

Kelly

(Inspired by Mike C, based on characters in his novel: “James”
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Chapter 31

Laura could see the pain in Cara’s eyes from across the room, could almost feel it. She left Kelly and Vanetta to talk and catch up with Brenda and Sherri, and went to where Cara was sitting holding her stomach.

“Honey,” said Laura, “you’ve got to let go of that anger or the pain will just get worse.”

Tears were forming in Cara’s eyes. “But... but...”

“Come with me,” said Laura taking Cara’s hand. “We’ll go someplace quiet and talk.”

Kelly looked over as Laura helped Cara up. “Anything wrong?” she asked with concern.

“Just a little intestinal bug, I think,” said Laura. “It’s okay. I know exactly the cure for it. We’ll be back in a little while.”

Kelly seemed uncertain, then saw Laura shake her head slightly. She knew now that Cara wasn’t suffering from any bug, but Laura’s eyes had told her that whatever it was, they needed to be alone for a bit.

Ami and Todd were still busy in the darkroom, but when Laura asked if she should bring Ami along, Cara shook her head. She didn’t want her lover to see her like this.

They climbed into the Tracker and Laura headed for the nearest ice cream parlor. Cara said hardly two words during the trip, and Laura allowed the younger girl to think. Thinking was important. It would help Cara clearly say what was bothering her, though Laura already had a good idea.

Ten minutes later they were sharing a “diet be damned” fountain special - nearly a full quart of ice cream, topped with fresh strawberries and drenched with hot chocolate fudge. This monster was then covered with freshly whipped cream and topped with shaved Belgian chocolate and almond slivers and big, juicy black cherries.

They ate in silence for the better part of the bowl, Laura occasionally clinking spoons with Cara as she beat her to a piece of fresh fruit. That began the dueling contest with the extra long fountain spoons, till finally Cara said, "That's not fair!"

"What's not fair, Honey? That I'm getting all your cherries or that Brenda was kissing Kelly?"

"Brenda," said Cara, deftly scooping a cherry out of the bowl before Laura could beat her to it.

"You know Kelly loves you," said Laura, swiping the last visible cherry from the bowl.

"Does she?" Cara asked hopefully.

Laura held the spoon with the cherry towards Cara, slowly and tantalizingly bringing it closer to the younger girl's lips.

"You know she does," said Laura rubbing the edge of her spoon over Cara's bottom lip.

Cara looked at Laura, her eyes threatening to break into tears any moment. She was about to reply but the minute she opened her mouth, Laura slipped the cherry into it. An older couple two tables away harrumphed with disgust and got up and walked out. Laura smiled as they left. Cara giggled. "Now they think that you and me are lovers," she said.

"I don't care what they think," said Laura. "But I do love you, and I love Ami too. Honey, do you think we could all live together if we didn't love each other?"

"So you're saying you love me, but it's a different kind of love," said Cara.

"No," said Laura, "it's never as easy as that. You can't quantify love or put labels on it. We just express it in different ways."

Cara twirled her spoon in the melting ice cream. "But," she said after a few minutes, "Brenda is the one who showed Kelly about woman love. The kind of love that you share with her."

"That's right, Sweetheart," said Laura. "And for that, I love Brenda. If it hadn't been for her, you and I might not be sitting here right now. I'd still be shaving roast beef at Arby's, and you'd be back in Laurel Canyon waiting to finish high school and wondering what to do with your life."

“I know,” pouted Cara. “I should be grateful to Brenda as well, but the two of them are going out like on a date! Doesn’t that bother you?”

“Not really,” said Laura. “I’ll have Todd and you and Ami to spend the night with.”

“But you won’t be sleeping with me and Ami,” said Cara loudly, then blushing at her own outburst.

“If sleeping is all they do, you have nothing to worry about,” said Laura with a laugh. “Kelly and I didn’t get upset when we found you and Ami sleeping with Todd a few nights ago.”

Cara blushed. “You saw us?”

“Actually, we were the ones that woke you guys up. But you were so busy trying to get your hand off Todd’s cock that you didn’t see us hiding behind the couch.”

Cara turned a deeper shade of red. “And you guys weren’t upset?”

“Cara, Sweetie. It was obvious the three of you had fallen asleep in front of the TV. People do funny things when they’re asleep without thinking about it. We knew you and Ami weren’t trying to steal Todd from us.”

“But... But... Brenda and Kelly will probably have sex!” wailed Cara, not able to hold back the tears.

“I don’t understand why that upsets you so much, Sweetie,” said Laura. “You can’t compare a few hours of physical intimacy with a life long commitment. Remember that in another month, Kelly and Todd and I will be married.” Laura’s eyes sparkled with the thought.

“But you should be upset!” said Cara. “You can say it’s a different kind of love, but it’s still sex.”

“That’s right, Honey. Except, it’s *just* sex. And aren’t you assuming a lot? What if all they do is go out for a meal and a movie or something?”

“Yeah, I know. If I assume, I make an ass out of me. But they were still kissing and Brenda had her arm around Kelly!”

“Sweetie. How many times have you seen Todd put his arm around Ami? And how many times has he put his arm around you?”

“But that’s different,” said Cara.

“No it isn’t, Sweetheart. It’s how we show affection. And if it goes a bit further than just hugging and kissing, just keep in mind that our Kelly chose us to live with her.”

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Todd and Ami were oblivious to everything going on in the studio or in the Ice Cream Parlor. They were running print after print through the trays of developer: 8 x 10 proofs that Todd would sort and send off to CrossTrain. When they talked at all, it came out in rapid-fire bursts, and then long periods of silence. Ami could see that Todd was thrilled with the results of what she and Cara had managed to pull off. She was getting a real understanding of what Todd looked for in an image, beginning to realize that no amount of classroom time could match the education she was getting as his apprentice.

The drying cabinet was getting pretty full and some of the prints could be removed. Todd finally stretched and switched off the enlarger.

“That’s it, Half Pint,” he said as he affectionately rubbed her head. “We’re done. Now it’s up to CrossTrain to pick and choose.”

Ami looked up at the clock. “Jesus, Todd, it’s past seven o’clock! No wonder I’m thirsty. Do you want a drink?”

“Yeah, that would be great. Mineral water, please. I think I need to replenish my electrolytes.”

“Why mineral water?” asked Ami. “I always thought that Gatorade was better for you?”

“It is if you are sweating up a storm like athletes,” said Todd, “but I just get dry and thirsty working in here. The mineral water is good for replenishing my salts and electrolytes without adding calories.”

“Cool. But you don’t seem to watch calories when you are eating!”

Todd grinned. “I like to eat. The vitamins take care of the rest. Now are you going to get us a drink or do you want to talk till the pictures are dry?”

“Back in a flash,” Ami said laughing, as she stepped into the revolving door.

At the swoosh of the heavy door, Brenda, Sherri, Vanetta and Kelly all looked around, only to see Ami standing in just her panties!

Sherri’s eyebrows shot up, Brenda smiled, and Vanetta and Kelly laughed.

“Oops! I did it again!” exclaimed Ami, quickly turning the door back to the darkroom.

“That’s our Ami,” said Kelly. “She’s a hard one to keep clothes on!”

“God, she doesn’t look anything like the girl I met out at Brookhaven,” said Sherri. “She’s beautiful!”

“As you will be,” said Kelly. “You already are, but a bit of makeup and some work with your hair, and we can get a basic portfolio started for you.”

Ami came back out this time wearing a T-shirt showing only her bare legs. “Nearly done,” she hollered as she dashed for the kitchen fridge and pulled out two bottles of mineral water. “Just got to empty the chemicals!” was all anyone heard as she reentered the darkroom.

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It was too late to plan or prepare a group meal, and it would definitely not be fair to Brenda and Kelly who wanted to spend a night out on their own. Kelly had been waiting for a chance to be alone with Brenda and tell her of all the wonderful things going on in her life and how much Brenda was responsible for.

Laura and Cara arrived back just after Robert, to hear him explain that the new band would start rehearsals on Saturday, so Todd arranged with Sherri to get the bulk of her portfolio done in the morning.

Vanetta sent an email to the CrossTrain executive in charge of the new ad campaign, requesting the equipment be picked up as soon as reasonably possible. She added a not so subtle hint that it would be a pity to see the tumbling mat go as the girls used it every day to keep in shape, implying that if a follow-up was needed CrossTrain would want Cara and Ami to be in the best shape possible. And of course all the outfits modeled by the girls would remain with TKO!

She shut down her machine and turned to find Todd and Ami had joined them, sucking on the remains of their mineral water.

“Are we all done for the day?” asked Kelly.

“Everything we can do today,” said Todd, scrutinizing Sherri.

“Suddenly I’m feeling like a piece of steak,” said Sherri watching Todd.

“It’s okay, Sherri,” said Ami getting up and walking over to the tall, slender, dark haired girl. Ami lifted Sherri’s hair from her neck and held it up with one hand as she stroked Sherri’s now exposed neck with the other.

“Nice neckline,” said Ami, looking at Todd.

“I agree,” said Todd. “We’ll have to do something to emphasize that.”

Vanetta sat on her desk and Robert took her seat, lifting her feet into his lap and started to massage them. She smiled as she watched Robert respond to what the others were doing.

Kelly walked to the make-up table and retrieved a few large banana clips and pinned Sherri’s hair up high. “Definitely a good neck,” said Kelly.

Ami continued to circle Sherri, twisting her shoulders and torso, looking for other major focus points. Sherri gasped as Ami slid her hands over her breasts and down to her hips. “Nice long waist!” Ami said.

“Ah, but the position of her belly button will determine if we can use it to her advantage,” said Todd.

“Well?” said Ami to Sherri.

“Well, what?” asked a perplexed Sherri.

“Are you going to take your t-shirt off or do I have to do that as well?”

Kelly laughed. “Todd, your apprentice is taking to this very quickly!”

Todd smiled. He could see that Ami was already planning tomorrow’s shoot, and getting the information he would need. Kelly was right. Ami was a natural.

Sherri let out a sigh and lifted up her t-shirt hem. She thought about turning away when she realized that would be *so* unprofessional. She knew that real models changed in open dressing rooms all the time.

Vanetta pressed down lightly with her foot, feeling Robert’s cock swelling. He looked up at her, and breathed a sigh of relief when he saw her smiling at him. Betrayed by his own dick. Well, Vanetta had told him to expect this working in the studio.

Ami was smiling as well. What most of the others didn’t know, but she had felt when she had run her hands over Sherri’s body was that Sherri was not wearing a bra!

Sherri lifted her T up and pulled it over the combs in her hair, then dropped the shirt on the floor.

Robert’s cock swelled some more at the sight!

“Damn!” said Ami. “High waist shorts. Here... let me help,” she said as she unbuttoned Sherri’s shorts.

The shorts parted on their own accord and threatened to drop to the floor.

“I hope you’re wearing panties,” said Vanetta, pressing with more intensity on Robert’s stiff mast. This would work out very nicely for her tonight!

“It’s Sara that keeps losing her panties,” said Todd.

“The one going to Miami?” asked Laura.

“Yep, that’s her,” said Kelly.

Cara wasn’t saying a word, but stood watching in amazement as her lover undressed another woman right in front of her. She had to admit it was rather sexy.

Sherri’s shorts slowly slid to the floor, leaving her in only a skimpy pair of low rider, high cut, frilly and dainty panties. Light blue panties, with embroidered flowers and trimmed with a cotton lace border.

“And?” she asked Ami. “Does my belly button work for you?”

Ami smiled. “You have a beautiful belly button and just in the perfect place, don’t you think so, Todd?”

“I totally agree,” said Todd. “Bare midriff shots tomorrow for sure!”

“So? Does that mean we can get something to eat now?” asked Sherri. “I’m starved.”

Ami gave Sherri a light slap on the bum. “Nope, definitely not starved,” she said laughing.

“Hey!” said Sherri. “I resemble that remark!” and then laughed with the rest of them.

“I’m going to order in some pizza and wings,” said Todd, and he moved to his desk to use the phone.

“Fast food for a fast lifestyle?” asked Brenda.

“It’s not always this fast,” said Kelly.

“It’s just been one of those days,” finished Laura.

Ami turned to Sherri. “Do you want to get dressed now?”

Sherri thought about it for a moment, then shook her head no. "I'm comfortable right now." What she didn't add was that she saw the reaction she was getting from Robert, and from Cara and Ami. She liked it. If this was what it felt like to be a model, she could get used to this!

"I know what you mean," said Ami. "I spend more time undressed than I do dressed these days. I guess I'm a natural born nudist," and with that she pulled her T-shirt off.

"Nice breasts," said Sherri, reaching over to cup them.

"Thanks!" said Ami. "Though I wish mine were more symmetrical like yours are," as she lightly stroked Sherri's boobs.

Laura looked at Cara, wondering how she would react to this flirtation. But Cara was smiling and slipped out of her own T-shirt, and moved closer to the other girls. Cara planted a big kiss on Ami's mouth and then her neck and said, "but I love yours just the way they are, Honey!"

Ami laughed and kissed Cara back. "Thank you, Darling. It's you I want to make happy, forever."

Cara finally understood, and placed her arms over Sherri and Ami's shoulders drawing them in for a bare breasted hug.

Vanetta was watching all this with a smile on her lips. Robert's cock had swelled to dangerous proportions and she could feel the heat emanating from his groin.

"Do you three want to get a room?" she called out playfully.

Ami looked at Cara, then at Sherri before answering. "Naw, we've just got a mutual admiration society going here. But feel free to take care of Robert."

Kelly burst out laughing.

Vanetta laughed as well and asked Todd how long before the food arrived.

"Half an hour," said Todd.

Vanetta grinned. "More than enough time for a quickie," she said, looking at Robert.

He blushed, but got up when Vanetta did. Vanetta turned on the studio sound system and selected Norah Jones' latest CD, then unbuttoned her blouse, letting it drop to the floor. "Undo me, honey," she said, presenting her back to Robert. He undid her bra and slid the straps from her shoulders, running his hands down her arms. With a

mischievous grin she turned to the group looking at her, her chocolate breasts swinging free with their dark nipples hardening and extending, and said, "Why is everybody looking so surprised? You think I like wearing clothes all day?" Then she laughed and grabbed Robert's belt, pulling him after her as she headed to their love nest upstairs.

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Vanetta wasted no time, efficiently removing Bobby's clothes and pushing him back against the bed, then lowered herself to latch her mouth on his blood-engorged organ. Robert was so aroused that it took less than a minute before he shot his seed deep into Vanetta's throat. Vanetta licked her lips. "Now that we have the urgency removed, we can take our time and enjoy ourselves," she said.

Robert helped her up from her position on the floor and kissed her passionately, tasting his own essence on her tongue, which caused his erection to start growing again immediately. Gently he removed the last of her clothes and laid her on the bed where he then lowered his head to the aroused center of her desire.

Since moving into Todd's apartment, Robert and Vanetta had made love in every room in every position they could think of. While they had decided to stick with Todd's generous furniture donation, they had started to add their own personal little touches to the place. Coconut scented candles were abundant in the bedroom, and cream-colored satin sheets covered the bed. Robert loved the contrast of Vanetta's chocolate body on the pale sheets.

Vanetta quickly pulled her knees up and apart, giving Robert the best access possible. He had really learned quite a few tricks in their time together and it took him only moments of nibbling on her labia to get her juices flowing. And they did flow. Vanetta had never thought sex could be this great. Robert loved to tease her and lick her bringing her slowly to a peak and then backing away leaving her panting with lust. He would do this repeatedly until she would finally grab his head and shove his face into her cunt, and only then would he latch on to her clit and suck till she crossed over her critical point. His very talented hand would be under her butt, gathering her dripping juices and with lubricated fingers would slide one into her puckered anus and another would be worrying her vagina, tickling her "G" spot.

Netta discovered with Robert that she was multi-orgasmic, and she would cum at least three times while he sucked and licked her delicious box. After she had screamed out a chorus of oaths and praises and prayers in her Jamaican patois, Bobby's cock was as hard as a cold steel chisel. He moved forward aiming his cock for her well lubricated tunnel and drove into her like a piston, pushing her over the edge once more.

Bobby eased up on his thrusting, knowing what his lover liked to do next.

"I love you, Bobby," she whimpered, and then using her tight muscles rolled them over giving her the dominant position. Bobby was still lodged deep inside her and felt

her muscles contracting trying to pull his seed out of him. She knelt on his cock slowly clenching her internal muscles, bent forward to place loving kisses all over his face still covered with her juices.

Slowly she began to rock on his prick and the tight tunnel started to move along the hard shaft like a subway tunnel on a train bound for pleasure. Bobby used his hands to cup and caress her beautiful tits, and tilted his head bending his neck, trying to suckle them as she rode the train.

Vanetta could feel the vein in his cock start to pulse and she knew that he was getting close to his eruption. Reaching behind her she lightly cupped his sac and then began to drive her pelvis into his till she felt his hot seed splashing in on her womb. It was enough to give her one more climax as well, and then she collapsed on him, both of them drenched in sweat and reeking of sex!

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Downstairs, the others heard the shower starting up. Brenda finally couldn't hold it in any longer and started to giggle.

"What language was that?" she asked Kelly.

Kelly smiled and told her whenever Vanetta got excited she resorted to her Jamaican patois.

"And you thought she sounded British," said Brenda to Sherri with a smug smile.

Sherri was still wearing only panties, as was Ami. Cara had felt overdressed wearing shorts, so she had shucked them and was now showing her satin boxer style shorts. "For comfort," she grinned in the way of an explanation.

"Now if I can get you girls to answer the door when the pizza and wings arrive, dressed the way you are..." suggested Todd.

"Dream on, Todd," said Cara. "I don't show these to just anybody," she said hefting her breasts.

"I'd do it," said Laura, "but with my luck, it would be my dad or uncle Lew with more information on that stalker."

"Stalker?" said Brenda and Sherri at the same time.

So for the next fifteen minutes, Kelly told the story about what had been happening in the last week.

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Robert and Vanetta came downstairs just as Kelly was finishing the story. Vanetta had slipped on a thin, light silk, cream-colored nightshirt. It did nothing to hide her erect nipples or her dark bush which peeked out as she walked, the bottom of her bum cheeks swaying and showing appropriately at the right times.

As if on cue, the doorbell rang, saving Robert from inquiring minds. Despite Laura's fears that it might be her father or uncle Lew, it was the pizza deliveryman. As usual, Todd had over-ordered and for the six females and two males, there were four large pizzas and two buckets of wings. Dipping sauce in every variety and flavor along with Todd's favorite: "Hell-Fire."

Ami reached with a chicken wing for the "Hell-Fire" dipping sauce when Cara brushed her hand aside.

"Don't even think about it," said Cara. "You eat that and I'll take a lighter to bed with me tonight and you'll be joining the 'blue-flame' club!"

Robert choked on his pizza and Todd started to howl with laughter.

"What's the 'blue-flame' club," asked Sherri.

Ami was glaring daggers at Cara.

"Cara is suggesting I pass wind in bed," said Ami. "Supposedly, though I believe it's just an urban legend, you can light the methane gas passed."

"Oh!" said Sherri, a look of understanding on her face. "So, Ami farts in bed. Does she stick your head under the covers like James does with us girls?"

"No," said Cara. "Ami loves me too much to do something that gross. And usually her toots smell like celery 'cause of the vitamins we take. But that 'Hell-Fire' sauce will gag me!"

Netta was pounding on Bobby's back. He had inhaled so sharply on the pizza he was chewing he was having trouble clearing his windpipe.

Todd was of no help as he was red in the face with laughter. Cara stood up and pressed her bare breasts against Robert's back and did the Heimlich maneuver. While it cleared the obstruction from his throat, Bobby instantly had another problem growing up front.

"Wow," said Netta, looking at Bobby's groin. "Maybe I should have tried blowing on that straw to clear his obstruction!"

Cara blushed, but after making sure that Robert was all right, took her seat again and proceeded to point at the others with a chicken wing. "I hope this teaches you all a lesson about laughing while you are eating!"

Todd put down his food and took a deep swig from the cold beer he had in front of him.

"You are absolutely right, Cara, but who started it in the first place?"

"And now it's my fault that Ami passes gas in her sleep?" asked Cara with a straight face.

"No," said Kelly, "but when you talk about making Ami a member of the 'blue-flame' club, you can't blame us for laughing."

"But can you really light farts?" asked Sherri, "cause if that's true, I'm going to give James a surprise he'll never forget!"

Brenda was laughing as well. "It's been so long since he's shared my bed that I had forgotten about that little game of his. It would serve him right though."

"Who shares your bed now, Brenda?" asked Cara.

Laura looked up with curiosity. This would be the test. How Cara reacted to Brenda's response would tell if her conversation with Cara had done the trick.

"It depends on what I'm in the mood for," said Brenda. "Mostly I sleep alone now, but if I want company, Amanda is always willing, and if I want a man, there's a cute guy in sales who is more than willing to satisfy my needs."

"You're not in a relationship?" Cara asked.

"Hell, no," said Brenda. "I'm too busy keeping up with all the changes at the company to really give a relationship the time it needs to make it grow. But I'm not complaining. Chuck is great company. We read together at night while Deanna and Anna catch up. Amanda likes to tinker in the prototype garage well past midnight, though I think she's got an engineer tucked away there she stays out late with. Whatever the reason, they're sure coming up with some unique ideas for hull designs."

"What happened with Deanna and Chuck after the opening of the Wheel?" asked Kelly.

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Brenda, having spent the most time with Chuck Regan and his granddaughter, told of how the reunion had gone. After the initial reunion at The Eyrie, things seemed to

go well between Chuck and Deanna. They had cast off the same morning that Todd and Kelly had left, and for five days, no one heard from them. Rumors of course were rampant. Chuck and Deanna and Anna on the high seas in the CL1. They had stocked enough provisions to last at least a week, but those who knew of the situation between father and daughter were apprehensive. Ten years had passed without a civil word between the two of them, and nearly six years of total silence.

“As you discovered,” said Brenda to Kelly, “Deanna had left her husband, though he didn’t realize it at the time, being he was so involved with his ‘boy-toy.’ I think Deanna could have forgiven him his desire to explore another side to his sexuality based on what little she has mentioned of it, but that he did it in such a sneaky underhanded way... that’s what really bothered her. What kind of relationship can you hope to have if you can’t be honest with your partner?”

“Indeed,” said Laura, looking at Cara.

“Absolutely,” said Vanetta looking at Robert.

“I agree,” said Kelly looking at Ami.

“So what did she do?” asked Todd looking at the last chicken wing.

“Deanna drove the CL1 back to her dad’s marina. When they arrived, there were a lot of us holding our breaths, but all three of them came off the boat laughing and holding hands. Once Chuck got inside, he phoned that friend of his, the one who found Deanna, and from what Chuck has said, his friend hired a photographer and they came up with some pretty interesting pictures. Chuck then sent word that either the marriage becomes null and void, with no settlement or trial or the pictures would find their way into the hands of other people. The last thing I heard was that Deanna got a letter turning all of her assets over to her free and clear and divorce papers signed.”

“Wow,” said Laura. “I sure wouldn’t want Chuck pissed at me!”

Brenda laughed. “He’s a sweetheart. But we *are* talking about his daughter.”

“The one he feels he forced out of his life,” Kelly added.

“Exactly,” said Brenda. “Though Deanna keeps asking when her big brother is coming down for a visit!”

Todd smiled. He’d never had any siblings, and then in the course of the summer had found a father figure he could respect and look up to and he had been afraid when father and daughter were reunited that there might not be room for him.

“We’ll be going down after the company picnic,” said Kelly. “I’m looking forward to seeing them all again and Todd promised to take a family portrait of them.”

“It’s a whole different family than before,” said Brenda. “I’m running Regan Boats, and Chuck spends his days with Deanna building handcrafted yachts like the CL1. Anna spends most of her time with Amanda through the day and then we all go swimming after supper.”

“Swimming?” asked Kelly.

Brenda smiled. “Okay, so nobody bothers to wear a bathing suit. What can I say?”

Todd laughed. “This will be some reunion. I’m really happy for Deanna and Chuck.”

“So am I,” said Kelly. “Family is so important.”

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It was past 9:00 when they finally finished eating and talking.

Todd arranged with Sherri to start shooting her portfolio at 10:00. Robert assured him that the band would not be getting together till after lunch.

“And what should I do after I get shot by Todd?” smirked Sherri. “I doubt you two will be back any time soon!”

Kelly laughed and said that yes, she did have plans for an evening out with Brenda that would start at lunchtime at a bistro she had discovered in town. Then they were going to spend the afternoon shopping till it was time to eat and then, they might seek out a club or two or just get pampered at a salon. “But, don’t wait up for us, Sherri,” she said with a smile. “Old pregnant women like me need to take things slow!”

Laura laughed and put her arm around Sherri. “Not to worry, Sherri, I’m sure the rest of us girls can find something to do.”

“I’ve got to start packing so I can have Bobby take me to the airport on Sunday,” said Vanetta.

“I’ve got the kids to work with all weekend,” said Robert. “That is, if you still want them opening the company picnic festivities.”

“Absolutely!” said Todd. “If the boys are half as good as Laura’s sisters, they’ll be the opening act for ‘Rebel Heart.’”

“Who’s Rebel Heart?” asked Sherri.

“They’re a band we heard at Brookhaven,” said Laura. “They’re good!”

“If you don’t mind, Rob, I might stick around and see how the first rehearsal goes,” said Todd.

“No problem with me,” said Robert, “and it will do good for the kids to get used to an audience.”

“Todd,” said Ami, “you think we can take pictures of the band on Sunday?”

Todd thought about it for about as long as it took him to swipe Kelly’s lit cigarette. “If Rob doesn’t mind, sure. Why not? Get it done now so we can start putting the brochure together.”

“You should let Cara work on that,” said Netta. She’s got a natural talent for layout.”

Todd looked at Cara as he inhaled. Then he smiled. “Feel up to a challenge, Cara?”

“I’d like to, if nobody minds,” said Cara.

“Cara, Sweetheart,” said Laura. “You know nobody will mind if you try something. That’s how we learn and we grow. We work as a team and we play as a team.”

Cara blushed. “Thanks, Laura.”

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Sherri and Brenda headed back to their hotel after the dishes and leftovers were cleaned away. Kelly wanted to pick Brenda up at the hotel, but Brenda reminded her that Sherri wasn’t old enough to drive yet - At least not legally! - So they arranged to all meet back at the studio at 10 Saturday morning.

Robert locked the door after Todd and the girls left, and gently caressed Vanetta’s scantily clad body. “You don’t know how much you’ve been turning me on all night knowing you’re naked under that thin piece of silk,” he said.

As he unbuttoned the nightshirt, Vanetta said, “Are you sure it’s me that got you all turned on or was it the three young near naked bodies that sat with us?”

Robert laughed. “I will admit, my darling Netta, that the sight of three young nubile nymphs sitting around topless did not hurt my libido, but it is you, Darling, that I want to take to bed!”

Vanetta slipped out of the nightshirt and posed provocatively in front of Robert. "Perhaps a visual inspection of your equipment is called for before we take the stairway to our own little heaven."

Robert groaned as Vanetta sank to the couch unzipping his fly in the process and allowing his engorged member to spring free. When her hot lips encased his cock, he started to buck nearly right away. He was loaded and his lover's lips captured and played with the most sensitive part of his glans. Her hands caressed his ass and one finger wormed its way into his ass, causing him to groan out in ecstasy as he filled her willing mouth with his hot milky cream.

As Robert slowly unfolded and landed beside his lover she laid back spreading her legs for him to see how wet she was.

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Cara took an exceptionally long time oiling Kelly in that night. It was like she was committing Kelly's body to memory, though she could already identify every nook and cranny with her eyes closed. Kelly, for her part was enjoying every minute of it. She knew there had been something going on earlier in the day, but whatever it was, Laura had in her own efficient way, handled it.

Kelly sat on the bed nude, having a cigarette, waiting for the body oil to do its magic. She wasn't concerned about the baby ruining her appearance, the thrill of motherhood erased that completely from her mind. Really, Kelly didn't have to work at all any more. She owned her house, her vehicles, and half of a very profitable business. Even in a worst-case scenario, she was also highly skilled and educated and could always find work in the business world. But...the feel of Cara's skilled hands sliding and gliding over her body was so erotic and sensuous. It had become almost natural that Kelly would have a small climax before Cara was finished with her, and she knew that Cara worked her towards that goal. The way Cara pulled and tugged on her inner thighs and worked the skin at the joining of her legs, she had to know the motion was causing Kelly's lower lips to pull on her clit! Most often she climaxed while face down, her head in the pillow, biting to stop from screaming out loud.

There was no use in denying it. Kelly had taken enough psych courses to understand Cara was expressing a deep emotional need. Transferring her desire to please on to Kelly. She knew that Cara loved her, but in different way than she loved Ami. Ami was her lover and her partner. Kelly was a surrogate sister for Cara, and all Cara wanted was to be loved for being a person. Not a lover, not a daughter, but the unconditional love that Kelly provided; acceptance without labels.

Cara came back into the room carrying two bottles of mineral water, and sat facing Kelly with her legs crossed beneath her.

“I never had a family before,” said Kelly softly. “Up until I met Todd, I didn’t trust anyone. Now, I seem to have a nearly complete family. I have two lovers, a grandmother, and if I could have picked anyone to be my sister, Sweetheart, I would have picked you.”

Cara blushed and lowered her head behind her bottle.

Kelly gently pushed the bottle down and lifted Cara’s face so she would have to look at Kelly.

“I mean it, Honey,” said Kelly. “Ami is great. I love her to pieces, but there’s just something about you that makes me think we could have been related. You’re a great listener, and God knows I like to ramble on.” Kelly sighed. “Maybe in our next lifetime eh? Let’s make a pact to come back as sisters.”

Cara swiftly moved into Kelly’s open arms and hugged her, the hint of a tear forming in her eye. “I promise, Kelly. Next time we’ll be sisters.”

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Twenty miles away, at the Hilton, Brenda picked up the room phone. Sherri had turned on the TV with the hope of catching a decent late night movie.

About 250 miles away, a sleepy voice answered the ring of Brenda’s call.

“Hi, Chuck. It’s Brenda. I hope I didn’t wake you but there’s something going on in Charlotte you should know about.”

Brenda quickly recounted what she could remember of the conversation about the stalker and how Laura’s dad and his friend had found out who was looking for either Kelly or Todd, though they still didn’t know why.

“Thanks, Brenda,” said Chuck after listening to her full account. “It’s still early on the west coast. I’m going to call my friend and have him look into this right away. We can’t let anything happen to our friends, can we.” It wasn’t a question, and Brenda shivered at the thought of what Chuck might do if either Todd or Kelly were threatened! Her whole body shook for a second. In her mind, Chuck was the nicest, gentlest man she had ever known, but she also knew that he had once been a member of an elite navy group in Viet Nam. His friend had been in the same group. Chuck had gone into building boats, but his friend had opened a security agency that now employed a few hundred people - all of them either former cops or retired military personnel.

She shivered once more. Chuck had become very close to Todd, considered him his son even. And with Chuck there was no limit on loyalty.

Brenda sat with Sherri for a bit trying to get interested in the movie when she remembered that she had brought along a special present for Sherri. They hadn't had any time together since Brenda had taken over the day to day operations of Regan's, and this would be a good way to make up for lost time, and to take her mind off what Chuck might do.

Opening her travel bag, Brenda brought out a package of water-soluble markers. Sherri was quite the little artist when it came to playing connect the freckles, a game they had both enjoyed many times when James had been busy in New York with Nicole. Once, Sherri had used a regular ballpoint pen. A lesson well learned as Brenda walked around for a week looking like the tattooed lady.

"Sherri, Honey... Look what I've got for you to play with!"

Sherri squealed with delight and instantly turned the TV off. Neither of them had much use for wasting time with the idiot box. There were so many better things one could do to occupy a bit of free time!

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Friday night was busy at the Charlotte jail. Eddie was fuming because he hadn't seen or heard from a lawyer, and that big fuck that had tackled him and hit him with the phone book was constantly harassing him. When he got out of this dump, he'd get that prick. The problem was, they could hold him for 72 hours while they checked him out and by the time the 72 hours were up, the fuckers told him that it was too late to get him in front of a judge to plead guilty.

"I'm not guilty!" Eddie whined, but they only laughed and reminded him they had caught him red-handed with an unlicensed pistol.

"Five years bonus time," the big fuck had said. "No parole on that one either, Eddie. We take stalking real serious in these parts. Maybe you and your friends get a good laugh telling stupid redneck jokes about us workin' folk down here, Eddie, but this time the joke's on you!" and walked away, chuckling while Eddie's knuckles whitened as he gripped the bars in frustration.

The jail cells had started to fill up close to midnight, as the police hauled in the drunks and hookers and troublemakers. Soon, space was at a premium, and some time after two in the morning, they tossed a drunk into Eddie's cell. Funny thing about this drunk though was that as soon as the guard walked away, he was stone cold sober.

Straightening up, he showed Eddie an evil grin, a steel cap glinting amongst the yellowed teeth. "Well, well, it mus' be my lucky day, right boy?" he said conversationally as he cracked the knuckles of each hand in turn.

Eddie never found out who he was, but he was big. Really big! About six four, at least 300 pounds, all of it muscle and all of it between Eddie and the cell door. The blurred tattoos on his arms writhed as he crowded Eddie into the corner, his breath sour on Eddie's face. "There's a price on your head, boy," he said, "An' I gonna be the one to collect, heh, heh!"

"Word is you tried ta rape the daughter of one of the good cops in this fuckin' town. An' there's a 'get out of jail free' card for whoever helps ya have a little accident, heh, heh! I had to beat the shit out of three guys just to get in here with you. Guess I got lucky, hey boy?"

Eddie squirmed and talked faster than he had ever talked in his life. He had always acted tough, but this guy was the real thing and Eddie was shaking as he tried to explain that he hadn't touched the cop's daughter and he never was going to and all he was doing was watching, but the big guy just kept crowding him into the corner.

"It was the guy she's living with that I had ta find. All I hadda do was keep an eye on him till my boss got down here. I swear it!"

"Why?" asked the big man, flexing his muscles and putting a forearm against Eddie's chest. "You queer, boy? Like watching guys?"

"No! It's just some stupid lawsuit. I been tailing him for close to eight months. I dunno what it's about. I just hadda find him and keep an eye on him till my boss got here, I swear!"

The big man wiped a greasy lock of hair from his forehead. "Makes no never mind ta me what ya was doing, ya little queer. I just know, I fuck you up good, I get to walk outa any jail inna state! Those cops really hate ya, boy!" And he drew back a fist the size of a ham.

Eddie squealed and shat himself in fear. By the grace of God, a guard happened to walk by at that very moment and called for backup. Three guards wrestled the big man to the floor and cuffed and shackled him as Eddie sat trembling in his soiled pants, tears running down his face.

"Shit, it stinks in here," said one of the guards.

"Yeah, that's what I think it is too. Haul this big fucker over to our special guest room and I'll take our stalker to the showers and get him a set of coveralls."

Eddie was too scared to move. He begged to be left alone and promised money if nobody else was given a chance to beat him, but the guard just lifted him by the scruff of the neck and marched him to the showers. Thirty minutes later, Eddie was in orange coveralls, sitting in the corner of the cell with his eyes fixed on the door and too terrified to go to sleep.

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The guards who had hauled the brute out of Eddie's cell escorted him all the way to the Duty Sergeant's office. Once inside, they removed the cuffs and shackles asking if they had been too tight.

"Little Joe" Johnson laughed, said they had played it just right. Reaching under the back of his hair, he pulled the pins that secured the hairpiece in place and revealed a military style crew cut.

Lew laughed. "Damn if that hair don't look natural. I could have sworn that was your real hair."

"That's the whole idea," said Joe.

"Ever lose it in a fight?" asked Lew?

"Little Joe" looked at Lew and smirked. "What do you think?"

Lew laughed again as Sergeant Major Joe Johnson (ret) removed his false teeth. They were an ugly set and designed to go over Joe's natural teeth. He slipped them into a zip lock bag and put them into a pocket. "Damn things come with their own stench cream," he said. "It has no taste, but it stinks like really sour milk."

"What about the art work?" asked Lew. "Any of it real?"

Joe smiled. "The real ones are hidden beneath this washable crap. Rub some alcohol on it and it's history. Better call in now, I think."

Lew turned the phone towards the big man. "Courtesy of the CMPD. Did you learn anything worthwhile?"

Joe started dialing the phone, stopped, and said, "Feel free to listen in."

The phone in Los Angeles only rang twice before it was answered.

"Johnson reporting" he said. "The perp is after the male party. Doesn't know why, but says it's to do with a lawsuit." He listened for a minute then turned to Lew. "The boss wants to know if you traced any calls to a law firm."

"Yeah," said Lew. "Langstaff and Associates. It's a mid size ambulance chasing firm currently on the tobacco trail of easy money. Here's the address," he said handing over a clipboard.

Joe nodded his thanks and read off the information to his boss. He listened for a few minutes more than said, "Okay. I'm at the Southside Holiday Inn. I'll pick up Ayres' trail and sniff around a bit. Call me if somebody from Langstaff leaves for Charlotte. Yeah, the locals are good guys," he said smiling at Lew. "They seem to like this Ayres guy. I'll get them to clue him in and give him some safety tips about likely scenarios. I'll just blend into the background and make sure nobody from Cleveland goes off half cocked."

After he hung up the phone, Joe stayed and detailed some of the things that might happen next, and most likely possibilities. Lew said that he and Harry would go over later in the day and bring Todd up to speed. Just before he left, Lew opened his drawer and lifted out Joe's Smith and Wesson in a quick release shoulder harness. "I sure hope you don't have a reason to use this," said Lew.

Joe smiled. "Ten years with the firm and the only time I've ever had to fire it was for the annual license test."

Lew stood up and shook the big man's hand. "Thanks for the help, Joe. Pity you can't meet the man you're going to be looking after, but I realize its best he doesn't know you're around. He's a decent man and a real asset to the community."

"I would have guessed that based on what you're doing for him. I'll see you when it's over, Lew."

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Meanwhile, forty minutes from the police station, Laura, Kelly and Todd were sleeping the sleep of the innocent. Daybreak was just minutes away.

In another part of town, Annie was already up and dressed and working on her day's orders, waiting for Jacob to show up and make a pot of his mighty fine coffee.

***To be continued...***