employees

go by every few minutes and check on her for me. We got Rae a new number for her phone and everything, but I think she's going to be okay."

"She's getting therapy for that, right?" Tegan asked, although it was not really a question. Despite the fact that she was never Rae's biggest fan, and that did not change with Rae reconciling with Donnie, she did feel some compassion toward Rae since the woman had gotten beaten up and she put herself in danger to protect Donna. She did not think that Rae deserved the beating and she respected Rae for putting her body out there for the baby.

"Duh. It's also something we're going to have to work on in couples' therapy as soon as we find someone we both like. I never thought Rae would be the picky one about a therapist, but trying to find someone for both of us has been crazy. Thankfully, she's fine with her therapist, even though I don't care for him much," Donnie said.

"Why not? Rae makes him sound like a really good guy and a lot of help," French said.

Donnie shrugged. "I might just be being paranoid at this point and that probably is it. I just don't like the way he looks at me sometimes. It makes me feel like he's blaming me for Rae's problems and I don't mean that in a really bad way. But, it seems like his eyes are saying to me that Rae really shouldn't need therapy and she should be able to talk to me about this stuff. Sitting in on a few sessions, I can see he doesn't blame me and Rae says he never does, but still sometimes when he sees me, I really feel like he's calling me a bad wife in his head."

Tegan scoffed. "That sounds like paranoia all right. No therapist is going to actually say they're not needed," she joked, earning a few light chuckles from her friends.

"So, have you seen Audrey lately or heard from her?" French asked, letting a shudder rip through her. Just thinking about Audrey gave her the creeps now that she knew what the woman was capable of, so she could imagine the horrors that Rae went through.

"Aside for the thing at the old house, she walked past the restaurant one day when I was there, but I'm not paying her any mind. We've got it on record and she hasn't really tried anything. I did call the police and everything. She was drunk outside the restaurant that day, so the cops took her in for public drunkenness. I really think that's her problem. She just drinks too fucking much," Donnie explained with a shrug.

"I think you're simplifying her problem," Spain commented in a dry tone.

"You might be right, but I'm a simple person outside of cooking and management," Donnie reminded them.

They nodded in agreement with that. They decided to let the matter drop since there was nothing that they could do with Audrey, except stay on the watch for her if they were around Rae. Their conversation was interrupted by the sound of the front door opening and closing.

"Babe," Rae called out.

"We're in the living room," Donnie replied.

Rae walked in and joined the sit-down on the living room carpet. She leaned down to kiss the baby before giving Donnie a kiss. They all spoke for a little while longer before Donnie served dinner. They all sat down at the table and joked, and laughed, and felt at ease.

Donnie was at the restaurant for her one day of work that she always tried to get in for the week; lately, she had been up at the restaurant just a few hours a week, mostly because she could. Everything ran smoothly without her having to hover over everyone. Usually when she came up now, it was to work in the kitchen because it was still her passion and she liked cooking for the restaurant just as much as she enjoyed cooking for her family; she was allowed to cook at home more often now.

The restaurant owner was packing up and getting ready to go, wanting to see her wife and child again. She stepped out of the office and was going to go out the front door, but as she walked to the main hall of the restaurant, she spotted a familiar profile; one that she had not seen almost a year.

Audrey was in the restaurant and Donnie was almost ready to call the police, but then she noticed that Audrey was not alone. The redhead was sitting with another woman and they were smiling at each other; hell, Audrey's eyes were practically sparkling and Donnie could see that from a distance. Audrey was paying the other woman complete attention and Donnie decided to leave her be.

She hoped that meant that Audrey had moved on since Rae had been avoiding her for a year. Plus, Rae had gotten on with her life, now having a life to get on with. She and Donnie were also getting on with their life, together, with Donna of course.

The end.

A/N: Thank you to everyone who read the story. I hope you all enjoyed it and I am sorry if the ending feels a bit weak. I just was not sure what else to do.

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**Shea K's Scrolls
Index Page**
