

~ Airwaves ~

by Zee
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Part 1

Gabriel squinted up at her clock; it was almost six. She was supposed to have been home a half hour ago, but luck wasn't on her side today - or yesterday for that matter. Instead she had endured two days of bitching, yelling, and name calling. It was almost like living with her parents again. She was beginning to see why she should have taken her friends' advice and not hired one Ms. Jessica Reinhart to be her morning news host. She winced, hearing her new host and the audio producer yelling at each other.

"You call this professionalism? A frog singing backwards to heavy metal music would be better than this crap you've put together. Jesus Christ! Could you have pointed the mic anywhere in my direction instead of thrusting it into the bowels of that car engine."

"Listen, lady. Trust me; I was doing you a favor drowning out that droning voice of yours. Could you pop your P's just a little bit more, and then hiss your S's some more to top it off? That car is easier to hear than you."

And it went on and on, the two of them shouting at each other. Gabriel was sure that it had to be doing wonders for her already barely floating radio station. Jim Stanton, the currently yelling audio producer, was the fourth one to work with Reinhart and she was out of options. Jim had only done it 'cause he owed her a favor, and he was on thin ice as it was at the station. She was running out of ideas and she was stuck in a two-year contract with Reinhart unless she could buy it out or Reinhart quit. She knew her poor little public radio station did not have the funds to buy Reinhart out. She let her head sink to her wooden desktop, lightly banging it again and again. Her phone rang and she contemplated ignoring it but figured it was her honey wondering if she

was okay.

"Hey, babe. I'll be home as soon as I can; have that massage oil ready."

"Ooo, kinky. I'd be flattered if I wasn't your half-sister."

Gabriel's day had just got worse. "Please tell me you're in jail again, and I won't have to see you for 10 to 20."

"Sorry to disappoint."

"Jesus, Sean; please, as a favor to me?"

"Sorry. No can do; that's the last place I wanna be again. Anyway, since I can't do something for you, Mama Megan wanted me to call and ask if you would give me a job."

"Don't you have one?"

"No, I got fired."

"How does one get fired from the Gas and Go?" Gab asked incredulously.

"I got caught having sex with some girl in the bathroom."

"Really?" Gab was almost impressed.

"No. But you'd expect that from me, wouldn't you?"

Gab almost felt guilty, and then remembered that she hated Sean. "Well, that's the sort of thing you use to do all the time. How many people have you screwed at the Gas and Go?"

"Like 3, in high school. Now about that job..."

"No." Gab didn't even have to think about it.

"Come on. If I don't have a job I'm in violation of my probation. Come on, please? I'll be the janitor and clean the toilets and stuff. Think of it this way, you can tell me what to do and pay me minimum wage."

Gab was tempted. At that moment Jessica and Jim stormed into her office.

"I refuse to work with this bitch a minute longer. She hasn't got a fucking clue how radio and audio work," Jim snarled.

"Now, Jim, I really don't think it's as bad as you're making it out to be," she started diplomatically.

"Yes, it is," Jessica broke in with her sweet alto voice, the one Gab knew would draw listeners. "This man doesn't know crap about producing."

"I've been an audio producer for 2 years."

"And that's 2 years to long."

"You fucking bitch."

"Jim and Jessica, please," Gab yelled.

The two opponents went silent, staring at the General Manager to see what she would do. "Jessica, why don't you go break for dinner while I talk to Jim here."

Jessica arched an eyebrow at being dismissed, but turned and left the office without another word. Gab couldn't help herself; she watched the older woman's shapely ass as it swayed out of her office.

"Jeez, why does such a hot woman have to be such a bitch?" Jim commented out loud.

Gabriel arched her own eyebrow in question, "What does that have to do with anything, Jim?"

"Ah...well...", the man stammered.

"Jim now that Jessica is gone..."

"I know I owe you, Gab, for not telling my girl about that kiss you caught Beth and I in at last year's Christmas party, but I cannot work with that woman. I want to go back to producing the evening news. Can you believe that woman? She called my editing skills crap. I'm the best audio producer in this joint," he said smugly.

"She's right." Jim's smug look fell to his knees. "I know I called in a favor to get you to work with her, but really, Jim, it was your last chance to pull your weight around here. If you won't work with her, you're fired. So what's it going to be?"

"I'll tell you what it's going to be, Gabby. I'm not working with that woman and you're not going to fire me."

Gabriel was getting riled up at being called Gabby. Hearing his words she blinked in surprise. "Oh, and why is that?"

"Because I'll tell everyone you're a lesbian. We'll see how long the Board of Directors of the station keep you around after that." The smug look crawled back up on his face.

"Jim, in case you didn't get the memo, this is a public radio station. It is an unnatural haven for

the left and the occasional liberal-minded person. Don't you listen to the radical right as they bash us for wasting taxpayer money? So nobody's going to care that I like pussy; if they do, they'll be too embarrassed to admit it." The smug look was crumbling away into a look of outrage. "Look, Jim, you've pretty much left me no option but to fire you. So, why don't you take it like a man, as the expression goes, pack up your stuff, and quietly leave. I'll mail your check to you..."

"You goddamn cunt licker! I've spent 2 years of my life here. You're not getting rid of me just like that."

Gabriel was slightly concerned; this wasn't going at all like she'd expected. In fact Jim was scaring her. His face was nearly purple with rage and the vein in the center of his forehead was sticking out. She backed away from her desk as he swept an arm out, knocking her phone and picture frames to the floor. Frightened, she remembered Sean was on the phone; maybe her half-sister would do something. She had a sinking feeling when the sound of the dial tone hit her ears. Of course, fucking Sean hadn't done anything but screw her over repeatedly since she had come to live with them. Gabriel vowed if she got through this moment she would have Shannon shoot both Jim and Sean.

"Hey, Jim, how's it hanging?" a voice broke in.

Startled, both Jim and Gabriel's heads darted around to look at the newcomer. Sean stood in the doorway, her shoulder-length blood red hair done up in a multitude of tiny braids. She wore a green polo that said "Gas and Go" in neon yellow, baggy khaki shorts, and flip-flops.

For the first time ever, Gabriel was very happy to see Sean.

Jim paused, his arm cocked back, and looked at the interloper. "This fucking cunt licker is going to fire me. How the hell do you think it's going!?"

"Dude, are you stupid. All the Wildeman children are cunt lickers. Well, the votes aren't back in on MJ but I have hope," Sean said with an easy grin. Her jade green eyes followed the man as he took a step away from Gab and took a step closer to her. She hoped Shannon would get here soon. She wasn't sure what she could do other than run; she wasn't very good at fighting but she could out run anybody.

Jim gave a loud bellow and charged at the young woman who had just called him stupid.

Sean flinched; she just knew she was going to get hit. She tried to back away quickly but her feet got tangled up in the flip-flops she was wearing. She was falling over backwards as Jim launched a fist at her face. Since her body was already moving out of the way, there was nothing to stop his forward momentum. He stumbled over her and out into the hallway, falling to his knees. Sean grunted as he stepped on the side of her face on his way out.

Jim stumbled to his feet only to find himself being stared down by six feet of pissed-off African American.

Sean stumbled to her feet. "Hey, Shannon," she greeted the tall woman. "I'm glad to see you. You should have seen it; he about took a swing at your girl. He was really pissed, calling her a cunt licker, and then he stepped on my face," she said brightly, pointing at the shoeprint on her cheek.

The man glared darkly back at Sean, then gulped as he saw the expression on Shannon's face.

"Jim, were you harassing my girl?" the woman spoke in low even tones.

Anger sparked back into the man's eyes. "Goddamn perverts! You make me sick, warping the world so decent god-fearing folks can't even work," he ranted and then took a swing at Shannon. It bounced harmlessly off her well-muscled stomach.

She laughed and asked, "Hey, Vic? You witness this putz attacking an officer?"

A well-groomed man wearing a police uniform stepped out from the empty cubical he'd been standing in. "Yep. Looks like I get to arrest him."

Shannon waited long enough for Vic to put Jim in handcuffs then she was in Gab's office. She took one look at her crying lover and was by her side in an instant.

"Gab honey, are you okay? He didn't hit you, did he?" she asked gently.

Gab hugged Shannon as tightly as she could. "I didn't...I mean how could I...Sean actually..." she babbled out through tears.

"Honey, take a deep breath and let it out slowly." She handed Gabriel a Kleenex and wiped tears away from soft springtime green eyes. "Okay, sweetheart. Take a deep breath and tell me this. Are you okay?"

"Yes, I'm okay. He didn't hit me, but he was going to if Sean hadn't come in." Gabriel's eyes got large, "Oh my god. Sean actually did something nice for me. Does this mean I have to be nice back?"

Shannon laughed. "No, honey. I think she'd resent it if you started treating her nice. So, what happened?"

"It's been a horrible day, I can't get anybody to work with Jessica. Jim was my last choice, and it was his last chance. He's been taking credit for other people's work, making inappropriate comments to the women here, coming in late. He was her audio producer today but they didn't get along and he refused to work with her again. So I told him to either work it out with her or he was through. He threatened to tell the Board that I was a lesbian."

Shannon snorted. "What a bozo."

Gab smiled softly at her lover. "When that didn't get him the result he wanted, he went nuts. I thought he was going to hit me."

"Honey, you know a lot of times people don't take well to getting fired. Why did you do it when almost all of your staff was gone for the day?"

"I don't know; I wasn't thinking. I never thought he would go nutso on me."

"Hey, sis. Officer Fox," Sean said as she walked into the room, wiping her face with a paper towel she'd gotten from the bathroom.

"Hey, Sean. Thanks for calling me," Shannon said, wrapping Gabriel in her arms and pulling into her lap on the desk.

"Calling you?" Gab asked.

"Yeah, I was on the line when that creep started getting creepy, so I hung up and dialed the good Officer here and then ran up to your office. By the way, your security sucks 'cause I know you have orders for me not to be let in."

Gab flushed. It was true; she did have orders for Sean not to be let into the building. "You came up here to help me? Wait a minute! Where were you? How did you get here so fast?"

"I was outside the station at a pay phone. Of course I came up to help you. I know you hate me because of that whole Casey Muldoon thing, but trust me, she so wasn't the girl you wanted to give your virginity up to. I know you think I'm a reprobate, but I'm not going to sit by and let some dickhead use my sister as a punching bag. No matter how much we don't get along." Sean said while spinning around in circles in the office chair.

Gab was starting to feel like a jerk.

Sean stared at Gab for a moment, looking for something. After a moment of searching her shoulders slumped and the grin fell off her face. She shuffled her feet then got up. "Ah well, no need to call security or anything; I'll just show myself out."

Shannon nudged Gab hard in the ribs, not believing how rude her lover was being.

"What?"

"Thank her."

"One moment of kindness does not redeem all the crappy things she's done to me since I was 16," she whispered harshly.

"Jesus, Gab, give her a break."

Gab sighed. "Sean, wait."

Sean's head popped back into the room grinning perkily.

"I...well...thanks."

"Okay; well, you're welcomed," Sean said puzzled.

"And I do have a job for you."

"Cool. Thanks." Sean bounded over to her sister and scooped her out of Shannon's embrace and swung her around the room. "Trust me. You'll never have a dirty toilet in this place ever again."

"Sean, first thing - stop touching me. I'm starting to remember why I don't like you." Sean instantly let go. She couldn't afford to piss off Gabriel right now. Maybe in a week or so she could do something but right now would be bad. "Second, how well did you do in that audio production class in college?"

"I got an A. Why do you ask?"

"Because you're not going to scrub toilets. You're my new morning audio producer. You'll be working with the talented yet bitchy Ms. Reinhardt."

"You mean a real job? Where I don't have to clean up puke and tell people to have a nice day? Oh, Gab, you rock." She went to hug Gab again, only to be stopped.

"No touching, or you're fired before I hire you."

"You won't regret this."

"I better not, Sean. You do this or you're gone. Be here tomorrow morning at 3 a.m."

"Aye aye, Captain." Sean saluted smartly, and skipped out the door.

Gab snuggled back into her lover as Shannon wrapped her large hands around Gab's waist.

"That was a good thing you just did. Your sister hasn't gotten that many breaks from people around here."

Gab snorted. "I'm sorry, honey, but it was self-serving. I can't get anyone to work with Reinhart. I'm expecting the two of them to kill each other. Reinhart expects the world to revolve around her and you know that Sean is well...Sean. She doesn't play well with others who talk down to her."

"Silly me. Here I thought you were finding that kindness buried at the bottom of your heart." Shannon said with a grin. She knew her lover may have been motivated a little out of spite, but

she knew part of it was her natural goodness too. "So are we all alone up here in the offices of KEZJ?" she asked.

"Why? Do you want to bless my office again?"

"Maybe. It's been a month since I've had to surprise you while you're working late."

"Well, Jim did go to all that effort to clear off my desk, and I feel a need to cleanse this place of the negative vibrations."

"Really."

"Uh huh," Gab said, turning around in her lover's arms. She began to undo the buttons on Shannon's shirt. While she was doing that, she felt large hands undoing her belt and then the zipper of her slacks. Deciding to forgo the unbuttoning part, she just ripped the shirt and forced the larger woman back onto her desk. One button fell to the floor. Spinning, it traveled in a line across the floor and out the door where someone stopped and picked it up.

Jessica Reinhart very much hated her new job. She hated this town; she hated the fact that the only place that would hire her was a public radio station; and she hated the cut in pay from her last job to this one. Most of all she hated Richard Ryans; that prick had fired her solely because she wouldn't sleep with him and then replaced her with a younger bouncier intern who would blow him three times a day. He had said his reasons were because she was too old, too difficult to work with, and asked for too much money. However, she knew it was because when he told her to suck him off she had poured hot coffee down his pants.

She smiled softly; it had made her day to see that prick Jim being hauled out of the station by a cop. Jim was a prick just like Richard. As she walked down the hall, something shiny rolled across the floor, catching her eye. She bent to pick it up and found a shirt button.

She walked into Gabriel's office. "Gab, I saw Jim being lead out on my way in. What do...gah," she ended unintelligibly, her eyes falling on the sight before her. Gab was straddling some woman on her desk, both of them were half naked.

Gab blushed and buried her face in Shannon's ample cleavage. "Uh...Jess...," she squeaked out. "I...oh crap...Shannon honey, please shoot me; I'm dying from embarrassment."

Jessica looking everywhere but at the mating couple and said, "I'll just go home. See you bright and early in the morning." She nearly ran from the room.

"Honey, let's go try and recapture the feeling at home. I could care less if the cat catches us humping like bunnies but I couldn't take it if another one of my employees were to walk in. Why couldn't they have walked in earlier when Jim was attacking me?"

Shannon laughed and helped her lover straighten her clothes.

Sean stood out in the rain, fuming. Gab had told her to be here at 3 a.m.; what she had failed to mention was that she would need a key to get into the building. The security guard had just laughed when she asked him to let her in. Through the gloomy damp she saw a tall figure coming towards the building. The person attempted to give her a wide berth and still get to the front doors.

She wiped water out of her eyes, and blew out a breath. "Excuse me," she said, getting the person's attention. Startled, the person looked over at her. Sean found herself looking into deep blue eyes; they reminded her of the ocean near dusk. The woman waited, then annoyed, said, "Yes?"

"Uh...right. I was wondering if you could let me in. I asked the security guard but he was being a dick," she said, giving a grin.

The woman looked her over and sniffed. "I'm sure he was but I'm sorry; I can't."

"It's okay. I work here," Sean said, giving another easy grin.

"Right. Well, if you want to get out of the rain, there's a homeless shelter a couple of streets away." With that the woman unlocked the door and then slammed it in Sean's stunned face.

"Why... you...", Sean sputtered before realizing she was alone again on the sidewalk as the woman walked away, warm and dry inside the building. "What a goddamn bitch! 'There's a homeless shelter'," she mimicked. "Of all the fucking nerve." Fuming she walked over to the payphone and dialed her sister.

Somewhere in the distance Gab heard the phone ring, but she was so into what Shannon was doing with three of her fingers she really didn't care. The bed squeaked dangerously in protest at being used in such a manner and their cat, Phantom Menace, was hiding in the living room under the couch with the dust bunnies and an old slice of forgotten pizza.

"Oh God, baby. Yes! Right there, again and again, repeatedly please," Gab begged. Shannon gave a husky chuckle, and did her best to give Gabriel what she begged for. Just as Gab was about to tumble off the glided peak into ecstasy, her sister's voice blared out, stopping her glorious orgasm cold.

"Goddamn it, Gab! This better have not been a fucking prank. I've been standing outside the motherfucking station since 2:45 this morning, so I could go to work like a good little capitalist and keep the American economy going. But you forgot to tell me I need a fucking key to get into the station, so quit licking super cop's clit and get your ass down here before...before I..." The

tape running out of room cut off Sean's voice.

Gab looked at Shannon; sheepishly she started, "Ah...honey."

"Go on. Go take care of things," Shannon said, giving her best 'I understand' look.

Gab almost cried in frustration as Shannon removed her fingers, acutely feeling their loss and experiencing empty nest syndrome.

She got up, stealing Shannon's T-shirt, and padded over to the phone. "Hi...yes...Greg is it? Uh huh. Well, Greg, this is Gabriel Wildeman, your boss. I have a question for you. Is there a crazy homeless person staring through the front doors at you? Uh huh. Does she have red hair in braids? Yes, good. Greg, that's my sister Sean, and I want you to let her in. Yes, I know I have orders for her not to be let in but things have changed; you can rescind that order. She's going to be the new morning producer working with Ms. Reinhart. Uh huh. Thanks, Greg."

She walked back into the bedroom, taking in the exposed glorious black skin; it seemed to glow in the light from the bedside lamp. She bit her lip; it beckoned to her, begging her to touch it, stroke it, and do naughty things to it. She groaned and covered her eyes.

Shannon laughed. "You have to go to work, don't you?"

"Yes," Gab whimpered. "I forgot to give Sean a key. She couldn't get in and now they're going to be behind. I need to go do damage control."

"Go on. I have today off so I'll be here naked when you get done."

Gabs knees almost buckled. Shannon laughed again, seeing the effect she was having on her lover. "Go on." She threw some pants at Gabriel.

Gab pulled the pants off her head, and grumbling, went in to the bathroom to get ready.

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Jessica pulled off her raincoat. The weather was something that she couldn't get over. It rained a lot, especially in the mornings. She shook out her long dark hair, wondering again if maybe she shouldn't just get it cut to a more manageable length. She went to the break room, slightly irritated to see that there was no coffee brewed. She was talent; she wasn't supposed to make coffee. She sighed, pouring water into the pot and flicking the switch to on.

She moved on to the studio and the production room. Annoyed, she saw that it was dark and empty. Great! Was she the only one here? Where was her audio engineer or whatever? She

couldn't do everything. She turned on the lights and began to fume. She was a professional; she was on time. Was it too much to ask of everybody else? She knew this was public radio and they did things a little different because of budget and personal constraints, but this was ridiculous. She went back to her cubicle and booted up her PC.

Sean sloshed up the stairs to the second story studios, dripping as she went. She was cursing under her breath and wringing out her shirt as she walked through the doors. The smell of coffee hit her nose, almost sending her into a caffeine coma. Water dripped from her clothes onto the carpet in a steady tattoo beat as she followed the scent back through the cubicles to the break room. She randomly stole a cup from the counter and poured the brown liquid into it. Caffeine now safely secured and being administrated to her body, she walked back to the studio.

Jessica looked up over the top of her cubical; she swore she'd heard something. Maybe her producer had finally shown up. She took the stack of printouts from her printer and made her way back to the studio. She missed television news reporting more and more; it wasn't nearly as much work. She had little peon's then to run around gathering information and news on late breaking events. She'd never had to do that stuff on her own before; all she'd had to do was sit there and look pretty for the camera.

She walked back, reading the latest from the AP news wire. Not even looking at the engineer she stated, "You're late."

"Well, Princess of Power, if you would have let me in the building when I asked we wouldn't be where we are today," a voice responded.

Angrily Jessica looked up, and then nearly choked on her tongue. It was the street person from outside the building. "But, but, you can't be my producer - you're homeless."

Sean looked at the woman as if she'd sprouted wings and given birth to a baby Elvis. "You keep saying stuff like that and the public radio listeners will crucify you. How the hell did you get this job?"

Jessica raised a perfectly plucked eyebrow in question. "You are my new producer, right? You just didn't sneak in to rob the place?"

"Yep, that's me; your new best friend. I'm Sean and I'll be your producer for the next four hours so just sit back and leave the driving to me." Sean gave her best winning smile.

Jessica was not won over; she remained skeptical. "Well, I still think you're probably a bum but you can't be as bad as anybody else I've worked with here."

Sean grunted, taking off her shoes and dumping the water out into the garbage can before wringing out her socks. She was contemplating whether or not to just strip off the rest of her clothes and do her first show naked. It wasn't like the audience could see her.

She went with taking off her shirt and leaving her bra and shorts on, she didn't want to make too

bad of an impression on her first day. She laid her clothes and shoes out to dry next to the equipment rack which was putting off a lot of heat. Sean wished Gab would get here. She didn't have a clue what she was doing, but damn if she was going to admit it to the ice princess.

Looking around she found a binder labeled Control Room and another labeled Morning Edition Host. Out the control room window into the studio, she saw whatsername reading and reworking news stories. She began to read and pore over diagrams of how everything worked.

Jessica was ignoring the control room and the strange person that was inside. She wasn't sure yet what to make of her morning. So far it was going better than her last two days; Sean was letting her get her prep work done and not bugging her.

"Hey," a voice called out and Jessica cringed. She'd spoken too soon.

Sighing she responded, "Yes?"

"Do you know where the power switch is for this thing?"

"What? Tell me you're joking." She stormed into the control room and nearly choked on her tongue again; the woman was half naked and very clearly a woman. Sean was standing hands on hips staring intently at the equipment bay that housed the various CD, reel to reel, and cart decks that were used to play back stories, music, or underwriters.

"They're all turned on but they're not on, so there must be a master switch somewhere."

"Huh?" was all Jessica managed. Her new producer was hot for some punk kid. She was shorter than Jessica's own 5'9" height by about four inches and had the best built body she'd seen in forever. Strong shoulders, defined arms, and fantastic abs. There was some sort of tattoo, a snake she thought, that wrapped around her body. It started out on her arm, curling around a bicep and then went across her back to end at the other arm.

"The power switch. Do you know where it's at or not?" Sean asked, getting somewhat annoyed at her supposed talent.

Actually Jessica found out, as Sean turned and looked at her, that it was two snakes - one went around the front and the other the back; they were biting each other's tail. *'Wasn't that called an oroburos or something?'* Jessica mused to herself.

"If you don't know something, it's okay to admit it. I won't tell anybody else," Sean said.

Jessica snapped out of her thoughts. "Of course I don't know anything about a power switch. I'm talent."

"Talented at what? Being a pain in the ass? Just go back to your news stories. Somehow I'll find a way to get you on the air and have you sound decent."

Jessica huffed and walked out. No matter how hot her producer was she would not be talked to in such a manor. When Gab got in they were going to have a talk about Sean.

Gab got to the station a little after four in the morning. She was happy to note that Sean had made the switch at the top of the hour, going out of the Classical Music programming into Morning Edition. Now if they would just be ready at five for when they cut away from the satellite to do the station's local news program, all would be good.

As she entered the second floor studios she expected yelling, or maybe to find dead bodies. She was a little concerned to see a trail of tiny blood droplets going to the women's restroom. She debated on whether or not she should go in to see if there was a dead body that needed disposing of. She went for door number one. She found a half-naked Sean standing over the sink holding a wet paper towel to her forehead.

"Jesus, Sean! How many more head injuries can you take before the brain damage is permanent?" she asked.

Sean turned towards the door and just glared at Gab with her good eye; the other was covered by bloody paper towel. "I better get hazard pay." She removed the paper towel, throwing it in the garbage and replacing it with another. "A word of advice. Ms. Reinhart doesn't like being told what her problem is. She gets irritable and throws phones."

"Sean, please tell me you didn't sexually harass Jessica, and why are you nearly naked?"

"No, she didn't harass me, Gabriel," broke in a throaty alto, that Gab was certain would make big bucks at a phone sex venture.

Gab turned and saw Jessica standing in the doorway. "Party in the women's restroom," Sean joked.

"Sean, shut up," Gab snapped. Sean's face went stony and she turned back to the sink.

Jessica noticed the interaction. Hesitantly she approached the two women. "Sean, I...I brought you some Band Aids and an ice pack. I'm very sorry about losing my temper."

"Hey, J, don't sweat it. It's not the first time a beautiful woman has thrown something at me and it probably won't be the last. I shouldn't have...um," she said, shooting a look at Gab, "I shouldn't have said what I said. I'm sorry."

Jessica smiled. She could be gracious. "Apology accepted, and from now on keep your theories

on how my bitchiness could be cured to yourself."

Gab's head was spinning; obviously there had been some big blowup, but instead of screaming, yelling, and nasty barbs being thrown around, they were being civil. "Sean, we'll leave you to get yourself patched up. Now, Ms. Reinhart, if you would come with me, I'd like to go over your news stories for the morning."

"Call me Jessica; Ms. Reinhart is my mother."

Gab's eyes bugged at that, and silently followed Jessica out of the restroom. "Oh, and Sean, get dressed. This is a place of business."

Once seated in the studio, Gab looked over the stories for the morning. "Jessica, I want to just apologize for my sister's behavior. She's not very big on tact, manners, or social graces."

Jessica stared at her manager, wondering why she hadn't seen the resemblance before now. They had the same build. Gab was a little shorter, her eyes a paler green, but they were very much related. "It's been an interesting morning, I'll give you that. But that's not all Sean's fault; we got off on the wrong foot. Hell, this morning I thought she was a homeless person, and that girl's mouth..." She paused, looking into the doorway to the control room and the phone that lay broken on the floor.

Gab's eyes followed, "Some arm you got there. So, you want to tell me what happened?"

Jessica laughed. "She told me 'Know what your problem is, Princess of Power? You need to get laid.' I thought...I don't know what I thought. Next thing I know I'm chucking the phone at her head."

Gab was surprised Sean hadn't offered to do it herself. Jessica was a very attractive woman. "Is there going to be a problem working together? In all honesty, I can't think of another option besides Sean. She's even a wildcard at best."

Jessica frowned. "Am I really that hard to work with?"

Gabriel frowned too, not sure how to phrase what she was about to say. Sean solved her dilemma by walking in and spouting off. "You're a fucking kick in the pants to work with or at least a swift phone to the head." They laughed, breaking the tension in the room.

However, Jessica had seen the look Gab had given her and knew what the woman really thought, probably what everyone in the whole station thought. "Is your head okay?" she asked.

"Yeah, no worries. I think it'll give me a right sexy scar on my eyebrow. I'll be a chick magnet for sure now."

"Great; like your ego wasn't big enough before," Gab broke in.

"Is there anybody who isn't gay in this place?" Jessica mused.

"Probably. What? Are you feeling outnumbered, Ms. Reinhart?" Sean said with a laugh.

Jessica grabbed her coffee mug, and on her way out to get more coffee, she said, "Just because I'm immune to your charms, Sean, doesn't mean I'm straight."

Sean's jaw dropped, and Gab nearly fell out of her chair laughing. *'Oh, God,'* Gab thought, *'someone made Sean speechless.'*

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Jessica locked the door on her car, set the alarm, and started the short walk to the station from the parking lot. It didn't even occur to her to be scared. Brooks was almost comatose compared to LA. At three in the morning, there was nobody out. Brooks wasn't that small of a town, but eerily the section of downtown where the station was located was empty of life.

As she turned the corner of the building, she saw two cops restraining a kid; this was probably the reason the streets were so empty.

As she got closer to the building, she heard the kid shouting at the cops, "I'm not loitering. I work here!" That's when Jessica realized that it was Sean that the cops were restraining. She smirked to herself; she wasn't the only one who thought Sean looked like a street person.

"Hey, she'll tell you I work here."

One of the officers looked up, "Miss, do you know this kid?"

"Kid. For Christ's sake, I'm 25."

Jess looked at the officer. "At KEZJ we're hardly in the practice of hiring juveniles."

"That's what I thought."

"What? Jess! Ha ha, very funny; come on." Sean attempted to wrestle free of the cops, only to be placed into a submission hold. She gave a yelp of pain as her arm was thrust into an uncomfortable angle.

Jess's smirk turned into a frown when Sean yelped and she saw how rough the cops were being. "Wait a minute. Can I look at her again?" The cop shoved Sean forward. "I'm sorry, Officer; I do know her. She does work here."

"Are you certain, Miss?"

"Quite."

They let go of Sean with a shove. Sean didn't look back or at Jess, she just scooped up her skateboard and walked into the building. Jess sighed, telling herself over and over again that she would apologize for being a vengeful bitch. Sean just had a way of bringing out the worst in her.

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Jess approached the building, looking for any sign of her audio producer. This morning there was no sign of her. Yesterday's show had been interesting at best. Sean would get her going, yelling at her for her little stunt with the cops. Before she could get a good yell back, Sean, the bitch as she was becoming known in Jess' head, would flip the mic to live. She had to switch gears to her professional on-air persona so fast she almost had an identity crisis. When the show was over she'd marched back to the control room only to find Sean gone and a large note telling one Ms. Reinhart to go fuck herself.

Sean had gotten the last word, which pissed her off to no end. Jess no longer felt bad for beaming Sean in the head with a phone.

As she walked onto the second floor she smelled coffee. She walked into her cubical and set down her backpack. On her desk she saw a steaming cup of pitch black sludge, and standing next to her mug was a She-Ra doll whose hair had been dyed black. She sat down, sipping her coffee and laughing.

Walking into the studio she saw Sean leaning back in a chair, feet up on the board and staring at the ceiling.

"Is She-Ra a peace offering?"

Sean looked over at Jessica, and got a puzzled look on her face.

"What? You did put the doll there, didn't you? I don't have some weirdo stalking me?"

"No, I put it there. You just looked different, then I realized what it was."

"So what's different about me?"

"You're smiling. You should do it more often. You have a beautiful smile."

Jessica felt herself start to blush. "Sean, we've talked about this. I'm immune to your flirting;

besides you annoy me."

"For the life of me, I can't figure out why."

"That's easy. You're annoying."

"Yeah well, you're a pain in my ass. Get over yourself. Oh, and I wouldn't drink the coffee. I put ExLax in it." With that Sean got up and left the studio.

Jess looked at her coffee. Setting it down, she ran after Sean.

Jess stared at the front doors of the building as she got closer and closer. She wondered what this morning had in store for her. Honestly, Sean may be a pain in her ass, but she never knew what each morning would bring her. Almost a month of working together and she couldn't imagine working with anybody else. She was surprised to see the doors open and two people come out. She recognized Sean's form right away, the other she had no clue about. She paused to watch and her jaw about hit the pavement as the two kissed. For a moment she thought the other woman was going to inhale Sean's head but then they parted with a whispered 'I'll call you'. She passed the young woman as she started walking up to the doors again. Sean reopened the door when she noticed Jess. Jess said nothing, noting the smug 'cat that ate the cream' smile on Sean's face and the faint perfume of sex coming off the shorter woman.

As she passed she shot out, "Entertaining?"

Sean shrugged and closed the door. "I gave her a tour then she gave me one."

Jess stopped in her tracks as she entered the studio. It reeked of sex. For some reason the thought of Sean and that thing having sex where she was supposed to be working was really disturbing. In fact it was making her really angry. "Sean!" she bellowed.

"You shouted." Sean came in, grinning from ear to ear, and handed her a mug of coffee.

Jess took it but eyed it suspiciously. "You had sex in the studio."

"Um...yes."

"I can't believe you. I have to work in here; now all I'll be thinking about is you and that, that thing having sex in here."

"Well, if it helps with the visual, I let her blindfold me and tie me up."

Was it hotter in the studio than normal? "Jesus, Sean! I didn't need to know that."

"Well, I'm not the only person to have sex in here. I'm sure Gab and super cop have done it in here three or five times. You know there's just something kinky and a turn on about having sex in a place that has the potential of broadcasting it to hundreds of listeners. Maybe you should try it."

"I think not."

"Your right, Jess; you should start small. Like actually having sex with another person. I know Gab doesn't put a morality clause in her contracts. So why don't you go down the Triangle and pick up some lesbian and..."

"Sean, this is me going for the phone so I can throw it at your head again." Sean went silent.
"Now go get me a fan so I can air this place out. It stinks."

Jess sighed, dumping her stuff onto her desk. Sean laughed, coming in behind her. "How did your interview go with the Fire Chief?"

Jess sat down and rolled her eyes. "What a pig. Seriously, he looked like a pig. He had these jowls, little beady black eyes, and he kept staring at my breasts."

"Well, you've got quite the rack there. I can see how he would get distracted," Sean said while pointedly looking at her cleavage.

Jessica laughed. "Can you do me a favor when you edit this?"

"Sure," Sean said, sitting on the edge of Jessica's desk.

"Make him sound like a stumbling idiot."

"You got it, She-Ra. One porky pig coming up," Sean said then started to get down off the desk, but stopped when Jess placed a hand on her arm.

Jess momentarily stopped when their skin touched, distracted by the warmth coming off of Sean's flesh. She could smell the faint aroma of strawberries coming from Sean. "I didn't figure you for a strawberry scent kind of girl."

Puzzled, but not complaining at the human contact, Sean shrugged. "In all honesty I'm not, but I ran out of soap and stole MJ's body wash. Oddly it's a nice change of pace."

"Oh, your girlfriend." Jess was somewhat upset by this intimate reference to Sean's special friend. However, she didn't remove her hand; in fact it began to move up Sean's arm. The corded muscle hidden under velvety skin surprised Jess.

Sean swallowed somewhat nervously. "MJ's not my girlfriend; she's my little sister." Sean really wanted to clear that up.

"But you have a girlfriend, right? That thing from the other morning."

"No, she's just someone I met and had casual sex with."

Jess gave a little chuckle. "Nothing like being honest." Her hand continued to move; it had moved up the bicep and revealed the snake's head. Her fingertips gently stroked the pattern.

"Well, no point in pretending it was something it wasn't. I was a little lonely and a whole lot of frustrated, but she wasn't somebody I wanted to keep and she felt the same."

Jess wasn't really sure what was going on, but she really wanted to do something to or with Sean. She wasn't sure which.

They fell into a heavy pregnant silence. Sean really, really wanted to lean over and kiss Jess.

Gabriel's voice shouting broke the moment. "Jessica, you get that interview?"

Jess flew out of her chair, clearing her throat, "Uh, yeah, yes. Got it right here. I just gave it to Sean as a matter of fact."

Gab stepped into the cubical, staring at the two women. If she didn't know better she'd swear they were up to something. "Great. Sean, do you mind staying and editing it tonight? I'd like it to air tomorrow morning."

Sean gave a grin and slid off Jess's desk. "You got it, boss."

"Sean, I love it when you're subservient. If you want to later I have some boots that could be licked clean."

Sean yelled back, "Bite me, short stuff. I'll show Shannon pictures of your senior prom. Remember Hal Harper and your attempt to pretend you were straight?"

Gab winced. "Don't you dare. And I'm only an inch shorter than you."

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In her office Gab smiled, twirling a pencil around in her fingers. Things were going well for a change. It had been almost two months since she'd taken a chance with Sean, and the morning news show was going well. Better than well; the ratings had come out and they were in the Top 10 for a change. Maybe the Board would renew her contract as General Manager. She smiled happily. She'd found someone who could put up with Ms. Reinhart. The studio was full of yelling and shouting every morning; Sean and Jessica still butted heads at every opportunity. However, despite the caustic remarks, they got the show produced and on air. She smiled smugly; she was a genius.

Sean stared at the coffee pot, willing it to drip faster. She heard someone come in but she ignored them; she needed coffee.

"Hey, Wildeman? What's your secret?" someone asked.

Confused, she turned around to see the station's engineer and her assistant. "Oh hey, Jill. Thomas," she said, giving them both a smile. "Secret to what?"

"You know - taming the shrew."

She stared at Jill in confusion. "I had a gerbil once; is that close?"

Jill laughed. Thomas broke in, "No, silly. Handling Ms. Center-of-the-Universe Reinhart."

"Oh, that. You know, a little of this, a little of that."

"I knew it. You're sleeping with the ice princess. Man, is she as hot in bed as she looks?"

"Thomas, you know we could get in trouble for making such remarks in the office," Sean sputtered. It wasn't true, but no one would believe her.

"Hey, I want details. It won't go outside this space. It's just between us," Jill chimed in.

"What's just between you guys?" a voice broke in. Three sets of eyes bugged.

Sean turned around, focusing on the coffee pot. "Nothing," she choked out. Jill and Thomas tried to look innocent and sneak away.

Jessica stared at her three fellow employees, trying not to show the hurt she was feeling. No matter how she tried she was still an outsider. Jessica didn't want to admit it but she was very lonely. It hadn't bothered her before, but after she'd lost her job in LA all her supposed friends had vanished since she wasn't a hot rich news celebrity. Living in Brooks she was coming to realize how empty her life really was.

"Fine, like I wanted to know what your three childish brains were up to anyways." She walked

over, taking the coffee pot that now held enough nectar for a single cup of coffee out from under Sean's nose and emptying it into her mug. Then she stormed out.

"I don't know, Sean. She's hot and all, but she's probably frigid in the sack."

Sean wasn't listening; she was staring at the now empty coffee pot in horror. She sunk to her knees screaming, "NO!". Jill and Thomas snuck away.

Jessica sat in her cubical reading over possible news stories; she wanted to look into the supposed smuggling ring but wasn't sure if Gab would go for it. She had been hearing rumors that the Brooks' docks were being used to hustle drugs in from British Columbia. Annoyed, she heard giggling coming from outside her cubical, breaking her concentration.

She started to get up to tell them to get the hell away, but stopped when she heard her name mentioned.

"It's true. Apparently Ms. Reinhart is slipping Sean a little something extra. That's why she sticks around," said one voice.

"Well, are you surprised? It is Sean Wildeman. That woman would sleep with anything."

"True, but you would think she'd have better standards than to be sleeping with that bitch Reinhart."

"Oh, Gloria, you're just jealous because Sean hasn't put the moves on you."

Jessica felt anger bloom like springtime in her chest. She got up, violently knocking her chair back, and strode out of her cubical back to the production studio, where she knew Sean was editing her interview with the chief of police.

The three women gave a gasp of surprise as the tall woman walked by them. "Oh, my God. Did you know that she was in her cubical?"

"No. She's normally not here this late in the day."

"She must have heard everything we said."

"Good. That cold bitch deserves a reality check."

"God, Gloria, get over yourself."

Sean looked up from the digital editing software she was using as the door was ripped open. She took her headphones off. "Hey, didn't you see the 'In Use' light was lit, dumbass?" She gulped as a very angry Jessica entered the booth. "Hey, J, what's up?"

"I'll tell you what's up. For some strange reason everyone thinks we're sleeping together. That's

my incentive package that keeps you around to work with me," she shouted.

"Hey whoa, Jessica; I'm sorry if that's what people are saying, but..."

"Is that what you and your cronies were whispering about behind my back? How you get to fuck me? How you thawed out the Ice Princess?"

"Jessica, honest, I never said anything to anybody to imply that were doing the nasty."

"Fuck you, Wildeman! I don't believe you at all," Jessica snarled. Leaning down she placed her hands on the armrests of Sean's chair trapping the smaller woman. They were face to face.

"Look, Jess, calm down."

Without conscious thought, Jessica leaned over and took Sean's lips in a brutal kiss. If she had been able to admit it, she would have realized she'd wanted to kiss Sean for a while now.

They broke apart. Stunned, Sean lifted her fingers to her lips; they came away red with blood. "Uh, did you have to do that?"

"I thought I would give you a taste of what you'll never have." With that Jessica turned around and opened the door to leave.

Sean was getting her stuff together for the staff meeting when she heard a small cough from behind her. Turning she saw Gab standing there, looking unhappy.

"What can I do you for, Sis?"

"How could you, Sean? I thought you had changed? You were doing good work here and then Reinhart comes into my office crying about you slandering her to the staff."

"I...I didn't do anything," Sean said in her defense.

"That's just weak, Sean. For the first time you can't get someone to fall into your bed. So you make up lies about her. Pack your stuff. You're fired."

"Gab, please! I didn't do anything, and I really need this job."

"I'm sorry but I can't condone this kind of behavior."

"Fuck you, Gab. You've just been waiting for a reason to screw me over, and you jump all over me before I can even do anything in my defense. Well, fuck you." She launched a kick, knocking over her cubical wall. Seeing the fear in Gab's face, she said, "Don't worry. I'm not going to sink low enough to take a swing at you." With that she grabbed her skateboard and stormed out of the office.

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Gab looked around at the faces of her staff. She cleared her throat. "Okay, if we could get started. First thing, we'll be opening up the job position for a morning audio producer to work with Jessica. Sean has been let go." Jessica felt the people around her mutter and she caught some glares.

"Saturday at the Mayor's speech, David, you'll be working with Jessica in covering that. Any questions?" Gab paused, waiting.

"No, but I'd like to say something," a voice broke in.

"Sean, what are you doing here?" Gab asked, seeing her sister at the back of the room.

"I just wanted to say something. I'm not sure how the rumor got started, but Ms. Reinhart and I have never had anything but a working relationship. Somehow it got around that we were sleeping together and that's not true. I just wanted to clear that up before I left." Sean sent a glare at Jill and Thomas who were doing their best to disappear into the chairs that they were sitting in.

Sean consciously avoided looking at Jessica. "Jessica is a fine reporter. She knows her stuff, and on the rare occasion she removes the stick she's got up her ass, she can even be a charming person." With that said she turned and left.

Gab felt like a shit. She knew Sean must have been telling the truth because she never would have said all that stuff otherwise. She tried to get the meeting back on track.

Jessica sat in her cubical, not sure what she was feeling. After everything she'd said and done, Sean had still come back and said all that. She'd called Jessica charming.

Gab sat in her office, throwing pencils at the ceiling, and thinking. She'd almost called Shannon but she knew her lover was working. There was a knock on the door and she absently told them to come in. She was startled to see her engineer come in. "What can I do for you, Jill?"

Jill stared at the floor for a moment. "Ah, that rumor about Jessica and Sean...that was Thomas' and my fault. We were razzing her and, well, we weren't very discrete. Sean never said anything one way or the other. Actually she was paying more attention to the coffee than anything else.

We just made connections that weren't there."

Gab wanted to scream; she had so much damage control to do.

"I just wanted to set the record straight. I'll understand if you want to fire me."

Gab sighed. "I can't do that. You have the luxury of being an engineer; I can't afford to treat you on the same level as everyone else. However, if this behavior is ever repeated, I'll have to do something."

Jill looked very ashamed of herself. "I understand."

"Okay, go home. I need to do damage control."

Jessica looked up as Gab came into her office. "Jess...um...I just wanted to let you know about some information that just came to light."

Sean was moping around her step mom's house. She looked up as Mama Megan came out on the deck that gave a great view of the ocean.

"Rough day?" the woman asked.

"Yeah, Gab fired me," she said, looking back out to the ocean. She didn't want anybody to see the tears in her eyes. She had really liked that job, and she liked working with Jessica. The woman could be a royal bitch but she knew her stuff and expected the best out of the people she worked with. Plus she dished it out just as much as Sean did.

"Oh, honey, I'm sorry. I know how much you liked that Jessica girl. Do you want me to talk to Gab?"

"I do not like Jessica; she's a bitch."

"Yes, you do. When you come over, it's Jessica this and Jessica that. So do you want me to talk to Gab?"

"No, not really. I mean, it was only a matter of time before it happened. What was I thinking? Gab has hated my guts since the day I moved in."

"That's not true. She's hated you since the day you hung her upside down from the upstairs balcony."

"Oh yeah. She was going to snitch on me."

Megan laughed. Sean and Gabriel had mixed like oil and water since the day Sean had moved in with the Wildeman clan when she was 16. Sometimes she could still see glimpses of the wild teenage girl who'd been transplanted from the ghetto of LA. She loved Sean just as much as she loved the three girls she'd given birth to, but sometimes she feared she had inherited some of Patrick's worst traits - drinking, womanizing, and depression.

She'd been happy with the recent changes she'd seen in Sean. Sobering up had been good for the girl, although the hitting rock bottom part had been scary for the family.

"How are the AA meetings going?" she asked.

"If that's a subtle hint to make sure I'm still going, that sucked, Mama Megan. They're fine and I'm still going twice a month."

"Good. If you ever need me to go with you, you know I will."

Sean smiled and gave the slightly taller woman a hug, "Thanks; I appreciate it."

"Well, Kelly, April, MJ, and the rest should be here soon for the annual end of summer BBQ. Feel up to forgetting about the rest of your day and having a little fun?"

Sean smiled. "Yeah, I'm up to forgetting about my crappy day. Tomorrow I have to go job-hunting, 'cause I don't want to violate my probation. You need me to do something to help get ready?"

"No. Why don't you go work off some steam on the ramp? I want you to be nice to Gab and Shannon; you two can slug it out but not during family time."

"Yes, mama," Sean said, flipping her board up into her hand. She leaned over and gave the older woman a kiss on the cheek before heading back to the skate board ramp.

Jessica watched as the car left the city of Brooks and moved into the boonies. She leaned forward. "Are you sure that it's okay that I come to the BBQ?"

Gab twisted in her seat. "Yeah, it's fine. My mom lives by the notion 'the more the merrier'. Plus Sean will be there and we can both do some groveling. God, she's going to eat it up; her ego will never let me hear the end of it."

In the driver's seat Shannon laughed. "I'll get you a beer to help wash down all that crow you'll be eating, honey."

Jessica looked at Gab for a second. "You and Sean really don't get along."

Shannon laughed some more. "That, Jessica, is an understatement. They've hated each other from nearly Day One that Sean moved into the Wildeman household."

Gabriel sniffed. "She held me upside down from my ankles from the second story balcony. That doesn't instill sisterly love. Then she went and slept with and stole various girlfriends from me."

Shannon broke in. "I thank god everyday that Sean slept with them instead of you. Honey, I've met some of these ex's and your taste in women until you met me sucked."

"You don't seem so down on Sean, Shannon. Why's that?" Jessica asked, trying to figure out the dynamics.

Shannon shrugged. "Well, if I hadn't arrested her, I never would have met Gab. So that's a point in her favor. Plus, unlike my biased lover here, I think Sean's really trying to clean up her act and some people, like the one sitting next to me..." Gab punched Shannon in the shoulder. "...aren't really giving her an easy time."

"What do you expect when you have a two year affair with the mayor's wife, have a messy public fight, top it off by getting really drunk, and somehow end up stealing the mayor's car which you then wrap around a light pole and get caught with an 8th of coke," Gab spouted off. "Those just aren't things the people of Brooks are going to forget overnight."

Shannon sighed. "It's been two years and certain people still won't let it go."

"Oh my god. What kind of person do you have me working with, Gab?"

Gab sighed. "Well, in all honesty, the coke was probably the mayor's. Jess, don't get me wrong; I don't like Sean, but now that she's not drinking anymore she's really not that bad. You've been working with her for almost two months. Do you really have any complaints?"

Jessica thought about it. Sean actually was really good at making her sound great on the air and there really wasn't anybody else that she wanted to work with. She remembered the She-Ra doll Sean had brought her one day as a joke. Sean had even dyed the doll's hair black. "Actually, if I had my pick of all the sound engineers, I'd only pick Sean to work with. She knows when to push me and when to let me work, and when to get me yelling. What did she do before working at the station?"

Gab laughed. "She was an attendant at the Gas and Go."

"What? You're pulling my leg?"

"Nope, but before her arrest she worked at the local CBS station. They fired her after her arrest."

Shannon snorted. "I'm sure our lovely mayor put some pressure there as well. In my opinion, after he was publicly humiliated, he went out of his way to bury Sean."

They pulled off the freeway onto a single lane gravel road. The only thing to mark it was an old black mailbox. As they pulled through the trees, a nice two-story house was revealed.

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Megan smiled and hugged Kelly and his girlfriend, Karen, as they came into the house. She pulled on the sparse chin hair desperately hanging off his chin. "Still trying to grow facial hair, I see."

He gave a sheepish smile. "Yep."

"Well, shave it off. You look like that Shaggy character from the cartoons."

"Hey," Kelly barked indignantly.

Karen mouthed a silent 'thank you' to Megan. She thought it was horrible, but didn't have the heart to say anything.

Megan gave the sparse hairs a good tweak, making Kelly blush and hide behind Karen. Megan laughed. "Okay, I'll leave it alone, but the next time I see you it better be gone. Go on; you're in charge of the grill like always. There's a cooler of chicken parts sitting next to it."

Kelly smiled and took Karen's hand to go down to the beach.

Next in came MJ and her friends, sounding like a herd of buffalo. "Ah, ah. All of you get out. I won't have you beasts messing up my clean house. You go around the side of the house down to the beach." Megan smiled at the chorus of 'Yes, Ms. Wildeman'. She grabbed her youngest, MJ, before she could make a break for it. "MJ, why don't you go out back to the ramp and spend some time with Sean." She smiled when she saw MJ's eyes light up; she knew how much the youngest Wildeman adored her older sister.

"She's here?"

"Yep, and she's had a bad day so I know she'll want to see you."

"What happened?"

"That's not important. Go on now; I've got traffic to monitor."

MJ raced around the other side of the house to the outdoor ramp. It had at one point been a pool, but Megan had thought it dumb to have a pool when the ocean was in her backyard. When Sean had come to live with them, she saw a way to connect with the angry young woman by taking an interest in something Sean loved - skateboarding. Megan had the pool converted and that had started a warming trend in their relationship.

MJ came around the corner to see her sister fly up the ramp. Coming to the top of the ramp, Sean's hands reached out, grabbing the lip and flipping her body upside down into a handstand, the board balanced on her feet. She held it for a few seconds then bent her knees and pushed back; the board came down with her feet, the rest of her body followed until she was upright again and zooming back down the ramp. She leaped over the smaller ramp on the other end, kicked out to a grind, and stopped a couple of feet away from MJ. She stepped off the board, unbuckled her helmet, and tackled the younger girl with a hearty yell of "MJ!"

Megan hugged April as she came in carrying a half rack of beer. April, like Sean, was the product of one of her late husband's indiscretions, but she loved April and Sean just as much as if she had given birth to them herself.

April smiled. "I brought beer. Do you want it in the kitchen or down on the beach?"

Megan pulled April into the kitchen. "Let's just put it in the kitchen for now. We'll make Kelly haul it down to the beach later."

"Mama, it's not fair to make Kelly do all the labor."

Megan just smiled, "Well, he wanted to be a boy so he can deal with the gender stereotypes that goes with it."

April laughed and followed Megan into the kitchen.

Jessica trailed after Shannon and Gab as they entered the house. They followed the call of, 'We're in the kitchen'. On her way through the house, Jess looked at the pictures that hung all over the living room walls. There were baby pictures, family photos, graduation shots, and various others. As she came into the kitchen she observed two women standing next to the counter, both laughing. The older of the two had graying blonde hair and bright blue eyes, and she gave off an energy that was hard to miss; this woman was queen of the castle. Standing next to the blonde was a younger woman, slightly taller, her hair a darker brownish red and her eyes a golden green.

Jess could see the resemblance between Gab and younger woman; they had to be sisters.

"Mama," Gab burst out. The older blonde put her beer down and gave Gabriel a hearty hug, nearly lifting her off the ground.

"How's my little leprechaun doing?"

"I'm good."

"And I see you've brought me more guests to spoil." Megan grabbed Shannon in a hug then made the officer bend down so she could give her a kiss on the cheek. "Have you been keeping Gab in line?"

Shannon smiled. "I try but she's a handful."

"I bet you need to break out those handcuffs of yours on occasion."

"Mama!" Gab said, blushing hard.

Shannon and Megan laughed. Then the Wildeman matriarch turned her eye on the newcomer. "And who might you be?"

Jessica fidgeted for a minute. "I'm Jessica Reinhart. I...ah...work for Gab."

"Well, I'm happy to see that you're just as sexy as your voice sounds on the radio. You wouldn't believe how many folks truly have a face for radio."

Jessica blushed slightly.

"Mama, don't embarrass the talent."

"Christ, girl! I raised five lesbians. I think I know a sexy woman when I see one. Especially after I found all that porn Kelly and Sean had hidden in their rooms. Those two, I swear."

"You swear about what?" Sean said, walking into the kitchen arm in arm with MJ.

The room suddenly went very tense. Gab and Jessica looked everywhere but at Sean, and Sean's face took on a stony quality.

"I was telling them about the time I found all that porn you and Kelly had stashed in your room."

"Oh," Sean said uncomfortably. She suddenly found the kitchen floor fascinating.

April didn't miss what was going on; Gab and Sean were fighting again. She decided to push things a bit. "Sean, you should have just done what Gab and I did."

"And what was that?" Sean was thankful; she now had someplace to direct her attention.

"Go in, steal yours, and then return it. That way there was no incriminating evidence."

"Hey, April, don't go spilling all our secrets," Gab sputtered.

"That would explain a lot," Sean said, nodding her head.

Jessica laughed at the interaction, thankful to April for moving everything forward. "So what happened?" she asked.

Sean looked embarrassed. Megan laughed. "They came back from whatever they were doing and I was sitting in the living room with this hill of porn mags. Their jaws just hit the floor. They're sputtering and denying and saying they just read 'em for the articles. So I made them read me the articles." Everyone started laughing.

"Hey now. It was a very traumatic experience for me," Sean broke in.

"Worse than when Mama caught you in the confessional with the nun?"

"Uh...well, no. I'm going to go back outside now," was all Sean said while moving rapidly towards the door.

"Hold it, Sean. Take this beer down to the beach." With that Megan dumped the half-rack in Sean's arms.

"Jeez, what am I? A pack mule?"

"Hush you or I'll bring up the story of how you came home one night with a Chihuahua attached to your ass." Sean made a hasty exit.

Jessica was laughing hard; she'd never seen Sean so cowed by anyone. "Oh my God! I didn't think anybody or anything could get to Sean. I've never seen her so polite."

"That's cause I'm the Mama and I have a large wooden spoon," the woman said, grinning. "I had some woman come up and tell me I didn't know what a headache was until I had raised three boys. I looked at her and told her to try five lesbians. I thought the poor woman's head was going to pop off."

Jessica felt admiration for Megan; it sounded like she'd raised five girls on her own. She had yet to hear any mention of the Wildeman father.

Gab, Shannon, MJ, Jessica, and April made their way down to the beach carrying various things for the BBQ. Jessica could see that the party was very much in full swing; at least 20 other people were down on the beach. Some were sitting next to a bonfire chatting, others were playing football in the sand and surf, and more were standing around the grill talking and giving

pointers.

A voice shouted out, "Come on, MJ. You're on my team. Put down the salad and help me kick your school chums' asses."

"Coming, Sean." MJ quickly set down the salad on the table next to the grill and took off, her feet spraying out sand as she ran toward the football game.

Jess watched the young woman who was the only Wildeman she'd met yet who looked anything like her mother. Her hair was longer and blonde but had faint red highlights and her eyes were bright blue like Megan's. They set their respective loads down on the table.

"Hey, Kelly, come here. I want you to meet someone."

A young man with short red hair and blue-green eyes looked up from flipping a chicken breast and gave a quick wave at Gab. Jess knew he had to be related because of the hair and the eyes, but she wasn't sure how. Megan had said she'd raised five lesbians and Kelly looked very boyish.

The young man gave a quick kiss to the woman at his side and walked over to them. He gave Shannon a hug and then picked up Gab and swung her around. Jess looked at Shannon. "Does everyone do that to her?"

Shannon nodded. "She's the smallest Wildeman so she gets the honors."

When Kelly put Gab down she punched him in the arm. "I hate it when you do that. Come on, I want you to meet someone. Kelly, this is my newest employee, Jessica. Jessica, this is my brother Kelly."

They shook hands but Jess looked confused. "I thought you had all sisters?"

"I do. Kelly use to be a girl."

Kelly smiled easily at Jess. "I hope it doesn't bother you."

Jess laughed. "Would it matter?"

"No, plus all my sisters would kick your ass."

"Good thing it doesn't matter then." Kelly seemed to be waiting for something. "What?"

"Well, normally people have tons of questions."

Jess laughed. "I'm from LA; there's not much I haven't seen."

Kelly gave a nod. "Cool. Well, I'm going back to my sacred duty at the grill. The chicken parts will be ready soon."

Jess took the beer that Shannon handed her and looked around. Everyone seemed to be having a good time. She looked for Sean and saw the woman running on the beach with a pack of young girls trying to tackle her. She wasn't sure how to approach Sean. She knew she needed to apologize; she just didn't know how to go about it. Sean had been nice enough in the kitchen but very tense. She suspected Megan had told her to behave.

She got up and decided to take a stroll along the beach to get herself centered.

Sean saw Jess walk off; distracted, the giggling girls easily brought her down.

She sat up spitting sand. "Okay, which one of you walking hormones copped a feel?" The teenagers giggled even more. "I see how it is."

MJ stared at her friend, Toni. "I can't believe you felt up my sister. That's so gross."

"Get over it, MJ. Your sister is hot. Besides it was an accident. I thought you'd be the last person to be a phobe."

"I'm not a homophobe, but she's my sister." She stared at the retreating back of her friend, not sure what she was feeling. It might have been jealousy that Toni found her sister attractive and not her.

Sean yelled at Shannon to come take her place with the perverts. As she handed the ball to Shannon she told her to watch out for their hands. Shannon just laughed and threatened to arrest the first one to grab her boob. As Sean went to walk off, Shannon grabbed her arm. "Sean, go talk to Gab. I know she wants to apologize. Just be patient and don't jump all over her till she gets it all out. Okay?"

"Yeah sure."

Shannon looked hard into Sean's eyes. Satisfied with what she saw, she nodded and let go.

Sean slunk up to Gabriel, not sure what to say. She was still pissed off at her sister for jumping on the 'Sean is a fuck up' bandwagon. "What's up, Gab?"

Gab blinked, set down her beer, and stared at Sean. She bit her lip in thought. "I wanted to say that I was sorry for not asking for your side of the story before firing you. Jill came to my office later and admitted that it was her and Thom who started the whole thing. I was a bad manager and I would like to offer you your job back."

Sean sat there, silently enjoying Gab's squirming. "Making amends for your mistakes sucks, doesn't it?"

"Yeah, it's a lot harder than I thought it would be."

"It gets easier the more you do it. That's part of our problem. We're both too proud to even say the words 'I'm sorry' or 'it's my fault'."

"Yeah. They're just words but it takes a herd of elephants to drag them out of me."

"Or a super cop."

"Yeah." Gab gave a brilliant smile as she caught her lover being taken down by the teenagers.

"Well, I'll come back only after I talk to Jess and make sure it's cool with her."

Gab smiled. "I don't think that will be a problem."

Sean shrugged and got off the table; she stopped when Gab called her name.

"Sean. Do everyone a favor and just kiss the girl. You know you want to."

Sean gave a roguish grin. "Yeah, I wanna so bad I dream about it at night."

They stared at each other, and then shock flooded both their faces. "Did we just have one of those sisterly bonding moments?" Gab asked.

"I'm not sure, but whatever it was, it scared me. Let's not do it again."

"You got it."

Gab smiled as she watched Sean tear off down the beach in the direction that Jessica had gone.

Jess stared out at the waves as they crept closer and closer, moving up the beach toward where she stood. The clouds had come back, hanging low over the ocean, blanketing the sky. She enjoyed being by herself. Gab and Sean's family and friends seemed nice, but it was hard to go from being on the outside to the middle and she needed some time to herself to get centered. She had taken off her shoes and socks and now walked barefoot in the warm sand, enjoying the feel of it shifting between her toes and under her feet. Jess tried to think of the last time she'd taken off her shoes and run around barefoot, enjoying the moment. Sadly she realized she'd never been one for enjoying the moment. She'd been too concerned with jockeying for position and doing the right things to move her career along. *'Look where that had gotten her,'* she mused. She had been one of the highest paid anchors in LA; she had been 'Queen of Snake Pit', to steal a phrase from Sean, but one dickhead manager had taken everything from her. So in the end all her climbing had left her with nothing - no real friends and no safety net. Now she was working in a

small market at a public radio station; she had indeed fallen far.

She heard something behind her and turned to see Sean running along the beach, her braided hair bouncing along. Jess had to laugh as Sean took a detour to run through a flock of seagulls who launched themselves into the air crying out in outrage. There was a look of devilment on Sean's face as she came up to where Jess stood. They stood side by side for a moment and the water rolled up the sand and nudged their feet, seemingly impatient with their mutual inability to speak.

"So," Sean started, "having a good time?"

"Yes," Jess said, smiling. "Your family seems nice."

"They're a hoot."

"You seem close."

"We are," Sean said. "How about you? Close with your family?"

"Not really," Jess said matter-of-factly.

"Okay. Note to self - never ask about the family."

Jess laughed. "Yep, and no questions or comments about my sex life."

"Gotcha, Princess of Power."

Jess laughed again. Feeling good, she turned and grabbed Sean in a hug, lifting the smaller woman up. After a moment she felt Sean wrap her arms around her in return, and there was nowhere else Jess wanted to be.

"Not that I'm not enjoying the love and affection being thrown my way, but what was that for?"

Jess set Sean back down, but didn't remove her arms. "I felt like it."

"So are we okay?" Sean asked.

"Yeah, we are."

Sean continued to look at her expectantly.

"What?"

"Well, I'm still waiting for my apology."

"You are, are you?"

"Yes. I'm not coming back to work for you 'til I get one."

Jess looked down into green eyes, worried. She was relieved not to see any anger in their jade depths. "Ice Princesses do not apologize."

"Uh huh," Sean said, stepping out of Jess's arms. "Well, this audio producer wants to see you grovel. Or you can work with David on Saturday. What's it going to be?"

"I'm sorry; I shouldn't have flown off the handle."

"That was weak."

Jess got onto her knees in front of Sean, the ocean came in washing along her legs. "Please come back to work. Mornings just won't be the same without you to cause havoc in my ordered universe."

"Well, okay. You're such a sweet talker."

"Well, I don't get wet for just anybody." Jess' jaw snapped shut as she realized how sexual that sounded.

"I've been told I have that effect."

"Jesus, Sean. Could your ego get any bigger?"

"Whoa there. You just channeled Gabriel. Please don't ever do that again."

"Can I get up now?"

"Sure." Sean held out a hand to help Jess up only to be pulled into the incoming surf. She sat up, sputtering and wiping the salt water out of her eyes. Seeing Jess struggling to get up and out of the way, she growled out, "Oh no you don't." Sean wrapped her arms around Jess's legs and pulled back, hauling the taller woman back down into the water.

"Sean, don't," was all Jess got out before she went back into the water.

Sean laughed as Jess sat up and spit water into her face. They sat there laughing, letting the ocean run over them as it washed up and then retreated from the beach. They were sitting in about a foot of water, laughing and splashing each other.

"You need to do that more, Jess. You're breathtaking when you laugh and smile." Jess stopped and looked at Sean. Sean just looked back intently. "Jess, I'd really like to kiss you now if you'll allow it."

Jess just nodded, unable to speak.

Sean cupped Jessica's face, looking into blue eyes that reminded her of the ocean swirling around them. It was just a simple kiss; she'd done it lots of times with lots of women, but this time it felt important. It created a weighted feeling in her chest; she paused, and then closed the distance, placing slightly chilled lips on Jessica's.

Jess grew worried as Sean hesitated. Had Sean changed her mind? Was she jerking her around? Then Sean's lips touched hers and she was lost and found all in swirling tenths of a second. She had forgotten what it meant to be worshiped by another person, but her body hadn't. Her mouth opened, allowing Sean's tongue to sneak in like Romeo up the balcony into Juliet's room. She no longer felt the water around her; it was just her body and Sean's being pulled together by the magnetism in their skin.

She gasped for air as Sean pulled away. "Wha...why did you stop?"

Sean giggled. "Because if we don't move out of the water, we're going to drown." She stood and held out a hand to help Jessica up. "Trust me; I didn't really want to stop."

Jess let herself be pulled out of the water and she wrapped a hand around Sean's waist, pulling the smaller woman close. "Does this mean you'd like to repeat that again in the near future?"

Sean just pulled Jessica down to her level and kissed her thoroughly until Jessica felt her skin heat and her heart pound.

Sean teased and tempted; her tongue the apple seducing Jessica out of the garden of her self-imposed isolation. Sean quite literally kissed Jessica senseless. Then abruptly she released the taller woman, giggling again at Jessica's stunned blank look. "I'll kiss you anytime you want, and if you ask real nice maybe we'll do some other even more pleasurable activities."

"Uh...okay. Like now?" Jessica asked eagerly. If Jess had been thinking even remotely clearly she would have been shocked at herself.

"No, having sex on the beach isn't really all that appealing. Trust me; you just end up with sand in the wrong places. However, if we're still speaking later, we might explore some things."

Jess, getting her wits back, replied, "You mean if you haven't annoyed me yet again."

"Whatever, Princess of Power." Sean turned to Jess and gave her a heated look and Jess' insides trembled. She felt a happy thrill as Sean invaded her personal space again, hoping it meant they were going to be kissing some more.

Sean ran her hands up Jessica's sides to her shoulders and then gave a push sending the taller woman back into the water. Sean watched for a moment longer to make sure Jess was okay then took off back down the beach. Jess stood up, her eyes icy. She should have known that things were going to well, and she took off down the beach after the redhead.

Jess caught up to her and took her down into the sand. Laughing, she began to tickle Sean's sides, happy to note the smaller woman was ticklish. Then, feeling empowered by the new wonderful feelings running rampant through her nervous system, she held Sean's hands over her head in the sand and kissed the redhead, proving she could yet again give as good as she got.

Shannon looked over at the new couple making out. "I guess this means Sean's coming back to work."

"Ewww. I know I just saw tongue. I'm going to be scared for life. I know I told her to kiss her but I thought they wouldn't do that in public. We have children present."

Shannon silenced Gabriel with a passionate kiss of her own. "Gab, leave them alone," she whispered in a pink-tinted ear.

Megan laughed, happily watching her brood of children and adopted children. The older woman closed her eyes, savoring the moment, holding it in her mind's eye so she could have it with her always. On a bad day she could call it up and savor it all over again. She opened her eyes and hugged her youngest to her as she watched the sun slink behind the clouds, setting them on fire as it slipped into the ocean.

The end for now...

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