

~ An Affair to Remember ~

by Ambrosia

Disclaimers: The characters in this story are figments of my imagination. They are solely the property of me, myself, and I J

Sexual Content: There are intimate/sexual/loving relationships between women occurring in this tale.

Violence: None. Nada. Zip. Just peace, love, and harmony. (Chuckle)

Language: Nothing that can't be aired on a network station.

Special Thanks: Thank you Hawke and Antigone for helping me by giving the names for the establishments mentioned in this story. I had no idea what to call them until you both offered your assistance. So thank you very much. I really appreciate it J

Inspiration: I would like to thank the creators of the movie "You've Got Mail" for inspiring me to write this piece. I've watched that movie so many times I just had to write a story loosely based on it. J

Feedback: All comments (please be gentle with me-for I'm a sensitive bard J) can be emailed to SumrBrezze@aol.com.

Part 1

Looking over her shoulder to make sure that the woman lying next to her was asleep, the blonde-haired twenty-seven-year old quietly slipped out of the bed. She tiptoed towards the door and slowly but surely eased it open before slipping out and closing it behind her. She breathed a sigh of relief, as she was able to successfully leave the room.

Feeling along the wall for the light switch, Sonny found it and flipped it on so that she would not stub her toe as she had clumsily done so many times before. Ambling over to the desk, she took a seat, wincing as the computer chair creaked a few times with the weight. *A mental note to myself. Need to purchase some WD-40.* Pressing a key on the keyboard, Sonny began to smile as she was greeted with her desktop picture showing a litter of puppies sleeping in a big basket.

Positioning a hand over her mouse, she moved the tiny arrow on the screen to the AOL icon and clicked it. When the sign on screen appeared, Sonny typed in her password to log onto her screen name "PerkyGrrl" before clicking the enter button. Sitting back in the chair, she impatiently waited as she listened to the modem dial. Another smile appeared on her face, as she was welcomed online. Sonny's heart skipped a beat as she heard the male voice inform her that she had mail.

Moving the arrow to the mail icon, she clicked it. There were four new pieces of mail since the last time she checked it nearly six hours ago. One was from her best friend Sarah, two were pieces of spam that Sonny annoyingly deleted and the last one was from her. The woman happily sighed as she first clicked on Sarah's, beginning to read.

Hey girlfriend!

I just got in from my fiftieth (yes I know that I'm exaggerating) blind date that you set me up on. I know that I say this every time, but remind me to never let you set me up again. That guy was boring with a capital B! (laugh) He spent the whole night talking about stocks and bonds. Blah blah blah. Anyway, thanks for trying to help, but I'll take charge of my "love life" from here on out. (chuckle)

Anyway, the main reason I wrote you was to tell you this. Remember that building that they've been constructing across the street? Well I found out what it is. Please don't faint. It's going to be a coffeehouse just like us when it opens and that's supposed to happen within a week or two. Seems like we have some real competition now. But the way I figure it, with you and I working side by side no one can defeat us Babe. (smiling) Well I'll see you tomorrow. Go get some sleep. You're on this computer way too much. (wink) Love ya.

Sarah

Sonny richly chuckled as she closed her friend's email. She should have known that Sarah and Dwayne would not be compatible. Oh well. At least she gave it a try. Meanwhile, Sonny would not worry about the impending arrival of the new coffeehouse. She felt fully capable of handling a little competition. It was no big deal. Sonny compared this to a baseball game. Anything they could throw, she could hit and make a home run for her team.

Smiling brightly, Sonny clicked and opened the remaining email from Blueyez. Not being able to wipe the silly smile off of her face, the young woman began to read after glancing at the bedroom door to make sure that it was still closed.

To My Special Friend,

*Hello P.G. I hope this email finds you doing well. You know what my little sister said this morning? She told me that you and I should meet for our one-year anniversary. That we should celebrate by choosing a place to meet in real time. I laughed at the time but I have to admit that I've been thinking about the prospect of us doing so all day long. I know we've never really talked about doing this before but what do you think? We live in the same city...it wouldn't be that hard to do so...Well you let me know your thoughts on the idea. Rather we meet in real time or celebrate online doesn't really matter to me. As long as I'm with my favorite girl in the whole wide world *smiling*. Well I should be going now. Need to get some sleep because I have a busy day ahead of me. I'll talk with you later P.G. Sweet dreams.*

Yours always,

Blue

Sonny sat back in her chair deep in thought. Should she and Blue meet? Sarah would probably cheer her on, but Sonny had a feeling that her girlfriend would not care for the idea. Still thinking about it, the young woman clicked a button on the screen so that a fresh email was before her. Positioning her fingers on the keyboard, Sonny began to construct her reply to Blue. After nearly half an hour of deleting and rewriting, Sonny had the email done just the way she wanted it. Putting the tiny arrow on the send key, she clicked and watched as the email vanished from sight.

Logging off, the blonde arose to her feet and stretched before heading back to the bedroom, turning off the light in the process. Opening the door quietly, she stepped inside before closing it behind her. Tiptoeing to the bed, Sonny got into it just when her girlfriend rolled over, throwing an arm across her stomach. Although it was dark, Sonny could tell that the woman was still asleep. Placing a hand on Laura's cheek, Sonny started to softly caress it as she attempted to focus her thoughts on this woman laying next to her, but her mind kept drifting to Blue.

Sonny once again felt the guilt creeping up. It was a constant companion of hers now. In the beginning things between her and Blue had been wholesome and innocent enough, but during the past few months they had become more intimate emotionally wise. Sure they called themselves friends, but there was much more to it in the way that they spoke to one another. If that was not bad enough, Sonny had admitted to herself months ago that she had feelings for Blue. The type of feelings that she knew should only be for Laura. In a way, Sonny felt as though she was cheating on her girlfriend, or at least cheating her, but she could not bring herself to end this relationship with Blue. That was not an option. She was in too deep.

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Sitting at the kitchen table drinking her second cup of coffee while reading the newspaper, Jacqueline Foster looked up as a younger woman who looked a lot like her except for her short height of five feet five, entered. They greeted one another as the younger woman walked over to the coffeepot and poured herself a cup, adding both cream and sugar before taking a seat at the small round table. She stared at the woman who was busy reading the newspaper again until she was noticed.

"What do you want Chloe?" Jacqueline asked in a pleasant tone of voice as she neatly folded the newspaper before placing it on the table.

The other woman cocked her head to the side. "Whatever makes you think that I want something?"

Jacqueline smirked. "Don't try to play innocent. I know all of your looks and the one you're currently wearing plainly says that you want something. So what is it?"

The younger woman grinned. "All right. You got me. Can I go to Hawaii with a few friends Jack?"

"That depends. Who are these friends? Do I know them?"

Chloe sighed. "Jack, I'm twenty years old."

Jack nodded as she picked up her coffee and took a sip. "Yes, I'm well aware of your age. And if that is your way of letting me know that you are an adult then why did you ask me in the first place if you could go Chloe?" She sat back in her chair while crossing one ankle over the other underneath the table. "Seems to me a grownup would just say I'm going to Hawaii with a few friends Jack."

"Okay. I'm going to Hawaii with a few friends Jack."

"Over my dead body you are."

"Jack!"

Jacqueline successfully hid her amusement. Her little sister was so adorable. She had the urge to reach out and pinch the girl's cheek. "What?"

"Come on. Just let me go," Chloe pleaded. "I'll be very responsible." She smiled charmingly at her sister, hoping that it and her words would do the trick. "You raised me to be that way."

Jack chuckled richly. "Flattery will get you absolutely nowhere," she paused. "Who is going on this trip and how long is it supposed to last? You know the coffeehouse is opening for business next week and I thought you wanted to be there for its grand opening." Jack took another sip of coffee. "It's never good to miss your first day of work."

"Justine, Mary, and Antonia. You've known all three of them since we became friends in the eighth grade. We'll be gone for five days, which means I'll be back a couple days before the grand opening. Oh, please Jack let me go on this trip. I promise I'll be responsible and I'll call you every day if you want me to." Chloe gave her sister the look she often used when she really wanted to do something.

"Don't give me those big blue eyes." Jack shook her head, not buying the act for one minute. "I have the same ones." She fell into thought for a few minutes as she felt Chloe's eyes upon her. Looking at the twenty-year-old she said, "All right. You can go to Hawaii but you better make good on your promises. Call me every evening. I'll give you a phone card and some spending money."

Chloe screamed in glee as she scooted her chair closer to her sister's and wrapped her arms around the woman's neck, hugging her tight. Jack smiled as she hugged Chloe back. "Thank you Jack! You won't regret this. I'm gonna go pack now. We leave tomorrow." Standing up, Chloe almost began to skip out of the kitchen before she remembered something. Turning back to her sister, she walked over to the woman as she removed a folded sheet of paper from the pocket of her shorts. She gave the piece of paper to Jack, who asked what it was. Chloe grinned. "It's an

email from Perky. I found it this morning and took the liberty of printing a copy out so you wouldn't have to bother with logging on to get it."

"That's so very sweet of you." Jack frowned. "I thought I told you not to open my email anymore brat."

Chloe shrugged. "Sorry. This is the last time. I just wanted to see what Perky had to say to your last email."

Jack arched an eyebrow. "And how did you know what I wrote last night?"

"Simple. I was reading over your shoulder." Chloe grinned. "Your senses must be dulling in your old age Jack. You had no clue I was there."

Jack smirked. "Thirty-two is not old. Now go away before I change my mind about Hawaii." She began to unfold the paper, anxious to read what her Internet friend had to say. Grinning, Chloe leaned down and kissed her sister on the cheek before walking out of the kitchen, leaving a smiling Jack. Smoothing out the paper, the woman began to silently read.

*Dearest Blue,*

*Wow. I can't believe that a whole year is nearly upon us. Where does the time go? Actually, I feel like I've known you all of my life instead of nearly three hundred and sixty five days. I'm so overjoyed that we met. Blue, I really don't know how I managed before having you in my life. I don't know how to fully explain it, but you make my heart soar. If no one else can, you have this ability...this gift to lift my spirits when they are down. I guess what I'm trying to say is that you are a blessing to me Blue. Thanks for you (smile).*

*Anyway, enough of my jabbering. You mentioned the idea of us meeting when our anniversary comes in three weeks. I've given it some thought and I think that's a great idea. I would love us to meet. I'm feeling nervous already, but I know this is what I truly want. More than anything else. So, our anniversary is on the last Friday of this month. Where would you like to meet? Let me know. I'll see you later Blue. Take care.*

*~PG~*

Folding the sheet of paper, Jack tucked it into her pants pocket with a goofy smile on her lips. She made PerkyGrrl's heart soar. It was probably the best compliment she had ever received. What a wonderful way to start the day. Arising from the chair, Jack strolled over to the kitchen window. Opening it, she stuck her head out, feeling the heat from the sun on her bronzed face. Gazing at the clear blue September sky Jack thought that it was a most glorious day. This was one of those days that should be spent at the beach. Jack would be amongst the many people that were probably going to flock there, but she had work to do. Her coffeehouse was opening next week and she wanted to make sure that everything was in order.

Heading back to the kitchen table, Jack picked up her cup and drank the remaining contents before she walked into the living room, taking a seat at the computer. She was going to head out, but there was something that she wanted to do before leaving. Quickly logging onto her screen name, Jack began writing her reply to PerkyGrrl. As she did so, she occasionally looked up to make sure that Chloe was not somewhere peeping.

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"Honey, you spend far too much time on that thing."

Sonny glanced up as Laura walked into the living room dressed and ready to go to work. Logging off, after having just read an email she received twenty minutes ago from Blueyez, Sonny arose from her computer chair, following Laura into the kitchen. She poured her girlfriend a cup of espresso and handed her a blueberry bagel. Thanking her, Laura took a bite of the bagel before washing it down with the hot liquid.

"It's not a thing. It's a computer," Sonny replied. "Say it with me. Com-pu-ter."

Laura smirked. "Very cute." Reaching out, she ruffled the blonde's short hair. "Seriously, computers are very addicting." Ignoring Sonny's "you don't say" look, she went on, "I'm writing my next column on it." Walking closer to Sonny, Laura tenderly kissed her lips. "I've been thinking about interviewing you for it." She grinned as she took another bite of the bagel.

Sonny arched an eyebrow as she smacked her lips once. Yummy. Laura tasted like blueberry. "Oh? And what shall I say in this interview?" Sonny hopped up onto the kitchen counter as she put a mock serious look on her face. "Hello. My name is Madison Campbell and I'm addicted to the Internet." As Laura playfully slapped her on the arm, Sonny laughed.

"You make fun, but this article is going to rock." Laura took another bite of the bagel before putting down on the plate. It did not stay there long because Sonny picked it up and began to finish her girlfriend's breakfast.

"I'm sure it will my love." Sonny gave her a warm smile, which Laura returned as she slipped between the blonde's thighs, standing there. Wrapping her arms around Laura's neck, Sonny's lips descended upon the woman's. They kissed for nearly a minute before Laura broke away, not really wanting to.

"I have to go," Laura said while glancing at her watch. "You should be on your way too. It's almost eight. I love you." Leaning forward, she kissed Sonny once more.

"Me too," Sonny replied as she watched Laura pick up her briefcase. She smiled when the woman winked at her before she headed towards the front door. Jumping down from the counter, Sonny met Laura at the door and opened it for her. "Have a good day sweetheart. Try not to work too hard."

"You too." Smiling, and feeling like the luckiest person on the planet, Laura walked out of the apartment to start her day. Closing the door, Sonny went to look for her Nikes before she got a start on hers as well.

Five minutes later, Sonny was leaving her apartment with her bike at her side. Rolling the bike out onto the pavement, she reached for the blue-tinted shades hooked onto her sky blue blouse and put them on. Straddling the bicycle, Sonny put her helmet on as she smiled at a neighbor getting into their car. Sitting down, Sonny placed her feet on the pedals and began the ride to work. She had a car, but Sonny enjoyed riding her bicycle to work since it was in such close proximity to her apartment.

While riding down the street, Sonny looked around her with a slight smile on her face. This was the beginning of another gorgeous day. She absolutely loved Florida and planned on living here for the rest of her life. Blue eyes...err blue skies, hot sun...Sunny glanced across the street where two blondes wearing short shorts were jogging together in the opposite direction...hot girls...Yes, there was no place like Florida. The best thing about it was that Blueyeze lived here and they would meet soon. In less than a month, Sonny would see her. The woman smiled again as she stopped at a stop sign before cautiously proceeding. How very lucky she was.

Picking up her pace on the bike, Sonny easily glided along the street feeling the gentle warm breeze flowing past her. Glancing both ways, she continued across the street when a car suddenly came barreling around the corner. Sonny tried to get out of the automobile's way but it was too fast. As the car slammed into her bicycle, the blonde went flying into it. Knocking her head on the windshield, Sonny's vision went black as she slipped into unconsciousness.

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Sonny softly moaned as she heard someone call her name. Slowly opening her eyes, she blinked a few times before she could focus on the concerned looking woman standing over her. It was then that she noticed the woman's eyes. They were a crystal blue.

"Blue," Sonny said in a faint voice.

The woman leaned down so that she could hear Sonny better. "Hmm? I didn't hear you clearly hon. What did you say?"

The blonde shook her head to clear her thoughts. Glancing around, she noticed that she was in what appeared to be a hospital room. Feeling a throbbing pain in her left arm, she looked down at it to see that she was wearing a white cast on her forearm. She must have broken it in the accident. The accident. A car had hit her. Looking up at the woman...the gorgeously breathtaking woman standing next to her bed, Sonny wondered if she was the one responsible for the collision.

Deciding to ask the question that most people who wake up in a hospital after an accident inquire, Sonny said, "What happened?"

Letting out a long sigh, the blue-eyed woman ran a hand through her shoulder length jet-black hair. "You were in an accident," she started. "I hit you with my car. I'm so sorry. To tell you the truth, I was talking on my cell phone and wasn't paying attention to where I was going. By the time I noticed you, I attempted to swerve but it was just too late." Reaching down, she briefly patted Sonny on the shoulder. "But you're going to be just fine. The doctor said that you have a slight concussion and your left arm was fractured in the impact, but other than those things just a few minor bruises. How do you feel?"

"I feel like I was hit by a car," Sonny replied as she softly chuckled.

The woman looked at her in surprise. "You seem to be taking this well."

Sonny smiled at her. "Guess you could call me a good sport. I was very lucky. Things like that teach you not to ever take life for granted, you know?"

The woman nodded, speechless. If the situation had been reversed, she knew that she would have been going off at the person responsible for nearly taking her life, no matter if it was an accident or not.

"How are you?" Sonny suddenly inquired.

The blue-eyed woman arched a brow. "How am I?"

"Yes. Were you hurt?"

The woman shook her head in bewilderment. Sonny must have been one in a million. "Let me get this straight. I hit you with my car because I wasn't paying attention to where I was going. You're the one in the hospital bed and you're asking *me* how *I'm* doing?"

The blonde nodded, suddenly realizing that she had a wicked headache. "Is that so strange?" Feeling a slight pressure on her forehead, Sonny reached up and touched the area to notice that there was a band wrapped around her head. She winced at a particularly tender spot.

"I guess it isn't. Just very noble of you. I'm just fine. Not a scratch on me." Noticing as Sonny winced, she added, "The doctor had to give you a few stitches in your forehead, but he said that there probably wouldn't be much of a scar if any."

"Oh, I don't mind having a scar. It'll be a cool visual when I tell my grandchildren the story of how you and I met." Sonny smiled again. The other woman decided that she liked the way the blonde did that. Sonny had the kind of smile that could light up a room.

A hint of a smile appeared on the blue-eyed woman's lips. "The story of you and I?"

Sonny nodded. "Yes. And if I'm going to tell them the story, then I should know your name." She extended her hand towards the other woman. "My name is Madison Campbell, though you



probably already know that. Everyone just calls me Sonny." She smiled fondly. "Well except for my mother."

The woman gave Sonny's hand a shake, liking the warmth that she felt from the blonde's palm. She found that she did not want to let go, but she did so anyway. "Nice to meet you Sonny. I just wish it were under better circumstances. My name is Jack. Jack Foster."

"Nice to meet you too Jack, Jack Foster." Sonny winked at her and Jack found herself blushing. She never blushed. The blonde started to grin as she caught sight of the reddening in Jack's cheeks. "So Jack, do you know when I can break out of this joint?"

"Well I'll go look for a doctor, but first there is a little matter that I would like to discuss with you." Reaching into a briefcase, Jack removed a checkbook from it and a pen. Opening the checkbook, she clicked the tip of the pen down and began to write as she said, "I think that we can keep this out of court and just between us." As she stopped writing, Jack turned her eyes to Sonny. "So how does twenty thousand sound?"

"You want to pay me off?"

"Is that not enough?" Jack nodded, thinking. "Okay. How about thirty thousand then? You think that might cover it?"

A small sigh escaped Sonny. "I think it's time for you to go," she quietly said. "Thank you for staying to make sure that I was all right. Rest assured that I won't attempt to sue you. I don't want so much as a penny from you Ms. Foster."

What happened here? "Sonny, I didn't mean anything by it. Please don't be upset."

"I'm not upset. I'm just disappointed. I thought that you and I could be friends but I guess that I was wrong," she paused, taking a deep breath. "Now please go."

Jack found that the last thing she wanted to do was leave. Though she did not know this woman from Eve, the thought that Sonny was disappointed in her upset Jack greatly. "We *can* be friends Sonny. I'm sorry. That was terribly crass of me."

Turning her head to the right, Sonny gazed out of the window not saying another word. Jack stood by her bed for a couple of minutes, hoping that she would say something. Softly sighing, Jack tore the check out of her checkbook and placed it on Sonny's lap. "Since I already signed it, no use throwing away a perfectly good check," Jack started, as she turned to her briefcase, closing it before picking it up. "If you ever change your mind, it's blank so you can write in any amount that you see fit," she paused, waiting for Sonny to reply, but there was no answer. "Okay then. I guess I'll go. Goodbye Sonny."

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After having just got out of the bathtub, Sonny put on a terry cloth robe before strolling into the living room. She had just arrived home about two hours ago after having spent a night at the hospital for observation. While she took a bath, Laura went to get the two of them some lunch. Since she was not back yet Sonny hurried to her computer and logged on so that she could write Blue back. Before she did so, the young woman reread her cyber-companion's last email.

Hey you,

*Do you know that every time I receive an email from you that I start smiling like a big dope? *laugh* Well it's true. And I'm usually not the type to wear dopey smiles, but you have this knack for causing me to do so. Thanks to my little sister who was snooping in my email again, I have a copy of your latest email on paper (the snoop printed it so that I could read it). Anyway, I have folded that piece of paper and slipped it into my pocket. I will carry it around with me all day and that way I'll know that a part of you is with me.*

*Oh, god. Can't believe I just wrote that. That was sappy. I'm usually not sappy. Look what you've done to me PG *grin**

Well since I've gone this far, I might as well get even sappier. How would you like us to meet for the first time at Disneyworld, the 'happiest' place on earth? Though our anniversary is on a Friday (a work day for most) I can make it there. Can you? If you can, I was thinking that we could meet there in the morning and then spend the whole day and evening together. What do you think about that?

Yours truly,

Blue

Smiling, Sonny hit the reply button before positioning her fingers over the keyboard. She thought for a few moments before she began to write her reply.

Dearest Blue,

I know that I'm sappy. So if I'm sappy and you're sappy then there is nothing wrong with that. Let's just be sappy together (smiling). You've mentioned having a sister before. How old is she? What's she like?

I think us meeting at Disneyworld is a wonderful idea! I'm so excited I'm nearly jumping up and down in my seat!! Since I have my own business, I know that I can have the time off (wink). We can meet at the front entrance when the park opens. I'll be wearing...a pink rose in my hair so that you can recognize me (smile). Oh, I'm so excited. I can't wait for September 29th to arrive so that I can see my Blue. I'll get going now. See you soon.

~PG~

A few minutes after she sent the email, Sonny logged off of the Internet. She was about to arise from her chair when she heard a key turning in the front door. Swiveling around in the chair, Sonny smiled as Laura entered her apartment, carrying a white plastic bag. Lightly sniffing the air, the blonde smiled as she detected what was in the bag. Laura had brought Mexican food, which happened to be Sonny's favorite. *Oh, what a great gal I have* Sonny thought just as another pang of guilt hit her because of this online relationship with Blue.

She attempted to shake memories of Blue out of her mind, as she arose to meet Laura. Kissing her girlfriend on the lips, Sonny took the bag from the woman. Both headed towards the kitchen, where Sonny put the bag on a small table as Laura got them something to drink. Taking a seat at the table, Sonny began to rifle through the bag as her girlfriend asked how she was feeling.

"Oh, I'm doing all right for a woman who was recently hit with a Mercedes." Glancing over her shoulder at Laura, Sonny gave her a bright smile.

Walking over to the table, Laura placed two glasses of lemonade on it before she got down to the floor on her knees and wrapped her arms around Sonny's waist. Looking up at the woman she said, "Please don't joke about it like that." She hugged the blonde to her tightly while whispering, "I could have lost you. And that would have killed me."

Closing her eyes, Sonny hugged Laura back just as tightly. "I'm sorry sweetie." Pulling back, she looked into Laura's eyes. Laura had tears in her light brown eyes. She hardly ever cried. "But I'm okay, see?"

The other woman nodded as she blinked the tears away. "Yes, I see Honey. You're more than okay." Reaching up, she tenderly kissed Sonny. "You're terrific. I love you."

Softly smiling, Sonny whispered, "I love you too."

The two women shared another hug before Laura arose to her feet and took a seat. Wiping at her eyes, Laura suddenly thought of something. Looking at Sonny who was busy opening a white box containing an enchilada meal, she asked, "Honey, how did you know it was a Mercedes? Didn't the accident happen kind of fast?"

Nodding, Sonny found a plastic fork in the bag. Shoveling spanish rice onto the fork, she raised it to her lips while replying, "Yes, it did, but I had just enough time to notice the Mercedes-Benz emblem standing proudly on that shiny black hood."

Shaking her head, Laura took a sip of her drink. "She must be loaded. You're going to use that check aren't you?"

"We already discussed this Laura. I don't want her money."

"But she owes it to you. The woman hit you with her car because she wasn't paying attention to her driving. You could have been killed Sonny."

The blonde took a deep breath as she reached over and covered Laura's hand with her own. "I know, but as you can see I'm intact."

"You're not intact. Look at your arm!"

Sonny glanced at the cast on her left arm before looking at her girlfriend as she shrugged a little. "Okay, so I have one broken bone. It'll heal."

"That's good. Let it heal with fifty thousand dollars or more in your bank account..."

"Laura...let's drop this conversation. I'm not going to use that check. In fact..." Getting up, Sonny walked out of the kitchen with Laura following close behind her. Reaching the bedroom, Sonny walked to her nightstand. Opening the top drawer, she took out the check. Turning to face Laura, the blonde held up the blank check for her to see. "This is going in the trash." She balled up the piece of paper as her girlfriend slightly winced, and then tossed it in the wastebasket. Smiling now, Sonny said, "Let's go eat." Kissing her girlfriend on the cheek, the young woman headed out of the bedroom.

Starting to follow her, Laura stopped and turned towards the wastebasket. Sonny was throwing away the opportunity of a lifetime. How often does a person receive a blank check from someone who obviously has a lot of money? That check could do wonders for the coffeeshop. Sonny and her partner Sarah could really use the money.

Glancing behind her, Laura quickly leaned down and grabbed the check, which was now wrinkled from having been balled up. Smoothing it out as best she could, Laura folded the check in half and tucked it into her pocket. With a little persistence from her girlfriend, Sonny would soon realize that this check was a valuable gift.

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As he noticed Laura's car pulling up outside, the man hurried away from the window and turned towards two women. "She's here!" he shouted as all three rushed to hide behind the counter. A bell chimed as the door was opened a minute later and Sonny walked inside. She was barely able to close the door behind her before the three people behind the counter popped up, simultaneously yelling, "Welcome back Sonny!!!"

The blonde woman smiled as she noticed they were all wearing party hats and one of the women had a small round cake in her hands with lit candles on top. "Aaw, you guys are so sweet," Sonny stated as she walked over towards them. Being instructed to blow out the candles, she did so before everyone clapped.

Giving her friends and co-workers a warm smile, Sonny thought of how thrilled she was to be back at work. Laura had insisted that she stay home and rest for a few days before returning, and being locked up all that time had nearly driven Sonny up the wall. Being made to stay home and rest was not the only thing that had nearly driven Sonny mad. After they ate the Mexican food

the day Sonny arrived home from the hospital, Laura disconnected the keyboard from the computer and locked it in the trunk of her car. Sonny just about had a fit when she did it.

*"What are you doing?"*

*Winding the cord around the keyboard, Laura replied as she looked at her perturbed girlfriend, "While you're taking a few days off, I know you'll probably just spend most of that time on your computer, so I'm confiscating your keyboard." Noticing that Sonny was getting ready to argue, Laura held up a hand. "You are not home to surf and chat, you are home to get some rest. You don't need to be typing with your arm in a cast. I think you can survive a few days without AOL."*

Well obviously, she had indeed survived, but if Sonny did not get to log on soon...very soon she would explode! During the last few days, Sonny's thoughts had often been of Blue and how worried the woman probably was to not have heard from her. Glancing towards the door leading to her and Sarah's office, Sonny felt anxious to get to the computer that she had in there. She then looked back at her co-workers, who were cutting pieces of cake and putting them on paper plates. Sonny chuckled.

"Isn't it a bit early to be eating chocolate cake?"

"Nonsense," Nicole Sanders, whom everyone called Hawke said as she thrust a paper plate holding a nice sized piece of cake into Sonny's hand, "it's never too early for chocolate." The twenty-three year old winked at her boss as she picked up her own plate and began to eat.

Sonny chuckled again as she reached out a hand and lightly ruffled Hawke's short spiky hair. "I like that color. What do you call it?"

"Thanks," Hawke replied after swallowing. "I got tired of green, so I dyed it this color the night before last. It's called Flamingo Pink."

"I've been trying to get her to do a rainbow thing but she won't," Peter interjected as he grinned at Sonny.

"Excuse me if I rather not go around looking like a pack of Skittles," Hawke swiftly replied as she looked at Peter. Over the past couple of years, Sonny and Sarah had grown used to their constant bickering. It was amusing because Peter and Hawke often resembled an old married couple.

Peter continued grinning as he looked back at her. "Oh, but you don't have a problem looking like cotton candy? Every time I see you, I have an urge to go to a carnival." He laughed as the young woman gave him a light slap on the back of the head, which only proved to make him laugh more.

Sarah chuckled as she walked towards the window and turned the "open" sign over. "Now, now children. This is Sonny's first day back therefore please try to get along."

"He started it," Hawke whined, though she was wearing a broad smile.

Sonny laughed as she polished off half her slice. She had missed these guys. Half the reason she loved coming to work was because she got to spend time with her closest friends. This was more like playtime rather than a job. She, Sarah, Hawke, and Peter always had fun with one another.

Nearly five years ago, Sonny and Sarah, her best friend since they were freshmen in high school, opened their coffeehouse "*Bean There, Done That*". At first, business had been slow, but it was not too long before they started to have a parade of customers and became one of the most popular coffeehouses in Orlando.

A little over a year later, Peter joined the team and not long after him so did Hawke. Sonny and Sarah hired Peter on the spot after he showed how skilled he was when it came to coffee. The man knew how to make every drink from an amaretto coffee to a vanilla cloud. In fact, over the years Peter had taught them a great deal of what they knew. Hawke on the other hand, when she first applied for a job at the coffeehouse, had a lot to learn. On her very first day at "*Bean There, Done That*", Peter took the then nineteen-year-old under his wing. Through patience and many coffee beans, Peter taught Hawke the art of coffee making. Both Sonny and Sarah swore to this very day that the first time Hawke made a cappuccino on her own, they saw a proud tear in Peter's eye though he denied it.

Walking over to her friend, Sarah put an arm around Sonny's shoulders as she smiled at her. "So how are you feeling Babe?"

Sonny wrapped her good arm around her friend's waist as she returned the smile. "I'm doing pretty good." She glanced out of the window across the street. That building appeared as though it was done. She briefly wondered how it looked inside. "Have you heard anymore news on our rival?"

"Well apparently they're opening for business later this week. That's about all I know. It's been kept pretty hush hush." Sarah looked at her friend. "But hey, don't worry about it Babe. We can take 'em."

Sonny nodded, smiling. "Yeah. They don't stand a chance."

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Sitting at a table in her soon to open coffeehouse, Jack opened her laptop. Quickly logging onto her AOL screen name, she sighed as she checked her email. There was one new email since the last time she checked, which was twenty minutes ago, but it was not from PerkyGrrl. Jack wondered for the billionth time why it was taking her friend so long to write back. An expression of worry appeared on Jack's face as she tried not to think negatively. There had to be a perfectly good reason why PerkyGrrl had not given her a reply in the past few days.

So what was it?

Opening a fresh email, Jack began to write to her Internet companion. It was times like these when she wished that she at least had PerkyGrrl's phone number, but both of them had agreed in the beginning not to get too personal. Jack's own cell phone started to ring as she typed, but the woman ignored it. Whatever...whomever it was could wait.

PG,

If you have been busy the past few days I understand, I would just appreciate it if you would send me an email to let me know that you are all right. I'm very worried about you hon. Just let me know how you're doing.

Blue

Positioning the tiny arrow over the send button, Jack pressed the enter key and watched as her email vanished. Maybe now she would hear something from PG by this evening. She most certainly hoped so. Logging off, Jack closed her laptop as she noticed Leslie Antigone, her consultant heading her way. She offered the woman a smile as Leslie took a seat in the chair opposite her own.

"Hey, what's up?" Jack started.

Sitting back in the chair, Leslie studied Jack as she crossed one leg over the other, causing her skirt to raise higher. Almost in reflex, Jack's blue eyes strayed to her consultant's long gorgeous legs, remembering those times long ago when they used to be wrapped around her waist. Blinking, Jack shook her head in an attempt to rid her mind of those thoughts. *It's been far too long since I've had any good lovin'. Hell, it's been too long since I've had any lovin' at all.*

Leslie faintly grinned as she noticed where Jack's eyes had momentarily been. She had a good idea what the other woman might have been thinking. *Poor thing. All work and no play, I bet.* Well if Leslie had her way, it would not remain that way for much longer. Over the past six months they had started working together to create this coffeehouse, the fire that Leslie deemed had died out years ago when she and Jack were at it, was burning red hot again.

"Funny, I could ask you the same thing Jack," Leslie started. "You've sort of been in your own little world all day. Is something bothering you?" she asked in a voice laced with concern. Leslie fought the urge to reach over and sandwich one of Jack's hands between both of her own.

Jack shook her head. "I don't know what you're talking about Leslie. Nothing is bothering me," she gave a momentary pause. "But thanks for asking." She offered her ex a smile.

"Are you worried about Chloe being in Hawaii? She's a big girl now Jack. You've raised her right and I know she's just fine. She and her friends are probably having a ball right at this moment." Leslie gave the other woman a reassuring smile. "Besides, knowing you, you probably have her calling you three times a day to let you know how things are going, so you should realize she's okay."

Jack suddenly laughed, as did Leslie. "Hey, that's not true." She grinned at the consultant. "Chloe's only supposed to call me once every evening."

Leslie chuckled. "I figured you had her on *some* type of schedule." She smiled fondly, remembering how she used to observe Jack with Chloe. There was always a warmth and softness in Jack when she was with her sister, talking to her, teaching her that she rarely showed to anyone else. "You're a very good big sister Jack."

Jack felt a blush creeping up her cheeks. "Thanks Leslie," she almost mumbled, feeling a bit uncomfortable with the compliment. She was not the kind of person that received them often.

"Is there anything that I can do for you?"

Glancing across the street at the much smaller coffeehouse, Jack formed an idea before looking across the table at Leslie. "Actually, I think that there is..."

~~~~~

Handing the latest customer his cup of coffee, Hawke smiled as she told him to have a good day. After he left the counter, she turned to the small radio that she always kept by the cash register. Reaching into a pocket of her jeans, she took out a tape. Opening the tape cassette deck, she slipped the tape in. As she did so, Peter came up behind her asking Hawke what she was about to play.

"Aretha Franklin," Hawke replied. "Sorry Petey, I don't have any Beach Boys for ya." She shrugged while grinning.

Peter smirked at her. "One, how many times do I have to tell you not to call me Petey? Please don't. And two, I like modern music unlike *someone* I know. You seem to be trapped back in the sixties and seventies."

Not standing too far away from them, Sarah shook her head as she observed Hawke and Peter. *There they go again.*

"Pe...ter...it was in the sixties and seventies that they knew how to make good quality music about life and love. Today it's difficult to find that kind of music. All these boy groups around cannot begin to compare with those such as Aretha Franklin, Marvin Gaye, Otis Redding, and Donna Summers. Not to say that there aren't *any* good musicians today, but it's not like it was thirty years ago." Hawke sadly shook her pink head.

Behind gold-rimmed glasses, Peter regarded the young woman quietly for a moment. "Hawke, thirty years ago you weren't even thought of."

She nodded. "I know. That's why I wish I had been born around 1955. That way I could have truly experienced the Disco Era. Going to nightclubs...dancing until dawn under that big shiny silver ball..."



Peter suddenly chuckled. Looking up at him curiously, Hawke asked what he found amusing. "Oh, I was just trying to imagine you in bell bottoms and platform shoes." He chuckled again as he dodged Hawke's hand, which was heading directly for his head.

Sarah laughed as she watched Hawke and Peter in amusement. Sure they bickered a lot, but the pair could be quite entertaining at times. Sarah was about to say something in the hopes of changing the subject before Peter ended up with a concussion when the door to she and Sonny's office suddenly slammed. Quickly looking over, she saw her best friend standing in front of it, wearing an irritated expression. Sarah asked what was wrong. Last she knew, Sonny had went in there fifteen minutes ago to check her email.

"I couldn't get online. I tried and tried, but it wouldn't let me. I kept receiving the same message. Please try again later."

Sarah walked over to stand next to Sonny. "Don't worry," she started in a quiet voice, "you'll be able to get online soon so you can get your latest email from Blue." A few months back, Sonny had confided in Sarah, Hawke, and Peter about Blue. She simply had to tell someone and she knew that she could trust them not to breathe a word to anyone else.

Not seeing any other customers, Hawke and Peter hurried over to the pair. "What's wrong?" Hawke asked. "Bad news from Blue? If she hurt you in anyway, I'll find out where she lives and I'll kick her butt."

That caused Sonny to laugh as she reached out and briefly hugged Hawke. "Thanks sweetie, but no, I didn't get any bad news from her. In fact, I didn't get any news at all. I can't get online. It's like fate is trying to keep us apart." She sighed. "Maybe fate is trying to tell me that my correspondence with Blue is wrong."

"Honey, if that's what fate is trying to tell you, it's a moron," Peter said as he squeezed Sonny's shoulder. "What you and Blue have is special. Call me a big romantic but I think she's the one for you. Carpe Blue, Sonny." Winking at her, Peter gave the blonde a brilliant smile, showing a deep set of dimples. He was a very handsome and good-hearted man, and Sonny always thought that if she and he were straight that he would be perfect for her.

Sonny smiled at her three friends. "Thanks. You guys are the best."

"You just now figuring this out Sonny?" Sarah smiled as the other two chuckled.

"Hey, I have an idea to cheer Sonny up," Hawke stated as she pointed to a vacant table close to the counter. "Sonny, will you please go set there?" Nodding, the blonde walked over to the table, wondering what Hawke had up her sleeve. She watched as the other three moved over to the counter and spoke among themselves.

Hawke removed a tape from another of her pants and pockets and held it up so that Sarah and Peter could see it. "Okay, she's sort of down right now so let's lift her up. How familiar are the both of you with Barry White songs? Do ya'll even know *who* Barry White is?"

Sarah lightly cleared her throat to get the other woman's attention. "You're asking *me* if I know of Barry White?"

"Now you see Sarah that would be wrong if I just assumed you knew Barry White because you are an African-American." She looked at Peter. "Just like it would be wrong if I assumed you listened to the Village People." She tried to keep a grin off of her face, but she couldn't. Peter merely smirked.

Sarah chuckled. "You're right Hawke. You probably know more about black musicians than I do."

Peter nodded. "Considering you listen to country music."

"I don't listen to country," Sarah retorted. "You saw me listening to Garth Brooks one day a couple weeks ago and it was only one song. Just one song. I like R&B and soft rock."

Hawke softly gasped. "Garth Brooks, Sarah?" If there was one type of music that you would never catch Hawke listening to, it would be country. She did like a couple of LeAnn Rimes songs, but that was it.

"Just one song!" Sarah nearly whined. "And so what if I did like country music? What's wrong with that?" She crossed her arms over her chest as she regarded Hawke and Peter.

Hawke shook her head. "Absolutely nothing is wrong with it Sarah. If you like Garth Brooks it's not a problem." She grinned. "Whatever floats your boat, toots." Hawke grinned again as Sarah stuck her tongue out at her. Turning to her radio, Hawke ejected her Aretha Franklin tape before replacing it with her Barry White tape. Looking back at her two friends she said, "Now what have we learned kids?" Both Peter and Sarah shrugged.

"I haven't the faintest clue. What have we learned?" Peter asked.

"You can't judge a book by its cover."

Both of them nodded as Peter said, "Right Ms. Sanders. Now what are we singing?"

"Ya'll familiar with *"Can't Get Enough of Your Love?"* " They both nodded as Hawke sighed in relief. "Good. You guys can sing backup while I'll do Barry's part."

"Waitaminute," Sarah said. "Why do you get to be Barry?" She indicated Peter. "Shouldn't Peter be him since he's a man?"

"That remains to be seen." Hawke winked at Peter as he gave her another smirk.

"Ha ha. I'm so very amused by your antics," the man said. "Push play Pinky."

Hawke put a finger on the play button as she asked Peter and Sarah if they were ready. When they both nodded, she pressed down before all three turned to face Sonny, who was patiently waiting for them to start. As music started to play, the various customers in the coffeehouse gave their attention to the three behind the counter.

"I've heard people say that too much of anything is not good for you, baby," Hawke spoke the words in as deep a voice as she could manage, while some in the coffeehouse smiled and chuckled. "Oh, no. But I don't know about that. There's many times that we've loved...we've shared love and made love. It doesn't seem to me like it's enough." She shrugged a little. "It's just not enough, baby. It's just not enough..."

As if they had planned this performance, Sarah, Hawke, and Peter started to lightly swing their hips from left to right as they sang in unison. While she sat and watched, Sonny began to slowly grin, a slight blush stinging her cheeks.

*My darling, I can't get enough of your love baby*

*Girl, I don't know, I don't know why*

*Can't get enough of your love baby*

*Lord, some things I can't get used to*

*No matter how I try*

*It's like the more you give, the more I want*

*And baby, that's no lie*

*Oh no, babe*

Grabbing a pink rose from a vase sitting on the counter, Hawke jumped onto the counter before sliding across it on the other side. Easily jumping down from it to land lightly on her feet, the young woman strolled over to Sonny as she and her "back up" continued to sing.

*Tell me, what can I say?*

*What am I gonna do?*

*How should I feel when everything is you?*

*What kind of love is this that you're givin' me?*

*Is it in your kiss or just because you're sweet?*

The slight blush that Sonny had been wearing just a minute ago grew to the point where she figured that her over-heated cheeks were going to burst into flame as Hawke straddled her lap, facing the older woman. Rowdy hoorays and hollers were heard from customers sitting in the coffeehouse, making Sonny feel like she was in a topless bar as Hawke proceeded to dance in her lap. *Hawke, did you have one too many coffees this morning or what?*

*Girl, all I know is every time you're here*

*I feel the change*

*Somethin' moves*

*I scream your name*

*Look what ya got me doin'*

*Darling, I can't get enough of your love baby*

*Girl, I don't know, I don't know, I don't know why*

*I can't get enough of your love baby*

*Oh no, baby*

*Girl, if I could only make you see*

*And make you understand*

*Girl, your love for me is all I need*

*And more than I can stand*

*Oh well, baby*

With a catlike grin on her face, Hawke raised the rose and gently caressed her boss' reddened cheek with it. Sonny was caught somewhere between mortification, intrigue, and amusement as the dancing singer continued trailing the soft rose down her throat. Glancing over towards Sarah and Peter still behind the counter, Sonny smirked at them, catching the grins they were so desperately trying to hide. Sarah looked as if she could burst into laughter at any given moment.

*Oh, you two think this is so funny, eh?*

*How can I explain all the things I feel?*

*You've given me so much*

*Girl, you're so unreal*

*Still I keep loving you*

*More and more each time*

*Girl, what am I gonna do*

*'Cause you're blowin' my mind*

*I get the same old feelin' every time you're here*

*I feel the change*

*Somethin' moves*

*I scream your name*

*Look what ya got me doin'*

*Darling, I can't get enough of your love baby*

*Oh no, baby*

Winking at Sonny, Hawke stood up and turned around before she slowly gyrated her hips before taking residence in the other woman's lap again as the cheers rose in the coffeehouse. Sonny could not be sure, but she could have sworn that she heard someone instruct Hawke to take it all off. Leaning back, so that her back was pressed against Sonny's chest, Hawke began to speak in her Barry White imitation again. "Baby, it took all of my life to find you. But you can believe it's gonna take the rest of my life to keep you."

At that moment, Hawke placed the stem of the rose in her mouth as she looked over her shoulder at Sonny while wiggling her eyebrows. As she started to grind her bottom into Sonny's lap, the blonde loosened the tight grasp her hands had on the arms of the chair she was sitting in. *Oh, well*, Sonny thought to herself in resignation. *If you can't beat 'em, might as well join 'em*. She then placed her hands on Hawke's slim waist as she matched the woman's grinding. Seeing this, the customer's cheers became even louder. The customers were so boisterous that people walking passed the coffeehouse started to wander inside to check out what was going on.

Leaning forward, Sonny deftly plucked the rose from Hawke's mouth with her own, holding the stem of it between her teeth as she grinned at the slightly surprised younger woman. Starting to grin back, Hawke resumed her singing along with Sarah and Peter who were now sitting on top of the counter.

*Oh no, babe*

*My darling, I can't get enough of your love baby*

*Yeah, I don't know, I don't know, I don't know why*

*Can't get enough of your love baby*

*Oh my darling, I can't get enough of your love baby*

*Oh baby I don't know, I don't know, I don't know why*

*I can't get enough of your love baby*

*Oh baby...*

As the song ended, Hawke placed a tender kiss on Sonny's cheek before she bounced up from the woman's lap. The customer's clapped and whistled, some even giving standing ovations. Walking over to stand next to Sarah and Peter who had jumped down from the counter, Hawke and her backup singers gave bows. Hawke chuckled as Sonny removed the rose from her mouth and tossed it at her before she started clapping along with everyone else.

Rising from the chair, Sonny turned towards the audience. "Thank you all for coming," she said in a loud voice. "Please do visit us again this afternoon for another performance from "Hawke and the Hawkettes." At this, the customers chuckled.

"Wouldn't miss it for the world Sonny!" A regular customer of the coffeehouse shouted, causing a few people to laugh.

Walking over to her co-workers as she shook her head, Sonny said, "Ya'll are crazy!" She grinned. "But I love you anyway."

A group hug ensued, before a small gasp was heard from Hawke as she looked towards the entrance to the coffeehouse over Sonny's head. The other three followed where her gaze was, to see a stunning dark-haired woman moving towards the counter, almost seeming to glide so graceful were her steps. She wore a skirt suit that clung to every curve of her body perfectly. She appeared to be the type of woman that always got what she wanted at the exact moment she wanted it. Smiling at the quartet, the woman patiently waited for one of them to take her order.

"I've got her," both Hawke and Peter exclaimed at the same moment. They then both looked at Sarah and Sonny, as if waiting for them to make the final decision.

"Ladies first," Sarah spoke up.

Hawke stomped her foot on the floor as she glanced at Peter with a mock irritated expression. "I wanted her to be my customer, but if you say ladies first Sarah then..." She shrugged as she attempted to hold in a grin while Peter smirked. "Go get her Petey." Raising her balled fist, Hawke lightly socked the man in his arm. Feigning pain, Peter strolled behind the counter as he pasted on a brilliant smile for the gorgeous customer. Meanwhile, Sarah, Sonny, and Hawke watched the exchange in interest.

"Hello," Peter said cheerily as he reached up, adjusting his glasses. "Welcome to *"Bean There, Done That"*. What can I get for you today?"

Looking up at the menu, the woman scanned it before returning her gaze to Peter, a little flirtatious smile on her lips. "I think I'll have a double caffe' mocha and do you have danish?"

Peter nodded. "Indeed, we do."

"Cheese?"

Peter cocked his head to the side. "You want me to take your picture?" He laughed as the woman before him chuckled in a way that made it obvious she was not very amused. "No seriously, we do have cheese danish. Freshly made this morning," Peter stated proudly while highly embarrassed over his little "joke". Now he knew why he hardly ever told them.

Unzipping her purse, the woman took out her wallet as she replied, "Then please give me a cheese danish as well. That'll be all."

Peter pressed in a few buttons on the electronic cash register before giving the woman her total. Handing him a ten-dollar-bill, she told him to keep the change before stepping out of the way of another customer waiting behind her. Walking over, Hawke took the next customer's order while Peter busied himself making the caffe' mocha.

Not three minutes later, the breath-taking customer strolled out of the coffeehouse with her drink and pastry in hand. As he leaned on the counter, Peter turned to look at Hawke who was standing next to him. "My oh my. I wonder if that beautiful specimen has a brother?"

Hawke chuckled. "For a moment there I thought you had uh...converted." She grinned up at the tall man.

Peter laughed as he shook his head. "Now don't get me wrong...she was gorgeous...but she still lacks one thing that I need."

His co-worker glanced down at the crotch of his chinos. "Yeah," Hawke nodded, wearing a suddenly serious expression, "you do seem to be underdeveloped in that department." If looks could kill, Hawke would have dropped dead in the very spot she stood. Laughing, the young woman swiftly moved out of the way as Peter attempted to slap her on the rear with the small towel he held.

"Hey, did that woman look familiar to any of you?" Sarah suddenly asked with a pensive look on her face. "I think I've seen her before..." Sonny, Hawke, and Peter shook their heads negatively. Sarah shook her head as she thought more. "I know I've seen...ah!" She snapped her fingers, as the other three looked her way inquiringly. "I've seen her walking in and out of that coffeehouse across the street."

Hawke slightly frowned as she glanced out of the window towards the other coffeehouse. "Why did she come over here?"

"Easy," Sonny replied as she began to march towards the exit looking quite perturbed. "She was spying on us."

"Where are you going?" Sarah asked as she watched her friend in some surprise. It was not very often that she witnessed Sonny being angry.

Reaching the door, Sonny pushed it open before glancing over her shoulder. "I need to go have a chat with our new neighbors. Be right back." With that said, she left.

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Minutes later, Sonny marched into the brand new coffeehouse. Her steps faltered as she took in the sight around her. She had to be honest. This place was absolutely incredible and not to mention huge! It was a two-story establishment with tables and booths located on both floors. It seemed that half of the tables and booths had a black laptop computer on them. *How could they afford laptops for fifty percent of the tables*, Sonny wondered in astonishment.

To her left was a rather large stage located against a wall. On it were two microphones and some equipment that Sonny could not make out due to the distance. In front of her was a long bar with at least a dozen black barstools surrounding it. Sonny shook her head as she had a sinking feeling that competing with this coffeehouse was going to be quite difficult. Taking a deep calming breath, Sonny tried to tell herself that everything would work out all right. All she had to do was keep thinking positive. Sonny looked towards the winding stairs leading to the second level and sighed. That was easier said than done.

Taking a few more steps into the coffeehouse, the blonde looked up as she heard the voice of a female. Coming down the stairs was the woman who had been in "*Bean There, Done That*" not too long ago. She was talking on a cell phone as she made her way down. Hooking her thumbs into the side pockets of her pants, Sonny waited to be noticed.

As the woman reached the end of the staircase, she and Sonny made eye contact. Quickly ending the call, the dark-haired woman slipped her phone into her purse before walking towards Sonny, asking if she could help her in some way.

Nodding, Sonny said, "You can tell me why you were just spying."

The other woman cocked her head to the side. "Spying?" she asked as if she had no clue what Sonny was referring to.

"Yes, spying. In my coffeehouse. Trying to see how we measure up to yours?"

The woman quickly looked around the establishment. "First of all I wasn't spying. I wanted a drink and something to eat, so I spotted your charming little place." Sonny narrowed her eyes at

this, but the other woman merely kept talking, "Second, this doesn't belong to me, though I did play an important role in making "*Brew n' Paradise*" what it is today."

"That you did," Jack said as she walked around the corner, coming towards the women. She took in the shorter woman standing in front of Leslie, thinking that she sounded familiar. "I'm the owner. Do you have a problem with Ms. Antigone here?"

Turning around, Sonny's mouth opened wide as she saw the person standing ten feet away from her. "Ja-Ms. Foster," she said in a soft tone of voice. Jack Foster, the woman that she literally ran into a few days before owned the new coffeehouse across the street from her own? Talk about a small world.

Quickly recovering from her surprise, Jack replied, "You can call me Jack, Sonny." Sonny owned "*Bean There, Done That*"? Jack inwardly sighed. This was going to make what she was planning to do a tad more difficult.

"I rather not. I believe it's too informal."

Jack shrugged as if it made no difference to her. "Have it your way then." Turning blue eyes on Leslie, she asked, "Les, will you give us a moment?"

Nodding, Leslie glanced at her watch. "No problem. I need to get going anyway." Walking over to Jack, she placed a brief kiss on the woman's cheek. "If I don't see you before the grand opening the day after tomorrow, good luck okay?" Leslie smiled.

Jack returned the smile. "Thanks Leslie. I really appreciate all of your help."

The other woman winked at her. "Anytime." Looking back at Sonny, she said, "Nice meeting you Sonny." Leslie waited a moment for the blonde to give a reply but she offered nothing. Smiling at her anyway, Leslie headed towards the entrance, the clicking of her heels on the shiny checkered floor the only sound in the coffeehouse before she exited.

The tension between Jack and Sonny was so thick that it could have been cut with a knife. Reaching up, Jack ran a hand through her straight jet-black hair. She glanced at the cast on the other woman's arm, feeling the guilt rise again. Opening her mouth, she asked Sonny how she was doing.

Sonny nodded. "I'm doing just fine," there was a slight pause before she continued, "I just don't like being spied upon. If she wanted to check out the competition, then that's fine, but she should have been up front about it." She shrugged as she let out a ragged breath. "Maybe I'm overreacting...I dunno. But there is a way to go about doing things, you know?" Sonny looked into Jack's eyes, finding them mesmerizing. Blinking, she looked away. *Good Lord, she's beautiful.* Slightly shaking her head, Sonny took a deep breath while mentally chastising herself. She had to stay focused.

"I know," Jack softly replied as she stared into those green eyes. She could not shake the feeling that she knew Sonny. She had experienced the same feeling the other day at the hospital. *Huh, maybe I knew her in another life,*" Jack thought sardonically. "Um...why don't we have a seat?" Indicating a comfortable looking booth located by the window, Jack watched Sonny walking towards it before following her.

"Listen, I'm sorry if sending Leslie over there, upset you in anyway," Jack stated as she sat across from the blonde. "That wasn't my intention."

Nodding, Sonny folded her hands on her lap as she looked across at Jack. She found that her mind was a complete blank and scuffled for something to say. Glancing around the coffeehouse, Sonny finally said, "This is quite a fabulous place you have here."

"Thank you. Leslie, the woman who just left, did most of the designing."

Sonny nodded while wondering just who this Leslie was and then wondering why she was so curious to know. They seemed rather close, considering that Leslie gave Jack a peck on the cheek. Sonny inwardly sighed. She was getting off track again. What and who Jack did was none of her business whatsoever. Sonny should have been inquiring why of all places in Orlando did Jack Foster have to open up her coffeehouse here? Looking back at the other woman who was staring at her intently, Sonny voiced the question.

Choosing her words carefully, Jack replied, "I wanted to compete with " *Bean There, Done That.*"

"Why?"

"Because I did some research and your coffeehouse does pretty good business," she paused, "and I want that business."

Sonny's brow furrowed. What did Jack mean by stating that she wanted her business? "Excuse me?"

Jack sighed as she sat back in the booth. She had a feeling that this meeting was not going to finish on a good note. "Sonny, I'm going to be totally honest with you, all right? No beating around the bush because that isn't my style. I'm just going to tell it like it is."

The blonde nodded. "I would appreciate that."

"You've never heard of me before us meeting at the hospital, correct?" At the other woman's nod, she went on, "Well I'm known for doing this type of thing. Starting a business that is the same type of business as another in close proximity. Over the course of time I manage to put the other place out of business because mine is always better. Proof of that is that I have a nine figure amount in my back account. I then sell my business to the highest bidder and move on to something else. This is why some have seen it fit to nickname me "The Conqueror." Looking across at Sonny she finished softly, "It's what I do. Conquer and destroy."

Sonny sat there, speechless. Indeed, she had heard of the Conqueror before but never paid it much attention. Now she was very much alert since said Conqueror had just moved on to her. Looking across at the other woman, Sonny wondered how the woman could be so callous about what she did. Did Jack simply not care that she was most likely destroying others lives as well as their businesses?

Locating her voice, Sonny inquired, "How do you sleep at night?"

"Truthfully? Quite well. Guilt is an emotion that would hinder my success. I have no time for it, therefore over time I have learned to quell it."

Sonny suddenly had an urge to slap this woman. Jack was much like a block of ice. Hard and cold. "Speaking of your success, your parents must be awfully proud of how you achieved it," Sonny replied, her voice dripping with sarcasm.

Jack's blue eyes darkened as her teeth clenched together. "I think that you should leave now," she stated tightly.

"You're plainly telling me that you plan on destroying my business and *you* have an attitude? I'm the one who should be upset. My partner and I worked our butts off to get that coffeehouse up and running. We didn't do it just so that a few years later the Conqueror, " she sneered the name, "could trounce all over it like some wild beast that hasn't had a bite to eat in weeks."

Jack arched an eyebrow. "C'est le vie, baby," she said coolly.

Standing up, Sonny narrowed her eyes at Jack. "I am not your baby."

The other woman gave her a relieved smile. "Thank goodness for that."

Sonny bit down on her lower lip quite hard as she mentally counted to ten. Jack was really starting to rub her the wrong way. Glancing back at the entrance, Sonny said, "You know I think I'll take your advice and bid you farewell Ms. Foster." Quickly turning around, she headed towards the glass door.

"Have a good day Sonny," Jack called, still sitting at the booth. "Hey, maybe later you can send your pink-haired friend over to give me a lap dance like she did you." She grinned. "It can be kind of like a welcome to the neighborhood gift."

Sonny's face flushed. Leslie saw that? Momentarily closing her eyes, the blonde took a deep breath before pushing the door open and walking out without comment as she heard a low chuckle behind her.

This was turning out to be a very lousy day.

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Reclining back on the couch, Laura looked at her lover. Sonny's eyes were glued to the television set, but Laura had a feeling that she was not paying attention to what was on the screen. Putting her hands on one of Sonny's feet, both of which were resting in her lap, she began to massage up and down, not getting any response from her girlfriend. Softly, Laura called Sonny's name. When the blonde kept looking at the television, Laura tried again, a little louder now. Still no response.

"Sonny!"

Her body jumping up slightly as though she was just startled, green eyes turned in Laura's direction. "Yes? What is it?" she said in a slightly alarmed voice.

Cocking her head to the side, Laura asked if she was all right. Nodding, Sonny turned back to the television. Something was definitely wrong if Sonny did not want to talk. "What happened Love? You've been quiet ever since I picked you up this evening."

For a moment Laura thought that Sonny was going to ignore her, until the woman looked at her again. "Have you ever heard of the Conqueror?"

Laura's expression grew thoughtful. "You remember that mini mall you used to love to shop at?"

Sonny nodded. "Yeah. It was torn down last year."

Her lover nodded. "That's due to the Conqueror, whomever he is. Put them out of business because he created a bigger better mini mall about two blocks down." Laura shook her head. "Just annihilated the place. And quickly too."

Sonny sighed. "The Conqueror is a she. I saw her today. Jack Foster."

Her eyes opening wide, Laura repeated, "Jack Foster?" To Sonny's nod, she went on, "You mean the same woman who hit you with her car?" Sonny nodded again. "Did she come in for a cup of coffee?" The blonde shook her head negatively. "She didn't almost hit you again, did she?"

Noticing the look on Laura's face and hearing her question, Sonny almost could have laughed. "No. No she didn't. You know the soon to be opening coffeehouse I told you about across the street? It's hers. And she informed me in no uncertain terms that she plans on destroying "*Bean There, Done That*." Sarah and my business is just another conquest for her."

Laura shook her head in bewilderment. "I cannot believe the nerve of that woman. First she almost takes your life and now she wants to ruin your business?" Laura felt the anger rising as she gently pushed Sonny's feet off of her lap before standing up. Picking up her keys and purse from the coffee-table, Laura headed for the front door.

Twisting around on the couch so that she could see her, Sonny asked, "Where are you going?"

"I need some fresh air. Be back soon." Opening the door, Laura walked out, shutting it behind her.

Minutes later, Laura was driving down the street. Her knuckles were almost white as she kept a tight grasp on the steering wheel. Glancing at the built in clock on her dashboard, she noticed the time and nodded to herself. She had time to make a stop by the bank before heading towards her final destination. As she came to a stop at a red light, Laura grabbed her purse from the passenger seat. Opening it, she extracted a folded check from her wallet. Opening it, she memorized the address. *Jacqueline Foster, you, and I are going to have a little chit chat.*

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Opening the door to her beach house, Jack switched on a light before closing and locking the door behind her. Stifling a yawn, she kicked off her shoes before making her way into the den where the mini bar was set up. Turning on the light in the den, she walked over to the stereo. Selecting a CD, she slipped it into the CD player before pressing play. A jazz song began to play as Jack made her way behind the bar. Grabbing a lowball glass, she picked up a bottle of one of the finest cognac's she owned.

Twisting off the cap, Jack poured some of the amber colored liquid into the short glass before replacing the top and resting the bottle on the polished bar top. Bringing the glass to her lips, Jack took a small sip of the cognac while closing her blue eyes in the process to savor it. A small pleasurable smile briefly appeared on her lips as the fruity liquid made its way down her throat. This was her idea of the perfect way to spend an evening. A glass of refined cognac and the captivating voice of Ella Fitzgerald.

Tonight, Jack planned to just take it easy. She was in desperate need of some rest and relaxation. Looking at her desk and the black computer sitting on it, she wondered if there was an email from PerkyGrrl waiting for her. Well there was only one way to find out. With glass in hand, Jack strolled over to her desk and took a seat in her comfortable black leather chair. Placing the glass of cognac on the desk, she booted her computer and then went through the process of logging online. While she waited for the dialing to complete, Jack picked up her glass and took another small sip, this time rolling the liquid over her tongue a bit before swallowing.

When she heard the words "you've got mail", Jack's blue eyes lit up in anticipation. She crossed the two fingers closest to her thumb on her left hand while moving the mouse to the mailbox icon with her right. Clicking on it, she sighed, noticing that out of the five new pieces of email, none of them were from PerkyGrrl. Not feeling up to opening any of them at the moment, Jack logged off before retrieving her glass and standing.

Deciding to stretch out on the couch while she listened to Ella, Jack headed in that direction when the doorbell suddenly rang. Sighing and frowning because she was not in the mood for company, Jack glanced towards the front door, speculating if she should ignore the caller. *No, I better get it. Might be important.* With her glass in hand, Jack hurried towards the front door, passing through the living room on her way. The doorbell rang again just as she arrived. Looking

through the peephole, she saw a woman standing there that she did not recognize. Opening the door, Jack regarded the visitor with a questioning look.

"May I help you?" she asked.

"I'm looking for Jacqueline Foster."

Jack raised an eyebrow, wondering what this was all about. Pointing at herself, she said, "You found her. And whom may I ask are you?"

"My name is Laura Scott. I'm here on behalf of Sonny Campbell. You and I need to talk Ms. Foster."

A few questions ran through Jack's mind at this point. Namely, how did Laura Scott find out where she lived. Another was, did Sonny intend to accomplish anything by sending her over? "Well then please come in." Stepping aside, Jack waited for the other woman to walk inside before closing the door. Leading Laura into the den, Jack indicated for her to have a seat on the couch. Glancing at the bar, she asked Laura if she would care for a beverage.

Laura shook her head as she took a seat. "No thank you Ms. Foster."

Jack inwardly winced. She hated it when people referred to her by her last name. It made her feel years beyond her age and quite uncomfortable. Whether someone was a good companion or her worst enemy, Jack preferred to be called Jack. She told Laura as much.

"I much rather call you Ms. Foster," Laura replied evenly. "I'm not your friend."

Jack nodded as she took a seat on the couch as well. "I know you're not my friend...Ms. Scott, because I don't have any," she stated matter-of-factly. Taking a sip of her cognac, she placed the glass on the plush carpet before turning towards Laura. "So...what did Sonny send you over here for?"

"That's a big surprise," Laura said dryly.

Jack faintly smirked, having an image of herself tossing Laura Scott out of the front door.

"Answer my question please."

"She doesn't know that I'm here."

"Ah. So why did you feel the need to pay me a visit?"

Laura looked straight into Jack's eyes. "I wanted to tell you just what I think of you."

Both of Jack's eyebrows went up at that statement. Was it just her imagination, or was this turning out to be the worst week of her life? No. Thinking back to eleven years ago, she knew that the answer was no. Perhaps this was the second or third worst week of her life. "And what

makes you think that I give a damn what you think about me?" Jack asked rather calmly. Reaching for the remote that was on her glass coffeetable, she pointed it towards the stereo. Soon the CD player ceased to play. There would be no kicking back and listening to jazz tonight. Ella would have to wait until another night.

Laura shrugged. "I don't think you do. Just thought that I would share. I wanted to look into the eyes of one of the most cold-hearted, self-involved people that was put on this earth."

Jack cocked her head to the side as she regarded Laura. "Did Sonny tell you about my little plan to put her business out to pasture?"

"You really don't care do you?"

"Why should I? I don't know her from Eve. Starting one's own business is very risky because you go into it not really knowing what will happen. It's much like gambling. If you make a wager and then find that your hand isn't as good as your opponent's then you lose your money. Sonny and I are gamblers and it is not my problem if she has a full house, whereas I have a royal flush. We both took chances and she is going to lose. That's just the way it is."

Laura's hands clenched and unclenched as she attempted to keep her temper in check. Lashing out at this woman would get her absolutely nowhere. She had to be calm and rational. "What makes you so sure that Sonny is going to lose?"

Jack quickly replied, "Because I always win."

Laura's eyes narrowed. *What a pompous witch you are!* "Even the best winner has to lose at some point. Otherwise they would be perfect and no one on this earth is perfect. Or do you disagree Ms. Foster? Do you think that you are perfect?"

Shaking her head, Jack said, "No. I'm far from perfect Ms. Scott. Except for when it comes to business. In that I excel incredibly well and I have the utmost faith that I will be able to make *"Bean There, Done That"* a distant memory. I'm not trying to be cruel. This is just the way I play the game. Now if Sonny can't handle that...then she's out of her league."

Laura looked at Jack as if the woman were something she had never seen before. "Do you realize that when you destroy other businesses in order to put more money in your bank account, that people are involved? That these people get hurt and are going through turmoil due to what you did?"

Jack shrugged. "It's not like I did anything illegal. They chose to gamble and lost to me. Not my problem. I realize that I appear cold and heartless and you know what? I am. I'm probably everything that people call me...think of me. But while they are griping about how mean I am, how much of a bully I am, I'm making million dollar deposits. I know that money isn't everything but it sure feels damn good to have an ample amount of it."

Nodding, Laura stood up and faced Jack, who was reclining back on the couch as though she was the queen of the world. "Okay Ms. Foster," Laura started, her right hand balling into a tight fist at her side. "Tell me how good it feels to have this!" Before Jack had any time to react, a fist struck her square in the right eye. Her head snapped back on the couch as she swore that stars began to twinkle in front of her eyes. As she blinked several times in the attempt to make them disappear, she heard the front door slam shut.

"Oh, crap," Jack mumbled as she leaned forward on the couch with a hand covering her eye. Pain radiated through head and eye as she closed it. Jack sat very still for a few minutes until the sharp pain receded to a dull ache. "That woman packs a hell of a punch, " she said out loud, as she carefully stood up. Gently pressing fingertips to the area around her eye, Jack winced, sure that she was going to have a pretty good shiner in the morning. *And this week just keeps getting better and better.*

Hearing a knock at the door, Jack sighed loudly. *That must be Sonny with an uzi. Either that, or Laura has come back to finish me off.* Shuffling towards the front door, the tall woman looked through the peek-hole, using her left eye. She was totally wrong. The visitor was Leslie and she did not have a weapon as far as Jack could tell. Opening the door, Jack grabbed the woman by the hand and pulled her inside before shutting and locking the door. As she turned to Leslie, she heard the woman softly gasp as she reached up and lightly touched Jack's eye, causing the blue-eyed woman to wince again.

"Oh, Jack I'm sorry. What happened? Who did this to you?" Leslie asked in an almost panicky voice.

"Would you believe that I had a run in with a door?" Jack countered as she grinned, trying to make light of her injury. When Leslie's expression remained serious she said, "Let's just say that someone who is a friend of Sonny Campbell's was a little pissed off with me due to my brutal honesty about wanting to ruin her business. So I guess she felt that her fist and my face should become better acquainted. Left not too long before you arrived. Ya'll probably passed each other on the street." Turning around, Jack headed for the den. "Let's go sit down." Without further comment, Leslie followed her.

Arriving in the den and at the couch, Jack took a seat before leaning down and picking up her drink. Taking a long sip from the glass, Jack found that she had nearly drained it. Glancing over to Leslie who had taken a seat next to her on the couch, she asked if the woman would care for a drink.

"Yes, please," Leslie said as she put her purse down on the coffee table. "I'll have what you're having."

Nodding, Jack stood up and headed over to the bar. Obtaining a glass for Leslie, she picked up the bottle of cognac sitting on the counter. Filling both hers and Leslie's glass, she brought the drinks over to the couch, handing one to the consultant.

"Thanks Jack." Bringing the short glass to her lips, Leslie took a sip before softly moaning. "Mmm...cognac. *Good* cognac," she said, smiling over at Jack. "You've always enjoyed it."

The blue-eyed woman nodded as she winked at Leslie with her good eye. "Nothing but the best."

Both women sat in silence for a few minutes, as they sipped their drinks, lost in their own thoughts. Turning her head to look at Jack's profile, Leslie thought of how beautiful she was. Perfect cheekbones, the most illuminating eyes...soft full lips. Fondly, she remembered how those lips used to kiss her. At times light and soft and at others hard and passionate. Leslie nearly shivered as she recalled just how very passionate a woman Jack could be.

Allowing her eyes to wander down, Leslie took in the other woman's breasts that were easy to define due to the tightness of her tank top. If she remembered correctly, they were about the size of an average grapefruit, soft yet firm and so very pleasing to squeeze. Her eyes traveling down further, Leslie recalled those creamy thighs that she loved to place kisses on, though she could not see them because Jack was wearing a pair of jeans. Leslie bit on the inside of her lower lip. Oh, how she wanted Jack back in her arms and in her bed again.

"Take a picture. It'll last longer." Looking over to Leslie, a small grin appeared on Jack's face when she noticed the blush creeping up the thirty-five year olds cheeks. "Leslie Antigone blushing. Now that's not something you see everyday."

Extremely embarrassed that she had been caught ogling, Leslie wished at that moment she were a turtle, so that she could hide in her shell. Opening her mouth, the woman attempted to come up with some sort of explanation but failed to do so. Zeroing in on Jack's bruised eye, she decided to change the subject. "Ice."

Jack's brow knitted in confusion. "Pardon?"

Standing up, Leslie lightly cleared her throat as she looked down at the other woman. "Ice. You need to put some ice on your eye. It might help in reducing the swelling. Follow me to the kitchen." Leslie heard footsteps behind her as she briskly walked towards the kitchen. Entering the vast room, she walked over to the refrigerator, taking out a tray of ice. Hearing Jack inform her that there were dishtowels in the drawer closet to the microwave, Leslie found them and removed one, putting a few ice cubes in it. Walking over to Jack who was leaning against the counter, Leslie folded the dishtowel before giving it to her. Taking the homemade ice pack, Jack put it against her eye, wincing a bit.

"You said a friend of Sonny's did that to you?" Jack nodded, mutely. "You want me to have a word with her?"

Jack shook her head. "No. Apparently, Sonny didn't even know that her friend was coming over here."

"Who is this friend?" Leslie asked as she leaned her hip against the counter.

Closing her eyes momentarily, Jack thought back to earlier that evening. "Her name was...Laura. Laura Scott," she gave a slight pause, "Though if you ask me, I get the feeling that they are more than just friends."

A look of interest crossed Leslie's face mixed with surprise. "*The* Laura Scott?"

Jack shrugged. "I dunno. Didn't realize there was a *the* Laura Scott. Who is she?"

"Only one of the best journalists in Florida!" Leslie replied in excitement. "I read her columns every week."

"Oh? What newspaper does she write for?"

Leslie shook her head. "No, she doesn't write for a newspaper. It's a magazine. Ever heard of *Climax*?"

Jack grinned. "Yeah, but I haven't had one in a very long time." She chuckled, as did Leslie. "Yes, I have. Once leafed through a copy while in the waiting room at the dentist. Found a few interesting articles to read."

Leslie nodded. "It's an awesome magazine. I'm a subscriber." She then shook her head in amazement, finding it hard to believe that Laura Scott had been in this very house not too long before she arrived. Leslie would have been able to meet the journalist, had she only been a few minutes earlier. "What was she like?"

Cocking her head to the side, Jack stared at Leslie quietly for a moment before pointing to her blackening eye. "Uh...what do you think she was like Leslie?"

With a slightly sheepish look, Leslie replied, "Oh, yes. Though, in her defense I could imagine why she would behave in a rather hostile manner. I mean look what you are trying to do to her...friend."

Jack slowly raised both eyebrows. "Leslie, let's not go there," she said in a warning voice. "I don't want to talk about that anymore tonight. I'm tired and I just feel like going to bed."

A small grin broke out on Leslie's face as she took two steps towards Jack, now standing next to the taller woman. "Alone?" she inquired in a soft whisper.

Looking down at her, Jack repeated, "Alone?"

"Yes." Reaching up, Leslie placed the palm of her hand against Jack's bronzed cheek, beginning to lightly stroke as she stared into the woman's eyes. Leslie felt her heart start to hammer beneath her chest, as she finally got up the courage to make a move. "Do you feel like going to bed alone? Because you don't have to."

"Leslie..."

Leslie placed her index finger against Jack's lips to stop her from uttering anything. "Sssh. Just kiss me Jack. Please. I need you to kiss me." As she removed her finger, Jack turned so that she was facing Leslie. She leaned towards the other woman until their lips met for the first time in a long time. Leslie could not contain a moan as she wound her arms around Jack's waist, bringing her closer. Tossing the ice pack in the sink and then wrapping her arms around Leslie, Jack picked the woman up and placed her on the counter, their lips still joined. As Leslie parted her lips, she moaned in pleasure as her mouth was swiftly invaded by Jack's tongue. Their tongues did a slow erotic dance while the two women began to rub up and down each other's bodies over their clothing.

Breaking the kiss, Leslie looked into Jack's eyes, her own filled with passion and want. "Oh, Jack. How I have missed you," she admitted in a slightly ragged breath. "Please make love to me." Leaning forward, Leslie kissed Jack again before whispering close to her ear. "I need to feel you."

Eliciting another moan from Leslie as she slid her warm palms up the woman's thighs while pushing up her skirt a bit in the process, Jack quietly replied, "Your wish is my command." Getting down to her knees, Jack gently pushed Leslie's legs apart as she pushed the skirt up higher. Leslie started to squirm in anticipation as the other woman placed soft butterfly kisses on the insides of her thighs. Leaning back on her hands, Leslie spread her legs wider, as kisses were trailed up her thigh.

Leslie felt the wetness and heat emanating from her center as Jack's tongue drew tiny circles on her thighs. Throwing her head back and barely missing hitting it on the cabinet next to her, Leslie let out a long moan as Jack worked her magic. She cried out as a soft kiss was placed on the crotch of her black laced panties. Fingertips trailed up and down the outside of her thighs as a skilled mouth gently began to suck at her over the underwear.

"Oh, Jack you feel so very good," Leslie breathed, her eyes closed as she felt the sensations flowing through her overheated body.

Momentarily stopping, Jack looked up at Leslie, her blue eyes darkened in lust. "Do you taste as good as I remember, Leslie?"

Opening her eyes, Leslie gave Jack a faint grin. "Only one way for you to find out." Raising her skirt so that it was pooled around her waist, Leslie hooked her thumbs into the sides of her panties before beginning to pull them down. When they reached her ankles, she kicked the panties off, causing them to fly across the kitchen. Looking into Jack's eyes she said in a husky voice, "Devour me Jack."

A low growl starting in her throat, Jack moved in again, kissing Leslie's thighs. Opening her mouth, she allowed her teeth to gently nip which caused Leslie to squirm on the counter and moan loudly. The closer she got to Leslie's sweet spot, the...guiltier she felt. Jack quickly stopped, as she laid her cheek against the other woman's thigh. Guilty? What in the world did she have to feel guilty for? So, she was about to make love to her ex-girlfriend. There was absolutely

nothing wrong with that. It wasn't as if she had someone one else and as far as she knew, neither did Leslie, so what was the problem? Where was this sudden guilt stemming from?

Trying to push it out of her mind, Jack placed another kiss on Leslie's thigh before she stopped again. It dawned on Jack why there was this feeling of guilt. She was in love. Not with Leslie, though she still cared deeply for her. If Jack was honest with herself, she had never been in love with anyone up until now. After thirty-two years on this planet, someone had finally stolen her heart, and that someone was PerkyGrrl. *I'm in love with PG*, Jack thought in amazement. The exact moment it happened, she had no idea, but she knew without a shadow of a doubt that it was true. She was head over heels for a woman whom she had never laid eyes upon. She was in love with her best friend...her only friend, unless she counted Chloe.

Standing up, Jack avoided Leslie's curious eyes as she walked over to where the woman's panties lay. Reaching down, she picked them up before coming back to Leslie and handing them to her. Wearing an apologetic expression, Jack finally met Leslie's eyes. "I'm sorry. I can't do this," Jack paused while gathering her thoughts. "I'm in love with someone," she finished so softly that Leslie barely understood the words.

"In love?" Leslie felt her heart shatter into a million pieces. When had this happened? Feeling the tears stinging her eyes, she knew that she had to get out of here before she broke down.

Jack nodded, feeling all the more guilty because it was obvious that she had now caused Leslie pain. She shook her head slightly. *This is just not my day where women are concerned*. "I'm sorry," Jack repeated, the words sounding inadequate to her own ears. "I never wanted to hurt you. I just thought that you should know." Raising a hand, Jack swiped at the tear that escaped Leslie's eye with her thumb. "Hey, you're a wonderful beautiful woman Leslie. It won't be much longer until you find the woman that is the perfect one for you and she is going to make you so very happy." Leaning towards her, Jack tenderly kissed Leslie's cheek. "You deserve that Leslie Antigone." Jack softly smiled at her. "And you'll get it."

Leslie did not know exactly why, but Jack's unusual sweetness made her want to cry even more. She gave the woman a faint smile in return before hopping off the counter and putting her panties back on. As she straightened her skirt, she looked at Jack. "Thank you for being honest with me and for the kind words." Leslie looked at Jack silently for a second or two. "You can be really sweet when you want to be," she teasingly remarked, trying to lighten the mood.

Jack crookedly grin. "Gee, thanks. That's probably the best compliment I've ever gotten."

Leslie faintly chuckled. "Well, I should go get my purse and be on my way. I have a busy day tomorrow."

Announcing that she would go retrieve it, Jack hurried out of the kitchen. After getting the purse from the den, she headed towards the kitchen when she caught sight of Leslie already standing by the front door, waiting for her. Strolling over, she handed the woman her purse, nodding when Leslie thanked her for it. Unlocking and opening the door, Leslie turned to Jack with her hand resting on the knob.

"If I don't see you for another year or so, you take care okay Jack? And good luck with...with your beloved." She smiled, though there was pain in her eyes. She wanted Jack to be happy and if the person that caused her to be happy was someone else then so be it. "She's very lucky."

Jack smiled, almost shyly. Shaking her head, she replied, "No. *I'm* the lucky one."

"Well then you both are lucky." Leslie winked as she placed the strap of her purse over her shoulder. Reaching out, she took Jack's hand in her own and gently squeezed it before letting go. "Goodnight Jack."

"Goodnight Leslie." Watching as the woman walked to her car. Jack waited until she was safely inside and started the car before she closed the door, locking it. Letting out a long breath, Jack meandered back into the den and over to the couch. Picking up both she and Leslie's glasses, she poured the remainder of the other woman's cognac into her glass before taking a couple of sips from it. Jack shook her head in bewilderment as she walked over to her computer and took a seat. What a peculiar night this had turned out to be. First, she received a soon to be black eye thanks to one of "Florida's greatest journalist", then seduced by her ex-girlfriend, then realized that she was in love with a woman whose real name she did not even know.

Jack smiled as she thought of PerkyGrrl. She wondered what her name was. Alison, Barbara, Caitlin, Dana...Jack richly chuckled. Hell, if it was Petunia, it did not matter one iota. She rested her head against the back of the chair. She, Jacqueline Foster was in love for the very first time and she had to admit that it felt pretty good. Glancing at her computer screen, a thought occurred to her. There was only one problem...okay perhaps there was more than one, but this was the main problem. How did PerkyGrrl feel about her? Jack could tell by the woman's words that she cared, but was there love? She would have to find out. She knew when the perfect time would be. When they met at Disneyworld at the end of September she would profess her love and see what happened.

Looking at the computer, Jack scooted her chair up to it. She then started the process of logging onto the Internet. She decided that if she did not see PerkyGrrl on her buddy list then she would wait until the woman hopefully came online and then chat with her if she was up to it. The two of them had chatted before on AOL Instant Messenger, but only a handful of times in the last year. Their main means of communication was sending emails back and forth.

Logging on, Jack softly sighed when she noticed that her online friend had yet to send a reply to her emails. Thinking of something, and wondering why she had not thought to do it before, Jack checked to see if her emails had been opened. A slight frown appeared on her face as she noticed that neither of the last emails she had sent to PerkyGrrl had been read. Jack's heart skipped several beats. She hoped that nothing was wrong. PG never stayed away from her computer this long unless she informed Jack beforehand that she would not be online because she was going out of town or something, but she had said nothing in her last email about doing that.

Reaching up, Jack ran a hand through her hair as she stared at her buddy list, willing PerkyGrrl to come online. She told herself not to worry but she was being ignored. *Please be all right PG. I need you to be all right.*

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As she flipped through the channels, Sonny kept glancing towards the front door, wondering what was keeping Laura. How much fresh air did that woman need? Stopping on HBO, Sonny tossed the remote control on the couch before starting to watch a movie that she had seen at least seven times before. As she mentally started to recite the lines, she heard a key turn in the doorknob. Looking over her shoulder, she watched as Laura entered with a black duffel bag in hand. Curiously eyeing the duffel bag, Sonny asked her girlfriend where she had been.

Standing in front of the now closed door, Laura nervously shifted her weight from one foot to the other as she studied the blonde reclining on the couch. "Promise me that you won't get mad."

Raising an inquisitive eyebrow, Sonny slowly shook her head. "No. I can't do that because every time you try to get someone to promise that they won't get mad due to what you are about to tell them, the majority of the time they do anyway, so instead of making a promise that odds are I probably will not be able to keep, my answer is no. I will make no such promise to you. Plus, my mood is already unstable due to my new neighbor Jack Foster who is from down under, and I'm not referring to Australia. So that is one more reason why I should not make any promises to keep my temper in check. Just tell me what is going on. Where were you?"

Taking a deep breath, Laura looked at Sonny as she opened her mouth to speak. However, no words would come out. Quickly wetting her lips, Laura tried again. "I umm...I..."

Turning around on the couch so that she was facing Laura, Sonny tucked one leg underneath her as she cocked her head to the side. "It can't be that bad honey," Sonny said, softening her tone of voice. "Did you cheat on me?" She asked, already knowing the answer. Laura would never do anything like that. Sonny studied the woman's expression. Well at least she hoped not.

Laura quickly shook her head. "No," she replied with conviction. "I love you and I would never ever even think of doing such a thing. You're the only woman for me, Sonny."

For that, she received a warm and yes relieved smile from the blonde. "All right. I didn't think so." Sonny thought for a moment before continuing, "Did you somehow join forces with Jack Foster?" Her expression was one of mild amusement as she asked the question.

If it was not for her nervousness, Laura could have laughed at that. "God no!" She faintly grinned. "I rather find myself some buxom young thing to take to bed."

Sonny chuckled a bit. "Okay, well tell me what's on your mind."

Laura inwardly sighed. Might as well tell her and be done with it. "I went to confront Jack Foster about the way she is treating you. I just came from her house."

"How did you find out where she lived?"

Biting down on her lower lip, Laura replied, "From that check she gave you. It had her address on it and I remembered what it was."

Sonny nodded. "I see. So you went to confront her...how did that go?"

"Not well actually." Laura glanced down at her right hand. Her knuckles were a little bruised from when she struck Jack. "She pissed me off so much that I lost my temper and ended up hitting her."

Sonny's eyes zeroed in on the duffel bag again before she looked back up to Laura, her green eyes slightly amused. "Did you chop her up and put her in there? If you did, I wish that you wouldn't have taken it that far, but I'll help you to get rid of the evidence."

"You're such an awesome girlfriend." Laura briefly chuckled as she looked at the duffel bag. "No, I didn't do that. Besides, I don't think she would fit in here. At least not all of her."

The blonde nodded, a small smile playing on her lips. "That's true. She's quite big...height wise I mean," she paused, "So is that all? You confronted Foster, hit her, and then..."

"I left."

Sonny nodded again. "Okay. Well I'm not mad. I would suggest that you not go over there anymore, but I'm not upset with you."

There was a pause before Laura admitted, "That's not what I tried to get you to promise not to get mad over."

"So there is more. What is it?" Sonny pointed at the duffel bag, which Laura was clutching rather tightly. "Does it have anything to do with what's in the bag?" Her girlfriend nodded. "Okay. What do you have in there?"

Instead of answering, Laura slowly walked over to the couch and quietly handed the bag to Sonny. Noting its heaviness, the blonde looked up to Laura questioningly. When she was informed to open the duffel bag, she looked at it almost as if there might be a ticking time bomb inside. Finding the zipper, Sonny slowly began to unzip the bag until it was fully open. A loud gasp escaped her as she stared at the contents. The duffel bag was filled with stacks of crisp fifty and hundred dollar bills. Finally managing to peel her eyes away, Sonny looked at Laura, her mouth hanging open.

"Where did all this come from? What did you do?"

"I um...I cashed the check."

Sonny thought for a moment before her eyes widened. "You mean the blank check I received from Jack Foster?" Laura nodded. "You went behind my back and cashed that check? How could you do such a thing, Laura? I told you that I did not want her money."

"I know Sonny, but she owed you that. She could have killed you because of her carelessness! And now she's trying to take your business away from you. The way I see it, this is pay back."

Feeling very much angry, Sonny zipped the duffel bag before tossing it across the room and standing up to face Laura. "Well the way I see it you betrayed me!" She yelled, her face flushed with fury.

Laura swallowed hard as she nodded. "Is that what you think?" she quietly asked. "I did this for you."

"How much did you write the check for?"

"Five-hundred thousand dollars."

Green eyes opened even wider than the last time. "Half a million?! You took that much money? Have you totally lost your mind Laura?"

The other woman shrugged. "She did hit you with her car. Some people get more than when they go to court. Plus, it isn't like she can't afford it. You should have seen that beach house. It was huge! I don't know how much money Jack Foster has, but I know that she's a millionaire at least."

Sonny stared at her girlfriend for so long that Laura began to fidget. Finally turning her eyes away, the blonde walked over to her computer desk. Picking up a tablet and finding a pen she came back to Laura and handed the woman both. She then informed the woman to write down Jack's address. Hesitating for just a moment, Laura jotted down the address before handing the paper and pen back to Sonny.

Turning around, Sonny tossed both on the couch before she mutely walked over to the front door and opened it. Looking at Laura she said, "Get out."

The nervousness returned as a look of shock passed across Laura's face. She had expected that Sonny might be upset but she had never even considered this happening. "You...you're dumping me, Sonny?"

The blonde shook her head. "No, I'm not dumping you. I just want you to go home because it is very difficult for me to look at you right now. So just get out of my apartment...please. Don't call me, don't write me, and don't come over. I don't want you to contact me until I decide to make the first move." When Laura opened her mouth to say something, Sonny read her thoughts and kept going, "I don't know how long it'll be until I get in touch with you. It might just be a couple days. I really don't know. However, what I do know is that you need to leave at this moment."

Without saying anything else, Laura walked out of Sonny's apartment and headed down the stairs. When she heard the woman call her name, a wave of relief went through Laura as she looked back up, thinking that Sonny had changed her mind.



"Before you leave please get my computer keyboard out of the trunk of your car. You can put it on my doormat." Having said that, Sonny shut the door leaving a dejected Laura on the stairs.

Turning back around, Laura continued down the stairs wearing a frown now. She had half a mind to toss the thing in the garbage.

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Jack was nearly asleep when she heard the sound of knocking. Quickly raising her head from her folded arms, which rested on her computer desk, she looked at the screen at her buddy list. She sighed, seeing that PerkyGrrl was not online yet. It was then that she heard the knocking again and let out a long loud breath. Now who could that be? Jack had had enough visitors for one evening.

Getting up, she took her time walking to the front door. Not bothering to look through the peephole, she unlocked and opened the door. She looked at the woman standing on her doorstep, as though she came over all the time.

"Well, well, well," Jack started in a tone bordering on being blasé. "If it isn't Miss Sonny Campbell. What can I do for you, Sonny?"

Sonny took in Jack's swollen eye and her overall tired appearance. "I'll make this quick. I came to apologize for Laura. She shouldn't have hit you no matter how much of a jerk you behave."

Jack smirked. "Thanks. Is that it?"

"No. I have something that belongs to you." Reaching down, Sonny picked up the duffel bag that she brought with her. She handed it to Jack.

Jack looked at the bag suspiciously. "What's this?"

"Five-hundred thousand dollars," Sonny explained. "Laura took the initiative to fill in and cash that check you gave me, so I'm giving you your money back because I don't want it."

The dark-haired woman whistled. "That's a lot of dough. I must have really ticked her off."

"You should be used to it Ms. Foster. I'm sure you succeed in ticking a lot of people off on a daily basis. Goodnight." Sonny walked away before Jack could say anything else.

Looking after her, Jack softly said to herself, "Goodnight to you too Sonny."

Hearing the phone began to ring as she closed the door, Jack hurried towards the den as she rolled her eyes. She had figured it out. She must be on that hidden camera show. Reaching the phone, she picked it up, saying hello. A relieved smile appeared on her face as she noted who was on the other line. It was one of her two most favorite people in the world. Since PerkyGrrl did not have her phone number then that left her sister.

"Hey Chloe! So good to hear from you." Jack moved over to the couch and stretched out, her feet dangling over one of the arms.

On the other end, Chloe laughed. "You act like you haven't heard from me in months, Jack. I just talked to you last night. Remember I've gotta call you ever evening."

Jack grinned into the phone. "Yeah, and I'm pleased that you have followed my instructions so very well," she paused, chuckling, "I have had one heck of a day kid."

"What happened? Did you hit someone else with your car?"

Smirking into the phone, Jack replied, "No, nothing that extreme. Just all kinds of sh-- um stuff. I'm glad you're having a great time, I'll just be even gladder when you get home 'cause I need some stability in my life." She smiled.

"Aaw, I've never been called stable before." Chloe laughed. "Cute, sweet, smart...but not stable."

Jack chuckled. She missed her little sister. This house seemed empty without her presence. Stretching some, she listened in delight as Chloe began to fill her in about her latest adventures in Hawaii. Closing her eyes as she started to relax, Jack hoped that no one else would knock on her door again. Well unless by some miracle it happened to be PerkyGrrl.

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Arriving home, Sonny started to go straight to bed when she looked towards her computer, which she now had the keyboard to. Deciding that she would write to Blue first, the blonde walked over to the desk and proceeded to hook up her keyboard before booting up the computer. Having a seat, she waited until it was done. Clicking on the AOL icon she waited as the log on screen appeared and typed in her password before pressing the enter key.

Moments later she was welcomed to AOL. Sonny's heartbeat began to increase as she looked at her mailbox and clicked on it. Soon she would be reading the latest words from her cyber-friend. She figured that Blue must have been worried sick these past few days. Scrolling down her mail, ignoring all others for the time being, Sonny found two emails from Blueyez. Deciding to open the latest one first, she did so, beginning to read.

*PG,*

*If you have been busy the past few days I understand, I would just appreciate it if you would send me an email to let me know that you are all right. I'm very worried about you hon. Just let me know how you're doing.*

*Blue*

Oh, poor Blue. She really had been worried. What explanation was Sonny going to give her? That a car had hit her and then she had been forbidden to use her computer while she stayed

home and rested? Sonny shrugged. Well it was the truth. Looking at the other email, she clicked on it and started to read that one.

*To Sappy Number Two,*

*I'm just excited as you are about us meeting. Well maybe more so **\*grin\*** I'll be counting the days until the last Friday in September. So you'll be wearing a pink rose, hmm? Well I'll wear my Mickey Mouse T-shirt just in case you see me first. Don't think I'll be hard to find because I'm nearly six feet tall **\*laugh\*** So be on the look out for me ;-)*

*So you want to know about my little sister? Sure, I'll tell ya a bit. She's twenty-years-old and I've been raising her for the past eleven years on my own. Our parents died and though we had relatives that were more experienced in raising children than I that I could have sent her to, I didn't want to, plus she didn't want to go. So I got custody of her and she's been with me ever since.*

*What's she like? She's a great kid and I love her to death. She's intelligent, witty, funny and is truly the light in my life. Frankly, I don't know what I'd do without her. And while I'm on the subject of not being able to do without, don't know what I'd do without you either PG **\*smile\***. Though you and I have yet to meet, I feel closer to you than a lot of people I know in real time. So thank you for being my friend. I'll cherish you always. Aarrgh! There I go with the sappiness again. **\*chuckle\*** I better end this before I get truly carried away ;-)* Well I'll be anxiously waiting for your response. Have a good one.

*Yours truly,*

*Blue*

Sonny was brightly smiling as she finished the email. Her eyes were glassy because Blue had touched her so deeply with her words. She wondered what had happened to their parents. It must have been some type of accident since they died at the same time. What a strong woman Blue was to decide to raise her sister when she herself was such a young age.

Placing her hand over the mouse, Sonny moved the small arrow on the screen to the reply button and clicked. Placing her fingertips on the keyboard, she started to write when an instant message appeared on her screen. She felt her heart leap when she noticed that the instant message was from Blue. Looking over at her buddy list, Sonny saw her screen-name. So intent she had been on checking her email, that she had paid no attention to her buddy list. Closing her email, Sonny started to write a reply in the instant message box.

**Blueyez:** Hey PG!!!

**PerkyGrrl:** Wow! Funny meeting you here! (chuckle) I was just about to write you an email.

**Blueyez:** *I've been online for that past couple of hours waiting...hoping that you would log on because I've been worried about you. I fell asleep and just woke up to see that you had popped on. What happened to you? Are you okay?*

**PerkyGrrl:** *Yeah, I'm doing okay. I'm sorry that I haven't been on to answer your e-mails. I injured myself a few days ago and have been taking it easy.*

**Blueyez:** *{{{{cyber hugging you}}}} But you really are doing better now, right? You've got to be more careful.*

**PerkyGrrl:** *{{{{smiling as I hug you back}}}} Yes, I'm doing much better Blue. I promise to be more careful from now on. (smile) Especially now that I'm in contact with you again. I have missed you terribly.*

**Blueyez:** *And I've missed you as well PG./// So we're still on for Disneyworld?*

**PerkyGrrl:** *You bet we are! :)))*

**Blueyez:** *Great!/// Well I hate to cut this short but I better get to bed now. I can hardly keep my eyes open \*laughing \* I just wanted to make sure that you were all right.*

**PerkyGrrl:** *(smile) Thank you for checking in on me. It means a lot. You g'wan and head to bed now Blue. Have sweet dreams.*

**Blueyez:** *You too PG. {{{kissing your cheek before exiting}}}}*

Sonny blushed as she looked at Blue's last post. She swore that she could almost feel that kiss. Knowing that the smile she was wearing looked goofy, Sonny happily logged off of the Internet, deciding to open the rest of her email tomorrow. Standing, she stretched before strolling into her room while unconsciously humming a little tune. Going into the connecting bathroom, she took a quick shower before changing into her pajamas, still humming all the while.

Saying her prayers, Sonny slipped into bed and then reached over, turning out the light before snuggling in. Closing her eyes, a small smile still on her face, she began to drift off. She hoped that she had sweet dreams. Sweet dreams filled with Blue.

Continued in Part 2.

"Can't Get Enough of Your Love" performed by Barry White.

# ~ An Affair to Remember ~

by Ambrosia

**Disclaimers:** The characters in this story are figments of my imagination. They are solely the property of me, myself, and I J

**Sexual Content:** There are intimate/sexual/loving relationships between women occurring in this tale.

**Violence:** None. Nada. Zip. Just peace, love, and harmony. (Chuckle)

**Language:** Nothing that can't be aired on a network station.

**Special Thanks:** Thank you Hawke and Antigone for helping me by giving the names for the establishments mentioned in this story. I had no idea what to call them until you both offered your assistance. So thank you very much. I really appreciate it J

**Inspiration:** I would like to thank the creators of the movie "You've Got Mail" for inspiring me to write this piece. I've watched that movie so many times I just had to write a story loosely based on it. J

**Feedback:** All comments (please be gentle with me-for I'm a sensitive bard J) can be emailed to SumrBrezze@aol.com.

## Part 2

Saturday morning found Sonny sitting behind her desk at the coffeehouse, as she looked at the thirteen-inch television sitting on it. As she munched on a granola bar, she stared at the television with a frown. That was all she had seemed to be able to do in the last week was frown at one thing or another. There was one person to blame for all of this and that person was none other than Jack Foster. During the past few weeks, that woman had become a major thorn in her side.

Finishing her granola bar, Sonny tossed the empty wrapper in the wastebasket before propping her feet up on the desk, crossing one ankle over the other as she looked at the news. They of course were speaking of how wonderful and snazzy Jack Foster's "*Brew n' Paradise*" was. It was the new up and coming coffeehouse in Orlando and was taking everyone by storm. Sonny rolled her eyes. It wasn't that she was jealous...well much. It irritated her that such a contemptible and cold-hearted person like Jack should get this great of publicity and praise. Where was the justice in this world?

Sonny ran a hand through her short hair as she let out a soft sigh. Jack was making good on her promise, which was to kick "*Bean There, Done That's*" rear end. Their sales were going down because they were loosing customers, some of which had been coming there for as long as the coffeehouse has been open. Just about everyone wanted a taste of "*Brew n' Paradise*" with its cheaper prices, computers, and entertainment. Sonny narrowed her eyes. The only reason they

had cheaper prices was because Jack made everything on her menu five cents cheaper than what it was on Sonny's...and that was if Sonny had it since "*Brew n' Paradise*" had so many more tasty beverages and pastries to choose from.

Reaching for the remote, Sonny switched off the television, not wanting to see anymore. After all, she was only torturing herself by watching it. Glancing at the calendar on the wall, Sonny smiled for the first time that morning. It was now the twenty-third of September, which meant that less than a week she would meet Blue in person. Sonny looked forward to the break from her current predicament. During the whole day, she would not give one thought to Jack Foster, business, and possible strategies. She would just relax and have fun with Blue.

Looking at the desk, green eyes caught sight of a gold-plated picture frame with a photograph in it. It was a photograph of she and Laura at the beach taken back in early June. Sadness washed over Sonny as she observed the picture. She and Laura were dressed in their swimsuits as they stood near the surf, posing for the camera with broad bright smiles on their faces. A faint smile briefly appeared on her lips, as she thought back to what happened right after their picture was taken. Sonny had been quickly swooped up into Laura's arms and tossed into the ocean as she heard her girlfriend chuckle in glee, soon to join in after the initial surprise. She softly sighed. The two of them had been so happy that day.

What had gone wrong during these last few months? It seemed as though she and Laura were drifting apart with every day that passed. During the past few weeks, Laura had taken to spending more time at her home than at Sonny's, which was unusual. Usually, she would sleep over so much at Sonny's that the blonde would often forget that she had a place of her own. Their relationship had really started to change about the time when Sonny put Laura out because of the money she withdrew from Jack's bank account. They had made up a few days later, but that occurring had forever altered their relationship.

Looking at the phone, Sonny wondered if she should call her girlfriend. Perhaps she could ask her out on a date tonight. After all, it was Saturday. They should spend the night out together on the town. Maybe take in a movie, go to dinner, and then take a long romantic stroll on the beach. A smile started to brighten up Sonny's face as she mentally made their plans. Yes, this was just what she and Laura needed. They needed to have some quality time with one another.

Reaching over for the phone, Sonny picked it up and started to dial Laura's cell phone number. Bringing the receiver to her ear, she listened as the phone rang three times before being answered. Detecting faint noises in the background, Sonny deduced that her girlfriend was most likely in her car.

"Hey Laura," Sonny began. "How are you doing? You must be having quite a busy week." *Considering that you haven't bothered to answer any of the messages that I left on your recorder.*

"I'm doing pretty good. Yes, it's been a hectic week. One thing after another happening. I'm sorry that I haven't returned your calls honey. I've just been so preoccupied with work."

Picking up a pen laying on the desk, Sonny began to twirl it between her fingers. "It's not a problem. I understand. I've been sort of preoccupied myself. Anyway, I won't keep you long. Just wanted to ask you a question."

"What's that?"

"What would you say to us going on out tonight? I know that it's short notice but I really want to see you. I miss you," she finished in a quiet voice.

"Oh honey, I miss you too but I'm afraid that I can't make it tonight. I have a very important interview slash dinner tonight and there is no possible way that I can reschedule. I've been attempting to get this interview for weeks and if I don't do it this evening then I can just kiss my story goodbye."

Sonny felt her hopes dissipate as she stopped twirling the pen, tossing it on the desk. Oh, well. She could now kiss their romantic evening goodbye. "No problem," she lied. "Then perhaps some other night we could get together." Sonny hoped that Laura did not detect the disappointment in her voice.

"I'll make it up to you. Without looking at my appointment book, I already know that this coming week is going to be another hectic one, but we can go out on that date Friday night. How about that?"

Sonny found that she was beginning to frown again. Why did she get the feeling that their possible date was like an appointment to Laura? Not only that, she could not even fit Sonny in until six days later. What was going here? Sonny could literally feel the gap expanding between them.

"I already told you last week that I have plans next Friday," Sonny replied in as pleasant a voice as she could muster now.

"Can't you delay them?"

Closing her eyes, Sonny mentally counted to ten...twice. She would not allow herself to show that she was upset. She reasoned that that would not solve anything. "Laura," Sonny calmly started, "my plans are just as important to me as yours are to you."

"I'm sorry. I didn't mean to make yours sound any less significant than my own."

At that moment, the door to the office opened and in walked Sarah. Noticing that Sonny was on the phone, she started to back out and leave, but the blonde waved for her to stay. Closing the door behind her, Sarah walked over to her desk and took a seat. Finding a stack of papers there, she began to shuffle through them as though she was looking for something.

"I know you didn't," Sonny said into the phone. "Listen, Sarah just came in and I have something important to discuss with her so I better go."

"Okay. I'll talk with you later this week and we'll make plans all right?"

"Sure thing. You have a good one."

"You too. I love you honey."

Sonny was beginning to find that last statement difficult to believe. "Me too." Moments later, she ended the conversation. Swiveling around in her chair, Sonny looked across to Sarah who appeared to be extremely engrossed in what she was reading. However, Sonny estimated that she was merely pretending. When Sarah felt Sonny's eyes upon her, she looked up, wearing a sympathetic expression.

"Didn't go well?" she asked.

"How did you know?"

Sarah replied, "You've been my best friend for many years and I know most of your expressions and the one that you are wearing now is not one of happiness. I can also tell when you're lying and when you told Laura that you had something important to discuss with me, I knew that wasn't true, which tells me that you only wanted to get off the phone with her. And if you wanted to stop talking with the supposed love of your life, then something is wrong."

Looking at her friend with amazement, Sonny nodded. "You're absolutely right, Sarah. Something has changed for the worse between Laura and I, and I just don't know how to fix it." She sighed. "Well, I just made an attempt at it, but she doesn't seem to willing to help. I asked her out on a date for tonight, but she won't be able to make it. Says that she'll make it up to me."

Standing up, Sarah pulled her chair over to Sonny's desk and took a seat next to her. Reaching over, she captured her friend's hand in her own gently. She began to rub her thumb back and forth across Sonny's hand. "Sweetie, all couples go through a rough spot at some point or another. It'll get better. You just have to give it some time and try your best to be patient."

"I know," Sonny replied in a soft voice as she looked down at their joined hands, while unshed tears threatened to fall. "I just feel like everything is falling apart at the same time. Our business...my relationship...nothing seems to be going correctly and I half want to climb onto the roof of this coffeehouse and just scream my head off because of all the frustration." Two tears then fell down her cheeks. Lifting the hand, which was still partially covered with a cast, Sonny wiped them away. "I feel as though I could crumble at any moment and I am trying awfully hard not to lose it," she finished in a whisper.

Wordlessly wrapping her arms around Sonny, Sarah pulled the woman into a tender embrace as she stroked up and down her back. Sonny's shoulders started to shake as the tears fell freely. Starting to rock her gently back and forth, Sarah offered her silent support as her friend cried on her shoulder while holding onto her tightly. After several minutes, the tears ceased and Sonny let go of Sarah, sitting back in her chair. She quietly thanked the woman as she was handed a tissue.



Dabbing at her eyes and then delicately blowing her nose, Sonny looked at her friend and softly smiled, noting the concern plainly written on Sarah's face.

"You needed to do that," Sarah stated. "Feeling any better now?"

The blonde nodded as she tossed the used tissue into the wastebasket. "Yes, I'm feeling much better." She smiled again at her friend. "Thank you for being here for me."

Sarah returned the smile as she gave Sonny's hand a brief gentle squeeze. "Hey, I'll always be here for you. I know that things seem dim now, but I believe that it all will improve with time," she paused thoughtfully. "I have an idea."

"I'm all ears."

"Why don't you talk to Laura about the two of you getting away for a weekend? That might do wonders for your relationship. Just go to a resort or somewhere and kick back...spend time with each other."

"You mean like you and Darryl did?"

Sarah nodded. "Exactly. You remember we went to Mexico for a few days. We were so much closer by the end of that trip."

"Uh huh. And I also remember you breaking up with him two months later. If it brought you closer, then why did that happen, hmm?" Sonny asked with a look of interest as she cocked her head to the side.

The other woman smirked. "Never you mind that. We're talking about you and Laura. Now, since you spend so much time on the Internet," at this Sonny smirked as Sarah merely grinned in return, "do something useful. Look for a resort that you two can go to for a couple days. Don't worry about the coffeehouse. As you know, I'm fully capable of handling things all by my lonesome."

Sonny smiled. "Yes, I do. Thanks for the idea. I just hope that I can get Laura to agree to it. She might say that she's too busy to go away...even for just the weekend."

"Too busy to save your relationship?"

The blonde sighed. She had to admit that she did not truly know the answer to that question. Was Laura interested in saving their relationship? Did she not care anymore whether she and Sonny stayed together? Looking down at her lap, Sonny felt fingertips touch her chin and gently push up until green eyes met with brown ones.

"Hey, everything is gonna work out for the best," Sarah softly said. "You'll see."

Sonny smiled at her. "I love you Sarah."

"And I love you too Sonny." The two women shared a heartfelt look before Sarah spoke, "I have another idea."

"What's this one?"

"When Hawke and Peter get here let's take off for a bit. I think you and I should go to the gym. You need to work off some of that stress."

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Shaking the hands of the newscasters, Jack nearly sighed in relief that this latest interview was finished. Though she did like the publicity, sometimes the cameras and all the questions got to be a bit much. Seeing the newscasters out the door, Jack turned around to see her sister examining her with a look that she could not discern. Looking back curiously, Jack walked over to the young woman standing behind the counter.

Before she could say anything, Chloe spoke first, "I need to speak with you Jack. In private."

The other woman nodded. "Okay. Let's go to my office." Looking around, Jack apprehended the attention of a young man wiping down tables. Indicating for him to take over the cash register in Chloe's absence, she led the young woman to her office, which was located on the second floor. After closing the door, Jack joined her sister on the couch, looking at her questioningly. "Is something bothering you kid?"

Chloe nodded, as she reached up to tuck a few strands of dark hair behind her ear, which she often did when she was nervous about something. "I don't like this and I can't take it anymore."

"What don't you like and what can't you take?"

Chloe looked into blue eyes that matched her own. "I don't like what you're doing to Sarah Watkins and Sonny Campbell." She shrugged. "It feels wrong and I can't deal with it any longer. The guilt is starting to eat me up because I feel as though I'm helping to ruin their business."

Jack sighed, figuring that Chloe's apparent distress had something to do with them. "Chloe, this is just business. You shouldn't feel guilty."

"Shouldn't I? And for that matter shouldn't *you*? You're taking all of their customers Jack."

"That's the point."

Chloe blew out an exasperated breath. "I'm not trying to be funny."

"Do I look amused?" Jack returned with a slight frown. She sensed that this was about to turn into an argument and the last thing she wanted to do was argue with her sister. They hardly ever fought.

"Don't you feel in the least bit responsible for what's happening?"

Jack slowly shook her head in a negative fashion. "No, I don't. Like I said it's just business. I'm not trying to be vindictive. Just doing my job." Why didn't anyone seem to comprehend that?

Her sister nodded. "Oh, I see. So, the point of your job is to screw with people's lives and futures? You must be really proud of yourself for exceeding so very well Jack." Chloe felt her temper rising. It was quite rare that she became upset with her guardian, but currently she was almost livid.

Jack's frown became more noticeable. She had to end this 'conversation' now before it got extremely out of hand. "Okay, kid I can see that you're getting upset and I don't particularly want to get into this with you right now, so we'll speak later when you've had a chance to cool off." Rising from the couch, Jack started to head for the door when a hand grasped her arm, stopping her. Turning around, she looked at her sister who appeared even more ticked off than she did a moment ago.

"This conversation as you call it is not over," Chloe tightly said. "Don't you dare walk out on me Jack. I refuse to be treated like a child. I may be your kid sister but I am also an adult, and you *will* treat me with some respect and listen to what I have to say."

The taller woman's eyebrow arched. She was surprised yet proud of Chloe for standing up for herself. Nodding, Jack crossed her arms over her chest after Chloe let go of her arm. "All right. I'll listen. What do you want to say Chloe?"

The younger woman reached up to tuck her hair behind her ear again, but stopped when she noticed it was already there. "I think you should close down."

Jack looked at her sister as though she had suddenly grown another head...maybe two. "I'm sorry. I must not have heard you correctly. It sounded like you suggested that I close down my coffeehouse. I misheard you, right?"

Chloe slowly shook her head. "Um...no. That's exactly what I said."

Cocking her head to the side, Jack asked, "Have you been smoking something kid?"

A frustrated expression appeared on Chloe's face. Jack was not taking her seriously and she found that highly irritating. "No, I have not been smoking anything and will you *please* listen to me Jack?"

"I *am* listening to you, I just don't *believe* what I'm hearing. Why in the world would I close down my business? I haven't even made a profit yet. Now soon I'm confident that I will, but that might not be for another month or two down the road. I've put a lot of hard work into making *Brew n' Paradise* and I'm not about to give it up now. That's not gonna happen. And if you think that there is even a slim chance of that happening, then you're dreaming."

"You hit Sonny Campbell with your car and you could have killed her! Now you're intentionally going after her. It's like you're behind the wheel of that car all over again, except there is one difference. This time you're trying to run her over!"

"Must you be so dramatic?"

"Must you be so cold-blooded?" Chloe asked in a soft voice. What would it take to get through to her sister? Jack was like a brick wall sometimes.

Jack nearly visibly winced. From anyone else she could take it, but those words coming from her sister hurt deeply. Trying to ignore the pain she felt, Jack replied, "I didn't get where I am today by being a sweetheart."

Leaning against the desk, Chloe mimicked her sister by folding her arms over her chest. "And where exactly are you Jack? You're thirty-two years old living in a grand house by the beach with your little sister. You are very good at making lots and lots of money but you lack the ability to hold down a decent relationship with any woman. You don't even have any friends, except for PerkyGrrl and you've never met her. Though you would probably lose her as a friend if she knew the real you because as we both know, Blue is pretty much just a façade. Too bad you don't know how to act like that more often. Maybe people would like you better...or actually just plain like you. If you keep this up, you'll end up a lonely spinster. Oh, wait," Chloe gave a slight pause while ignoring the hurt look that her sister was so desperately trying to conceal, "I guess you won't be totally alone Jack. You'll always have your millions." She shrugged. "Who knows? Maybe by another thirty years or so you'll upgrade to a billionaire because after all, you are *so* very talented at getting what you want no matter how many people get trampled in the process. Just as long as Jack is happy that is all that matters."

Noticing the door out of the corner of her eye, Jack debated with herself on whether to just leave the room before she ended up possibly saying something that she would not be able to take back. If this had been anyone else, she would have explained to him or her just what they could do with themselves. Desperately attempting to be patient, because this was her sister, the woman took several deep calming breaths before she finally spoke. "Is that what you really think? That I only care about myself? That my happiness is my number one priority?"

Chloe nodded. "Basically, yes. That's what I think now. Can't believe I didn't notice it years ago."

Silence descended between the two women before Jack finally responded, "I've been busting my butt for years not only for myself but mainly for you. *You* are my number one priority Chloe. From the moment I decided to take care of you, to raise you in the best way I knew how, I vowed that you would want for nothing. So, if you choose to be upset with me because of the way I do my business then fine. So be it. I can rest assured that I did my damndest to make sure you had a pleasant childhood, even after what happened to our parents. It was my cold-bloodedness as you put it, that put food on the table, that put a roof over your head, and clothes on your back. It was my cold-bloodedness that made sure you went to the finest schools so that you could be guaranteed a good education. My cold-bloodedness secured your tuition for any college you wanted to attend had you not chosen to stop after obtaining your high school diploma. And

because you graduated...with honors if I may add, it was my cold-bloodedness that bought that cherry red Viper you have parked outside. I also can be rest assured that after I die, I know that you will be okay because everything that I have you will inherit. I don't want you to ever have to suffer if it can be helped," momentarily stopping, Jack looked down at the floor as she blinked away the tears that were starting to form in her eyes. She swallowed with some difficulty as she looked back up at her sister. "Don't you see Chloe, just as long as you're happy, that is all that matters to me. I love you more than anything on this earth."

Chloe merely stared at her sister for a few moments before she raised her hands and began to clap as she saw the curious look appear on Jack's face. "Bravo Jack," the younger woman started as she stopped clapping, "you deserve to win an Academy Award after that performance. Perhaps your true calling is to be an actress instead of a businesswoman. Or maybe you could do both." Chloe shook her head as though she were bewildered. "Gosh Jack, you are so multi-talented."

"That wasn't an act," Jack quietly replied. "I meant every word."

"You know what? I think that you're telling me the truth. I believe that you believe you mean what you say. I really don't know which is worse. You lying to me or you lying to the both of us."

"What are you talking about?"

"I'm talking about the fact that you seem to want to believe that everything that you have done has been solely for my benefit, when in all actuality you like your job. I obviously know you better than you think I do Jack. You like the thrill of competing with other businesses and you like to conquer them, hence your nickname. This isn't all for me. It's like a hobby...a sport to you. Just admit it. You kind of like being known as the Conqueror. And the icing on the cake is that you get paid millions for being just that."

"I hope you enjoy what you're doing."

"What am I doing?" Chloe asked.

"Hurting me."

"What's wrong Jack? You can dish it out but you can't take it? Do you have any idea how many people you've hurt over the years? You know what they say about paybacks."

The other woman nodded. "Yeah, I know. Is that all?"

Chloe shook her head. "No, that's not all. Prove to me that you can be a better person than the one you are now. Do the right thing for a change. Close *Brew n' Paradise* down before you totally destroy the other coffeehouse. You don't have to do this. It's not like you need the money. You could retire right now and live an extremely comfortable life."

"No."

"No?" Chloe stared at her. By the expression on Jack's face, she was resolute. *Brew n' Paradise* wasn't going out of business any time soon. "So you still intend on getting rid of *Bean There, Done That*." It was a statement, not a question.

Jack nodded. "That's right."

"Okay. You do realize that if you continue to go through with this that I'm leaving."

Jack looked at her sister closely. "You mean you're leaving this coffeehouse?"

Chloe nodded as she removed the apron she was wearing and tossed it over on the couch. "Yes, but that's not all. I'll move out, because I really don't think that I want to live under the same roof with someone like you."

The taller woman chuckled humorlessly. "Funny, you claim to know me so well yet you're just now figuring out who I am? Or who you deem me to be." Jack's heart was beating a million miles an hour as she felt the nervousness start. Chloe was drifting away from her, which was causing her to feel utterly horrible.

"I take it that your answer is still a no?"

"You betcha," Jack tried to say in as casual a voice as possible. "If you think I'm gonna let you give me an ultimatum, you've got another thing coming Chloe."

The other woman nodded. "Fine. I'll be on my way then. Enjoy your solitude Jack." Brushing past her sister, Chloe opened the door and left without another word. Turning around, Jack started to go after her, but changed her mind. It would most likely do more harm than good. Walking over to the door, Jack closed it before going to the couch and taking a seat, hardly being able to believe what had just happened. Had she lost her sister forever? No, that could not happen. Chloe would come around. She had to.

Putting a hand in her pocket, Jack pulled out her keys. Looking at the key to her Mercedes, she glanced at her watch. It should be open now. Coming to a decision to get out of here for a while, the woman stood up and headed for the door. She needed to work off the tension she felt.

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After they did some light stretches, Sarah led Sonny over to where the punching bags were located. Grabbing a pair of gloves that would fit her friend, she started to put one on the blonde's right hand. As she tied up the strings on Sonny's glove, the other woman reminded her of the cast she was wearing, which partially covered her left hand.

"No problem," Sarah said as she finished. "You can just hit the bag with your right hand." Moving to the punching bag, Sarah placed a hand on either side of it as she instructed her friend to take a jab at it. Sarah grinned as a thought came to mind. "Pretend that this bag is Jack Foster."

Sonny laughed as she took a stance much like a boxer. "Hey, that might not be such a bad idea." Focusing on the punching bag, the blonde visualized her competitor's face. Since she had a broad imagination, it wasn't difficult to do. Drawing her arm back, Sonny slammed her gloved hand into the punching bag, causing it to move a bit. A bit surprised at the force in Sonny's punch, Sarah held on tighter to the bag as the other woman took another jab at it, this one a tad harder than the last. Putting her left arm into it, Sonny took mock jabs at the bag with it before making contact with the right.

Sonny thought of Jack, beads of sweat beginning to form on her body as she struck the punching bag faster and harder. She even began to put some fancy leg work into it, bouncing around a little as the song "*Eye of the Tiger*" started to play over the loudspeaker. Sonny grinned as fat beads of sweat rolled down her slightly flushed face. The song was fitting.

Jack Foster. She was the proverbial pain in Sonny's backside. Could the woman's head swell any bigger? If being cocky were a crime, Jack would surely be serving two life sentences back to back. Just about every time that Sonny laid eyes on the woman, she felt the urge to slap her silly. Especially when Jack put on that "I'm superior to you" smile of hers. Good Lord, that woman was aggravating! Given the opportunity, within minutes she could probably make a priest want to commit homicide towards her.

As sweat began to soak through the sports bra she was wearing, Sonny started to deliver a round of uppercuts to the punching bag, pretending that she was making contact with Jack's chin. Tiring of the uppercuts, Sonny started a succession of quick jabs to Jack's middle. This was very therapeutic. She would have to come here more often. Better yet, maybe she should just purchase a punching bag and put it up in her bedroom. Yes, that would work. Sonny had a feeling that she would be using it just about everyday.

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Done with her program on the treadmill, Jack hopped off before grabbing her towel from one of the handlebars. Bringing it to her face, she began to dab at the sweat before rolling the towel and placing it around her neck. Having given it much thought, she still had no idea what she was going to do about Chloe. Somehow, she was going to make it up to her. Everything would be all right between them. They had had arguments before. None this large, but they would heal from it sooner or later.

Deciding to spend some time working on a punching bag, Jack headed in the direction of them. Moments later she stopped dead in her tracks as she noticed Sonny and Sarah. Sarah was seemingly holding on to the punching bag for dear life while Sonny beat the crap out of it. Jack arched an eyebrow. Seemed she wasn't the only one who was experiencing tension. She had a feeling that Sonny's had something to do with her. Jack was having quite an effect on women these days.

Blue eyes moving up and down the blonde's body, Jack could not help but to notice how adorable Sonny looked in her little loose-fitting gray shorts with matching sports bra. *Great abs*, Jack thought as she studied them from afar. In fact, everything about Sonny's body was pretty great. The cute tight little butt, the nice round full breasts that slightly jiggled whenever Sonny bounced around like she was actually in the boxing ring...Blinking, Jack shook her head. What was she doing checking out Sonny Campbell? She was in love with the most incredible woman on this earth. Jack smiled as she thought of PerkyGrrl. There was simply no one like her. How long was it until Disneyworld? Oh, yes, less than a week now. The smile grew wider.

Focusing on Sonny and Sarah again, Jack made up her mind to say hello. Beginning to walk again, she headed towards the two women. Soon she was standing on Sonny's right. Opening her mouth to say something, the glove that suddenly struck her cheek, quickly stole the words away from her. Her head snapping to the right, pain shot through Jack's face as she began to see stars twinkling in front of her eyes. Well now, Sonny and her possible girlfriend Laura had hit her. Jack decided that this hurt worse than the black eye she received a few weeks back. Though not too much worse.

Green eyes opening wide, Sonny stared at her gloved fist as though it had a mind of its very own. What had happened here? She knew exactly what happened. Sonny had been so into delivering punches to the bag and pretending that her target was Jack that when the woman actually approached her, for a split second she thought it was just her imagination. Before Sonny fully knew what she was doing, she had aimed her fist at Jack and hit the woman in the face.

Watching as Jack cradled her cheek with her hand, Sonny gave the woman an apologetic look before glancing at Sarah who merely looked amused by what had just occurred. In fact, she appeared as though she could just burst into laughter at any given moment. Looking back at Jack, who was staring at her questioningly, Sonny shrugged.

"Oops. That was an accident. I'm sorry," she said.

Both of Jack's eyebrows raised. "Oops? That was an accident? How could it be an accident? You looked right at me and then hit me." The tall woman rubbed her sore cheek while briefly wondering if there would be a bruise. "That sounds premeditated to me."

"It wasn't. I swear. It was more like a reflex."

Jack shrugged. "Whatever. If I were you I'd want to hit me too considering that I'm about to put you and your friend/partner here out of business."

Green eyes narrowed slightly. Ah, there was the cockiness that she had come to know and despise. "Did you want something Jack?"

"I just wanted to say hello and see how you ladies were doing."

"Do you really care how we're doing?" Sarah spoke up.

Jack nodded as she flashed Sarah a charming smile that the woman was not buying. "Why of course I do. So?" Blue eyes darted from one woman to the other as Jack placed her hands on her hips.

"We're fine," Sonny replied, wishing that she would just go away. Jack was sometimes peskier than a plethora of flies at a picnic on a sizzling summer day. Sonny inwardly grinned as an image popped into her mind. Too bad there was no such thing as a Jack swatter. Or Jack repellent...

Jack's eyes moved up and down Sonny and Sarah's bodies. "Yep. You two look very fine to me," she said, grinning as the other two rolled their eyes.

Sonny attempted to smile, but she doubted it looked right. "Jack, now don't take this the wrong way, but I think it's about time you go somewhere else. Sarah and I are busy." Shoo shoo!

The dark-haired woman nodded. "Ah, I see. What are you busy doing, hmm? Trying to come up with a strategy on how to save your coffeehouse? You do know that that would be pointless. Please don't waste your time trying to prevent the inevitable. Life is much too short."

"Did anyone ever tell you that you put the 'b' in front of itch?" Sarah asked hotly as she gave Jack a look that could melt an ice cube. Was there anyone on this planet that was more infuriating than this woman standing before her?

Jack gave a short chuckle. "Um, no Sarah. I do believe that you have the honors of being the very first one."

Sonny took a deep calming breath. She could not fathom why, but it appeared as though Jack enjoyed getting people angry. Well in that case she was going to try to remain as composed as was possible. She would not play right into this woman's hands. Sonny looked into Jack's bright blue eyes. *Sadistic jerk*. "Why are you doing this?"

"Doing what? I was merely trying to help by giving you a tip and your friend here got upset with me because of it." Jack shrugged. "I just want you to be prepared for what is going to happen. Well what is already happening actually, which is I'm climbing up the ladder of success while you are desperately clinging to it, trying not to fall off. I almost feel sorry for you," she finished in an earnest tone of voice.

Sonny shook her head slowly. This woman was unbelievable. Truly unbelievable. "Tell me, does being arrogant come naturally to you, or do you have to work at it?" Sonny made a mental note to herself to stop by a sporting goods store when she left here. Right now, she felt like she could punch the stuffing out of a bag.

Jack cocked her head to the side as though she was really giving thought to that question. "Hmm, guess I would have to say that I just have natural arrogance."

"Why don't you and your natural arrogance take a flying leap?" Sarah suggested.

"You mean like *Bean There, Done That* is going to do?" Jack winked at her.

That was it. She could not take it one more minute. Sonny felt all of the anger and resentment that had built up during the past few weeks rush through her body. Forget playing into Jack's hands. She didn't give a flying leap anymore. Besides, the woman was asking for it. Looking at the cocky expression on the taller woman's face, Sonny's right arm came up. Drawing back to gain more force, she then executed a blow to Jack's stomach with her gloved hand, causing the woman to double over in pain as she felt the wind get knocked out of her. Those nearby that had seen what just happened looked at the trio curiously. A couple winced in sympathy for Jack.

As she watched Jack attempt not to fall to her knees, Sarah found that she had been rendered speechless. During all of the years that she had been friends with Sonny, never had she known the woman to strike someone. Well now she knew that when push came to shove, the blonde was skilled in how to do it. Glancing at her best friend, Sarah noticed the somewhat shocked expression on her face. *She must be just as surprised as I am*, she thought.

Still doubled over, Jack closed her eyes tight as she felt the pain shooting through her stomach. She had not seen that one coming. Out of the black eye and the strike to the cheek, this was now the worse one of all. It hurt. It hurt very much. Taking in a deep breath and wiping the expression of pain from her face, Jack slowly stood up to her full height. Looking at Sonny as nonchalantly as she could manage, she said, "Wow. That was a good hit. You should become a boxer after your coffeehouse closes down." When Sonny put her hand up as though to strike again, Jack took a quick step back, and raised her own hands. "Okay, okay. I apologize. That was uncalled-for." Lightly clearing her throat, she went on, "I should go now before this gets totally out of hand. Have a nice day." Walking away, ignoring the looks thrown her way, Jack shook her head. Have a nice day? Well that was lame.

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Not five minutes later, Sonny and Sarah entered the women's locker room and headed over to where their lockers were located. Sitting on the bench, Sonny was quiet as she began to remove her tennis shoes. What had she just done? In twenty-seven-years she had never resorted to violence and now she had hit someone. Sure Jack Foster probably deserved it, but the blonde felt extremely guilty for her actions.

Grabbing her toiletries, Sarah informed her friend that she was heading to the showers. Announcing that she would be following right behind her, Sonny watched for a moment as Sarah left before turning to remove her socks. As she did so, two women wearing only towels approached the bench adjacent to her own. Sonny overheard their conversation, not really meaning to eavesdrop.

"Did you see that body?" one of the women asked her friend in a voice filled with awe. "She was absolutely gorgeous!"

The other woman chuckled as she began to open her locker. "Are you kidding? I couldn't help but to see it! I'm telling you Mary, if it wasn't for Andrew I might convert!"

Both women laughed at that. "I think what really drew me in were those blue eyes," Mary replied. "They were...hypnotic."

Her friend nodded in agreement. "Definitely. Wish I could have stayed in the sauna longer, but it was getting hot in there."

"For more than one reason!"

They both laughed again as a thought came to Sonny's mind. She had a strong feeling that they were discussing Jack. Reaching a decision, the blonde stood up and closed her locker, before she headed in the direction of the sauna. Coming to the door, she peeped into a small square window on it. Her thoughts were confirmed when she saw Jack reclining on a bench with her head resting against the wall. Having shucked her workout clothing, Jack was solely wearing a towel that covered her breasts down to her thighs. Sonny could not be sure, but it appeared as though the woman had her eyes closed.

Taking a deep breath, Sonny opened the door to be greeted by a wave of steam. Walking into the sauna room, she quietly closed the door behind her before looking around. She was pleased to find that they were currently the only inhabitants. Turning to Jack, Sonny watched as her eyes slowly opened. The woman stared at her inquisitively for a moment before saying anything.

"Well, well, well. If it isn't Sonny Balboa. If you have come to hit me again, I must tell you that I'm getting tired of people's fists flying at my various body parts...it kinda hurts you know. So, I must warn you that I will defend myself this time."

"I didn't come here to hurt you. I just wanted to apologize for what I did. No matter how you behave that is no excuse for me resulting to violence. I promise you from this day forward to keep my hands to myself. I really am sorry Jack." Sonny found that she was holding her breath as she waited for the other woman's reply. There was no telling what Jack might say.

There was silence in the room for a few moments before Jack finally replied, "Don't worry about it. You don't need to apologize to me Sonny." She shrugged. "It's no big deal."

The blonde raised a curious brow. Was that it? No sarcasm, no jibes? Did this woman have multiple personalities? Sonny started to grow just a tad bit suspicious. "Okay," she slowly said. "I guess I'll leave now." Turning around, she started to open the door when she heard Jack calling her name. Sonny nearly groaned as she turned back to face the woman. "Yes?"

"Get naked."

"What?!" The old Jack must have been back.

Extending her hand towards a small pile of towels, Jack grabbed one and tossed it over to Sonny, who caught it. "You heard me. I said get naked," the blue eyed woman said in a serious tone of voice. "You can put the towel on, but wrap it around you loosely so you'll sweat better. I

recommend that you stay in here for about ten minutes or so. It might do you a world of good to sit in this sauna for a bit. It can relax you and cleanse the toxins from your body."

A confused look flashed across Sonny's face. She just could not for the life of her figure out Jack. The woman was very complex. "You want me to take my clothes off with you sitting there?"

"Oh, are you shy Sonny? I was intending to turn away. I don't feel the least bit compelled to look at your naked body," Jack explained matter-of-factly.

Sonny quickly glanced down at herself. Was there something wrong with her body? She did not know whether to be insulted, infuriated, or grateful. Looking at Jack, who was wearing an unreadable expression she said, "I didn't know you were such a gentlewoman Jack."

A smile appeared on the other woman's lips. "I'm full of surprises." Standing up, Jack began to walk towards Sonny. As she did so, she reached up to remove the towel that she was wearing. Taking it off, she bit the inside of her lower lip to keep from grinning when she noticed the look on Sonny's face. The smaller woman's mouth was open as her green eyes took in nearly six feet of naked beauty. Reaching Sonny, Jack whispered close to her ear, "See? I told you. Full of 'em." The blonde looked at her speechlessly, her mouth still hanging open. Winking at her, Jack exited the sauna, a huge grin appearing on her face as she closed the door.

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Climbing the stairs and heading towards her bedroom, Jack looked towards Chloe door as she heard music emanating from inside. Walking down to the room, she knocked on the door. When no one answered, she knocked again, louder this time. A moment later, the door was opened. Sparing her sister a look, Chloe returned to what she was doing, which was packing a suitcase.

"You're really leaving?" Jack asked, shock evident in her voice. She had never truly thought that her sister was serious about leaving their home. Obviously, her thoughts were erroneous.

While she removed clothes from hangers, Chloe glanced at Jack as she nodded. "You doubted me?" She chuckled humorlessly as she tossed two pairs of pants into the suitcase. "I shouldn't be surprised."

Finding the music a distraction, Jack walked over to her sister's stereo and turned it off before settling her attention back on Chloe. "What do you mean by that? I just figured that you would have calmed down by now so that we could talk about this rationally."

"What I mean is that you see me as some child who is fully dependent on you. You think that I could not possibly make it out in the world on my own, because I need my big strong sister to take care of me," her voice rising, Chloe paused while trying to calm down. "I don't need your protection. I am old enough to take care of myself."

"I know you are an adult Chloe and I know that you are capable of taking care of yourself. That doesn't mean you have to leave in order to prove it."

Done packing, Chloe closed the suitcase before looking at her sister. "I'm not trying to prove anything to you. I'm merely moving out because I no longer wish to live with you anymore." There were tears in her eyes as she said, "You've changed into someone that I don't want to know."

Jack felt like someone had just pierced her heart with a knife and twisted it for good measure. "I don't want you to go," she admitted softly.

The expression on her sister's face appeared slightly compassionate. "And I don't want you to continue ruining people's lives on purpose."

"I'm not doing it on purpose. This is just--"

"I know," Chloe quickly interrupted. "I know. It's just business." Turning to her suitcase, she zipped it up before grabbing the handle. "Well you do what you feel is necessary and I'll do what I feel is necessary." Lifting the suitcase, Chloe headed in the direction of the door.

Taking a few steps back, Jack leaned against the door, successfully blocking it. When Chloe politely asked her to move, the woman shook her head negatively. "No, I can't just let you walk out of this house. You are not a child, but you're still my sister and I'm concerned about you. Where are you gonna go? Do you have any sort of plan?"

"I have money saved up in my bank account, but this afternoon I sold my car so that I'd have even more. Now I don't have to worry about finding employment right away, though I plan on starting to look tomorrow."

"You sold the Viper?"

Chloe nodded. "Yes, it was very easy. Of course, the buyer was suspicious at first because the price was so low. He couldn't believe it. I soon convinced him that there was nothing wrong with the car. Even let him take a test spin."

Jack's eyebrow raised just a smidgen. "How low was it?"

"The price?" At the other woman's nod, she went on, "Thirty-five thousand dollars."

If she had just taken a drink of water, she would have choked on it. Or she would have spit it out, causing water droplets to land all over her sister's face... "What?! You sold an eighty thousand dollar car for less than half its original price?"

Chloe's blue eyes narrowed slightly. "Is that all you care about is money?"

"No, but what I do care about is my sister selling a Dodge Viper that I just bought for her two years ago. It was the best present that I ever gave you and I was so thrilled to see your face light up when you noticed it in the driveway."

"Funny, I always thought that the best present you ever gave me was your love," Chloe uttered in a faint voice. "It's all I ever really wanted from you."

Jack felt a lump growing in her throat, as her eyes became glassy. "I do love you Chloe."

For a split second, Chloe appeared as though she was about to burst into tears before her expression became passive. "Please move out of the way."

"Chloe..."

The younger woman whispered, "Just let me go."

Slowly moving away from the door, Jack silently watched as her sister left their home and her. She stood rooted to one spot as Chloe walked down the staircase with her luggage in hand. It was probably the hardest thing Jack ever had to do. She waited a few minutes before walking out of her sister's bedroom, closing the door behind her. Moving down the steps and making her way to the bottom, she checked everywhere before coming to the difficult conclusion that Chloe truly was gone.

The house already seemed empty as Jack felt the loneliness creeping in. Holding back the tears that threatened to come, she walked back upstairs and into her bedroom. Turning on the lamp next to her bed, she kicked her shoes off before laying down on her back with her hands folded behind her head. She stared up at the ceiling as she attempted not to think about what had just taken place. She did not want to think and she didn't want to feel.

Closing her eyes a short while later, Jack willed sleep to take her but before it could the phone placed on the night-stand next to her bed started to ring. Quickly opening her eyes, she sat up and grabbed the phone, hoping against hope that the caller was Chloe. Answering it, Jack was disappointed to find that it wasn't. To her surprise, it was Leslie.

"Hey Jack. How are you?" Leslie asked in a way that gave the other woman the impression that she already knew how she was.

"I've had better days," Jack replied in a weary tone. When there wasn't an immediate response, she called Leslie's name, wondering if she was still on the line.

"I'm here. Was just thinking," Leslie paused while trying to gather her thoughts. "I called to tell you not to worry about Chloe. She's going to be staying with me for a while and I'll watch out for her."

"She's going to be staying with you?"

"Yes. What happened was she called me earlier today and was visibly upset. She told me all about what happened between the two of you. She just needed someone to talk to. When she said that she was moving out I asked her where to and she told me that she was going to a hotel. Well then, that was when I had the idea that she just come stay with me. At first, she objected to it, but I kept persisting and she gave in."

Reaching up, Jack rubbed at her eyes, which were stinging. Suddenly she felt extremely tired. "Is she there now?"

"Yes, she just walked through the door a couple minutes ago. I wanted to wait until she arrived before I called you," Leslie gave a slight pause before continuing, "I hope that you're not upset with me Jack. I just wanted to make sure that Chloe was all right and by her staying here I'd be able to keep you posted. You know I love her like she was my own." Leslie smiled into the phone. "When you and I started dating, I think I fell in love with your sister before I did you."

Jack softly chuckled, remembering how quickly Leslie and Chloe had bonded. They were like two peas in a pod. "I'm not upset Leslie. Thank you for being there for her." She sighed. "I wish she would let me."

"Just give her a bit of time to cool off. Chloe's a sweetie and she'll probably be knocking on your door before you know it to make up."

Jack stifled a yawn. "Maybe you're right."

"I know I'm right. Now you sound tired so I'm gonna let you go," Leslie said. "Try to get some sleep all right?"

A ghost of a smile appeared on Jack's lips. "Yes ma'am."

"Goodnight Jack. Sweet dreams."

"Goodnight Les. Same to you." Hanging up the phone, feeling a little better, Jack stood up. Turning towards it, she pulled back the covers on the bed before stripping down to her boxers and walking over to the dresser to obtain a T-shirt. Slipping it on, she moved back to the bed and climbed in. Stretching a long arm towards it, she switched off the lamp, casting the room into darkness. Jack was nearly asleep by the time she settled her head on the pillow.

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Putting down the latest copy of *Climax* magazine, Sonny reached over for the phone, which was lying on the coffee table. Glancing at the clock on the wall, she saw that it was almost ten o'clock. Figuring that Laura should be home by now, she punched in her girlfriend's phone number. The phone rang four times before Laura's answering machine picked up. Sonny let out a soft sigh as she waited for Laura to get through her message before there was a beep.

"Hello Laura, this is Sonny. It's 9:48. I was hoping that I would catch you at home by now, but obviously, you aren't there. I was talking with Sarah today and she gave me an idea. If you aren't busy...I hope you're not busy what do you say to us going away for the weekend of October sixth? I found this resort in Panama City and it looks heavenly. So, just give me a buzz ASAP okay? Take care. I love you."

Hitting the 'end' button, Sonny tossed the phone on the couch before getting up and stretching. Walking over to her computer, she took a seat. Moving the mouse, she watched as her screensaver vanished before clicking on the AOL icon. A couple minutes later she was greeted to the Internet and soon had a fresh email box up, which was addressed to none other than Blueyez. Flexing her fingers, Sonny placed them on the home row of her keyboard and started to type.

*To A True Blue,*

*How are you doing? Hope that this email finds you in good spirits. I'm doing okay. My day was kind of hectic, but I'll most certainly survive (smile). I find myself counting down the days until we meet. Less than a week away now. I'm so delighted. I feel like Christmas is coming up! ;-)  
Anyway, I'm on my way to bed but I wanted to write you before I turned in. Yesterday morning, while I was eating breakfast I wrote you a poem. Now I'm no poet but I felt compelled to dedicate a poem to you so I'm going to give it to you now. Please don't laugh. It's taken all of my courage to get up the nerve to actually let you read it ;-)* So here goes:

### **Your Eyes**

*Your eyes remind me of the ocean*

*Tranquil...peaceful...serene*

*Enveloping me like a wave crashing against the shore.*

*Your eyes remind me of the stars*

*Their radiance astounds me.*

*When your eyes blaze into mine*

*My knees become weak*

*And I can barely breathe.*

*Your eyes...*

*They see into my soul*

*Like no others have ever been able to do.*



*Okay...so I have an idea of what you might be thinking. How could I possibly write that when I have never really seen your eyes (smile)? Well...I do believe that I have seen them in my dreams. Ah, I think I have caught another case of "sappitus" (wink). I do hope that you like the poem Blue. Guess I better be getting to bed now. If you happen to read this tonight...sweet dreams.*

~PG~

Quickly clicking on the send button before she had the chance to change her mind, Sonny sat back in her chair as she watched the email disappear swiftly as the blink of an eye. Well unless she decided to click on the 'unsend' button, it was too late now. Taking a deep breath, Sonny logged off of the Internet before sitting back in her chair again as she wondered what exactly it was she was doing. Ten minutes ago she had left a message on her girlfriend's answering machine, pitching the idea of them going away for the weekend and then she logged on to AOL and sent another woman an intimate poem.

The blonde shook her head. She thought back to when she asked Laura if she had cheated on her, the night the woman came there with that duffel bag full of money. However, wasn't it she that was cheating? If Sonny were truthful with herself, she would have to say that the answer to that question was yes. The only person on this earth that should have received that poem was Laura, yet it belonged to Blue. The words were one hundred percent true because Sonny truly did feel that Blue had the ability to see into her soul at times.

Shutting down the computer, Sonny stood and began to walk towards her bedroom as she continued to mentally debate with herself. Upon entering her room, the blonde changed into her pajamas before slipping into bed and turning off the light. She was in love with Laura and Blue was just a friend...a very good dear friend who could see into her soul. Laura was the person that she wanted to spend the rest of her life with. If the laws were to change, Laura would be the woman that she would want to marry. During this trip, Sonny and Laura would be able to mend their relationship and make it burn brighter than it ever had before. Meanwhile, after Disneyworld, Sonny and Blue would just remain good friends. Yes, things would be perfect if they turned out just like that. At least that's what Sonny informed herself.

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It was so dark and so cold as she kept running and running. It appeared as though she was in a tunnel. A tunnel that would never end because no matter how fast she ran...how long she ran, she never seemed to get any closer to her destination. She saw the door...it was the only object detectable because of a bright light hanging above it. The door was like a welcome beacon that guided one through a horrendous storm in the ocean.

She had to reach it. She had to get there in time before it was too late. Faster and faster, she ran as beads of sweat appeared on her forehead and puffs of cold air rushed out of her lungs only to vanish into the darkness. She could not be late this time. This could not happen again...oh God not again. Adrenaline pumping through her veins, her heart racing at an incredible speed, she finally began to feel as though she was making some leeway, the distance between her and the door seeming to decrease. She was almost there...remarkably close to her goal. Don't let it be

too late...not this time. Not again, never again. The course of all of their lives depended on whether or not she would succeed.

Reaching the door, she placed her hand on the ice-cold knob. She took a deep relaxing breath. It could not be too late. This time she would make it there before it happened. Turning the knob, she opened the door. It was then that she saw it, like this was déjà vu. Oh, not again. Not again! A scream rose from deep within her and echoed against the close walls of the tunnel. Running into the bathroom, she hurriedly lifted and removed the small lifeless body hanging from the shower stall.

Hot tears ran down her cheeks as she lovingly placed the body on the floor. Having learned it in school, she began to perform CPR although she knew within her heart that it was too late...much too late. Finally giving up, she cradled the body in her arms as she cried more and more. Throwing her head back, she let out a blood-curdling scream as she wondered...why?

"Mama!!" Sitting up in the bed, Jack swallowed gulps of air as she attempted to bring the beating of her heart back down to a normal speed. Rivulets of sweat clung to her body as she began to shake violently. Throwing the covers back, the tall woman jumped out of the bed and raced into her bathroom, where she quickly lost the contents of her stomach in the toilet. After enduring a few dry heaves, her nausea thankfully subsided. Standing, Jack moved over to the sink. Turning on the cold water, she began to splash some on her face before picking up her toothbrush and beginning to brush her teeth.

Her knees feeling quite weak, Jack purposely collapsed onto the cold hard bathroom tile. Lying down in the fetal position, she wrapped her arms around her body while waiting for the shaking to recede. The tears that she had managed to hold in all day finally came. Not bothering to stop them, Jack continued to hold herself as the sobs shook her body.

Minutes later, Jack stopped crying. Sitting up, no longer shaking, she wiped at her eyes with the back of her hand. Getting to her knees, she rose from the floor and left the bathroom, making sure to turn out the light before closing the door. Carefully traveling down the stairs, Jack headed towards the mini bar in her den. Finding a bottle of red wine, she poured some of the liquid into a glass before taking a huge swallow before refilling it. Jack hoped that if she drank enough of it, that the alcohol would put her into a deep sleep sans the nightmares.

After polishing off a glass of wine and then refilling it again, Jack moved to her computer and took a seat. Taking another sip from the glass, she placed it on her desk before starting the process of logging onto the Internet. Perhaps she would find something to do in order to distract her from the memories now coursing through her mind. The last thing Jack wanted to think about was that horrid day.

Successfully logging on, Jack checked her e-mail after being informed that she had some. A faint smile made its way to her lips as the dark-haired woman zoned in on the email from PerkyGrrl. Clicking on it, she began to read after noticing that this latest email had been sent not two hours ago. Her heart rate started to increase when she was told that PG had written her a poem. No one had ever done anything like that for Jack. The faint smile she had been wearing had grown into a

full-fledged one by the end of the poem. Sitting back in her chair, Jack reread the poem a few times while completely speechless. This was the most beautiful thing anyone had ever told her. If she would have had PG's phone number, she would have called the woman right then and professed how much she loved her.

Your eyes...

They see into my soul

Like no others have ever been able to do.

Jack decided that that was her favorite part, as she reread the last three lines repeatedly, committing them to memory. Did PerkyGrrl really mean that? Did she mean every word that she wrote? Jack smiled to herself. Yes, she honestly believed that the woman did. Maybe...just maybe PG felt the same way that Jack did. Or at the very least, perhaps she was starting to. Now, more than ever Jack could not wait until next Friday to arrive.

Placing her hand on the mouse, she clicked the 'reply' button before starting to type a response to PerkyGrrl's email.

To the Lovely PG,

*Wow. You have rendered me speechless. Absolutely speechless. I don't think that anyone has ever written anything so beautiful as that was for me. Thank you so much for thinking of me and for being my friend. I will cherish this poem and you always *smile* You have a true talent for writing. You should do it more often. I have pretty much had the day from you know where, but you have instantly made it so much better. Again, I thank you. Well, I best get to bed now. I will see you next week sweetie... and hopefully in my dreams tonight.*

Yours always & forever,

Blue

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Today was turning out to be a good day so far. She had managed to find a parking space relatively close to the amusement park. Shutting off the ignition, Sonny placed both of her hands on the wheel as she took in a deep breath and then slowly let it out. Today was the day. Today she would for the first time meet Blueyez and she was both thrilled and nervous about that happening. What if they did not click in person like they had online? She had heard of that occurring before.

Sonny shook her head. No, she would not think like that. She had to be positive. Everything would be fine between them. She just had to have some faith. Nodding, feeling a little bit calmer, Sonny looked in her rearview mirror to check her hair. Though it appeared to be neat, she reached anyway and lightly patted it on the top and sides. Glancing down at her outfit, Sonny

wondered for the fiftieth time if she looked all right in it. This morning she had changed clothes at least a dozen times before deciding on this one.

The blonde had finally chosen to wear a pair of khaki shorts that ended just above her knees along with a navy blue sleeveless cotton shirt. On her feet were blue tennis shoes that she decided at the last minute would be more comfortable than the sandals she had started to slip into. Looking down at her neatly tucked in shirt, Sonny shook her head as she pulled it out. The other way looked much too formal. Now pleased, Sonny reached over in the passenger seat for the full pink rose lying there. As she examined herself in the rearview mirror, she carefully tucked the flower behind her right ear before nodding in satisfaction.

Glancing at her watch, Sonny noted the time. She had roughly twenty minutes before the park opened. Deciding that Blue was most likely already here, Sonny opened the car door and stepped out, making sure to close and lock it behind her. Running her hands over her shirt and shorts, though both were completely free of wrinkles, the blonde began to walk towards the park as she took in deep breaths in the hopes of relaxing. She suddenly felt like a rubber-band that could snap at any moment. Everything would be okay. Sonny just had to keep reminding herself of that. She and Blue were going to have a lovely day together.

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Waiting until the last song on her CD player finished playing, Jack turned off the ignition and placed her keys in one of the pockets located on her blue jean shorts. Reapplying cherry flavored lip balm, she glanced in the rearview mirror to make sure that her french braid was still neat. After noticing that it was, she looked at her watch to note that she almost fifteen minutes left until the park opened.

Opening the car door, she stepped out, putting on a pair of dark shades in the process. Stretching out her long limbs, Jack took a deep breath of air. It was hard to believe that she was about to meet the love of her life. PerkyGrrl was probably waiting for her right now, wearing a pink rose in her hair. Jack looked down at her perfectly pressed Mickey Mouse T-shirt as she briefly wondered which of them would notice the other first. Deciding to find out, she headed towards the park, taking long quick steps.

Minutes later, Jack reached the front entrance and started to look around at various women for the one wearing a flower. Excusing herself as she moved between throngs of people, Jack removed her shades so that she could see better and hooked them onto the collar of her shirt. Blue eyes perusing around, Jack thought, *PG, come out, come out wherever you are*. She smiled in delight. *Your Blue has arrived to sweep you off of your feet*. At least, Jack hoped that she would be able to accomplish that.

Jack sighed as the crowd grew and grew, making it that more difficult for her to locate PerkyGrrl. This was turning out to be harder than she had originally thought it would be. While wishing that they had decided to meet somewhere else such as the parking lot, Jack continued to study each woman that she laid eyes upon, searching for that telltale flower. Moments later, blue eyes caught sight of a big pink flower behind a woman's ear. *Oh, it's only Sonny*, Jack thought as she

started to turn away to elsewhere before quickly looking back and blinking. Sonny?! What was she doing at Disneyworld today of all days with a pink rose in her hair?

No, it could not possibly be her. PerkyGrrl was not Sonny. Just because she had chosen to come to Disneyworld on the exact same day of Jack and PG's meeting there, did not make her PerkyGrrl. And just because she was wearing a pink rose in her hair that did not mean she was PerkyGrrl either. And although she seemed to be searching the crowd of people, that did not mean she was looking for Jack a.k.a. Blue. No, none of that meant a single thing.

Jack's thoughts settled on the handle PerkyGrrl as she quickly moved so that Sonny could not see her. Perky. What does one associate the word perky with? The blue-eyed woman sighed as the answer came to her. Coffee can make one perky and since Sonny owned a coffeehouse, she might have chosen PerkyGrrl to be her handle on AOL. Jack let out a long sigh as she concluded that it all made perfect sense. There really was no reason why Sonny could not be PerkyGrrl. After all, PG was sweet and though Sonny usually did not act that towards Jack, the woman knew that she was too. Jack just had the knack to bring out the worst in her.

Peering from behind a rather large man, Jack studied Sonny as the woman continued to look around with a slightly anxious expression on her face. So, what did this latest information mean? Jack was supposedly in love with PerkyGrrl, but since Sonny turned out to be her, had those feelings faded away or did Jack still feel the same? The woman mentally asked herself that question, deciding that the feelings had changed a great deal, yet they were still there. She could not say in all honesty that she was in love, since she had not taken the time to get to know Sonny, but Jack admitted that she felt something for her. Maybe that was why she took delight in making Sonny lose her temper because she liked her. Wasn't that the way young children behaved when they had liked someone? Having a ten-year-old boy push you down in the mud when you had on your favorite dress meant he had a big crush on you.

Deciding that she did not feel like exploring those feelings right now, Jack turned and headed towards the parking lot at a quick pace. A part of her felt as though the love of her life had died. Sure, PerkyGrrl did indeed exist, but she was a woman that disliked Jack. The woman sighed again as it occurred to her that she probably did not deserve PerkyGrrl or Sonny anyway. Even if she attempted to behave in a more pleasant manner, there was no way that Sonny would be interested anyway. Look at what Jack had done thus far. First, she had almost killed the woman and now she was in the process of stealing her customers and ruining her business. Jack could only imagine how Sonny would react if she were to find out that Blueyez, the woman she had come to know and trust over the passed year was none other than her business rival. No, it was best to just make Blueyez disappear now.

Nearing the parking lot, Jack stopped dead in her tracks as she shook her head. Looking back over her shoulder, she felt the guilt rising. This was wrong. She could not just leave Sonny all alone. The younger woman had looked so fragile and innocent standing there as her green eyes desperately searched for her online friend. Coming to a decision, Jack removed her shades from the collar of her shirt and put them back over her eyes before she crossed her arms against her body and lifted the shirt, pulling it over her head. Glancing at her peach-colored tank top, Jack

started to fold her Mickey Mouse shirt, glad that she had chosen to wear a tank top under it, thinking that it might heat up later in the day.

Jogging towards the parking lot, Jack made her way to her Mercedes. Opening the trunk, she tossed her T-shirt inside before allowing the trunk to fall shut. She then began the walk back to the park entrance as she gathered her thoughts. Finding Sonny, Jack plastered a smile on her face as she strolled up to the woman as though they were old friends...which in a way they were she supposed. Calling out the other woman's name in greeting, Jack watched as Sonny's eyes moved towards her, her expression now one of part curiosity mixed with a healthy dose of annoyance.

"Jack. What are you doing here? Are you following me now?"

The dark-haired woman grinned at her. "Yeah, I thought I would try out stalking as a possible hobby to take up." Jack's grin broadened as she saw a smirk appear on Sonny's lips. "What brings you here? Come to have some good old-fashion fun?"

Sonny nodded. "That's usually what people do when they venture to Disneyworld," she paused as she looked at Jack introspectively. "Though I can't for the life of me figure out why you're here. This doesn't seem like your type of place."

"And what does?"

The blonde woman shrugged. "Maybe the forest. I can picture you with a rifle in your hand crouching behind a bush as you anxiously wait for some unsuspecting innocent creatures to come into your line of vision so that you can shoot them down just for the sport of it."

Jack let out a short chuckle as she clutched at her chest. "Ouch. That hurt." She chuckled again, as she examined Sonny from head to toe. Someone sure did look cute today. "Did you wake up on the wrong side of the bed this morning, Sonny?"

"No I did not, but you're getting on my wrong side now."

The taller woman cocked her head to the side. "Oh?"

The other woman nodded. "Oh. Now there really is no pleasant way for me to say this Jack. Go away. Please."

Jack glanced around before refocusing her attention on Sonny. "Why? You're alone aren't you? Or are you waiting for someone? Your girlfriend perhaps? What was her name...Lola...Lulu?"

Sonny smirked at her. "Laura. You know what her name is."

"Ah, yes. Laura. How could I forget?" Jack's expression was one of mock innocence. "Laura Scott, one of the best darn journalists in Orlando! Also one of the best right-hookers my face has ever encountered."

A smug look briefly appeared on Sonny's face. "That would be her. Now please go elsewhere and bug someone else."

"Whatsamatter Sonny? Am I cramping your style? I promise to tell Laura that absolutely nothing is going on between us when she shows up. That you and I were just having a civil conversation while you waited in excitement for her to arrive."

Sonny's eyebrows raised. "Civil? You wouldn't know civil if it walked up and bit you on the butt, Jack."

The other woman laughed heartily at that. "Oh, Sonny not even attempting to be nice to me today? Tired of my BS already are ya?"

Sonny softly sighed, as she reached up and rubbed her head as though she was starting to get a headache. "Yeah, that's about the gist of it. Can you go now please?"

Not moving from the spot she was vacating, Jack glanced at her watch before looking at a clearly agitated Sonny. "It's getting late. The park is about to open in a few minutes and I'd bet my money on the fact that Laura is not going to come." Sonny was about to say something, but Jack went on, "And ya know what Sonny? I don't even think that you're meeting Laura here. No, I get the sneaking suspicion that you are meeting," taking a couple steps towards the blonde, she whispered in her ear, "your mistress." Leaning back, Jack winked at her conspiratorially. "Am I right or am I right?"

Green eyes narrowed. "Number one, no I'm not meeting Laura here but a friend. And two, I do not have a mistress. I am completely faithful."

A dark eyebrow rose into Jack's bangs. "Oh, is that right? You're *completely* faithful?"

Sonny started to look the least bit uncomfortable at this line of questioning. "Yes, I am. What business is it of yours anyway? None," she ended, answering her own question.

Jack nodded. "You've got me there. It really is none of my business," she paused as she looked around again at the growing crowd. "So what's your friends name?"

"None of your business."

"Well *that* is an odd name." Sonny gave her a dirty look to which Jack smiled sweetly at. "Sorry, couldn't resist."

"Are you here alone?"

Jack nodded. "Yes, I am now. I was supposed to meet...well..." she grinned. "I had a hot date, but she just called me," reaching behind her, Jack removed a small cell phone that was clipped to the waistband of her shorts and showed it to Sonny, "and said that she couldn't make it. Something came up. So, I was about to go home when I suddenly saw you standing here all by

your lonesome. I figured that if you are alone like I am, then we could have fun together." Putting the phone back in its place, Jack hooked her thumbs on her side pockets.

"Guess you figured wrong because I'm waiting for someone. And she *will* show up."

"Ah, so the mystery person is definitely a woman." Jack watched as Sonny's eyes moved over the crowd. "You wouldn't be this nervous about just meeting a friend," Jack said, as her expression grew thoughtful. "You know what I think?"

Sonny looked at her. "You know what Jack? This may come as a real shock to you, but I couldn't care less about what you think." She started to walk away but was stopped by a hand on her shoulder.

"Listen to my theory before you trot off," Jack said as she removed her hand, pleased to find that Sonny was choosing to stay. "I think that you are meeting someone that you have never met before." She almost grinned when the blonde attempted to hide her surprise. "Yeah, because why would you be nervous about meeting up with one of your friends such as...Sarah. Let me guess...it's an online friend right? And the two of you are meeting for the very first time. That is why you have that rose sitting behind your ear so that your friend can recognize you. Correct, aren't I?"

Sonny looked at her suspiciously, wondering how Jack knew all of this. "Have you really been stalking me?"

Jack laughed. "I'll take that as a yes. So, since you never told me her name I'm guessing that *you* don't even know." Jack shook her head as she clucked her tongue loudly. "Here you are meeting someone for the first time and you don't even know her name. Well at least you chose a public place. I have to give you credit for not being totally reckless."

Sonny let out a frustrated breath. "Goodbye Jack!"

The other woman glanced around. "Do you see her?"

"No, and I don't want to see you."

"All right, all right. I know when I'm not wanted so I'll just take my leave. Have a fantastic day." Winking at Sonny, Jack walked away as she noticed the crowd forming lines to purchase tickets. Choosing a line, she stood there as she looked towards where Sonny still was. She wondered how long the young woman was intending to wait for Blueyez to show up. Would she be willing to stay rooted to that same spot all day? Well, Jack was not going to let her do that. Somehow, some way she would get Sonny to spend the day with her at Disneyworld. Jack found that she wanted to do just that. Perhaps Sonny turning out to be PerkyGrrl was not such a bad thing after all.

Ten minutes later, Jack had two tickets in her hand as she strolled back over to Sonny, who was starting to look just a tad bit disillusioned. Jack figured that she must have been coming to the

realization that Blueyeze was not going to make an appearance. Tapping the woman on the shoulder, Jack watched, as Sonny looked up at her with sadness in her usually bright green eyes that tore at the older woman's heart. Holding up the tickets, Jack smiled at her tenderly.

"C'mon Sonny. I don't think your friend is going to make it. Maybe something important happened that required her immediate attention. I'm sure she'll email you later with an explanation. Meanwhile, I have two ultimate park hopper tickets here in my hand, which means that we can go to any of the theme parks located in Disneyworld, and I'd really consider it an honor if you would join me in a day of fun and exploration. Maybe it's too late for me to try to be your friend but I'm gonna make the effort anyway." Jack cocked her head to the side in the hopes of looking endearing. "So will you please come play with me in the happiest place on earth?"

Sonny observed her for a moment, realizing that Jack was being earnest. Thinking that she must have lost her mind, Sonny softly chuckled as she replied, "Now with a sweet little speech like that how could I resist?"

Jack winked at her. "Shall we go then?" She offered an arm to the other woman.

Sonny nodded as she slipped the arm that still bore the cast on it, through Jack's. "Let's go hang with Mickey and the rest of the gang."

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This was turning out to be quite a fantastic day. Sonny did not think that she could be more surprised. During the entire day, Jack had been nothing short of charming and sweet as they explored the Magic Kingdom. They had done and ridden so much that she could not remember everything. In fact, there was so much to do and see in the Magic Kingdom that they had yet to venture into any of the other parks.

The first ride they went on after entering the park was "Pirates of the Caribbean" located in Adventureland. Sonny had enjoyed some good old-fashioned teasing at Jack's expense after the ride was over. Jack spent most of the time screaming like a banshee as the cart they shared with a few other people went up and down. Her screaming reached a new pitch as the cart made a sudden long drop that caused her stomach to perform several flip-flops. The first one to get out when the ride was over, Jack gave Sonny a dirty look as the blonde doubled over in hearty laughter. Starting to smirk, Jack informed her not to hold anything back, which only caused Sonny to start laughing that much harder.

Sonny was half shocked that Jack did not have laryngitis after riding "Space Mountain" and "Splash Mountain" and that she herself was not deaf. Surely, Jack must have been the loudest person on both of those rides as she screamed her head off. During "Space Mountain" Sonny slipped her hand into Jack's, which was something that she soon regretted doing as the woman held onto her hand so tight, that the blonde had a feeling that her arm was not the only part of her body that was about to be broken. Afterwards, Jack apologized for her death grip before she raised Sonny's hand to lips and tenderly kissed the back of it. Grinning at the blush that quickly appeared on the shorter woman's cheeks, Jack wrapped an arm around her shoulders as they

headed towards the much tamer "Jungle Cruise" ride, where Jack snapped a few pictures with the instant camera she bought back on Main Street. She took even more pictures as she endured "It's a Small World," the ride that Sonny insisted that they just *had* to go on because it was a "classic". It took Jack nearly an hour after the ride was over to get that song out of her head. Sonny grinned every time that she heard the woman humming it.

Now, the two women were in the midst of a cruise on the "Liberty Bell Riverboat". There were three levels to the riverboat and they had managed to obtain a place on the uppermost tier. Standing next to the railing, the women looked out over the water, both feeling happy at how well things were going between them. Blue eyes traveling to Sonny, Jack took in the woman as she smiled. Yes, it had turned out to be a very good thing that PerkyGrrl was this cute petite blonde. She was everything that Jack could want in a woman and so much more than that. She now admitted that she had a crush...a rather large crush on Sonny. Though, she was not about to tell her that, because Jack figured that Sonny would not react to them in the way that she would prefer her to. One, because despite how well this day had gone, that did not automatically erase everything that Jack had caused and done. Two, Sonny was currently already involved with someone, though Jack had a feeling that it was not going well, since the blonde sent an intimate poem to Blueyez just last week. Three, even if there was not a Laura Scott in the picture, there was still Blue.

Jack could have laughed at that. She was standing in her own way. The woman shook her head slightly as she glanced towards the setting sun, deep in thought. What was she going to do about Blue? Somehow, she had to either get rid of her or cause Sonny to end whatever it was that the two of them shared. Jack looked back to Sonny as she softly smiled, though the other woman did not notice it because she was looking elsewhere. Truthfully, Jack knew without a shadow of a doubt that she did not deserve this sweet and gentle person, but she wanted her. In fact, she wanted to take Sonny in her arms right now and kiss her until the younger woman was breathless. Somehow, Jack had to acquire Sonny's affections. She would not allow Blueyez or anyone else to stand in her way. What the two of them could share would be so very special. *Oh, Sonny you have definitely gotten under my skin*, Jack thought, not in the least bit upset by that fact.

Feeling eyes upon her, Sonny looked over her shoulder to Jack and smiled as she caught the one on the other woman's lips. Turning away from the railing, the young woman leaned against it as she crossed her arms over her chest, green eyes keeping contact with blue ones. "Take a picture. It'll last longer," she said, wearing a playful expression.

Jack grinned at her as she reached into her pocket and took out her Kodak camera. "Hey, that's not such a bad idea. Pose for me, will ya?" Raising the camera until it was eye-level, Jack closed one eye as she looked through the lens.

Smiling brightly, Sonny hopped up onto the railing and sat there as she placed her hands on it to keep steady. Looking towards the camera, she kept smiling as she carefully crossed one leg over the other. Sonny faintly blushed as Jack let out a long appreciative whistle before snapping the woman's picture. When Jack announced that she wanted to take one more picture, Sonny carefully let go of her hold on the railing and stretched her arms out as she gave the camera a

goofy smile. Chuckling, Jack pressed the button on her camera, successfully taking the picture just before the smile on Sonny's face slipped as she began to lose her balance. Before Jack could reach out a helping hand to her, the blonde fell backwards and headed towards the water as she emitted a high-pitched scream. Moments later she crashed into the water, creating a great splash.

"Sonny!" Jack yelled as she dropped her camera and ran towards the railing, vaulting over it with ease. The tall woman tucked in her body as she moved towards the water at the speed of a cannonball. She managed to take in a deep breath of air and hold it just before she made impact. Surfacing, Jack quickly looked around not seeing any sign of Sonny. With the beat of her heart beginning to rapidly increase, she inhaled deeply and held her breath as she slipped underneath the water. Opening her eyes, she began to look for the other woman as she tried not to panic. Not a minute later, Jack located the blonde floating about fifteen feet away. Surfacing again, she quickly swam towards her, gliding through the water with the ease of an Olympic swimmer.

Reaching Sonny, Jack wrapped her arms around the unconscious woman and brought her to the surface. Turning the blonde around so that she was facing away, Jack wrapped an arm around her chest and started to swim towards the riverboat, which had stopped moving. As Jack arrived, two strong looking men reached over the railing and as gently as they could manage, pulled Sonny onto the boat, placing her on the floor before turning back to the railing and helping Jack up. Thanking the men, the now soaked Jack kneeled next to Sonny, placing two fingers on the pulse point located on her neck. Relieved to find one, she checked for signs of breathing but could not find any.

Putting panic aside, Jack started to perform CPR, thankful that she had taken that first-aid class with Chloe a few years back. Gently tilting Sonny's head back, Jack pinched her nostrils between thumb and forefinger before lowering her own head and placing her mouth over the woman's, giving Sonny two long full breaths. Raising her head slightly, Jack examined Sonny's chest for signs of movement but was discontented to find that there weren't any. Lowering her head again, Jack gave the other woman two more breaths before watching her still chest. Her heart began to beat so fast that she was sure those standing around watching could hear it.

"Come on Sonny," Jack said in a panicked voice, "damn it, breathe! Don't leave me. Please don't leave me. You can't," her voice cracked. Taking in a deep breath, Jack lowered her head and covered Sonny's mouth again, emitting the air into her lungs. She was about to give the unconscious woman another breath when Sonny's chest suddenly heaved and water sputtered out of her mouth, some finding its way into Jack's. The dark-haired woman rolled Sonny over on her side as she continued to spit out water, her whole body shaking as she coughed. Some of the onlookers began to clap as Jack placed a hand on Sonny's back, gently patting her. Tears of joy sprang to Jack's eyes as she lifted the small woman in her arms after the coughing and sputtering ceased.

"Are you okay?" she asked in a quiet voice, placing a tender kiss on Sonny's cheek.

Nodding, Sonny looked at her. "You saved my life," she whispered hoarsely.

Jack gave her a lopsided grin. "Well I hit you with my car and could have ended your life and now I've saved you from drowning, so I guess that balances it out. I owed you one."

The blonde softly chuckled. "Yeah, I guess so."

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As they exited the riverboat, Jack looked at her companion with concern evident on her face. She asked the other woman for what must have been the thirtieth time if she was sure that she was all right. Announcing that she was, Sonny reached out and gave Jack's hand a reassuring squeeze. Not letting go, the taller woman gently pulled her over and wrapped an arm around her shoulders as Sonny in turn wrapped her arm around Jack's waist.

"I still think that you should see a doctor," Jack said.

Sonny shook her head. "No, I don't need to do that. I'm fine, really." She looked up at the other woman. "But there is something that I need..."

Blue eyes stared into her green ones as Jack's heart skipped a beat at the words. By any chance, was what Sonny needed what she herself wanted? Swallowing with a bit of difficulty, Jack asked, "And what is it that you need?"

"Food." Sonny grinned. "I don't know about you but I'm famished! The cheeseburgers we ate for lunch have been gone."

Jack chuckled. That was something that she had discovered about Sonny today. The woman had the combined appetite of a team of professional football players. During lunch, she managed to scarf down two cheeseburgers, a large order of fries, and two large cups of lemonade that had her running to the restroom every fifteen minutes. "Then we should get you something to eat. But first, we should get out of these wet clothes and I have an idea."

"What's that?"

"How about we get some dry clothes, check into one of the Disney resorts and take a shower before ordering some room service? And we can relax there for a bit before we leave."

One of Sonny's eyebrows arched. She and Jack alone in a hotel room? No, that did not sound like a good idea and she had a feeling that her girlfriend would agree. "That's not necessary, Jack. We can just go home. It's not like either of us live too far from here. I can get something to eat when I reach my apartment."

Jack shook her head as she reached up and pushed a wet lock of hair out of her face. "No, I insist we go to the resort. If you won't allow me to escort you to the doctor, then at least concede on this. I think it would be a good idea for you to rest. Plus, I want to buy you dinner. I'm not sending you to your car on an empty stomach. The room service at *Disney's Contemporary Resort* is fantastic and I can guarantee that you'll love it. And, I don't think you should drive all

the way home in those wet clothes. Now, I don't know about you, but I don't feel like catching a case of pneumonia."

"Jack, you don't have-

Turning towards Sonny, Jack stopped walking as she placed her hands on the smaller woman's shoulders, halting Sonny's steps as well. Looking into her eyes, Jack said, "Okay, no more excuses. I just don't want this wonderful day with you to come to an end yet. I'm not ready for that. Are you?"

Silently staring into Jack's eyes for a moment, Sonny shook her head. "No, I'm not," she admitted in a faint whisper.

The other woman smiled at her, pleased beyond words with her answer. "Very well then. It's settled. We'll check into the resort, stay for a couple hours and then head on home."

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After making a stop on Main Street to purchase clothes in one of the souvenir shops, Jack and Sonny headed over to the Monorail, which was their choice of transportation to get to Disney's Contemporary Resort. Sitting next to a window on the Monorail, Sonny gazed out of it with a thoughtful look upon her face, as she remembered what happened not an hour ago on the riverboat.

She thought back to the look on Jack's face after the woman successfully revived her. There had been a mix of concern, relief, and something akin to affection in her eyes. And then Jack had kissed her cheek so sweetly and tenderly. Though the situation could have quickly turned into a tragedy, it seemed as though somehow the two of them had connected on that boat. Turning her head in the opposite direction, Sonny observed Jack, who was occupying the seat next to her own.

Noticing that the woman's eyes were closed as she relaxed against the headrest, Sonny took her time looking at her. Jack indeed was quite a beautiful woman with her high cheekbones, full sensuous lips, and those alluring blue eyes that were now shielded. Sonny softly sighed as she resisted the urge to reach up and push back the damp bangs plastered to Jack's forehead. *Oh, Jack. After today, I am certain that you have a good heart. Question is why do you insist on keeping it locked up.*

"Take a picture," Jack started in a low voice as she kept her eyes closed, "it'll last longer." She grinned, pleased that she was able to return Sonny's earlier comment to her. "At least, that's what a certain blonde informed me earlier." Not hearing so much as a sound coming from Sonny, Jack opened one eye, looking at the stunned woman. She started to chuckle as she asked, "Cat got your tongue?"

"I...you...how did you know I was looking at you?" Sonny finally got out. "I thought you were asleep."

Jack shook her head. "Nah, just resting my eyes. I could feel your eyes upon me." She faintly grinned. "Do you like what you see?"

Sonny smirked. "You look like a drowned rat."

The other woman burst out in laughter. Finding it contagious, Sonny started to chuckle a bit. "Ah, you sure do know how to say the right thing to a woman, Sonny." Jack winked at her. "Oh, and dear you ain't lookin' too spiffy yourself." As she closed her eyes, a small grin appeared on her lips. "But I must admit that that doesn't matter to me, because I like it when you're wet."

Blushing red hot, the stunned expression appeared on Sonny's face as she turned back to the window. She and Jack Foster alone in a hotel room. This was definitely turning out to be a bad...very bad idea.

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Ignoring the looks thrown their way, Jack and Sonny walked up to the check in desk while their shoes made squishing noises due to the water that was saturated in them. As they waited for the people ahead of them to finish, Jack fished in her back pocket and removed her now soggy wallet. When Sonny insisted that she pay for their room, Jack shook her head negatively as she explained that since this was her idea, it was her treat as well.

"But you bought our clothes!" Sonny returned as she glanced at the two sets of clothing in the plastic bag she held. "You should at least let me pay for the room. You've been paying for everything all day. Our lunch, snacks, the tickets to get in..."

Jack granted her with a saucy grin. "Just consider me your Sugar Mama." Before Sonny could offer any reply, Jack walked up to the desk after the other people left. Smiling charmingly at the young woman behind the desk, whose nametag said "Kiki," she said, "Hello. We'd like a room please. Preferably one with a nice view." Jack allowed her eyes to trail down to Kiki's bountiful bosom before she looked back up at the woman's face. Jack barely contained a grin as she noticed out of the corner of her eye, the almost jealous look on Sonny's face as the woman stood next to her.

Blushing brightly, the clerk turned to her computer and began to type as clicking sounds filled the air. Looking up at Jack, Kiki said, "How about a garden view?"

The tall woman nodded. "Perfect. We'd like a regular room. Just staying tonight."

Nodding, Kiki produced more clicking as her fingers flew over the keyboard. Still looking at the computer screen, she asked Jack if she would like a king size bed or two queens. Starting to grin, Jack glanced at Sonny as a lascivious thought entered her mind that probably would have gotten her slapped had she voiced it. The thought of she and this beautiful blonde rolling around in a king sized bed almost caused Jack to outwardly moan. Turning back to Kiki, she replied that they would prefer two queen beds.

"Smoking or non?"

"Non smoking please." Reaching into her wallet, Jack pulled out a gold colored credit card and slid it across the desk to the clerk.

Announcing Jack's total, the clerk picked up the credit card and swiped it through a machine. As she did so, the blue-eyed woman once again glanced at Sonny, who was observing the lobby, seemingly not paying them any attention. Wondering if she could obtain a full jealous look from the woman, Jack turned back to the clerk as that charming smile appeared on her lips again.

"Kiki, I was just wondering...do you come with the room by any chance?" Looking out of the corner of her eye, Jack noticed green eyes rolling as Sonny turned around to regard them both. She rolled her eyes again as she caught the blush creeping up Kiki's cheeks. What was Jack up to now? Sonny had a feeling that this was all for her benefit.

Sliding a paper over along with a pen for Jack to sign, Kiki coyly smiled at her. "Do you want me to?"

As the grin on Jack's face grew, Sonny inwardly sighed, watching as the woman leaned on the desk, signing her name while Kiki continued smiling at her. She could not take this anymore. Enough was enough. Before Jack could reply to the clerk's question, Sonny sidled closer to her, wrapping an arm around the woman's waist. Ignoring the surprised expression on Jack's face, she stared at Kiki. "Listen, I don't mean to be rude but this is my woman you're flirting with and I really don't appreciate it considering that I'm standing right here. So just watch yourself, Mimi."

Swallowing with a bit of difficulty, Kiki nodded. "My...my name is Kiki, not Mimi," she pointed to her nametag. "And sorry, I didn't know you two were together. I mean you're getting two beds and all..."

"We had a fight...a physical one earlier on the riverboat ride and ended up falling over the railing into the water. And it's her fault it happened, so that is why we're sleeping in separate beds tonight, though I don't see where that is any of your business."

A small grin graced Jack's lips as she thought of a way to use this situation to her advantage. Slipping an arm around Sonny's slim waist, she leaned down, whispering in the woman's ear loud enough for the clerk to hear, "Oh, baby let's sleep in the same bed. You know you can't get a restful night's sleep without first having my tongue inside you...pleasing you."

Sonny became speechless as she felt a stinging sensation in her cheeks. Glancing up at a satisfied Jack, she blew out a frustrated breath before muttering something about waiting over by the elevators. With that said, the blonde marched towards the elevators, instinctively knowing that Jack was watching as she went.

Peeling her eyes away from Sonny's firm rear as she walked, Jack looked back at Kiki, shrugging. "She's a little shy."

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As the elevator climbed, Jack observed Sonny as she leaned back against the wall with her arms folded over chest. The blonde had not uttered one word to her and by the expression on her face, it was apparent that Sonny was royally ticked off.

"Are you intending not to speak to me for the duration of the evening?" Jack asked. When she did not receive a response, she went on saying, "I'm sorry if I embarrassed you in anyway, but you *did* start it."

Her mouth formed in the shape of an O, Sonny turned around so that she was facing Jack as she put her hands on her hips, one of them still carrying the bag of clothes. "Pardon me? Did you just say that *I* started it, because in my opinion *you* did."

Jack arched an eyebrow. "Oh, I did? Let's recount what just happened. I was flirting with the desk clerk, which was an A and B conversation before you decided to C your way into it." She grinned a bit as Sonny smirked. "You were the one who exclaimed that I was your woman and I just merely played along with it. In a way, I helped to make your story plausible. Now how...please explain to me how I started anything?"

"You only flirted with her to get to me and you know it Jack," Sonny replied. "That little show you put on was solely for my benefit."

Walking over to the elevator panel, Jack pushed the red stop button before she turned around to face the other woman as the elevator ceased to move. "Let me get this straight...you think that I flirted with Kiki to what...make you jealous?"

Sonny shrugged while thankful she was not claustrophobic. "If the shoe fits..."

Jack laughed. "Now why would I do that? It doesn't make any sense because it's not like you're interested in pursuing a relationship with me. You're very much in love with your girlfriend Laura right? She's the only woman for you, so it shouldn't matter what I do."

The blonde nodded. "Right. I do love her, but that doesn't mean you don't want to get to me." She pointed towards the panel that Jack was almost fully blocking. "Now can you get us to move? Other people are waiting to use the elevators."

"Just a moment." Jack cocked her head to the side with a thoughtful look on her face. "Were you jealous Sonny?"

"No, I wasn't." She hoped she sounded convincing.

"Then why call me your woman? You must have felt threatened."

Sonny let out a sigh. "I just wanted that fiasco to end and I didn't feel threatened because the fact of the matter is that I don't want you. Like you just said, I'm not interested. Not in the least bit."



How could I be? You're like a chameleon. I never know how you're gonna behave from one moment to the next," she paused as a small frown appeared on her face. "Do you know how disturbing that can be?"

Not giving a quick reply, Jack gazed down at her shoes as she gathered her thoughts. Finally raising her head, she looked at Sonny. "I apologize," she softly admitted as she shrugged. "I dunno. I think sometimes my mouth overpowers my brain and takes charge. I...I was just playing with you down in the lobby when I was flirting with that clerk. I didn't know you'd get this upset about it. I really am sorry."

Walking over to her, Sonny briefly took Jack's hand in her own and gave it a small squeeze. "That's okay."

The taller woman smiled at her, wishing that Sonny wouldn't have let go of her hand so quickly. "So we're cool now?"

The blonde returned the smile as she nodded. "Yeah, we're cool. Can we move now?"

Jack nodded. "Yes, but I have one more question. Honestly, it didn't irk you in the least bit that I was flirting with Mi-oops, I mean Kiki." She grinned.

Sonny shook her head. "Nope. You could flirt with every woman between here and California and wouldn't bother me one bit."

"Uh huh." Reaching behind her, Jack released the stop button so that they would continue going up.

"You don't believe me?"

Waiting a few moments, Jack nodded while biting on her lower lip to conceal a knowing grin. "Yeah, I believe you Sonny." *About as much as I believe that Adolf Hitler was really a kind and gentle soul.*

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Slipping her key card into the slot on the door, Jack opened after the green light blinked. Moving out of the way, she waited for Sonny to enter the room before following behind her and locking the door. Locating a light switch on the wall, Sonny turned it on before she walked more into the room, passing the bathroom on her way to where the beds were. Laying the bag she was carrying on the nearest bed, she looked around, marveling at the spacious room.

"This is nice Jack," Sonny stated as she glanced up at the ceiling fan. Walking towards it, she stood on her tiptoes to turn it on before she headed towards the balcony with Jack following close behind her.

"Yeah, it's not a suite but it is charming," Jack replied as she walked through the sliding glass doors to stand next to Sonny on the balcony. Leaning over, she placed her arms on the railing as she admired the expansive garden along with her companion.

"It's beautiful," Sonny said in a breathless voice.

Looking straight at her, Jack replied in a near whisper. "Yes, it is."

Noticing where Jack's attention was located, the blonde started to faintly blush as she lightly cleared her throat. Facing the other woman, she said, "Maybe we should take a shower now."

Jack arched an eyebrow as she grinned. "I do believe that that is the best idea you've had all day."

Sonny rolled her eyes as she gave Jack a "what am I going to do with you" look. "I mean separately."

The other woman snapped her fingers. "Aw, shucks. And here I thought you meant we could get all soapy and wetter together." Grinning, Jack went on to say as she pointed towards the bathroom, "You go on and take yours first. I'll look and see what they have on the room service menu."

Nodding, Sonny exclaimed that she would not be long before she headed back into the room. Getting her clothes out of the plastic bag on the bed, she walked into the bathroom and closed the door behind her while Jack watched from the balcony. Turning around to look out across the garden for a few more minutes, Jack then walked back into the room and closed the sliding glass doors behind her.

Pulling a chair out from a small round table, she dragged it over to where the television was and took a seat in it before reaching out and grabbing the remote. Turning the television on, Jack started to channel surf as she attempted not to think about the beautiful blonde that was undoubtedly now naked in the bathroom. A moment later when the water from the shower started to run, Jack winced as she imagined Sonny getting in the shower and allowing the hot water to cascade over her skin, making sure to turn around so that it could touch every inch of her body. She would then pick up the bar of soap and slowly beginning to caress her skin with it, going up and down...side to side...

Shaking her head and blinking her eyes rapidly, Jack let out a long ragged breath, as she suddenly felt extremely overheated. Concluding that nothing on the television could distract her, the woman pointed the remote towards it and clicked it off. Standing, she placed the remote on top of the television before moving around the room, searching for the room service menu. Finding it in the top drawer of the nightstand sitting between the beds, Jack flipped it open, starting to read as she paced back and forth across the room.

As she decided what she wanted, Jack heard the shower being cut off. Placing the menu on the nightstand, she walked over to the bed where her clothes were. Taking them out of the bag, Jack

went back to her seat in front of the television and waited for Sonny to come out of the bathroom. Minutes later, steam poured into the room as the bathroom door was opened. As Sonny walked out of the bathroom while wiping at her still damp hair with a plush towel, Jack thought of how adorable and sexy she looked.

Sonny was wearing a pair of dangerously short plaid shorts with different shades of blue in it along with a tight blue T-shirt that had a picture of Goofy on the front. The T-shirt was short enough so that Sonny's bellybutton was clearly visible and tight enough that her full breasts were very defined. Putting her hands on her hips as she looked down at her outfit, the blonde asked, "Jack, I thought I told you that I'm a size eight." Looking across at Jack, she arched a golden eyebrow.

The dark-haired woman grinned broadly. "You did, but I thought you'd look real fine in a size six. Are they uncomfortable?" *Because if they are, I personally don't mind if you take them off...*

Sonny shook her head as she tossed her towel on the bed she was standing next to. "No, just a little...small." Plopping down on the bed, she shook her head as she gazed at Jack, her expression full of mirth.

"What?"

Sonny chuckled. "You know what." She indicated the bathroom with a nod of her head in its direction. "Hurry and go take your shower now. I'm famished."

"Oh, I see. You like your food clean before you eat it, eh?"

Smirking, Sonny moved onto her knees on the bed and crawled up towards the headboard as Jack closely watched her firm little derriere shaking from side to side. Biting down hard on her lower lip, she groaned a little as she briefly wondered if the blonde knew what she was doing to her. Grabbing a pillow from underneath the blanket, Sonny tossed it across the room towards Jack. Before the woman could even think of ducking, it hit her square in the face. Starting to laugh, Jack arose from the chair and headed towards the bathroom.

"All right, all right. I'm going. Look at the menu and decide what you want while I'm taking my shower. We can order when I get out." She winked at Sonny, who was reclining back on the bed with a very pleased look on her face. "Oh, and please feel free to join me if you like."

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After drying her hair with the blow dryer that she found in the bathroom, Jack began to comb through it using her fingers to get the tangles out. Looking down at her outfit that matched Sonny's except for the fact that it was red, much bigger, and there was a picture of Winnie the Pooh on the front of her T-shirt, Jack decided that she was presentable. Opening the bathroom door, she walked out to notice Sonny tucked into the fetal position while lying on top of the bed fast asleep.

Cocking her head to the side as she watched, a warm and tender smile appeared on Jack's face. This had to be the most precious sight in the world. Disappearing back into the bathroom, Jack grabbed her camera from the sink. Luckily, she had dropped it safely on the riverboat before she jumped over the railing to rescue Sonny, so it still worked. Unfortunately, Jack had lost her cell phone in the water, but she considered it a small price to pay since Sonny was all right.

Walking out of the bathroom, Jack stood at the foot of the bed Sonny was sleeping in. Bringing the camera eye level, she snapped a picture of the woman as she wore a smile. Putting the camera over on the dresser, Jack strolled to the other bed and pulled the covers down before moving over to Sonny. Gently picking up the sleeping woman in her arms, careful not to disturb her, Jack placed the blonde in the other bed before pulling the covers up to her shoulders. She watched as Sonny curled onto her side again and snuggled underneath the covers.

Ignoring her stomach that chose that moment to start growling in protest of not having any food, Jack walked over to the light switch near the front door and turned it off before she headed for the vacant bed, guided by the moonlight shining through the curtains on the sliding glass doors. Pulling back the covers, she slipped into the bed and fell asleep almost as soon as her head hit the pillow.

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Hearing sounds, Sonny turned around in the bed, finding herself tangled in the covers. Hearing more sounds, she raised her head and looked in the direction of the other bed where Jack was moving around a bit, though it was obvious she was still asleep. Sonny could detect that she was muttering something about her mother as the woman continued to toss and turn. Making up her mind, the blonde found her way out of the tangle of cover and arose from the bed.

Shuffling over to the other bed, she quietly pulled back the covers before slipping in next to the other woman. Wrapping an arm around Jack's middle, Sonny held on tightly as she whispered shushing sounds in Jack's ear in the attempt to calm her down. Almost instantly, the bigger woman began to calm down as she ceased to move. Rubbing up and down Jack's side, Sonny waited until she was sure that the woman was peacefully asleep before she went back to sleep herself.

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Squinting from the bit of sun peeking through a crack in the curtains, Jack opened her eyes to find that her cheek was resting against a rather plump breast that she found to be much more comfortable than any pillow. Raising her head, she noticed that the breast belonged to Sonny, who was still asleep, if her slightly parted lips and deep even breathing were any indication. Jack arched an eyebrow in curiosity. How did Sonny get in her bed when she had placed the younger woman in the other bed last night? The dark-haired woman started to smile. The answer was simple enough. Sometime during the night, Sonny must have quietly slipped into her bed. The only question left was why she did so.

Propping her chin in her hand as she laid on her right side next to Sonny, Jack observed the woman as she slept. Sonny's hair was slightly disheveled now, yet it only proved to make her look all the more beautiful. Jack's eyes traveled down to Sonny's lips...lips that she ached to touch with her own. Is that why the young woman had slipped into her bed, hoping that she would make a move? It did not seem plausible, but what other explanation could there be? Was Sonny afraid of the dark and needed to sleep with someone, anyone? Had she seen shadows jumping across the walls last night and hurried into Jack's bed? The dark-haired woman suddenly grinned. Did she have nightmares about those little people from the "It's a Small World" ride chasing her while singing that addicting yet annoying song? That could scare the pants off of anyone!

Jack's eyes slowly moved down Sonny's body until they stopped at the end of her T-shirt, where smooth creamy skin was visible. Acting before she could thoroughly think about it, Jack reached out a hand and lightly ran her fingertips across the part of Sonny's stomach that was visible. She bit on her lower lip as the blonde's muscles rippled slightly at her touch. As commonsense begged her to stop, Jack ignored it as she slipped her hand under Sonny's T-shirt, feeling more of her taut stomach. As Jack's hand inched higher, she heard a soft moan escape Sonny's lips. Quickly looking up, she noticed that the younger woman appeared to still be sleeping yet she must have been enjoying this touching.

Figuring that she must have misplaced her mind somewhere between going to sleep and waking up, Jack leaned down and pressed a soft kiss to Sonny's stomach, which made the woman moan again as she whispered something that was indecipherable. Sticking out the tip of her tongue, Jack slowly rolled it around Sonny's bellybutton causing the smaller woman to squirm in her sleep as she emitted a sound of pleasure. Feeling encouraged, Jack dipped her tongue into the woman's navel, moving in and out, occasionally swirling around it.

"Ooh, Blue," Sonny softly said in a voice laced with desire.

Glancing up at her, Jack saw that the younger woman was still fast asleep, though there was a slight smile on her lips. Arching an eyebrow, Jack thought about what she just said. Ooh, Blue? Well that was highly interesting. Not "Ooh Laura" but "Ooh Blue." Well, well Sonny, Jack thought with a small grin on her lips. *Do you have erotic fantasies and dreams about me? I just bet you do. Wonder how you'd take it if I were to make those fantasies come true.*

Deciding to find out the answer to her inquiry, Jack slipped one long leg between Sonny's underneath the cover before she slowly moved to her stomach, resting some of her weight on the smaller woman as she observed her from above. And she thought Chloe could sleep deeply. Sonny had her beat by a mile.

Pressing her thigh against the crotch of Sonny's shorts, Jack started to move it up and down while the blonde moaned because of the pleasurable contact. Almost moaning herself at the heat she felt through Sonny's shorts, Jack pressed her thigh harder as she leaned down, her lips bare centimeters from the other woman's.

Sonny groaned loudly as she wrapped her arms around Jack in her sleep. "Ooh, Blue...that feels so fantastic," she whispered, unconsciously starting to move her hips. "Make love to me...I need you."

Closing her eyes tightly, Jack buried her face in Sonny's neck as a tortuous moan escaped her lips. She attempted to ignore the guilt but she couldn't shake the feeling that what she was doing was immoral. Sure, Sonny appeared to be thoroughly enjoying herself, but she was asleep! Jack shook her head in self-disgust. Had she grown so desperate that she would resort to taking advantage of this woman while she slept? Evidently, the answer to that was yes.

Deciding to stop before she did something even more foolish, Jack raised her head and started to move off of Sonny when she caught hostile green eyes staring right at her. Before she could say or do anything, the blonde swiftly moved the position of their legs underneath the cover and kneed Jack in her crotch. Howling in pain, the bigger woman ended up on her back, as Sonny showed a considerable amount of strength by pushing her off before she leapt out of the bed.

Hands placed on her hips, Sonny accusingly looked at Jack, whom by now had rolled onto her side and drew her legs up as she cupped her private area protectively while wearing an expression of sheer pain. "What did you think you were just doing?" Sonny asked in a tight voice. She waited for the other woman to reply, but Jack just continued to lie on the bed, looking as if she could burst into tears at any moment. "Answer me!"

"I...I'm sorry," Jack finally croaked out.

"You're sorry?" Sonny nodded slowly. "Yeah, you're one sorry jackass Jack! Now I know what your first name *really* stands for."

The pain starting to subside a bit, Jack carefully sat up in the bed as she looked up at Sonny. "If I wasn't hurting and if you weren't staring at me like you wanted to hurt me more, I would laugh at how amusing that sounds. Very witty of you." It could have been her imagination, but Jack could have sworn she heard the other woman softly growl then.

"Tell me right now why I shouldn't pick up one of these pillows and smother you!"

"Umm...because then I would be dead?"

Sonny tossed her hands up in the air. "That would be the point of doing it!"

Jack sighed while wishing that Sonny would not insist on yelling, though she understood why she was doing so. "I apologize for that. I was about to stop when you woke up." She shrugged as she scooted over to the edge of the bed so that her feet touched the floor. "I thought you wanted it to happen though."

The blonde arched an eyebrow as she folded her arms across her chest. "Really? And how could you figure that I want something that I didn't say I wanted because I was incapable of doing so, due to the fact I was asleep!"

"You told me to make love to you and you were moaning. I felt encouraged."

Angry green eyes opened wide. "I did not and I was not!"

"Yes you did and you would to," Jack calmly replied. "Obviously, you just don't remember or are trying not to."

"Whether I responded or not to your touches, doesn't change the fact that you took advantage of me. What...who do you think I am?" The look in Sonny's eyes changed from one of anger to hurt.

"Wait a minute." Though the look in Sonny's eyes nearly shattered her heart, Jack felt the need to defend herself. "What was I supposed to think, huh? I carried you to the other bed last night after you fell asleep and this morning when I wake up you're snuggled next to me. I was thinking...hey, maybe that was your way of telling me that you wanted me...to be with me so I started to make that happen. And then I felt all the more encouraged when you began to moan and then you called out, oooh Blue." Jack shrugged. "I figured you must have been referring to me since if I recall correctly from that one time I met her, your girlfriend has gray eyes and mine are blue. So I thought you were calling me blue as a nickname because I have blue eyes." Jack could have grinned at the look that appeared on Sonny's face after that last comment. *I'm so very naughty. It's a wonder she doesn't catch on to the fact that I'm Blueyez.* Jack shook her head a little. *No, it's not. Most of time I don't act anything like I do online with her.*

"Are you okay?" Jack inquired, when she was greeted with nothing but silence.

The blonde nodded. "Um...yes," she replied, not sounding all that convincing. Had she really uttered Blue's name while Jack...well pleased her? Any guilt that she had felt during the past year over her online relationship/friendship with Blue could not compare to what she was enduring now.

"So?"

"So what?" Sonny asked blankly, deep in thought.

"Why were you in my bed?" Jack inquired.

"Oh," Sonny said, attempting to bring her concentration back to the issue at hand. "I called myself comforting you because you seemed to be having a bad dream. When I slipped into bed with you, you calmed down almost instantly."

Jack tried not to look disappointed at the explanation. She should have known it wasn't what she hoped. There had to be another reason, because Sonny was not the type of woman to just jump into bed with someone. "I apologize for assuming that you had feelings for me and wanted to be with me," Jack quietly stated as she looked down at her hands, which were folded in her lap.

"What I did was stupid and I understand if you can never forgive me."

Sighing, Sonny took the few steps towards the bed and sat next to Jack. Gently pulling one of the woman's hands into her lap, she sandwiched it between her warm soft palms. "Jack, anyone would be lucky to have you." Sonny ceased to talk as the other woman gave her a disbelieving look. "Well they would. You just have to brush up on your people skills." Sonny softly smiled as she squeezed Jack's hand. "I'm not the one for you though because my heart belongs to another. You'll find that special someone and she'll brighten up your life like no one else has ever been able to do."

Jack smiled almost sadly while thinking that she had already found that special someone. They were sitting right next to her and she wanted to reach out so badly and take them into her arms. "Thanks Sonny," she paused. "So you and I...are we okay? From this moment on I promise not to behave like a jackass. Well...I'll try anyway." She grinned as Sonny rolled her eyes, a faint smile on her lips.

"Yeah, we're just fine Jack."

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"So, are you sure I can't entice you to have breakfast with me?" Jack asked as she and Sonny arrived at the blonde's car. Despite the quarrel they had this morning, she had thoroughly enjoyed the last twenty odd hours spent with Sonny and could not bear to see it end now.

Sonny nodded, though a part of her did not want this to end. "Can I have a raincheck? I need to get to the coffeehouse as soon as possible."

Jack smiled as she nodded. "Yes, you can." Shoving her hands into her pockets, she looked around the parking lot that cars were rapidly pouring into. Turning back to Sonny, she watched as the younger woman opened the door before looking back at her, wearing a smile.

"I had a nice time with you Jack. Maybe we can do it again sometime."

"I would like that," Jack replied as she took a step towards the smaller woman, placing a hand on the top of the door. "May I have a little kiss before you go?" She crookedly grinned, which Sonny found endearing. "I think it would be the perfect ending to this Disney experience."

Sonny smirked. "You don't think you've gotten enough kisses from me already?"

Jack grinned. "Nah, 'cause I only kissed you once and that was your cute little flat belly." Sonny began to blush at that, which only caused Jack's grin to widen. "C'mon. Just one little itsy bitsy kiss."

The blonde smiled as she conceded. One kiss wouldn't hurt. Placing her hands on either side of Jack's face, she leaned up and softly kissed her lips, intending it to be brief. However, Jack obviously had other plans as she wrapped her arms around Sonny's waist, gently pulling the smaller woman against her body. The kiss quickly became heated as Jack gently pushed the tip of her tongue against Sonny's lips, silently asking for entrance. Opening her mouth, the blonde

could not help but to moan as Jack's tongue invaded it. Their tongues did a little dance before Sonny came to her senses and gently pushed away as she blushed furiously.

"You call that little???"

Jack grinned at her as she shrugged. "Sorry. I just couldn't help myself."

Sonny softly chuckled as she shook her head in bewilderment. "I best be on my way now Jack. Hope you have a great Saturday."

"I intend to." Jack smiled, her blue eyes twinkling. "You do the same Sonny."

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Opening the door to her apartment, Sonny walked in, closing it behind her. Tossing the bag containing the clothes she was wearing yesterday on the couch, she headed towards the kitchen to make herself a cup of coffee before taking a shower and going over to the coffeehouse. Walking into the kitchen, Sonny headed over to her percolator, noticing that her coffee pot was missing.

"Looking for this?"

Feeling her heart jump into her throat, the blonde swiftly turned around as a small yelp escaped her. Noticing Laura calmly sitting at the kitchen table sipping a cup of coffee, Sonny groaned. "You nearly scared me to death!"

Pouring steaming hot coffee into a mug that she had sitting on the table, Laura held it out to Sonny as she said, "Sorry. Didn't mean to almost do that."

Walking over, Sonny accepted the cup of coffee before she took a seat in the chair across from Laura's. Bringing the cup to her lips, she took a couple of sips from the rich brew before placing it on the table. "How long have you been here?" she asked, looking at her girlfriend while not being able to shake the feeling that she was quite upset.

After taking a sip of her coffee, Laura replied, "Since around three o'clock."

Sonny's eyes opened wide. "You've been here for nearly six hours?"

Laura nodded. "Yes, I have. After I kept calling and you didn't answer the phone, I became concerned so I drove on over. I was intending to give you a couple more hours to arrive home before I called the police."

"I'm sorry you were worried Laura. If I had known you would have been trying to contact me, I would have called you to let you know where I was."

"Speaking of which, where were you anyway? I know you mentioned that you had plans, but they took all night to finish?"

Picking up her cup, Sonny took a swallow from it, while she gathered her thoughts, before answering, "I was at Disneyworld." She then pointed to her Disney shirt as evidence.

Laura slowly nodded as she glanced at the shirt, noticing it for the first time. "I see. Well unless things have drastically changed, last I knew it, Disneyworld didn't stay open all night."

"It doesn't. I was tired by the time it was evening, so I checked into one of Disney's resort and slept there."

"So you went to Disneyworld all by your lonesome?"

The blonde shook her head, as she automatically replied, "No, I went with Sarah." Sonny almost winced at her response, hoping that Laura had not called Sarah to see if she knew of her whereabouts.

"Ah, I see." Laura nodded again, wearing an unreadable expression. "So you and she just hung out and had fun, hmm?"

Sonny let out a relieved breath. "Yes, we did. And I would have invited you along but Sarah and I hardly get to spend any quality together anymore because we're so busy with trying to save our coffeehouse so I came up with the idea for us to go spend a day at Disney. By the end of the day, we were both so wiped out from exploring and riding so much, that she and I both checked into the Contemporary Resort."

Laura smiled at her. "I understand. She's your best friend and I know how much she means to you. I'm glad you two had fun."

"That we did." Glancing at the clock on the wall, Sonny took another sip of her coffee before standing and pushing her chair in. "Honey, I have to get my shower and head over to the coffeehouse. Would you like to have dinner with me later?"

"That would be lovely."

Sonny offered Laura a smile as she walked towards her. Leaning down, she touched her lips to her girlfriend's, only to have the kiss end much sooner than she planned as Laura quickly broke away. Sonny's brow furrowed in concern. "Laura, are you okay?"

The other woman as she smiled. "Yes, I'm fine. You go take your shower. I'm just going to sit here and finish my coffee and then I'll see myself out. I have some errands to run."

Sonny briefly squeezed her shoulder. "Okay. I'll call you about dinner later today then. See you later honey." Laura waved at her as she walked out of the kitchen. Glancing at her computer,

Sonny bypassed it, deciding that she would check her email later to see if there was anything from Blue about why she did not make it to Disneyworld yesterday.

On entering her bedroom, Sonny closed the door behind her before she walked over to her phone. Picking it up, she speed dialed a number as she kicked off her shoes and headed into the bathroom, turning on the light.

"Hello?"

"Hey Sarah, this is Sonny," the blonde replied as she picked up her toothbrush and grabbed the toothpaste out of the drawer. "Listen, I have a really big favor to ask of you."

"Well hey girlfriend," Sarah said warmly. "How was Disneyworld?"

"It was great. I'll give you the details when I get to the coffeehouse." Putting mint flavored toothpaste on her toothbrush, Sonny placed both on the cabinet.

"Cool. So what's this favor?"

"Well when I came home...and I didn't get here until this morning because I stayed over night at one of the Disneyworld resorts, Laura was here waiting for me. She had been wondering where I was so I told her--pretty much without thinking that I went to Disney with you and that we stayed at the Contemporary Resort. So if she asks or comments about it to you, would you be willing to play along like you really did go with me?"

Sarah emitted a low whistle. "You spent the night with Blue?"

"No, no. It wasn't like that," Sonny quickly replied as she walked over and turned on the shower so that the water could heat up. "Nothing illicit happened. I just don't want to get into all this with Laura. I don't know how she would take it."

"I get you. It's no problem. As far as I'm concerned you and I went to Disney yesterday and I just walked in the door about fifteen minutes ago."

"You're a lifesaver."

Sarah smiled into the phone. "Hey, there have been times you've covered for me. Like the times in high school when you told my mother that I was sleeping over at your house when I was really out with Kevin."

Sonny laughed. "I recall you also covering for me when I sneaked out of my house to meet Cindy."

Her friend laughed as well. "Oh, yes I remember her. Cindy Noble, the head cheerleader and your very first girlfriend."

"And I remember you were jealous of the time she and I spent together."

Sarah scoffed. "I was not. I just plain didn't like her." She chuckled, as did Sonny. "I knew she wasn't good enough for my best friend. Now Blue...I'm getting vibes here that she's the one."

"Oh, is that so?"

"Mmhmm. I know you're with Laura and I think she's great, but Blue is your soulmate," Sarah replied in a serious tone of voice. "I can't explain it, but I feel it."

"Well if we go out of business maybe you should become a psychic."

Sarah smirked. "Ha ha. You make fun but I know. Now, I'm gonna let you go because your shower is running and you're wasting water."

"Wow," Sonny replied in mock amazement. "You really *are* a psychic!"

"Shut up girl."

The blonde heartily laughed. "I love you too Sarah."

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Dear PG,

I'm sorry that I was unable to make it to Disneyworld yesterday. I can explain. You see, I was on my way there when there was suddenly an accident on the freeway between a big rig and an SUV. I was stuck in traffic for nearly two hours before I was able to get off, deciding to take the street the rest of the way when as luck would have it my front tires blew out! Yes, tire(S)!! Both of them! You see there were sharp pieces of broken glass in the road that I was unable to avoid. So I had to wait for AAA to arrive and while I was waiting someone tried to mug me!

Highlighting the message, Jack pushed the delete button as she shook her head at how idiotic it sounded. Who in their right mind would believe that? Certainly not Sonny. She was much too intelligent. Letting out a long breath, Jack placed her fingers over the home row keys as she thought of what to say. Finally coming up with something, she began to type.

Dear PG,

I'm sorry that I was unable to make it to Disneyworld yesterday. I could sit here and come up with a million reasons why I wasn't there, and I almost started to do that, but I changed my mind. I'm going to be completely honest with you. The reason that I didn't show up was because I was scared. I do want to meet you, but at the last moment, I just couldn't bring myself to drive there. My heart started to beat a million miles per hour and I was perspiring...in short I was a nervous wreck and I couldn't bear for you to see me in that condition. I know that this all most likely makes me sound like a coward and I apologize for that PG...I really do. If I hurt you, know that

I'm sorry. That is the last thing in the world that I wanted to do, because as you should know, you mean a lot to me.

I started having all of these thoughts, wondering if I was good enough for you. What if you met me and then didn't like me? I didn't want to take the chance of that happening so I copped out and now I wish that I hadn't. If I could turn back the hands of time, I would have shown up. I would have been there for you...for us and I just hope that you can find it in your heart to forgive me someday for behaving in such a foolish manner. If you can't, I understand, but know that this has been the best year and you'll always be in my heart. I'll cherish our friendship for the rest of my life.

Yours truly,

Blue

Reading over the email a couple of times, Jack nodded, pleased with it. Clicking on send, she sent the mail before logging off. Grabbing the wrapped gift laying on her desk, the tall woman arose from her chair and headed for the front door, on her way to a certain blonde's coffeehouse.

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After securing her new bicycle outside, Sonny walked into *Bean There, Done That*. She barely made it through the door as Hawke, who now had lavender colored hair, hurried over, wrapping an arm around her shoulders in greeting.

"Hey boss," the younger woman said cheerily, with a smile on her lips. "How was your big day with the mysterious Blueyez?"

Since there currently weren't any customers, both Peter and Sarah came over as well. Pulling her over to a table, Peter indicated for Sonny to have a seat before he took one next to her. Sarah and Hawke took their seats in the other two chairs at the table as they gave Sonny their full attention.

"Yes," Peter stared as he reached up to adjust his glasses. "Tell us everything that happened. Was she cute?"

"Did you two uh...do anything naughty?" Hawke asked as she wiggled her brows suggestively.

Sonny laughed as she sat back in her chair while crossing one ankle over the other underneath the table. "Whoa guys. One question at a time," she paused in thought. "I don't know if Blue is cute because I didn't meet her. She neglected to show up. Or if she did, I didn't see her."

"I thought you said on the phone that you would give me the details when you got here?" Sarah asked.

Sonny nodded. "I did. I didn't want to tell you over the phone."

"She stood you up?" Hawke asked, looking angry. "How could she do that? I'm gonna email and give her a piece of my mind."

The blonde quickly shook her head. "No, don't do that. I'm sure there was a reasonable explanation for Blue not showing up."

"She probably took one look at you and thought you were too beautiful. She was intimidated," Peter offered as he smiled at Sonny tenderly.

Leaning towards him, she kissed the man on his cheek. "Thank you Peter. That's a sweet thing to say."

"I don't get it." Sarah shook her head with a look of confusion on her face. "If Blue didn't show up, then why tell Laura that you were at Disneyworld with me and that we spent the night? You were there alone, right?"

"Not...really." As Sonny thought about what to divulge, her friends looked at her with a mix of curiosity and interest. By the time she opened her mouth to speak, Hawke was able to do so first, as she looked behind Sonny, wearing a distasteful expression.

"What is *she* doing here?" Hawke asked to no one in particular.

"Who?" Sonny asked as she looked over her shoulder, spying Jack standing in front of the door with a present in her hand. Winking at her, Jack strolled over to the table and nodded at everyone.

"Hello ladies," glancing at Peter she added, "and gentleman."

Hawke looked at her co-worker as she said, "You had it right the first time." She grinned at Peter as he stuck his tongue out at her in reply.

"Hello Jack," Sarah said, sounding pleasant. "How are you?"

The woman smiled at her. "I'm doing very well and thank you for asking. How are you?"

"Doing pretty good. To what do we owe this visit?"

Jack glanced down at Sonny who was staring at the table as though she had discovered something interesting on it. "Well actually I came to see Sonny here." Reaching out, she tapped the blonde on her shoulder. When Sonny looked up at her, Jack winked again as she held out the present. "Hello Sonny one. I come bearing a gift that is for you." As Sonny accepted the gift with a quiet thanks, Jack went on to say, "I had it done this morning. I hope you like it."

Sonny smiled at her. "I'm sure I will."

Jack returned the smile as she stuck a hand in her pocket and took out a folded piece of blue paper, which she handed to Hawke. "I don't know if you heard about it," she started, addressing the woman, "but there is going to be a karaoke competition tonight at my coffeehouse and the grand prize is five-thousand dollars. Second place gets twenty-five hundred and third one thousand dollars. The audience will judge who wins, and I thought you might be interested in participating. I know you don't like me and with good reason, but the prizes are very good, plus there are supposed to be talent scouts there, so maybe you can be discovered."

"How did you know that I sing?" Hawke asked, as she opened the piece of paper, looking at.

"A friend of mine heard you a few weeks back. At the same time you were dancing for Sonny." Jack attempted to keep a grin off of her lips, but failed to do so.

"Oh, that. Well, thanks for suggesting this but I don't think-"

"She'd love to participate," Peter said, interrupting Hawke as he smiled up at Jack. "She's just shy. We'll work on her though. What time is the competition?" he asked, ignoring the less than pleasant look Hawke was giving him.

"It's at seven o'clock," Jack replied. "But she should be there by six-thirty so that she can register and choose what song she's going to sing. By the way, there will be a live band playing the music instead of using a karaoke machine. You all can feel free to come," Jack finished, directing her last comment to Sonny.

Peter nodded. "You bet. We'll be there to give little Hawke here our support." He gave the woman a sweet smile, but Hawke's eyes continued to shoot daggers at him.

"Great," Jack replied. "Well I best be on my way. You guys have a wonderful day." Looking at Sonny she warmly smiled. "Especially you." Turning around, Jack headed towards the door and walked out. Looking through the windows, the small group watched as she jogged across the street and disappeared into *Brew n' Paradise*.

Arching an eyebrow, Sarah looked at her friend. "Especially you? What just happened here between you two? Was it just my imagination or did anyone else sense the electricity?" Both Peter and Hawke nodded in agreement.

"What? There's nothing," Sonny said a bit too defensively.

"So your rival just gave you a present for no reason at all?" Hawke inquired as she looked at the neatly wrapped gift that sported a large gold-colored bow.

Sonny shrugged. "We're getting along better."

"Since when?" Sarah asked.

"Since she and I spent the day at Disneyworld together," Sonny quietly replied.

Sarah's mouth gaped as both Peter and Hawke's eyebrows rose. "Wait a second. Blueyez didn't show up and you ended up spending the day with Jack Foster? How did that happen?"

"Well, while I was waiting for Blue, all the sudden I saw Jack heading my way. At first, she was quite annoying and kept asking me questions about who I was waiting for. Finally, she took the hint that I wanted her to go away so she did, but not too long later she came back with seemingly a new attitude and two tickets to get into the park. Noticing that the person I was waiting for most likely was not going to show, Jack came up with the idea that she and I spend the day together, so after thinking it over I agreed, so we did."

"And the night too?" Sarah went on.

"You slept with Jack?" Hawke asked loud enough to gain the attention of several customers. She yelped as Peter lightly kicked her leg.

"A little louder next time Hawke," he said. "Don't think they heard you in Japan!"

She frowned at him as she reached down to massage her calf. Looking at a mortified Sonny, she apologized for her outburst.

"That's all right Hawke." Sonny smiled at her before she looked at Sarah, who was waiting for an answer. "Yes, the night too, but not as you might think. Nothing happened. We slept in separate beds. We would have went home last night, but I fell asleep while she was in the shower."

"Is there a particular reason why she couldn't bathe at home?" Peter inquired.

Settling back in her seat, Sonny began to tell her friends what happened on the riverboat and the events that followed it. Sarah, Hawke, and Peter listened avidly, Peter having to get up once when a customer came in. Sonny waited until he came back to the table before she continued her story. When she was done, Sarah scooted her chair over and hugged the woman tightly as a few tears arose in her eyes.

"Hey, what's wrong?" Sonny softly asked her as she stroked her friend's back.

Letting go of Sonny, Sarah leaned back as she accepted a napkin that Hawke held out to her. Dabbing at her eyes, she said, "I almost lost my best friend yesterday and I didn't even know it until now. I don't know what I'd do without you. Thank goodness Jack was able to get to you in time."

Gently taking one of Sarah's hands in her own, Sonny gave it a light squeeze. "I'm just fine now, sweetie."

Sarah smiled at her. "I know."



Peter smiled at them both. "Aaw, now this is a Kodak moment," he said, causing them all to chuckle. A few moments later, he asked Hawke what she was going to sing that night for the karaoke competition.

"What makes you think I'm going? I'd be walking right into the enemy's camp."

"Enemy's camp?" Peter started. "Girl what do you think this is? Vietnam?" He pointed across the street. "That is not the enemy's camp. It's a coffeehouse. And Jack Foster is not the enemy. Sure, she can be infuriating with wanting to put Sarah and Sonny out of business and all, but we just found out that she can be a decent and kind person. So I'm willing to give her the benefit of the doubt and I think it would be a good idea if you did as well. Plus, it was very nice of her to mention that competition thing to you and I think you stand a good chance of winning because from hearing it on numerous occasions, I know that you have a beautiful voice."

Hawke was almost speechless. "Peter, I do think that is the kindest thing you've ever said to me. Thank you," she finished softly.

He smiled. "So you'll do it?"

Taking a deep breath and then letting it out slowly, Hawke nodded. "What the heck? Yeah, I'll do it."

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Closing the door to the office behind her, Sonny walked over to her desk and took a seat, placing the present from Jack on the table. Booting up her computer, she waited until it finished before she started the process of logging onto the Internet so that she could check her email. Hopefully, there would be something from Blue that would explain yesterday. Moments later, Sonny breathed a sigh of relief as she noticed an email from the woman with the heading "Apology." Opening the email, she began to read the message.

After reading over Blue's email twice, Sonny felt the tears in her eyes as she clicked the reply button. Sitting back in her chair, she thought of what to say for a few minutes before she started to type her response.

Dearest Blue,

Though, I admit that I was hurt by your absence yesterday, I understand what you were going through, and there is no need for you to apologize. We all have fears and doubts, but you must know that there is no chance that I would ever reject you. I know without a doubt, that I would like you...I already do very much (smile). You mean a lot to me as well, and nothing could ever change the way I feel about you.

So, our meeting can just be postponed until you are truly ready, okay? You just let me know the place and time and I will be there (smile). If you would like to talk on the phone first we can do

that. My home phone number is 555-4342. Feel free to give me a ring any ole' time ;) Well I'm writing this at work, so I better get going now. I'll talk with you soon. Take care, Blue.

~PG~

After hitting the send button and then logging off, Sonny observed her present, wondering what was inside. *Well, there is only one way to find out*, the young woman thought as she picked it up. Gently removing the golden bow, she started to take off the gift-wrap as neatly as she could. Quickly growing impatient, Sonny ripped the paper off, anxious to discover what awaited her inside. She started to smile as the last piece of paper fell to the floor and she saw what it was. This was a spectacular gift.

In her hands, Sonny held a beautifully crafted 8X10 Mikasa frame with a photograph of she and Jack at Disneyworld. They had taken this picture in front of Cinderella's castle at the Magic Kingdom, right after Jack purchased her camera. In the photograph, Jack was standing behind Sonny with her arms loosely wrapped around the smaller woman's shoulders. Their cheeks were pressed together as they smiled brightly for the camera.

Smiling more, Sonny placed the picture on her desk before sitting back in her chair, crossing one leg over the other as she observed it. Without fully knowing why it was so important to her to do so, the blonde knew that she would cherish this picture of she and Jack forever. After looking at the photograph for a few minutes while deep in thought, Sonny sat upright in her chair, turning to her computer. Since she was at work, she might as well do some.

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Walking into the crowded coffeehouse, Laura and Sonny searched around for a place to sit, when they suddenly noticed Peter and Sarah waving them over to a table that was near the stage where the live band was currently setting up their equipment. Smiling in some relief, the two women made their way to the table, exchanging hugs with Peter and Sarah before all four took their seats. Looking around, Sonny asked her friends if Hawke had yet to arrive. Glancing at her watch, she noted that it was a quarter to seven o'clock.

Peter shook his head as he replied, "Not unless we missed her. The contest will be starting pretty soon. I hope she didn't get cold feet." He looked towards the door expectantly.

Sarah chuckled. "Hawke nervous? No, never. If she doesn't make it, it's because she's too stubborn to come in here because she deems Jack the 'enemy'," she paused. "But I think she'll come. I've never known Hawke to break a promise and she said she would come, so she will."

Just as the other three nodded in agreement, Hawke walked through the front entrance wearing an attractive looking mid-thigh length cornflower blue dress with spaghetti straps. Finding her friends sitting at a table near the front conversing, Hawke took in a deep breath as she began to walk towards them in a pair of one-inch high heels that matched her dress perfectly. As she neared the table, Peter looked up noticing her for the first time as a look of surprise appeared on

his face. Standing, the man moved towards Hawke, starting to brilliantly smile, as he looked her up and down appreciatively, a low whistle escaping his lips.

"Well hello sexy girl," he said, kissing both of her cheeks softly, careful not to disturb the light dusting of make-up he noticed there. "Don't you clean up nice." Peter winked at her, wearing a wide grin. Hawke rolled her eyes playfully in return.

"From you I'll take that as a compliment," she said, her voice filled with amusement. Looking behind Peter, she waved at the trio sitting at the table. All of them looked just as surprised as Peter had. "Gee guys. A girl puts on a dress, adds a little make-up, and reverts back to her natural blonde hair color and ya'll act like she walked in with a complete face-lift and boob job."

"You look beautiful," Sarah said, being the first of them to speak up. "Wow...we've just never seen you so..." She looked at Laura and Sonny for help.

"So dressed up before," Sonny added as she smiled up at Hawke. "I should have brought my camera so I could take a picture."

Nodding, Hawke grinned at her. "Yeah, you should have, 'cause I don't plan on playing dress up very often." She glanced around at the growing crowd. "There sure are a lot of people here..."

"Nervous?" Peter asked her.

Looking at him, Hawke shook her head. "Nah." She smiled brightly. "You know I thrive on having an audience. The more the merrier. Do ya'll know where I sign up?"

"Over there," Peter replied as he pointed towards a small table set up by the stage. "What are you going to sing?"

"You'll soon find out." Winking at him, Hawke headed towards the table to register.

Meanwhile, as she casually leaned against the bar, Jack observed Sonny as she tried to ignore the jealousy she felt over Laura being there. At that moment, Jack wished that she could trade places with Laura so that she could have the opportunity to be close to Sonny. Raising a cup to her lips, Jack took a sip of strongly brewed coffee as she kept her eyes on the blonde near the stage. A smile curved her lips, as she saw Sonny laugh at something one of her friend's must have said. She had a wonderful laugh. Heck, everything about Sonny was wonderful.

So involved was she at admiring Sonny, that Jack never noticed when Leslie sneaked up behind her and lightly squeezed her firm rear-end. Swiftly turning around so that she could deck the creep who surely must have had a death wish, Jack grinned when she saw Leslie standing there, wearing a satisfied expression.

"Oh, it's you," Jack said as she put her cup down before sharing a brief yet tender embrace with the other woman. "I was about to punch your lights out." She grinned again.

Leslie chuckled. "Yes, I saw the anger in those baby blues. For a moment there I thought you were gonna go through with it. I was prepared to duck."

Jack laughed. "Nah, you're too purty to hit." She winked at Leslie before glancing behind her as though expecting to see someone in particular there. "I'm glad you could make it tonight. Chloe didn't come with you, did she?" Jack had been hoping that she would. She had not spoken with her sister since the night she moved out of their home. Every time that she called Leslie's house, Chloe either was not there, or she did not care to speak to her.

Leslie shook her head, hating to see the disappointed expression on Jack's face. "No, she said that she had other plans." Slowly nodding, Jack picked up her cup and took a sip, her eyes filled with sadness that she was attempting to conceal. Reaching out, Leslie squeezed her shoulder gently. "Hey, she'll come around. I know that she misses you terribly though I'll be damned if I can get her to admit that. It's obvious to me that she does."

Looking at her friend, Jack gave her a faint smile. "Yeah, we Fosters can be quite stubborn." She glanced at her watch. "Almost show time," she remarked, looking at Leslie playfully. "You going to participate?"

"Have you ever known me to sing?" Leslie laughed richly. "I can do a lot of things, but none of them include singing," she paused thoughtfully as she glanced in the direction of the stage. "So, are you going to tell me who you were looking at all googily-eyed before I interrupted you?" Jack stared at her blankly. "You know what I'm talking about Jack. I know that look you were wearing quite well. You used to give it to me." She grinned. "'fess up."

Jack shrugged. "You obviously misread my expression. I was merely observing the crowd. I'm pleased with the turnout."

"No, no." Leslie wagged a finger at her. "Your eyes were fixated on one person near the stage." She looked towards the stage again, for the first time noticing the people from the coffeehouse across the street. "Well, well, well..." Leslie looked back at Jack, one eyebrow arched in interest. "Could it be that you have the hots for one of the *Bean There, Done That* clan?"

Jack snorted as if that was the silliest thing she had ever heard. "I don't have the hots for anyone."

"I thought you were in love?"

"I am," Jack admitted. "But that doesn't mean I'm in love with Sarah or Sonny."

"Doesn't mean that you're not either. So...which is it?" Leslie asked.

Jack arched in eyebrow. "What business is it of yours anyway?"

"It's not any of my business," Leslie quickly replied. "But I'm still interested in knowing. I won't tell anyone. You can confide in me."

Sighing, Jack glanced over her shoulder towards Sonny before she looked back at the woman standing before her waiting for an answer. "Sonny."

"Does she know?"

Jack shook her head. "She knows that I like her, but not that I...well that I love her." It was the first time that she had admitted it to anyone and it felt awesome to do so. "I would tell her, but she has a girl-" Ceasing to speak, a thought came to Jack as she glanced over to Sonny again before looking at Leslie while trying to keep a smile that would make the average person suspicious, off of her face. "Hey Leslie, how would you like to meet your idol?"

Leslie frowned slightly in confusion, wondering why Jack changed the subject so quickly. "My idol?"

Nodding, Jack said, "Yes. Don't you adore Laura Scott?" Without waiting for a reply, Jack turned around and pointed towards the table where Laura was. "She's right there. You should introduce yourself." She faintly grinned, noticing Leslie's now delighted expression. "I'd be more than happy to introduce you to her, if you want me to."

Another frown creasing her brow, Leslie began to smirk as she turned to Jack, placing her hands on her hips.

"What?"

"You know what Jack. I can see exactly what you are up to. Well I refuse to be apart of it. If you're planning on trying to break them up, then fine, but I will not participate in making that happen. I am not nor have I ever been a home-wrecker."

"Whoa, I just wanted to introduce you because I know you like Laura Scott and her columns so much. You may not ever get this opportunity again," Jack replied, trying to look as innocent as she could. However, by the expression on Leslie's face, she wasn't buying it. "I'm not trying to break them up."

"I don't believe you."

Jack shrugged indifferently. "Okay, then. Don't go over and meet her then. Doesn't make me any difference whether you do or don't. It was just an idea." She glanced at her watch, noting that it was a couple minutes passed seven. "I've got to get going. You wanna talk after the competition?"

Leslie nodded. "Sure. We can share a cup of coffee. Before you go on stage, will you escort me over to their table?"

A small grin crossed Jack's lips. "Thought you didn't want to go over?"

"Never said I didn't, just said I refused to be a home-wrecker. I still want to meet her though." Reaching up, Leslie quickly ran her fingertips through her dark hair, though every strand was already in its correct place. "Will you take me?"

Jack nodded, smiling as she slipped an arm through Leslie's. "I'd be delighted to. Let's go."

Moving through the throng of people, Jack and Leslie made it to their destination where Sonny, Sarah, Laura, Hawke, and Peter were seated chatting. Smiling at them all, Jack informed the small group that she was delighted they came. Looking at Laura, she said, "Hello Ms. Scott. Long time no see. My friend here has been dying to meet you. She's a huge fan of your columns in *Climax* magazine."

Before Jack could go on, Laura stood up and outstretched a hand to Leslie. "Hello. It is so good to finally meet you," she said warmly as the two of them shook hands. "You're Leslie Antigone, correct?"

Wearing a surprised expression, Leslie nodded. "Why yes I am. How did you know that?"

"I know a couple of businessmen who have required your assistance in the past and they've remarked on how great a consultant you are. Ever since finding that out, I've sort of kept track of some of your work and I've seen pictures of you from time to time. Been meaning to give you call. I would love to do an article on you if you're interested."

Leslie had an almost shy look on her face now as she desperately tried not to blush. "Oh, what I do is nothing special," she modestly replied.

"Are you kidding?" Jack spoke up as she wrapped an arm around the woman's shoulders. "You're a miracle worker. You played a major role in making *Brew n' Paradise* what it is today." Smiling at Leslie, who returned it with quiet thanks, Jack gave her a light squeeze before letting go. "Now you two get better acquainted. I need to get on stage." Looking around the table at everyone, her gaze lingering on Sonny a few seconds longer than anyone else, Jack said, "I hope you guys enjoy the show. Hawke, good luck to you."

"Thank you Jack," Hawke replied, making an effort to be pleasant. Perhaps the Conqueror wasn't so bad after all.

The other woman winked at her, smiling. "You're welcome."

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Nearly an hour later, the karaoke contest was almost over as Jack went up on the stage in order to introduce the next singer, which was to be Hawke. After she performed, there would be two more people and then it was time for the audience to cast their votes by applauding. The three performers that received the loudest applause would be the winners.

Standing next to the stage, Hawke took deep relaxing breaths as she waited for Jack to call her. Just before she was about to address the audience, Jack glanced down at Hawke and gave her an encouraging smile, which did help to calm the younger woman's nerves though she would not admit that to anyone in a million years.

Glancing down at a small card in her hand where notes were written, Jack spoke into the microphone, "Our next performer is an aspiring singer who loves to listen to mostly an type of music, dance, and hang out with her friends. Let's hear it for Nicole Sanders singing "Here With Me."

As the crowd began to clap enthusiastically, Hawke walked up the few steps leading to the stage and strolled over to the microphone. Fixing the microphone so that it was at the correct height for Hawke, Jack briefly patted the young woman on her back before she left the stage. Looking out over the now silenced crowd, Hawke took a deep breath before she glanced behind her to the waiting band. Giving them a signal that she was ready, the band started playing the music as the lights in the coffeehouse dimmed and there was a soft blue light emanating the stage. Wrapping a hand around the microphone, Hawke closed her eyes as she let the music and words carry her away.

I didn't hear you leave, I wonder how am I still here And I don't want to move a thing, It might change my memory Oh I am what I am, I'll do what I want, but I can't hide And I won't go, I won't sleep, I can't breathe, until you're resting here with me And I won't leave, and I can't hide, I cannot be, until you're resting here with me I don't wanna call my friends, They might wake me from this dream And I can't leave this bed, Risk forgetting all that's been

Oh I am what I am, I'll do what I want, but I can't hide And I won't go, I won't sleep, And I can't breathe, until you're resting here with me And I won't leave, and I can't hide, I cannot be, until you're resting here

And I won't go, and I won't sleep

And I can't breathe, until you're resting here with me

And I won't leave, and I can't hide

I cannot be, until you're resting here with me

Oh I am what I am

I'll do what I want, but I can't hide

And I won't go, I won't sleep

And I can't breathe, until you're resting here with me

And I won't leave, and I can't hide

I cannot be, until you're resting here

And I won't go, and I won't sleep

And I can't breathe, until you're resting here with me

And I won't leave, and I can't hide

I cannot be, until you're resting here with me...

Opening her eyes, Hawke smiled as the crowd cheered some even giving her a standing ovation. Taking a small bow, she started to leave the stage, smiling at Jack who gave her a wink as they passed one another. Making her way to the table where her friends were, Hawke endured hugs from Sonny, Sarah, Peter, Laura, and even Leslie. All of them congratulated her, as she took a seat between Peter and Sarah.

"You did wonderfully," Peter said, smiling much like a proud father would.

Hawke smiled at him. "Thank you very much." Gratefully accepting a tall glass of raspberry iced tea given to her by Sonny, Hawke took a large gulp from it, finding that she was thirsty.

All six turned their attention towards the stage as the next performer came on the stage after being introduced. Not ten minutes later, Jack was back on the stage after the last two singers were through. She was about to ask all of the karaoke contestants to come on stage so that the audience could vote when Leslie chose that moment to stand up and loudly announce that Jack should sing before the voting proceeded.

Arching an eyebrow in her direction, Jack motioned Leslie to sit down, but the woman remained standing with a broad mischievous smile on her lips. "Come on Jack," Leslie started. "Why don't you sing for us? I know you have a beautiful voice."

"I can't take part in the contest," Jack replied, trying to come up with an excuse. There was no way that she was going to sing in front of this large crowd of people.

Leslie continued wearing that smile. "I didn't expect you to. Just sing for the entertainment value." When Jack shook her head negatively, she ran up on the stage and plucked the microphone out of her hand. Turning towards the audience, Leslie spoke into it, "Ladies and gentleman, I don't think that this evening would be complete if Jack here didn't grace us with her lovely vocal abilities." Glancing at the perturbed woman, Leslie winked at her before continuing, "So please give it up for Jack Foster!" The crowd began to cheer and clap as Leslie started repeating Jack's name like it was her mantra. Moments later, the audience caught on and soon just about everyone one in the coffeehouse was cheering her name. Even the small group from *Bean There, Done That* was participating.

Looking around the large room, Jack felt her defenses crumbling. Never having heard her name being shouted repeatedly, she had to admit that it gave her a small thrill. Sighing in defeat, Jack

put out her hand for the microphone, which Leslie gladly gave her before kissing her cheek and exiting the stage. Walking towards the band, Jack inquired if they knew the song that she wanted to sing. After finding that they did, she pulled a vacant stool to the front of the stage and took a seat as silence fell over the audience. Indicating for the band to start, Jack tapped her foot the beat of the music as she lifted the microphone to her lips. Glancing in Sonny's direction, she waited until the correct moment and then started singing.

That old dog has chained you up all right

Give you everything you need

To live inside a twisted cage Sleep beside an empty rage I had a dream I was your hero

Damn, I wish I was your lover I'd rock you till the daylight comes Make sure you are smiling and warm I am everything Tonight I'll be your mother I'll do such things to ease your pain Free your mind and you won't feel ashamed

This monkey can't stand to see you black and blue I give you something sweet each time you Come inside my jungle book What is it just too good Don't say you'll stay 'Cause then you'll go away

Damn, I wish I was your lover I'd rock you till the daylight comes Make sure you are smiling and warm I am everything Tonight I'll be your mother I will do such things to ease your pain Free your mind and you won't feel ashamed

Shucks, for me there is no other You're the only shoe that fits I can't imagine I'll grow out of it Damn, I wish I was your lover

If I was your girl believe me I'd turn on the Rolling Stones We could groove along and feel much better

Let me in...mmmm I could do it forever and ever and ever and ever Give me an hour to kiss you Walk through heaven's door, I'm sure We don't need no doctor to feel much better Let me in Forever and ever and ever and ever...

I sat on the mountainside with peace of mind And I lay by the ocean making love to her With visions clear Walked for days with no one near And I return as chained and bound to you

Damn, I wish I was your lover I'd rock you till the daylight comes Make sure you are smiling and warm I am everything Tonight I'll be your mother

I'll do such things to ease your pain Free your mind and you won't feel ashamed

Shucks, for me there is no other You're the only shoe that fits I can't imagine I'll grow out of it Damn, I wish I was your lover

Open up

I'm gonna come inside

I'm gonna fill you up

I wanna make you cry

Damn, wish I was your lover

I'm on the subway and I'm comin' up town

Damn, I wish I was your lover

Standing on the street corner

Waiting for my life to change

Damn, I wish I was your lover

And I'm feelin' like a schoolboy

Too shy and too young

Damn, I wish I was your lover...

As the crowd loudly applauded Jack's performance, Sonny sat completely stunned with a crimson shade covering her cheeks. She had the distinct feeling that Jack had been singing directly to her, since the majority of the time she sang the line "damn, I wish I was your lover" she glanced at Sonny with a small smile on her lips. Closing her eyes for a moment, Sonny shook her head. *Jack, what in the world was that all about?*

When she opened her eyes, Sonny was greeted with curious looks from Sarah and Peter, which caused her blush to grow even deeper. "What?" she quietly asked.

"Could have just been my imagination," Peter started, "but it appeared that Jack was serenading yo- Ouch!" Peter frowned as he looked over to Hawke, who had just kicked him in the leg.

Hawke appeared to be quite pleased with herself as she gave the man a saccharinely sweet smile. "Got you back," she mouthed before getting up and walking towards the stage after Jack announced for all of the performers to come there so that the voting could start.

Turning to her girlfriend, Sonny apologized as she took one of Laura's hands in her own.

"What for? It's no big deal. I'm sure there are a million women who would want to be your lover, but you're mine." Laura smiled at her tenderly. "Right?"

Sonny smiled back as she pushed the thoughts of Jack singing to her and the kiss they shared earlier that day out of her mind. "Always and forever."

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"So Hawke, now that you've won the grand prize of five-thousand dollars, what are you gonna do now?" Peter asked as he pretended he held a microphone in his hand.

Hawke smiled at him broadly as she stated, "I'm gonna pay bills!" She laughed as did her friends. Hawke felt the adrenaline coursing through her veins as she gazed at her trophy for what must have been the thousandth time since Jack presented it and a check to her ten minutes ago. Never in her life had she won anything. Hearing someone call her real name, Hawke turned around to notice a man in his mid-thirties briskly walking towards her. After warmly shaking her hand and congratulating her, he reached into his coat pocket and pulled out a business card, which he handed to the young woman.

"Nicole, I'm not sure if you're interested in pursuing a career in music, but if you ask me you have the voice to do so. I'm Dell Holiday from *Olympus Records*, and we would love to strike a deal with you."

"*Olympus Records*?" Hawke repeated as Dell nodded. The name was most definitely familiar. As far as she knew, *Olympus* was a relatively new music company, but they were steadily growing. Hawke smiled as she observed the business card. This night was just getting better and better. She had dreamed of being a music artist and now it seemed like her dream would become a reality. "Mr. Holiday-"

He smiled at her. "Dell please hon."

Hawke returned the smile. "Dell, I am very much interested." She chuckled. "Guess I might need an agent."

Hurrying over to Hawke, Leslie wrapped an arm around the younger woman's shoulders as she winked at her. "You've got one." Looking at Dell, she smiled at him as she reached out a hand to shake his. "Hello Dell. I'm Leslie Antigone, Nicole's agent."

"It's a pleasure to meet you Leslie," Dell replied.

"You're an agent?" Hawke asked.

Leslie smiled at her. "Well no not really. I'm just a business consultant, but the way I see it that's not much different from being an agent. I feel compelled to offer my services and I believe that I can do a great job. My fee is cheap. I'll work for free."

Hawke grinned. "You're hired."

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As Laura and Sonny stood up to leave, the blonde glanced in Jack's direction. The other woman was sitting at the bar sipping some type of beverage from a cup. Coming to a decision, Sonny asked Laura to wait for her in the car. Without inquiring why, Laura merely nodded before she headed out of the coffeehouse alone. After Laura exited the door, Sonny walked over to Jack and took the vacant seat next to hers. Looking up, Jack gave her a welcoming smile that almost proved to calm any anger that Sonny felt. Almost was the key word here.

"Jack, you want to tell me what that was all about?" the blonde asked as she lightly drummed her fingers on the bar top.

The smile slipped from Jack's face as she suddenly noticed that Sonny was upset. "What what was all about?"

"Damn, I wish I was your lover."

Jack grinned. "Tell me something I don't know."

Sonny rolled her eyes. "You're not funny," she said, though she was trying to hold back a chuckle. How could someone be infuriating and amusing at the same time? "Please be serious," Sonny said pleadingly.

Looking at her silently for a few moments, Jack raised her cup and took a sip before setting it back down on the bar. "You didn't like my singing?"

"Yes, I did. You sing beautifully, Jack. I just wish that you wouldn't have sung to me. I mean my girlfriend was sitting right there..."

One dark eyebrow rose. "You think I was singing to you?"

"It was obvious that you were. Everyone sitting at the table I was at knew it." Sonny looked Jack straight in her eyes. "Do you deny it?"

"No."

Sonny slowly nodded as she ignored the butterflies in her stomach. "Could you please not do that again? It was very uncomfortable considering that Laura was sitting there watching you as you did it."

Jack nodded. "Sure. I didn't mean any harm." She smiled crookedly at the other woman. "I guess I have a tiny crush on you and I just felt like singing you a song and that seemed like the perfect one to express myself. I promise I won't do it again though. It was rude and disrespectful to Laura." She glanced around the coffeehouse. "Where is she? I'll apologize."

Sonny shook her head as she laid a hand on Jack's knee before realizing what she was doing and quickly removing it. "It's okay. You don't have to apologize to her."

Glancing down at her knee, Jack wished that petite hand were still there. "Are you sure?"

"I'm sure." Getting to her feet, Sonny said, "I must be on my way now, Jack," she paused as a thought came to mind. "Oh, and thank you for the wonderful gift" She smiled. "It's on my desk now."

Jack smiled at her. "I'm glad you liked it."

"And thank you for what you did for Hawke."

A thoughtful expression appeared on the other woman's face. "Are you talking about getting her involved in the karaoke competition?"

Sonny gave her a knowing look. "No, I'm referring to Dell Holiday."

"Oh, that. Well that had nothing to do with me. He witnessed her performance and saw talent."

"Yes," Sonny replied, "but I'm sure you had something to do with him coming here tonight. Now no matter what happens with *Bean There, Done That* Sarah and I don't have to worry about Hawke. She seems to be in good hands because of you." When Jack just looked at her blankly, Sonny tenderly kissed her cheek. "Pretending like you don't know what I'm talking about makes what you did that much sweeter."

Jack gave her a terrific smile. "I'm glad I got to see you tonight."

"Likewise." The blonde then fell silent as a thought came to mind. Outwardly wincing, she leaned towards Jack whispering in her ear, "How is your crotch?"

Grinning at her, Jack replied, "Sweetheart after that sweet little kiss you just gave me, how do you think it is?" She wiggled her eyebrows up and down in a comical fashion, causing Sonny to both blush and chuckle in the same moment. Shaking her head, Sonny informed Jack that she was very bad. Grinning yet again, the taller woman asked, "But you wouldn't have me any other way now would you?"

A faint grin appeared on Sonny's lips. "I guess not, because then you wouldn't be you," she paused in thought. "And I basically like you."

Jack laughed richly. "You *basically* like me?" Sonny nodded, fully grinning now. "Okay. I can accept basically," Jack said, laughing again. "For now anyway." Somewhat sobering, she went on saying, "As for my crotch...well..." Looking up at Sonny, she whispered, "let's just say I shouldn't go out and ride a horse."

"Oh, Jack I'm sorry I did that," Sonny replied with an apologetic look.

Jack waved a hand in dismissal. "Aw, it's okay. I deserved it." She grinned up at Sonny. "I've learned my lesson about trying to have my way with a sleeping woman."

Green eyes rolled playfully. "Okay, I've kept Laura waiting long enough. I must be on my way. You have a great evening, Jack. Goodnight."

Jack smiled at her warmly. "You too Sonny. Goodnight." Turning around, Sonny headed towards the exit as Jack watched her go until she disappeared into the night.

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As she returned to the suite, Laura quietly closed and locked the door behind her. She moved in the direction of the bedroom with a small bag in her hand that contained the tube of cherry lip balm that Sonny had sent her to purchase from the gift shop in the lobby. Opening the door, Laura was greeted by a multitude of lit candles strategically placed around the bedroom. Soft music played from the stereo as a bottle of champagne chilled in a bucket. So this was why Sonny had been so desperate to have that lip balm. She wanted Laura out of the way while she put all of this together.

Starting to slowly smile, Laura closed the door just as the door leading to the bathroom opened and Sonny came out. Her girlfriend's jaw nearly dropped to the floor as she took in the blonde. Sonny looked absolutely delicious to say the least as she stood with hands on her hips about six feet away from Laura, wearing a sexy little grin on her face.

Desire filled eyes traveled up and down Sonny's body, taking in the thigh high stockings, lace garter belts, thong panties, and a one size too small lacy bra that left little to the imagination. Well...the whole ensemble left little to the imagination. Since everything she had on was white, Sonny resembled a wanton angel. Laura grinned as her libido increased by the second. She watched as Sonny wordlessly walked over to the champagne bucket and took out an ice cube. Raising an eyebrow in curiosity, Laura wondered what she was intending to do with it, as the blonde headed towards her, still wearing that sexy grin.

"Like what you see, Laura?" Sonny inquired in a seductive voice, as she stood close enough to her girlfriend, that Laura could detect a vanilla scent emanating from her body. She smelled heavenly.

The other woman nodded dumbly, finding that her voice was gone. Half expecting that she might be drooling, Laura reached up and quickly wiped the back of her hand across her mouth.

Sonny's grin widened as she took a step closer, her body brushing against Laura's. "Does the cat have your tongue, Love?" Putting her lips against her girlfriend's ear, she heatedly whispered, "May I have it?" Before Laura could give any type of response, Sonny captured her lips in a passionate kiss. Both women softly moaned in pleasure as the blonde's tongue slipped between Laura's lips to playfully duel with her own. As she slid her tongue along her girlfriend's, Sonny's hands moved down to cup her cheeks, giving them a gentle squeeze, which caused Laura to moan loudly.

Ending the kiss, Sonny looked up into Laura's eyes as she softly said, "It's been so long since we've made love. Let me make love to you tonight." Kissing Laura tenderly on the lips, Sonny brought around the hand that held the ice cube. Lightly tracing the ice cube along Laura's parted lips, she then slid it down the woman's neck as Laura softly panted. Causing more moans to escape her girlfriend, Sonny followed the wet trail that the ice cube left with her warm tongue, making tiny swirls on her way down Laura's neck. Just as Sonny began to gently nibble and suck on her neck, Laura took a couple of steps back as she ran a hand through her hair in frustration.

"I'm sorry... Sonny I can't do this." Wearing an expression of confusion, the blonde allowed herself to be led over to the king-sized bed by Laura. As both women took their seats on the end of the bed, Laura turned so that she was facing Sonny. "I know that we came here to Panama City for the weekend so that we could rekindle what we once had, but it's over," she slightly paused. "We're over."

The confused expression on Sonny's face grew deeper. "What do you mean we're over? I thought everything was going well..."

Laura quickly nodded in agreement. "It has. Ever since we arrived yesterday, I've been having fun with you, but in the back of my mind has been this doubt that I can't get rid of no matter how hard I try to."

"What doubt?"

Laura stared into saddened green eyes a few moments before she offered a reply. "The doubt that you and I aren't meant to be." As Sonny opened her mouth to say something, Laura quickly pressed two fingers to her lips. When the blonde closed her mouth, Laura removed them before softly saying, "I know." By the look on her face, she must have expected Sonny to understand what she knew, but the younger woman hadn't the faintest idea.

"I don't understand." Sonny shook her head. "What do you know?"

Laura's eyes were now full of sadness. "I know that your heart belongs to another. Deep down I've known for weeks, I just couldn't... didn't want to admit it. I love you so much Sonny, and I don't want to lose you, but I don't want to be with you knowing that you are thinking of and loving someone else. That's not fair to either of us. Don't you agree?"

"No, I don't agree," Sonny replied while shaking her head. "I don't know where you're getting this all from. You're the only one for me. I love you and *only* you."

Tears brimming in her eyes, Laura wiped them away. "I do believe you want to love me, but I don't want it to be something that you are *trying* to do. Loving someone should not take a lot of effort. You just do."

Dropping the ice cube that was numbing her fingertips, Sonny placed a hand on either side of Laura's face as she looked deeply into her eyes. "Listen to me Laura. I do love you and that will never change. My heart couldn't possibly belong to anyone else because *you* have it."

"Why are you trying so hard to make this work?" Laura quietly asked as she reached up and gently removed Sonny's hands from her face.

"Because I love you!" Sonny shouted, quite sure that if anyone was in the suite next to theirs, that they heard the admission loud and clear. "I don't understand what is going on here. One minute we're about to make love and in the next, you're accusing me of loving someone else. You're the one who has been distant lately. I feel like I've been trying to get close to you only to be constantly pushed away. If anyone should be saying that someone's heart belongs to another, that person should be me."

"Oh, Sonny," Laura said in a sad tone of voice, "there is no one else on this earth that I rather be with. But I've come to realize that there is someone else for you and I wish you nothing but happiness. I really do."

Sonny briefly covered her face with her hands as she shook her head, thinking that this had to be a nightmare that she would soon awaken from. Lowering her hands, she looked at Laura. "Where is all this coming from? I'm so confused."

"A few weeks ago, I did something that I'm still ashamed of, though in a way I'm glad that I went through with it."

"What's that?"

"Well," Laura started as she took a deep breath, "I was starting to notice that you seemed to be changing. I don't know..." She shook her head. "You seemed distracted, Sonny. Even when you were with me, it felt as though I was alone. Like you had other things...other people on your mind, so I grew suspicious of your time on your computer. I just had this feeling that your change in behavior stemmed from the computer, so one day when you were getting ready to log on, I made sure to watch what keys you pressed so that I would know your password," pausing, Laura noticed that the expression on Sonny's face hadn't changed. "A couple days later I was at home and decided to log on under your screen name. Doing so, I checked your old emails and found quite a few you had written and received from a woman named Blueyez. I read a few of them and found that you and she were supposed to meet for the first time at Disneyworld on the last Friday in September. I tried to tell myself that you and she were just friends, although some of the things said in your emails were a little too friendly for my taste, but it wasn't until last Friday when you went to meet her that I knew the whole truth. She's more than just your friend," Laura finished in a near whisper.

"No," Sonny shook her head, a thousand thoughts racing through her mind. "That's not true. Blue and I have always been just friends. Maybe some of the things said made us appear closer than we are, but a friend is all she ever was and all she'll ever be."

"I gave you a chance to tell me the truth, but you didn't do it," Laura went on as though she had not heard what Sonny just said. "Remember when you called me the Saturday before last, asking me out for a date?"



Nodding mutely, the blonde waited for her to continue.

"I said I was busy, but then I asked you if you wanted to go out Friday, knowing that you were supposed to meet Blueyez then. I just wanted to see what you'd say and you merely replied that you had plans. If she's just your friend, then why didn't you tell me? I wouldn't have minded you meeting someone that you chat with online. I just would have cautioned you to do it in a public place. Why did you feel the need to hide it from me?"

Sonny bit on her lower lip nervously. "I didn't know how you'd feel about that."

"Only one way to find out," Laura quietly replied. "Tell me."

"I know and I'm so sorry. I'll never keep anything from you again. I promise. Blue is just a friend. I swear Laura."

"Just a friend..." Laura faintly chuckled humorlessly. "Just a friend that you spent the night with, Sonny?" she asked, looking straight into the other woman's eyes. "I called you Friday night a few times to see if you were home and you never answered the phone. I then came over, hoping that I'd find you asleep and that you just hadn't heard it ringing but you weren't there. I tried not to panic as I waited for the front door to open and finally you came waltzing in the next morning. I'm not sure if you even realized it, but when you walked into the kitchen, you had a slight smile on your face, so I figured that you must have had a *really* good time with Blue." When Sonny opened her mouth to speak, Laura quickly held up a hand, stopping her. "I asked you where you had been and you looked me straight in the eyes and lied to me, telling me that you had been with Sarah at Disneyworld and that you two were tired and spent the night at a resort. You might have spent the night there, but you were not with Sarah," Laura said in a slightly less than calm voice.

Opening her mouth to speak, Sonny found that she was speechless, so she quickly shut it. She felt like the villain that had just been unmasked in one of those Scooby Doo cartoons. Laura had definitely done her homework, and Sonny could not blame her for the way she was thinking. If the shoe were on the other foot, she would have been thinking the same, except she would not have waited this long to confront Laura.

"I know it looks bad, but nothing happened," Sonny started, speaking slowly. "Not that it really matters, because I still lied to you, but I wasn't even with Blue. She didn't show up. Later I got an email from her, apologizing for not doing so."

"Then you were alone? Or did you really end up going with Sarah?"

Sonny shook her head negatively. "Neither. While waiting for Blue, I ran into Jack so after waiting for Blue a little while longer and then concluding that she most likely wasn't coming, I spent the day with Jack." Noticing the surprised look on Laura's face, Sonny continued, speaking rather quickly, "We did end up in a resort that evening, but the reason we did was because while on the riverboat ride I fell into the water and Jack jumped in to rescue me. Since the both of us was drenched, she came up with the idea that we check in to a hotel, take showers before putting

on some dry clothing, and then order some room service before heading home. That's why I was wearing that Disney outfit you saw me in Saturday morning, because Jack bought it for me. Anyway, while she was taking her shower, I fell asleep so we ended up staying overnight. The next morning she walked me to my car, I *did* give her a little kiss and then I got in my car and drove home. That's all."

Laura stared at her silently for a few moments, leaving Sonny to wonder just what was going through that mind of hers. "I believe you," the brunette finally stated. "Though that is a rather...involved story, I believe every word that you just said."

Sonny breathed a sigh of relief. "Thank you. I do promise that I'll never hide things from you again. You're my partner and I should share everything with you."

"I was your partner," Laura replied so softly, that it was almost incoherent. "Sonny, whether you've been faithful to me or not...and now I do believe that you have, you and I are not meant to be together. It all makes perfect sense now and I was wrong about Blue. She isn't the one for you because Jack is."

Sonny's eyes opened wide at the statement. "Jack? While you were in the lobby getting my lip-gloss, did you grab yourself a little nip? Smoke something other than tobacco?"

Laura momentarily closed her eyes as she breathed deeply. "I'm not kidding Sonny."

"Neither am I Laura." Rising from the bed, the blonde quickly walked into the bathroom and grabbed her robe, putting it on. Returning to the bedroom, she retook her seat on the bed, as she faced the other woman. "I can't believe what you just said. What makes you think Jack is the one for me?"

"The looks I saw between you two that night of the karaoke competition when she was on the stage performing...singing to you. She started out as just your business rival but...maybe you don't even realize it consciously, but you want more and it's quite obvious that she does."

"I want Jack like I want a root canal," Sonny argued, though she had a feeling that it was feeble. Laura had made up her mind to go through with this.

Giving her a smile filled with sorrow, Laura cupped the blonde's chin in her hand as she gazed into her eyes. "I'll always love you Sonny, but it's about time that I let you go. In my heart, I know that this is the right thing to do. Though I don't want to, I must. I don't expect you to now, but you'll thank me for it later." Removing her hand, Laura blinked back tears as she attempted to remain strong. What she was doing was the right thing. She just had to keep reminding herself of that fact.

As a few tears escaped her, Sonny slowly nodded in defeat. "Okay Laura. I'll always love you too," she said, her voice breaking. Without another word, Laura wrapped the smaller woman in her arms as they both shed silent tears for the ending of something that they once thought would last for eternity.

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The next day found the two women in Laura's car on their way to Sonny's apartment. The ride there as well as the airplane back to Orlando was quiet, neither woman saying much. Finding the silence slightly tense, Sonny reached over to turn on the radio. Switching the stations, she searched for a good song to listen to. Not finding one, Sonny settled for a station that broadcasted the news. Turning the volume up a notch, she sat back in her seat as she prepared to listen to what was going on in the world. Sonny's ears perked up as she heard Jack's name.

"Just over an hour ago, business tycoon Jack Foster's younger sister was involved in a car accident. Though we do not yet know for sure, it is suspected that twenty-year-old Chloe Foster was driving on the freeway while under the influence when her car toppled over a railing and overturned several times down a hill. The young woman was taken to Florida Hospital and is now in emergency surgery..."

"Laura..." Sonny looked at her now ex-girlfriend.

The other woman took her eyes off of the road long enough to glance at her, noting the look on her face. "Want me to drop you off at the hospital?"

Sonny nodded.

Switching lanes in order to head back in the opposite direction, Laura increased her speed some. "I'm on my way there."

~~~~~

After running through the hospital much like a mad woman, Sonny finally found out where Chloe had been taken. Nearly out of the breath, her steps faltered as she noticed a nervous Jack pacing back and forth in front of the waiting room. Sonny watched as the other woman stopped a surgeon and asked him a question, however he must not have had any information for her if the agitated expression on her face was any indication. As the surgeon walked on, Sonny continued forward. It was when she was nearly upon Jack that she finally noticed her. Worried blue eyes quietly stared into green for what seemed like forever before Jack hurried towards Sonny and wrapped her arms around her, burying her face in the smaller woman's neck. The blonde felt hot tears slide onto her neck as she wound her arms around Jack's waist tightly. Turning her head, Sonny placed a soft kiss on the other woman's head.

"Oh, Jack. I'm so sorry," she said in a near whisper. "Is there anything that I can do?"

"Hold me," Jack replied in a heartbreaking voice, her words muffled and shoulders shaking as she continued to sob. "Just hold me."

Continued in Part 3.

"Here With Me" performed by Dido

"Damn, I Wish I Was Your Lover" written and performed by Sophie B. Hawkins

### The Athenaeum's Scroll Archive

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## ~ An Affair to Remember ~

by Ambrosia

**Disclaimers:** The characters in this story are figments of my imagination. They are solely the property of me, myself, and I J

**Sexual Content:** There are intimate/sexual/loving relationships between women occurring in this tale.

**Violence:** None. Nada. Zip. Just peace, love, and harmony. (Chuckle)

**Language:** Nothing that can't be aired on a network station.

**Special Thanks:** Thank you Hawke and Antigone for helping me by giving the names for the establishments mentioned in this story. I had no idea what to call them until you both offered your assistance. So thank you very much. I really appreciate it J

**Inspiration:** I would like to thank the creators of the movie "You've Got Mail" for inspiring me to write this piece. I've watched that movie so many times I just had to write a story loosely based on it. J

**Feedback:** All comments (please be gentle with me-for I'm a sensitive bard J) can be emailed to SumrBrezze@aol.com.

### Part 3

Sitting in the waiting room, Sonny watched as Jack paced back and forth in front of her. It was like watching a professional tennis match and Jack was that fuzzy little green ball. Calling out to her, Sonny waited until the woman looked her way before she recommended that she take a seat. Announcing that she would in just a few minutes (which was the same answer she gave the last three times Sonny informed her to sit) Jack returned to her pacing as she quickly ran a hand through her already disheveled hair.

Softly sighing, the blonde noticed a stack of magazines on the small round glass table located next to her chair. Leafing through them, she picked up a *Better Homes and Gardens* magazine and began to search through it for something to read. Finding it rather difficult to concentrate, Sonny tossed the magazine back on the table before turning her attention back to the pacing tennis-Jack.

"Jack...honey come here," Sonny said, unaware of the endearment she had just used. Outstretching a hand to the other woman, she watched as Jack slowly took it and allowed herself to be pulled over. When Sonny indicated for her to sit, she did so without comment and began to drum the fingertips of her empty hand on the arm of the chair. Still holding her left hand, Sonny reached over with her left and briefly placed it over Jack's right, stopping the tapping. Lifting her hand, Sonny was pleased to notice that it stayed still.

Glancing at her watch, Jack let out a loud breath as she started to tap her feet on the floor. She missed Sonny shaking her head. "When are they going to give us some information?" Jack nearly shouted as she looked at Sonny, as though the younger woman could give her the answers she so desperately sought. "I'm going crazy here."

*Yes, I know you are* Sonny thought as she gave Jack's hand a light squeeze. "They're still working on her Jack, but I'm sure we'll learn something soon. I know it's hard to do because it's your little sister in there, but please try to remain as calm as you possibly can."

Jack let out a long sigh as she leaned her head against the wall directly behind them. "Sonny that is easier said than done," she replied quietly.

She squeezed the woman's hand again, smiling slightly as Jack returned it. "I know. She'll be all right," Sonny remarked as she looked into Jack's eyes, trying to reassure her. "I have faith that she will be."

Leaning towards her, Jack kissed the other woman's cheek. "Thanks for those words Sonny. And thank you for being here. I might be acting totally out of control if it wasn't for your presence."

"Whew! Glad I came to keep you in line then." Sonny winked at her, earning a genuine smile.

Both women fell silent as they anxiously waited for any update on Chloe's condition. Glancing at a clock on the wall, Sonny noted that they had been waiting for nearly thirty minutes. Unconsciously stroking the back of Jack's hand with her thumb, Sonny looked at the woman when she heard her sigh loudly. Asking if she could get her anything, Jack replied with a shake of her head.

"I just want my sister to be okay," Jack said in a soft voice. As she looked at Sonny, fresh tears sprang to her eyes. "She's the only family I have left and I don't know what I'd do if I were to lose her. I can't," she finished in a whisper.

Letting go of Jack's hand, the blonde wrapped an arm around her shoulders, pulling her as close as she could manage with the arm of their chairs being between them. "You won't have to worry about what you'll do, because you're not going to lose her. If she's anything like her sister, I know that she'll make it through this with flying colors." Sonny pressed a kiss to the top of Jack's head as she felt the woman's shoulders shake, instantly knowing that she was crying again. As she leaned her head against Sonny's shoulder, the blonde offered her comfort as they continued to wait.

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Briskly walking towards the waiting room with a clipboard in hand, Dr. Keller removed his surgical mask, tucking it in a pocket of his pants. On arriving at the waiting room, he looked at two women sitting together, one with her arm around the other. Noting that one of the women was Jack Foster, he greeted them both, exclaiming that Chloe was now out of surgery and had been moved to a private room in the Intensive Care Unit.

Watching as the doctor pulled a chair over and sat in front of them, Jack asked, "How did the surgery go? Is she going to be all right?"

"There were a couple of minor complications, but overall it went well," Dr. Keller replied as he gave the worried woman a reassuring smile. "It's going to take a while before she heals, and your sister will need extensive therapy, but I believe that she'll be just fine. I will tell you that she is in a coma, but that is not surprising with the injuries that she sustained."

Jack nodded as she swallowed hard, trying to digest that bit of information. "When do you expect her to wake up?"

"I honestly cannot say," the doctor replied. "Depending on how severe a head trauma is, the longer a coma might last, which could be anywhere from a few hours to days. Based on Chloe's head injuries, my best guess would be for her to awaken within the next twenty-four hours or so."

Nodding again, Jack asked, "What is the extent of her injuries? I was told that she might have been drinking. Is that true?"

Dr. Keller nodded as he glanced at the clipboard in his hand. "Yes, your sister had been drinking. She had a blood alcohol level of .22, which is extremely high. With her small stature and age, I'm surprised that she was even capable of driving at all, let alone making it onto the freeway."

Running a hand through her hair, Jack shook her head as she wondered where and how Chloe managed to obtain that much alcohol, considering she was underage. The one thing she was grateful for was that no one else was involved or hurt in the accident. "Besides being in a coma, what else happened to her?"

Looking at his clipboard again, the doctor replied, "Well, she had some internal bleeding but we were able to stop it. She has a concussion, which most likely resulted from her skull fracture," Dr. Keller paused as the look of worry deepened on Jack's face. With her arm still around the woman, Sonny gave Jack a light squeeze. "I know that it sounds quite horrible Ms. Foster, but Chloe only has a simple fracture, which means that there was a break in a bone, yet there wasn't any damage to her skin. Since the break wasn't too severe, surgery wasn't needed because the fracture can and *will* heal on its own," he assured her. When Jack nodded, he went on, "Also, two of her ribs were fractured, which resulted in her left lung being punctured. This is fairly common with injuries to the ribs," Dr. Keller quickly added when Jack looked as though she was about to either cry or scream.

"What does that mean?" she asked as calmly as was possible. The more he spoke, the worse it seemed to get.

"What it means is that her left lung collapsed. The medical term for it is Atelectasis. That's when an area of the lungs collapses, which prevents air from getting it. It's difficult to breathe so we have her on oxygen. To repair her lung, we'll show her some breathing exercises to do and she'll have respiratory therapy treatment. You understand?" At Jack's affirmative nod, he went on, "Chloe's right leg was broken in two places so she now has a cast on it. She'll be able to use crutches when she gets back on her feet. Besides all of that, she has multiple bruises and scratches, none of which are serious, though her whole body will probably be aching when she awakens. Any questions?"

"When can I see her?"

"You can see her right now," Dr. Keller said as he stood up and put the chair back where he found it. He then informed Jack of Chloe's room number, announcing that if other family member's were to arrive that only two at a time were allowed in the room.

Standing, Jack walked over to the surgeon and shook his hand briefly. "Thank you for saving my sister's life."

"You're welcome." He smiled at her. "Hey, it's my job." Offering a smile to Sonny, who was still sitting down, Dr. Keller took his leave.

Turning around, Jack headed towards Sonny with tears in her eyes, though these were of part joy and part relief. As the dark-haired woman neared, Sonny stood and embraced her, tears in her own eyes. Mutely, they enjoyed a long warm hug before finally breaking away. Placing her hands on Sonny's cheeks, Jack gave her the most tender of kisses on the forehead before letting go, smiling into the blonde's bleary green eyes.

"She really is gonna be okay, isn't she?" Jack stated in a hushed tone.

Sonny nodded while smiling back at her. "She's going to be great."

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With her hands tucked in the pocket of her jeans, Jack walked into her sister's hospital room, where Chloe lay in the bed closest to the large window. At seeing the young girl looking so fragile and small in that bed, her heart feeling like it was shattering into a million pieces. Moving closer, Jack pulled one of two chairs located by the window, next to her sister's bed before having a seat in it. Looking at the unconscious girl, Jack noted the IV needle that ran into the back of her right hand connected to a drip. Inserted in Chloe's nose were nasal prongs that were attached to a cannula tube giving her oxygen.

Gently taking her sister's limp hand in her own, Jack gave it a small squeeze as she gazed at Chloe, thinking that she looked so very helpless. Suddenly remember something she heard about

those in a coma possibly being able to hear when people spoke to them, Jack scooted closer in her chair as she continued to hold her sister's hand. Listening to the faint sound of Chloe's breathing for a few minutes, Jack then began to speak.

"Hey Kid. I'm not sure if you can hear me or not, but I'm gonna give this a try anyway," the blue-eyed woman started in a soft tone of voice. "Man, when I got that call today that you had been in a car accident, my stomach nearly jumped into my throat. I kept hoping...praying that it was just a nightmare and that I would soon wake up and you would be just fine. But obviously that's not the case," pausing, Jack looked at the wide bandage wrapped around Chloe's head and the faintly purplish bruise on her right cheek. "Do you know how worried I was about you, Kid?" she asked in a voice close to breaking as tears stung her reddened and puffy eyes. "You scared the you know what out of me. Promise me...*please* promise me that you'll never drink and drive again. That was a very thoughtless idea and I swear if you weren't already in this bed I'd think about putting you in it myself." Reaching up, Jack wiped away a tear before continuing, "If you kill yourself that'll kill me as well. Don't you know that? I love you," she managed to get out in a whisper before breaking down into tears. Leaning her head down on the bed, Jack sobbed as hot tears coursed down her cheeks. Minutes later, she felt a slight pressure on her hand as though it had been squeezed. Quickly raising her head, Jack closely looked at her sister who still appeared unconscious. Glancing down at their joined hands, she softly smiled through the tears. "Thank you."

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Around seven o'clock that evening, walking down the corridor of the hospital, Leslie made her way to the waiting room where she found Jack and Sonny along with three other people. Sonny was sitting upright on a couch with Jack stretched out on it (well as much as she could being that she was longer than the piece of furniture), her head lying in the other woman's lap. Since her eyes were closed, it appeared that Jack was asleep, but Sonny was obviously awake, due to the fact that she was reading a magazine she held in one hand, while rubbing Jack's head with the other.

As Leslie walked into the living room, Sonny glanced her way over the top of the magazine. Seeing her coming towards them, Sonny closed the magazine, placing it on the arm of the chair as she smiled in greeting. Almost tip toeing so as not to disturb Jack, Leslie arrived at the couch, kneeling on the floor in front of Sonny.

"I came as soon as I heard about the accident," Leslie whispered to the blonde. "How is Chloe doing?"

"She's in critical yet stable condition," Jack piped in before Sonny could answer. Opening her eyes, she looked at Leslie whose attention she now had. "Both Sonny and I saw her. In fact, she just practically dragged me out of Chloe's room about twenty minutes ago so that I could take a nap, but unfortunately, I can't sleep," Jack finished, remaining in the smaller woman's lap, seemingly content to be there.

"Is she awake?" Leslie inquired.

Jack shook her head. "No, she's in a coma, but her surgeon doesn't seem to be too worried about that because the trauma to her head isn't that great. So the lesser the head trauma, the more likely the coma won't last long. Dr. Keller, Chloe's surgeon, thinks that she'll wake up by tomorrow evening." She suddenly smiled faintly. "She squeezed my hand. I started thinking that perhaps it was just my imagination, but Sonny convinced me that she really had done it."

Leslie smiled at them both, the errant thought of how cute a couple they would make popping in her head. "That's wonderful news, Jack."

Jack nodded, softly sighing.

A small frown appearing on her face, Leslie said, "I'm so sorry for what happened. I take full responsibility."

"It's not your fault Les," Jack replied, wondering why the woman would blame herself. If this was anyone's fault, it was Chloe's and the person who was stupid and careless enough to sell a minor alcohol.

"Yes, it is my fault," Leslie replied. "You see I have a liquor cabinet, but I never keep it locked, although I have a key. When I went home earlier this evening before finding out about Chloe's accident, I noticed that the doors to it were wide open and most of the alcohol was missing. She must have drunk it and then left, soon to have that accident."

Sitting up, Jack reached for Leslie's hand and gave it a brief squeeze before letting go. Looking into the woman's eyes, she said, "Les, what happened is not your fault. You had no way of knowing that Chloe would go near your liquor. She is the one who is responsible for what happened to her, not you. You didn't put a gun to her head in order to get her to drink and you weren't the one who put her up to driving afterwards. Please don't blame yourself."

"She's right," Sonny interjected. "Chloe is responsible for her own actions."

Leslie smiled at them both gratefully, relieved that they (especially Jack) were not upset with her over what happened. After having discovered her open liquor cabinet, Leslie had felt the knots growing in her stomach. When she found out about the accident, she felt sick to her stomach, instantly blaming herself for what could turned out to be a major tragedy. Though Jack and Sonny did not blame her, Leslie still felt somewhat responsible and wondered if there was a way she could help. Thinking of something, she voiced a question to the two women.

"I have an idea," Leslie started. "You two look tired. Why don't you go home and get some rest for a few hours and I'll stay here with Chloe. If anything changes, I'll call you right away. I promise."

Jack shook her head. "No, I'm not leaving until she wakes up." Thinking her reply sounded harsh, Jack added in a softer tone, "But thank you for offering it Les." She smiled at the woman. "I can't leave until I'm sure she's going to be all right."

Leslie smiled in return while wearing a look of understand. "If it were my sister I wouldn't leave either. I should have known better. Can I at least get you guys something to eat? Maybe some coffee?"

"Coffee sounds good," Jack said, turning to Sonny who agreed.

Standing, Leslie smiled at them, informing the two that she would be right back before she turned around to leave. Glancing back at them, Leslie nodded to herself, thinking that yes indeed Jack and Sonny would make a wonderful couple. She watched for a moment as Jack leaned her head on the other woman's shoulder and Sonny wrapped an arm around her waist as though this were their usual routine, before she left in search of the cafeteria.

~~~~~

After finishing her fourth cup of coffee that evening, Jack tossed the paper cup in the trash can before glancing at her watch, noting that it was nearly ten o'clock. Thinking that Leslie should have been home by now, since she had left the hospital about an hour ago, Jack looked across to Sonny, who was sitting on the opposite side of Chloe's bed. Studying the younger woman while she read her magazine, a small smile appeared on Jack's lips. She was very thankful that Sonny had decided to come to the hospital and offer her the comfort that she so desperately needed. Giving thought to it now, Jack didn't know what she would have done without Sonny being here for her.

The smile on Jack's face grew slightly. *Just one more reason why I love you*, she thought as she openly gazed at the other woman. Feeling eyes upon her, Sonny looked up from the article she was reading to notice those eyes belonged to Jack. Smiling at the woman, she closed the magazine and leaned over to put it on the floor before settling back in her chair, crossing one leg over the other.

"I didn't mean to disturb you," Jack said in an apologetic tone. "I was just looking at you and wondering where you stashed your wings."

Sonny's brow crinkled in confusion. "Hmm?"

Slightly grinning, Jack replied, "Well you've simply got to be an angel." The grin she was wearing widened as she noticed the shade of crimson, which instantly arose on the blonde's cheeks. "Am I wrong?"

Sonny bit down on her lower lip...hard. In fact, she did it so hard, that she swore she tasted blood as heat stung her cheeks. "I...err...umm." The blonde scowled, embarrassed that she had seemingly lost her ability to speak coherently.

Jack's eyebrow arched as she grinned so broadly that Sonny waited for her face to shatter. "I'm sorry. The only languages I understand fluently are English and Spanish. Unfortunately, I'm not at all familiar with that one."

The blonde smirked as she mouthed, "Bite me."

Swiftly, Jack replied, "It would be my pleasure. Just stand up, turn around and toot over so I may sink my choppers into that firm luscious little a-"

Pale brows rose high, as Sonny's cheeks became so hot that she wished she had a bucket of ice. "Jack!" she shouted in astonishment. Swallowing with some difficulty, she glanced at Chloe before whispering, "We're in a hospital and your little sister is between us."

Scooting her chair forward, Jack placed her hands on Chloe's bed before lacing her fingers together. Looking at the furiously blushing Sonny, she whispered, "That's right. We are in a hospital...not a church. And even in a church, it's okay to say ass as long as you use it in the correct context. Therefore, it's okay to say ass. Ass is fine." She winked as the other woman rolled her eyes. "And though I wish she were awake, I doubt that Chloe is listening to my gentle ribbing."

"Gentle ribbing?" Sonny cocked her head to the side. "That's what you call it?"

Jack nodded. "You know I'm only kidding with ya Sonny girl." She winked again, grinning as Sonny unexpectedly blushed. Suddenly becoming serious, the brunette outstretched a hand to Sonny. When the blonde placed her hand against Jack's warm palm, she fought another blush that threatened to arise as a delightful little surge went through her. Sonny didn't want to end the contact, but let go after a reasonable length of time while she wondered why they were shaking hands in the first place. "I apologize if I went too far," Jack said, taking a deep breath as she fought the urge to recapture Sonny's hand in order to press her lips to the softness of the smaller woman's palm. "I just like teasing you, I guess." Jack faintly smiled. "You're cute when you're all ruffled."

The blonde grinned. "As opposed to being "un-cute" the rest of the time?"

Laughing, Jack shook her head. "No, cute doesn't even began to do you justice." She fell silent as she stared into bright green eyes. "You're beautiful," she softly admitted. "On the outside and within, I believe that you are the most beautiful woman that I have ever seen."

Noting the earnest expression on Jack's face caused Sonny to blush even more as she cast her eyes to her lap, not knowing what to say in response. *I'm having a hard time figuring you out Jack Foster. If you're not trying to press my buttons to the point where I get an itching to slap you silly, then you're either teasing me or being sweet as molasses.* Glancing up, she noticed blue eyes staring at her inquisitively, which caused more blushing. *What is the matter with me? I never blush this much!*

"Cat got your tongue?" Jack asked with a hint of playfulness in her voice.

Remaining silent, Sonny shook her head in a negative fashion while feeling the need to get some fresh air. It might have just been her imagination, but it seemed as though it was starting to become unbearably hot in here. *She's some type of sorceress. Sonny faintly nodded. That must be*

*it. And she's worked her spell on me and that's exactly why I'm having all of these feelings and thoughts.* If she kept telling herself that, she might actually come to believe it.

Cocking her head to the side, Jack studied the other woman carefully, wondering what she was thinking. Opening her mouth, Jack voiced her question.

"Oh, nothing," Sonny replied much too quickly. She watched as Jack arched an eyebrow and fought to keep a look of irritation off of her face. *If she keeps doing that, I'm gonna be forced to shave both of those brows off! They're a nice pair, but she moves them far too much!*

"So your mind is a complete blank?"

"Yep." Standing up, Sonny moved over towards the window as she heard Jack richly laugh. After a couple of moments, she managed to get the window open before perching on the sill. Carefully leaning out, Sonny took deep gulps of air as she gazed up at the clear night sky, noting the twinkling stars. She briefly wondered if Blue was looking at these very stars right now.

"Hey be careful there Sonny girl," Jack warned as she turned her chair around to observe the blonde. "If you fall this time, I'm not sure I'm gonna jump outta that window after ya. I ain't Superwoman."

Laughing, Sonny decided to move away from the window as she experienced a flashback to the riverboat. Heading back towards her chair, Sonny didn't get very far because arms were suddenly wrapped around her waist and she was pulled onto Jack's lap. When she attempted to get up, the arms around her waist became a little tighter, though not uncomfortably tighter. If she weren't so stubborn, Sonny would have admitted to at least herself that she really didn't mind being in this position. "Giving in" she turned around a little so that she could easily see Jack's face. Noting the pleased look that she found there, Sonny smirked.

"What?"

Sonny shook her head. "Nothing. Nothing at all."

Starting to trail her fingers up and down the blonde's side, Jack playfully inquired, "So what do you want for Christmas Sonny girl? Well first I suppose I should ask if you've been a good little girl this year."

As fingertips moved up and down her side, Sonny found that she had a rather difficult time concentrating. "Um...well that depends on what you define as good," she finally said, sounding flirtatious to her own ears.

A slow grin made its way to Jack's face. "Here is my theory," she said in a low voice that Sonny could only categorize as being extremely sexy. "Good is good. But bad is *so* much better." Moving her eyes to Sonny's lips, Jack slowly leaned in not fully thinking about what she was about to do. Currently not using her brain either, Sonny began to do the same thing, but stopped

when there was a sudden knock on the door. Leaping off of Jack's lap like it was suddenly on fire, the young woman noticed the nurse walking in and blushed furiously.

With an apologetic look, the nurse informed the two women that she had come to check Chloe's vitals and that it would only take a few minutes. Watching intently as the nurse did her job, Jack attempted to hide her frown as she tried to be reasonable. After all, the nurse didn't know that she was interrupting anything. She was only doing what she was supposed to do, and Jack was pleased to see that she was being so gentle with her sister.

A few minutes later, the nurse was done and wrote something down on a chart located at the end of Chloe's bed. Smiling at them both apologetically, the nurse turned around and quickly left the room, deciding that next time she came to this particular room, she would peek through the window before knocking.

Pulling her chair closer to Chloe's bed, Jack started to caress her sister's cheek with the back of her hand as she gazed at her, willing the young woman to wake up. She would give anything to just see those blue eyes that matched her own, looking back at her. Moving down Chloe's body, Jack watched as her chest rhythmically rose and fell. Seconds later, she glanced up as hands touched her shoulders, beginning a light massage. Smiling gratefully, Jack patted one of Sonny's hands before continuing to caress her sister's cheek while she felt the tight muscles in her shoulders starting to loosen up.

"Sonny, I appreciate your being here but you should go home. I know you must be tired," Jack stated after a short silence fell between them.

The blonde continued her massaging, moving her hands up and down the other woman's shoulders, feeling the tension. "You trying to get rid of me?" she asked, a smile evident in her voice.

Jack lightly chuckled as she shook her head. "Nah, I'd keep you forever if it were possible."

Glad that Jack could not see the blush that appeared on her face, Sonny quietly replied, "I want to be here with you...for you," she quickly amended. "I'm not leaving until you get to introduce me to your sister."

Jack smiled at that. "I think you and Chloe will get along perfectly. You're the sweetest, kindest women that I'm lucky to know."

Giving in to the impulse to do so, Sonny leaned down intending to kiss the other woman's cheek, when Jack abruptly turned her head causing their lips to come into contact. The kiss was brief yet had both women's hearts fluttering. Noticing that she had her eyes closed, Sonny opened them and smirked at Jack knowingly as she asked if that was planned.

Grinning much like the cat that ate the canary, the blue-eyed woman replied, "I'll never tell."

Chuckling, Sonny shook her head as she moved back over to her chair and took a seat, crossing one leg over the other in the process. Discreetly she ran her tongue along her lips while remembering the brief yet tender kiss she and Jack had just shared. What exactly was her problem lately, Sonny wondered. She had the most incredible wonderful girlfriend and had subconsciously pined for Blue, a woman that she had never met. Then Jack stepped into the picture and at first Sonny could not stand the sight of her, but it wasn't long before her business rival won her over and now Sonny found herself thinking of the woman in a more than platonic way.

*This has got to stop! Laura was right when she said that Blue was the one for me. It cannot be Jack. This is just some attraction built solely on lust.* At least that's what Sonny tried to convince herself.

"Hey, are you still with me?" Jack asked as she observed the other woman.

Blinking rapidly, Sonny looked over at Jack and nodded. "Yes, sorry. I got lost in my thoughts," she finished quietly.

Jack nodded. "I see," pausing, she glanced at her watch before returning her attention to Sonny. "You don't think you should call Laura?"

"Why would I do that?"

Jack arched an eyebrow. "Because she's your girlfriend and she might be wondering where you are at this time of night," she slowly replied.

"Laura dropped me off here so she knows where I am," Sonny paused in thought. "But I don't owe her any explanation as to my whereabouts because she's not my girlfriend anymore."

A myriad of expressions passed across Jack's face at the admission. Some of them were astonishment, confusion, sympathy, and though Jack felt guilty confessing it, glee. Though she had nothing against Laura (even if she did slug her), Jack felt like running to the roof of the hospital and jumping up and down in joy as she yelled that Sonny was a free agent. When did this happen? Better yet, why?

"You're kidding," Jack started, looking surprised. "What happened? I thought you two were all right."

Nodding, Sonny replied, "We were up until a few weeks ago. We went on a romantic getaway to this beach resort in Panama City for the weekend and she broke up with me last night."

A look of disbelief appeared on Jack's face. "Laura dumped *you*? What is she? Stupid?" Mentally chastising herself for the outburst, she apologized.

Sonny waved a hand in the air. "It's okay. And no, Laura is far from stupid. She's...good-hearted and understanding," she softly admitted. "The main reason she broke up with me is because she

wanted me to be happy and she felt that someone else could make it happen better than she could."

"Who?"

"You remember the online friend that I was supposed to meet at Disney?" Jack nodded silently. "Well, Laura thought that she and I were...more than just friends so at first she figured that my online friend was the one for me but after I explained that we really were just friends she decided that someone else was my soul mate if you will."

*And just who might that be? "Who?" Man, I sound like an owl.*

For a moment, Sonny simply looked at Jack before she faintly whispered, "You."

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As they walked back to Chloe's room with fresh cups of coffee in hand, Jack glanced towards Sonny saying, "So let me get this straight. Just because we shared a little kiss and a few looks passed between us at my coffeehouse during karaoke night when I was singing, your girl- your ex-girlfriend thinks that you and I are soul mates?" *That sounds good to me!* Jack was smiling like an idiot on the inside. She had a feeling that if Laura would have been there right now, that she might have kissed the woman. This was like opening a Christmas present that you didn't really think Santa would deliver.

Sonny nodded as she brought her cup to her lips, taking a small sip. "That's the gist of it. I tried to tell her that it wasn't true, but she just refused to listen to me," she paused thoughtfully as she took another sip of coffee. "You know, I've been thinking about it and maybe it was a good idea that Laura ended our relationship anyway. I mean, I loved her...I *do* love her, but I can't honestly say that *in* love with her anymore. So that's not fair to her to be in a relationship with someone that cannot completely love her the way she deserves to be loved. I'm sure that in no time she'll find someone that can do just that."

Smiling to herself, Jack suddenly thought of Leslie who was Laura's biggest fan and most likely had a major crush on her as well. *Oh, yes I'm sure she will.* "I agree," Jack started as they walked into Chloe's room. "And so will you Sonny. You'll find someone that will love you like Laura did, if not more and you'll love them just as much as they love you." She hoped that someday that lucky person would be her.

Softly smiling at her, Sonny put her cup down on the floor before she turned and wrapped her arms around Jack, squeezing her tight as she quietly thanked her for the positive words. Careful not to spill her coffee on the smaller woman, Jack hugged her back, luxuriating in the feel of Sonny's body pressed against hers. At that moment, she wished that she had the power to stop time just so that she could hold Sonny for a little while longer. Glancing at the vacant bed, an idea developed in Jack's mind as Sonny ended their hug and reached down to pick up her coffee.

"Hey, you look tired Sonny girl," Jack remarked as she indicated the empty hospital bed with a nod of her head. "Why don't you try to get some sleep? I'll wake you up if anything happens. Promise."

Green eyes moved between the bed and Jack as Sonny chose her words carefully. "Only if you agree to join me," she said, immediately thinking that her reply sounded too much like a proposition. Quickly she added, "You need sleep as well and I'm willing to wager that that bed is large enough to accommodate us both." *There. That is much much better.*

Grinning Jack inquired, "You trust me now?"

"What do you mean?"

"Considering what happened at Disney. You know...when I was kinda touching and kissing you while you slept."

A blush appeared on Sonny's cheeks as she thought back to that morning. She remembered it like it had happened just yesterday. Looking up at Jack, she nodded. "Yes, I trust you. I trust you completely actually," Sonny said earnestly.

Being touched by the words, Jack was almost rendered speechless. "Really?" she asked in a faint voice. What a concept this was. Sonny trusted her completely.

Smiling at her, Sonny replied, "Really. I really do Jack. I can hardly believe that we've gotten to this point, but I'm so glad we did and that we're becoming friends."

They were becoming friends? Well Jack could be content with that. At least for the time being. "I remember the last time we were in a hospital room and you attempted to be my friend but I screwed it up before it could truly happen." Jack looked down at the floor, suddenly feeling sheepish.

Placing two fingertips under her chin, Sonny gently pushed up until she could see Jack's baby blues. "Let's give it another try, shall we?" she softly inquired.

Her lips breaking into a smile, Jack nodded as she reached up and took Sonny's hand in her own, kissing the palm of it. She watched as Sonny began to blush and her smile widened. "Yes, let's...friend."

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Being awakened by Sonny's stirring, Jack opened her eyes and glanced at her watch. Since it was dark in the room, it was difficult to see what time it was, but Jack finally concluded that it was five something in the morning. Looking down at Sonny who was turned away from but nestled against her, Jack felt the younger woman squirm again. Wanting to see Sonny more clearly, Jack reached above them and pulled on a string connected to a small light, which illuminated their bed. Glancing back towards her sister, Jack then returned her attention to the woman she was



sharing this bed with. Noticing that Sonny's eyelids were lightly fluttering, Jack wondered what she was dreaming about. *Could this be another one about Blue?* She grinned mischievously. *Meaning, me.*

Hearing a faint moan, Jack looked at Sonny curiously as the grin on her face broadened. *Well, well, well. Was I right?* Jack motionlessly watched as the smaller woman began to squirm around in the bed and moan more. Since they were lying on top of the sheets, Jack had a good view as Sonny slowly slid a hand over her breasts, down her taut stomach and between her thighs. Letting out a frustrated sigh, Jack shook her head. *Nope, I'm not gonna do that. I refuse to touch her no matter how much she arouses the hell out of me.* One, her sister was laying in a coma in the next bed and two Jack had learned her lesson the last time when she got a good swift knee in her crotch.

Still asleep, Sonny moved onto her back as she managed to snake a hand underneath the waistband of her shorts. She moaned again as her petite body writhed on the bed. Meanwhile, Jack groaned, now in desperate need of a shower. A very cold shower at that. She shook her head, thinking that this was just pure torture. Reaching out towards Sonny, Jack started to wake the woman up when she suddenly opened her mouth and spoke.

"Mmm, Jack I need you to take me," Sonny throatily said. "Make me yours." Her hand moved up and down within the crotch area of her shorts.

Jack's mouth became dry as she heard the words that she wished Sonny would utter when she was fully conscious. Moving onto her stomach, the blue-eyed woman pushed her face into the pillow muffling another groan. If this was some sort of cosmic test, she was dangerously close to failing. *Thou shalt not touch thy neighbor, when thy neighbor is sleeping,* Jack mentally repeated to herself again and again. Raising her head, Jack glanced at Sonny as she came to a decision. She had to get out of here and get some fresh air. Nodding, the tall woman turned around and sat up in the bed, thinking that she could use a walk around the block. In fact, maybe she would even do a little jogging.

Putting her long legs over the side of the bed, Jack started to get up when a hand clamped down on her shoulder. "Where are you going?"

Blue eyes widened in shock as Jack looked over her shoulder to see bright green eyes staring at her curiously. Quickly licking her lips, Jack replied, "Out for a run around the block. I'm in need of some fresh air."

"Well guess what?" Sitting up, Sonny scooted closer to Jack before hotly whispering in her ear, "I'm in need of you."

Looking surprised, Jack propped her legs back up on the bed before turning to regard Sonny more closely. "What did you just say?" Her ears must have been playing tricks on her because she couldn't have heard that correctly.

Grinning, Sonny repeated, "I said that I'm in need of you." Raising her hand to Jack's face, the blonde lightly caressed her cheek. "Do you need me too Jack?"

Pushing all suspicions aside, Jack nodded as she leaned into the hand on her cheek. "You know I do. I think I've always needed you."

"Show me," Sonny whispered just as she leaned in and pressed her lips to Jack's. The kiss quickly deepened as Jack wrapped her arms around the smaller woman's waist, pushing her back onto the bed until she was laying half on top of her. Hearing Sonny moan only proved to turn Jack on more as she darted her tongue in and out of the woman's mouth, eliciting her own moan when Sonny began to rub a thigh between the apex of Jack's thighs.

Breaking the kiss and proceeding to place butterfly kisses along Sonny's jaw, Jack whispered, "Oh, Sonny I love you so much." As her lips landed on the blonde's neck, Jack started to lightly suck there as she felt small hands stroking up and down her back in encouragement.

Sonny loudly moaned in pleasure. "Oh, Jack...yes, Jack."

"Mmm, Sonny," the brunette said, her voice muffled in the crook of Sonny's neck. She swirled her tongue around the smaller woman's racing pulse point as she rocked her hips against Sonny's thigh.

"Jack...Jack...Jack!"

Her head snapping up, Jack blinked her eyes rapidly before trying to focus on the person who had shouted her name. Wearing a confused expression, she looked at the blonde standing next to the bed with a small bag in her hand that smelled of breakfast food. Sonny? How could she be there when...

Glancing back to the bed, Jack noticed that she was the only one laying in it. Her arms were wrapped around a pillow that had a suspicious wet spot on it where her mouth had been. *Oh...my...God.* Jack wanted to pick up the pillow and smother herself as she felt her cheeks stinging due to an impending blush. It had only been a dream. Well she should have known that Sonny was not the type to try to seduce someone in a hospital room, with a patient in a coma in the next bed. Feeling quite dirty and ashamed of herself despite the fact that it had been a dream she could not control, Jack sat up in the bed with her legs dangling over the edge. Looking at Sonny, she noted the blank expression on her face. *What exactly are you thinking?* She sincerely hoped that Sonny did not think she was some sort of pervert.

"I brought you some breakfast," Sonny stated as she handed the bag to Jack, nodding as the woman thanked her. "I didn't want to wake you, but thought you needed to eat something." *What were you just doing?* When Sonny walked into the room not two minutes ago, she found a sleeping Jack slowly moving her body up and down on the bed as she kissed a pillow. Evidently, she must have been enduring some type of erotic dream.

"Thank you for thinking of me," Jack replied, wishing that this awkwardness would disappear. She glanced at her watch, noting that it was almost eight o'clock. A thought suddenly occurred to Jack. Had she been talking in her sleep? Did Sonny overhear her declaring her love? Wetting dry lips, Jack opened her mouth to speak when the blonde interrupted her.

"The nurse checked Chloe's vitals not too long ago and reported that they were pretty good. So we're just waiting for her to wake up now. I'm sure she will be soon."

Jack smiled as she glanced back at her sister. "Thank you for the update Sonny."

"You're welcome."

"Sonny...did you hear me?"

"When?"

Jack's face became flushed again. "I mean was I just talking in my sleep?" she asked in a quiet tone of voice.

"Oh." Sonny shook her head. "No, I didn't hear you say a thing." *You were just moaning, which sort of excited me, but I'll never admit that.* "You better eat your breakfast before it gets cold," the blonde added in order to change the subject, noticing Jack's strained behavior. Highly curious, it was on the tip of her tongue to ask what the woman had said, but Sonny decided against it. Whatever it had been, it wasn't meant for her ears.

Glancing at the bag in her hands as though she had forgotten it, Jack gave Sonny a slight smile of appreciation. "You're right." When she opened the bag, the delicious smells that quickly assaulted her nose caused her stomach to growl. Hearing the tell sign of hunger, Sonny chuckled as she took a seat on the bed next to Jack. The other woman looked at her sheepishly as she said, "Hey, I haven't eaten in hours!" Relieved that the awkwardness between them had vanished, Jack joined in on the chuckling. Opening the bag, she pulled out a small bottle of orange juice and two egg and sausage muffins wrapped in paper napkins. Jack tried to give one of the sandwiches to Sonny, but she shook her head negatively.

"No, I brought those just for you," the blonde stated as she happily watched Jack take a big bite out of one of them. "I ate in the cafeteria and then put those together for you."

Swallowing, Jack twisted off the cap from the bottle of juice and took a long swig before replying, "It's delicious. Better than McDonald's." Winking at Sonny, she took another bite, half the sandwich nearly gone now.

The blonde chuckled. "Maybe I should open a fast food restaurant after *Bean There, Done That* closes its doors."

An unreadable look appeared on Jack's face as she placed her sandwich on a napkin before seriously looking at Sonny. "I've been giving this a lot of thought and I wanted to talk to you

about that. I've decided-" Jack stopped speaking as she heard something that sounded much like a moan. Sonny must have heard it too since she quickly looked over towards Chloe, Jack doing the same. Rising, both women hurried to Chloe's bed, each coming to stand on opposite sides. They noticed Chloe's eyelids fluttering as she moaned again.

"Chloe...honey?" Jack softly said as she took her sister's hand in her own. "Can you hear me? My friend Sonny is here and we'd like you to wake up. Will you do that for us?"

A moment later, Chloe began to slowly open her eyes, glancing between Jack and Sonny before focusing on her sister. A small smile tugged at her lips as she lightly squeezed the hand joined with her own. Wearing a smile of her own, Jack quickly returned the squeeze before bringing Chloe's hand to her lips and kissing the back of it. Joyous tears springing to her eyes, Sonny silently watched the exchange between the two sisters for a minute before quietly telling Jack that she would be in the waiting room.

"No stay," Jack replied while looking at the blonde. The tears she saw in Sonny's eyes pulled at her heartstrings and Jack desperately wanted to hug her close. "I want you to."

Walking around the bed to stand next to Jack, Sonny stood on her tiptoes to kiss the woman's cheek briefly before whispering close to her ear, "I'm gonna retire to the waiting room for a bit because I think that you and Chloe should have some private time to talk." Pulling over a chair for Jack to sit in, she then added, "I won't be far away if you should need me for whatever reason."

Giving her a grateful smile, Jack released Chloe's hand so that she could embrace Sonny. It was on the tip of her tongue to say that she needed the blonde every moment of every day, but she was unsure of how Sonny would take that. Pressing a kiss to the smaller woman's cheek, Jack let go and took a step back as she looked into Sonny's eyes. "Thank you for being here. You couldn't begin to know how much I appreciate it."

Sonny smiled again. "There's no place else I rather be."

Rendered speechless, Jack watched as the younger woman turned around and headed out of the hospital room, quietly closing the door behind her.

"Who's the pretty blonde?" Chloe softly asked in a teasing voice.

Chuckling, Jack turned towards her sister and took a seat in the chair next to her bed. Slipping her hand into her sister's, Jack looked at the younger woman with affection and love. She couldn't put into words just how much she had missed that voice.

"That's my new friend Sonny Campbell," Jack replied as she brushed her thumb back and forth across Chloe's hand.

Chloe's face became thoughtful and then she quickly winced finding that it hurt to think. Hearing Jack inquire if she needed a doctor, Chloe shook her head. "No, I'm just a little sore," she gave a slight pause, "Sonny Campbell...isn't she your competition?"

"Yup."

"And now she's your friend?"

Jack nodded, with a small smile on her lips. It was funny how things worked out sometimes.

"Yup."

"That's...interesting," Chloe slowly replied as she allowed her heavy eyelids to shut. The little bit of talking she had just done, was beginning to wear her out already and all the young woman wanted to do was sleep. However, she soon realized that her big sister had other plans. Chloe inwardly sighed as Jack suddenly started in on a lecture about the dangers of driving while under the influence of alcohol.

"I know what I did was stupid," Chloe said, interrupting. Opening one blue eye with some effort, she looked at the other woman. "I promise to never do it again." Closing her eye, Chloe took a deep breath, wincing because of the pain that shot through her chest. She made a mental note not to do that again anytime soon.

"Chloe..." Jack started in a soft voice, "I can't lose you too." Her voice breaking, Jack lowered her head as hot tears of both relief and fear rolled down her cheeks.

Hearing the sobbing, Chloe's heart broke in two as she opened her eyes to watch her sister. She hadn't seen Jack cry in such a long time, that she failed to remember when the last time was.

"Jack..." At a loss as to how to console her sister, the younger woman merely reached out a hand and placed it on Jack's shoulder, squeezing slightly. "Please look at me," she went on to say moments later. Slowly raising her head, Jack looked at Chloe as she attempted to stop crying.

"I'm not going anywhere." A teasing smile made its way to Chloe's lips as she asked, "You didn't think you'd be able to get rid of me *that* easily did you? I'm gonna be a thorn in your backside for many many years to come. After all, it's my job as a little sister."

Breaking out in laughter, Jack patted the hand still resting on her shoulder. "You promise?"

Chloe's smile broadened. "I do."

Arising from her chair, Jack gently gave her sister a hug, feeling as Chloe slowly but surely returned it. The loving embrace seemed to last forever before Jack sat back down in her seat. Slipping her hand into Chloe's she looked at her sister as she gathered her thoughts. "So does this mean that you forgive me? Jack finally asked in a quiet voice.

Silent for a few moments, Chloe then replied, "No, because there isn't anything to forgive. *I'm* the one who was irrational and stubborn and I should be apologizing to you. Jack, I treated you wrong and I said some horrible hurtful things that I wish I could take back. You have shown me

more love than anyone on this earth and look how I've repaid you. I'm so sorry," she finished in a whisper, as she became teary-eyed.

Using her free hand, Jack reached over and pulled a tissue out of a box before she gently dabbed at her sister's eyes. She softly smiled as the younger woman thanked her for the gesture. "Tell you what?" Jack started as silence fell between them. "Why don't we leave all of that in past and vow to make the future brighter?"

Chloe nodded, as she gave the hand she was holding a small squeeze. "That sounds like a plan to me." Feeling her eyelids growing heavy again, the young woman fought to keep them open just a few moments longer. Looking into her sister's eyes she said, "No matter how much I might behave like a jerk...or you for that matter," Chloe grinned slightly, "I've always loved you and I always will."

Lightly chuckling, Jack leaned forward and kissed her sister's forehead. "I love you too, kid," she whispered, watching as Chloe closed her eyes. Disengaging her hand from Chloe's, Jack started to caress the younger woman's cheek as she gazed at her, thankful that she would be all right. She didn't have the slightest idea what she would have done had she lost Chloe, who she considered a precious gift. Jack shook her head. That was the last thing she wanted to think about.

"Chloe," Jack softly started, though she knew that the other woman was asleep by now, "you may not think that there is anything for you to forgive me for, but there is. Some of the things...a lot of them actually, you said the day you moved out of the house were correct." Jack took a deep breath as she collected her thoughts. "When I first started out in these business adventures my main goal was to make enough so that I could take good care of you. I also wanted to make you proud to have me as your big sister. Over the years, I think I lost myself if that makes any sense. You were right when you said I enjoyed being known as the Conqueror. As cruel as it may sound, it gave me a thrill to cause other businesses to collapse." Jack slowly shook her head. "I became something...someone that I'm so ashamed of now and I'm so sorry that you ultimately had to see that side of me. When I became your guardian, I wanted to be a role model for you, but I've failed. I've succeeded professionally, but I'm a moron when it comes to what really is important, and that's you.

I've given it a lot of thought and things are going to start changing. *I'm* going to change kid. I just hope it isn't too late for you to be proud to call me your sister. I've always been proud to call you mine, because you are the most beautiful young woman, inside and out. In fact, I feel like I should be the youngest of us, because Chloe you're *my* role model. I look up to you...figuratively speaking of course." A smile appeared on Jack's lips. "You're smart, funny, warm, thoughtful...I wanna be just like you when I grow up." Blinking away a few tears, Jack kissed Chloe's cheek. "Sleep well sweetie. We'll talk more later."

Standing, Jack stretched before turning and heading towards the door. Looking back at her sister, she then quietly left, heading in the direction of the waiting room. Stopping just before she reached the room, Jack leaned against a wall as she took a few moments to compose herself. Mentally telling herself to be strong, Jack walked into the waiting room, seeing a few people

there, amongst them Sonny. She smiled broadly as she watched the blonde sleeping, the back of her head touching the wall behind her. She looked so sweet and innocent.

Strolling over to where Sonny was, Jack sat in the chair next to hers before she leaned towards the blonde whispering close to her ear, "Wake up sleeping beauty."

"I'm not asleep," Sonny swiftly replied, her eyes still closed. She ignored the tingling sensation that started just after she felt Jack's warm breath caressing the ridge of her ear. "I was merely resting my eyes is all."

"Oh, I see," Jack said as the smile on her lips grew. "Guess that means I don't have to kiss you in order to wake you."

Opening her eyes, Sonny looked at Jack, with a hint of a smile on her face. "I can tell that you're in a good mood. That's wonderful."

Leaning back in her chair, Jack wrapped an arm around Sonny's shoulders. "Well I've got every reason in the world to be in a good mood. My sister is going to pull through this just fine and she and I have made up. Plus, I've got you as a friend now and for that, I'm truly thankful. Everything seems to be looking up and I have a feeling that things are just going to keep getting better and better." Jack smiled again as she gently squeezed Sonny. "I'm a lucky woman."

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Settling back in the bathtub, Jack let out a sigh of pleasure, feeling the tense muscles in her body start to loosen as she relaxed. Sonny's suggestion that she soak in the tub was a good idea, because this was exactly what Jack needed. Looking around the small yet cozy bathroom, the brunette smiled, thinking that Sonny had went to great lengths to make this an enjoyable experience for her.

Soft relaxing music played from a small stereo sitting on top of the sink. And having left the light off, Sonny had placed aromatherapy candles all around the bathroom. Watching the shadows on the walls created by the flickering of the candles, Jack picked a mug up from a tray and took a short sip of the delicious chamomile tea Sonny had made for her. After taking a few more swallows, Jack placed the cup back on the tray before lying back in the tub, the nape of her neck relaxing against a rolled up towel.

Jack closed her eyes as she took in the fragrant scents flowing throughout the small room. Just moments after she entered Sonny's bathroom, Jack felt the tension in her body begin to loosen up with each breath she took. The ambiance, candles, tea, music, and bath were definitely having an effect on her. Not to mention the fact that she was alone with Sonny in her apartment. A grin made its way to Jack's lips as her mind began to wander with the possibilities. Namely, Sonny joining her in this bathtub that was just large enough to accommodate them both. *No, no, no. I shouldn't think such things*, Jack mentally chastised herself, though the mischievous grin remained.

Picking up her cup, Jack sipped some more of the tea as she let out a soft purr of complete contentment. Dang, this stuff was great! Jack made a mental note to ask Sonny where she bought her chamomile. She wanted to stock up on it! Hearing a light knock on the door, Jack put the cup back on the tray before looking over her left shoulder towards the closed door. "Who goes there?" the brunette asked in a singsong voice. She heard chuckling emanating from the other side of the door and smiled. Sonny's laughter was one of the most pleasant sounds on this earth.

"It is I, Sonny Campbell Ma'am," the blonde replied in a booming voice.

"And what pray-tell may I do for you Sonny Campbell Ma'am?"

Laughing, the other woman replied, "That's what I called on you for Ma'am. To see if there was anything that I could do for you. Your wish is my command." Sonny bit her lower lip hard at her poor choice of words. Knowing Jack, she would have a field day with them.

Jack grinned, liking the sound of that. "Do come in Sonny one."

"I can't."

"Why not?" Jack inquired. "Is the door locked?"

"Umm...no," Sonny replied in a slightly strained voice. "I can't come in the bathroom because you're in there completely naked and I don't think it would be appropriate for me to see you in that...condition."

"But you already saw me naked," the brunette quickly retorted. "Remember the sauna?"

Her cheeks beginning to redden, Sonny thought back to that day at the gym. She most definitely remembered what Jack did in the sauna. That situation was forever branded on her brain. "Yeah, I remember but still...I shouldn't..."

"C'mon Sonny," Jack said in a coaxing voice. "I may be naked but I'm surrounded by big fluffy bubbles, so you can't see anything that isn't allowed to be shown in public." Jack glanced towards the door as she heard a small click. Seconds later, Sonny walked inside, closing the door behind her before she leaned her back against it while looking towards Jack, albeit a little uncomfortably.

"How umm...how's the bath coming along?" the blonde asked as she wrung her hands together nervously. Jack Foster was in her bathtub. Nearly six feet of gorgeous sopping wet nakedness was relaxing just a few feet away from her and that fact did things to Sonny's body that she wouldn't dare even admit to herself.

A knowing grin appeared on Jack's lips as she watched the other woman's expression. She wondered what Sonny would do if she were to stand up right now. *I wouldn't be opposed to the idea of her joining me*, Jack naughtily thought. "It's coming just fine," the brunette replied. Leaning over, she picked up her cup and took another sip. "And this chamomile tea is simply to

die for. By far the best tea I've ever had! Where did you get? I wanna know, 'cause I wanna get some as soon as possible. Chloe would probably love it too."

One blonde eyebrow arched as Sonny carefully examined Jack's face, paying close attention to her eyes. Now was it just her imagination or were those blue eyes looking glassy and much too bright? Also, wasn't Jack speaking just a wee bit fast as though she only had a small amount of time to get out what she wanted to say? Surely, the chamomile tea couldn't be responsible for all of that.

"Jack...are you feeling okay?" Sonny inquired, her voice laced with concern. By the grin that appeared to be stuck on the woman's lips, Sonny figured that the answer would be yes.

The brunette nodded as she finished the contents of her cup before putting it down. "Yeah, I'm fine! This tea along with the aspirin completely took care of that terrible headache I had. I feel so light and happy now! By the way, that's the big bottle of aspirin you have darlin'. Should last you for months!"

Sonny's brow furrowed in thought. What big bottle of aspirin was Jack talking about? The bottle in her medicine cabinet was small enough to fit in the palm of your hand. "Jack, I told you to look for a white bottle. Was it white?"

"Yep."

"But it wasn't small enough to be concealed in your hand?"

Jack shook her head, wondering where this conversation was headed. "That's right my little Sonny bunny." She winked at the blonde, grinning broadly. "Oh, and the pills were kind of big too."

Uh oh. Sonny had a feeling that her guest had taken the wrong medication. No wonder Jack was feeling so euphoric. The tea was good, but not *that* good! "Were the pills white and oval-shaped with a fancy 'v' on them that sort of resembles a bird flying away?"

"Whoa, you're a psychic!" Jack laughed heartily. "Ding, ding you're absolutely correct!"

The blonde slapped a hand over her face as she unsuccessfully attempted to stifle a chuckle. Jack was definitely flying much higher than a kite. Walking over to the medicine cabinet, Sonny opened it and took out a large white bottle. Turning around, she showed the bottle to Jack, saying, "You didn't take any aspirin Jack. What you took was Vicodin. What I want to know now is how many? It's recommended to only take one or two."

Jack held up the first and middle finger of her left hand. "Two. I've heard of Vicodin. It's a powerful and sometimes addictive painkiller. What are you doing with some?"

"A few weeks ago I was hit by a car and my doctor prescribed them for the pain." Sonny could have given herself a swift kick in the rear when she noticed the look of guilt that appeared on

Jack's face. Quickly putting the bottle of Vicodin back in the medicine cabinet, she moved over to the tub and knelt down, placing a petite hand on top of the other woman's shoulder. "I'm sorry Jack. I shouldn't have said that so flippantly. I hadn't meant it to come out that way. Please forgive me."

Softly smiling, Jack leaned over and briefly kissed Sonny's cheek. "Nothing to forgive Sonny. It's all right," pausing, Jack gazed into Sonny's eyes as she gathered her thoughts. "I've caused you so much pain both physically and emotionally. Therefore, I should be the one apologizing." Seeing that the blonde was about to say something, Jack quickly pressed two fingers against her lips, successfully silencing her. "Please allow me to speak." When Sonny gave a small nod of acquiescence, Jack removed her fingers. "I've single-handedly created turmoil in your life ever since the first day we met and now that I look back at all I've done, I'm ashamed of myself. I don't exactly know when it happened, but somewhere along the way, I turned into a...well a cold-hearted bitch and I don't want people to see me in that light anymore. Frankly, I'm tired of being known as the Conqueror." Jack sighed as she leaned back in tub, her eyes on Sonny. "I just wanna be Jack."

When Sonny opened her mouth to speak, Jack held up a silencing hand. "So, I've been giving it a lot of thought, and I've come to a decision on how to start making changes to improve myself. I'm going to close down *Brew n' Paradise*."

Green eyes widened in surprise. She most certainly hadn't seen that one coming. "What? Why would you do that Jack?" *Okay former Conqueror, no more Vicodin for you!*

"Because my coffeehouse has created much more trouble than it's worth," Jack replied gravely.

"What trouble? What are you talking about?"

"If it wasn't for *Brew n' Paradise* I never would have hit you with my car, nearly killing you," Jack started as she started counting off the facts on her fingers. "Also, you and Laura would never have endured the problems that you did in your relationship, because I wouldn't be around to complicate things. Because of me, she ultimately dumped you--"

Sonny quickly interrupted by saying, "When you put it that way it sounds so harsh. I'd like it much better if you said she ended our relationship."

The dark-haired woman rolled her eyes. "Okay, because of me Laura ended your relationship. And if--"

"And--"

Jack inhaled sharply as she faintly glared at Sonny. "Please shut up or I'll be forced to put a strip of electrical tape over those pretty soft lips of yours." Sonny pressed her lips together so tightly that they almost hurt. Pausing for a few seconds, Jack then went on with what she was previously trying to say. "And if that wasn't bad enough, Chloe and I have an argument because of the coffeehouse and she moves out. Worst of all, not long after she does, she almost gets herself

killed as her car tumbles over and over down a hill. Therefore, if I'd never built the coffeehouse, Chloe and I wouldn't have quarreled over it and she wouldn't be lying in a hospital bed at this very moment. And if you'd never met me, then I wouldn't have put your life in jeopardy not once but twice!" Jack looked deeply into Sonny's eyes as she finished her fast-paced explanation. "You see what repercussions my selfish actions started in motion?"

"Jack, you can't blame yourself for all of that."

"Can't I?" the brunette replied in a soft voice. "If I'd never wanted to destroy yours and Sarah's business in the first place, then all of those things never would have occurred."

"You can't predict the future. First of all, I could have been paying better attention as I rode my bicycle." Thinking back, Sonny remembered how she had carefully looked both ways before she continued across the street. *Well that's just a little piece of information that I'll keep to myself.* "Secondly, you are not the reason that Laura and I broke up. We did so because she realized before I did that we weren't meant for each other. You also aren't the reason that Chloe nearly killed herself. You didn't put a gun to her head and make her consume an abundant amount of alcohol before getting behind the wheel. I know that she's your sister Jack and I mean no disrespect when I say that Chloe was behaving like an immature dumbass. She's an adult, and she's solely responsible for her actions. And, you cannot blame yourself for what happened at Disneyland. I was the moron who decided to sit on that railing and then fell overboard," Sonny felt her temper rising as her hands gripped onto the edge of the tub tightly. For some peculiar reason, she almost had this desire to slap Jack into next year. "And Jack, you seemed to have come to some stupid conclusion that my life would have been better had I never met you. Well," Sonny paused taking a deep breath, "you couldn't be more wrong. Sure, I don't like the way we met by your literally running into me, but I'm thankful that you came into my life because I'm happy now that you're my friend. We started off rocky, but now the path is much smoother."

"I've wanted to kill you more times than I've wanted to hug you, but Jack for some reason I cannot possibly imagine my life without your presence. You make me laugh and smile and God help me, I even like it sometimes when you tease me. If I had the opportunity to turn back the hands of time, I wouldn't do it. If I could change anything I wanted to that happened in these past few weeks, I wouldn't alter a thing." Releasing her grasp on the tub, Sonny captured one of Jack's hands in her own as she looked into soft blue eyes. "What I'm trying to say is that I care about you Jack and I hate seeing you be so hard on yourself. You can't beat yourself up for the events that occurred after your coffeehouse was built. If you want to make a change for the better than that's terrific, but don't sink into this "oh, I'm such a horrible person" mode. Calling yourself names won't change anything. Only your actions will. Like the quote goes, actions speak louder than words."

Silently regarding Sonny with an expression that was obviously love, Jack felt her heart melt into a puddle. She was so touched by the woman's words that she felt a lump growing in her throat, which suggested that she was dangerously close to crying. Swallowing with a bit of difficulty, Jack lightly squeezed the hand holding hers. *Do those Vicodin give you a rush as well as make you emotional?* Jack bit down on her lower lip, afraid that if she spoke she might tell Sonny that she loved her and how she would be content spending the rest of her life gazing into those

beautiful green eyes. *Oh, Sonny you don't know how much I love you. I would willingly give up my life if I could spend even one little hour making sweet passionate love to you.*

Lips curving into a smile, Sonny reached into the water for Jack's floating blue pouf. Picking up a bottle of body wash, she flipped the cap open before squirting some of the thick raspberry scented substance onto the pouf and then started the process of lathering it. Instructing Jack to lean forward, Sonny began to lightly run the soapy pouf along her back, using long slow strokes. Closing her eyes, Jack savored the moment while imagining that it was not the pouf but Sonny's lips placing feather light kisses on her back. As the pouf slowly made its way up her spine and across her shoulder blades, Jack bit down on her lower lip in order to contain a moan of pleasure. She wondered if Sonny was trying to tease her or was she completely clueless as to what she was doing. Jack glanced over her shoulder into innocent green eyes. Just as she had suspected, Sonny had no idea what this was doing to her. This was like sweet torture.

"Something the matter?" Sonny asked as she began to rinse the soap off of Jack's back. Was it just her imagination, or had those blue eyes become darker? Almost like Jack was... Sonny felt the heat rising in her cheeks. It was time to leave the bathroom and the naked wet gorgeous woman in her tub. Quickly.

The dark-haired woman shook her head as she lightly cleared her throat. "Um...no. Everything is just fine. Thanks for washing my back Sonny. That's the most difficult place for me to reach." Glancing over her shoulder again, Jack smiled at the blonde, watching as she stood up.

Returning the smile, Sonny winked at her. "You're welcome, Jack." Walking over to the towel rack, the blonde dried her hands before turning back towards her guest. "Why don't you finish up your bath and by the time you come out, I'll have lunch ready, 'kay?"

"I'll be out in a few minutes," the brunette replied as she looked back at Sonny. "Anyone ever tell you that you're the hostess with the mostess?" She grinned slightly. "Welcomed me into your home, offered me a wonderful bath and now you're gonna feed me. Hell, I might just wanna move in!" Jack's grin grew larger.

Sonny began to richly laugh. "Yeah, that makes a lot of sense. You and Chloe move out of that palace of yours into my one bedroom apartment!"

"Hey, don't knock this place," Jack replied, wearing a tender smile. "It's full of love and warmth because of you and I think that you and your home are terrific."

Around two weeks ago, if anyone had told Sonny that she would believe Jack was a sweet woman, she would have said they were insane to think such a thing. Though now she was beginning to realize that it was true. Sure Jack could be cocky, infuriating and excessively flirty, but underneath it all she did have her moments of sweetness. Resisting the urge to walk over and kiss the woman's cheek, Sonny uttered soft thanks before opening the bathroom door and quietly leaving.

Leaning against the closed bathroom door, Sonny let out a soft sigh as she momentarily closed her eyes. This was supposed to be a mere friendship, but some of the thoughts going through her mind were more than friendly. It had to just be a silly meaningless crush if anything. They had been spending time together and had even slept in the same bed twice. Therefore, this was bound to happen. Successfully convincing herself of this, Sonny smiled a bit in relief. She and Jack were just friends and that was all they would ever be.

Her heart belonged solely to Blue.

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After finishing her bath, Jack blow-dried her hair and pulled it all back into a ponytail with a rubberband she found in one of Sonny's bathroom drawers. Grabbing a pair of loose-fitting blue jeans and a maroon T-shirt, she quickly put them on, glad that along with a spare tire she always kept an extra set of clothing in her trunk. If she hadn't, she would be forced to wait for her clothes to finish washing and drying because Jack doubted that any of Sonny's clothes would fit her.

Giving the top half of her body the once over in the medicine chest mirror, Jack headed towards the door. Glancing at her sneakers neatly placed next to the toilet, she decided to remain barefoot until she and Sonny left to return to the hospital later this evening. On exiting the bathroom door, Jack noticed Sonny sitting at her computer desk. She detected the sound of keys being rapidly clicked as the blonde intently stared at her computer screen. Yet to be seen, Jack watched in curiosity as the other woman continued doing whatever it was that she was up to.

*Hmm, wonder if what's she's writing is for Blue? Um...I mean for me.* Jack shook her head. *Geez, now I'm referring to myself in the third person.* Deciding to find out, the dark-haired woman quietly slipped into the living room unnoticed by the blonde whose full attention was on the computer. Wearing a faint mischievous smile and feeling like a precocious child spying on her older sibling, Jack tiptoed until she was standing about three feet behind Sonny. Thankful for her 20/20 vision, she looked over the other woman's shoulder towards the screen, instantly noting that Sonny was writing an email. She also noted with a broad smile that the email was for Blueyez.

Unfortunately, Jack wasn't able to read past "Dear Blue" because Sonny suddenly clicked the send button before she swiveled around in her chair to face the brunette. Feeling like a deer caught in the headlights of an oncoming vehicle, Jack looked back at her sheepishly. Starting to grin, Sonny clucked her tongue as she slowly shook her head. Folding her arms across her chest, she sat back in her chair as she silently regarded Jack.

While trying not to fidget, the brunette wondered what she was thinking. If the grin on her face was any indication, she wasn't too upset. Finally not being able to stand the silence a moment more, Jack opened her mouth to speak. "Well?"

Cocking her head to the side, Sonny kept the grin in place. "Well what?"

Jack suddenly wished that she had the ability to read minds. "So you caught me snooping. Now what are you gonna do or say about it?"

Sonny shrugged. "Nothing." She then turned back around so that she was facing the computer. Logging off of the Internet, she stood up stretching languidly before looking over her shoulder towards Jack, who was wearing a suspicious expression. Suppressing a giggle, Sonny walked over to Jack, standing in front of her. "Why are you looking at me like that?"

"I sneak into the living-"

"No, no, no," Sonny interrupted, grinning faintly. "You didn't sneak Jack. I saw you the moment you came out of the bathroom." The grin on her lips broadened. "Guess you're not as slick as you think you are businesswoman formerly known as the Conqueror."

Arching an eyebrow, Jack attempted to hide a grin but it was impossible to do. This little woman was just too cute and saucy. "Remember when you were washing my back?" Sonny nodded, trying to figure out why Jack changed the subject. Leaning towards the shorter woman, the brunette hotly whispered in her ear, "I was plenty slick then Sonny. And it had nothing to do with the bath water I was sitting in." Watching the blush that immediately appeared, Jack grinned to herself. *Score one for moi!*

Okay, it was time for another subject change before Jack had her glowing like a Christmas tree. Lightly clearing her throat, Sonny took a few steps back to the desk and picked up her keys. "I'm going to *Bean There, Done That Jack*. I'll be back in a couple hours."

Hiding a look of disappointment, the brunette hooked her thumbs into the pockets of her jeans. She had been hoping that she and Sonny could spend a few hours together before leaving for the hospital. "Do you have to go? What about lunch?"

The blonde lightly tapped her keys against her thigh. "No, I don't have to but Sarah has been in charge all by herself since Friday and I want to relieve her. I'm closing up at five, so I should be back by five-thirty and then we can go see Chloe unless you want to rest a little more." Pointing towards the kitchen, Sonny added, "I already ate lunch but yours is on the kitchen table. You just need to get something out of the fridge to drink. Please feel free to help yourself to anything. My casa is your casa."

Jack smiled again. "You really are the hostess with the mostess."

Smiling back, Sonny walked up to Jack and playfully punched her on the arm. "You be good while I'm gone."

"I'll try," Jack replied while grinning. "But if I'm not will you spank me?" She asked, attempting to look innocent.

The blonde laughed as she shook her head. "You're too much Jack."

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After enjoying the delicious lunch Sonny had prepared for her, Jack washed the dishes and made sure that the kitchen was spotless before she went back into the living room. Blue eyes instantly landed on the computer as Jack came up with an idea. Slightly smiling, she walked over to the computer desk and took a seat in Sonny's chair. Placing her hand over the mouse, Jack clicked on the AOL icon and waited for the screen to pop up before she selected the screen name labeled 'guest' and then pressed the button to sign on. Lightly tapping her fingertips on the keyboard as she waited for the modem to finish dialing, Jack then typed in her screen name along with her password when asked to do so.

A second later she was greeted by the male voice on AOL and told she had mail. Opening her mailbox, Jack started to smile as she searched through her email for Sonny's. Out of nearly two hundred new pieces of mail, Sonny's was the last one on the list. Double clicking on it, Jack started to read, her smile growing broader.

Dear Blue,

Wow, it seems like forever since we've last spoken. I'm so sorry that I haven't written to you in these past few days. Things have been happening in my life and the truth is I've just been too busy. But alas, here I am. Better late than never, eh (smile)? I really have missed you Blue. When I'm not in contact with you, it feels as though a piece of me is missing. I can't really explain it, I just feel a little emptier.

If nothing else, these past few days have taught me that life is so precious. Before I thought it was something to be cherished, but now I realize first hand just how much. We have to seize the day and make the most of every minute we have on this earth because life can be threatened or taken away in an instant.

The reason I say this is not because someone I know lost their life, but they almost did. A friend of mine nearly lost her younger sister yesterday due to a car accident. They had been having trouble communicating with one another and God forbid if she would have died, then my friend...well I don't know what she would have done because the last time they spoke it ended terribly. That would have been the last memory she had of her sister and I know it would have torn her up inside. Now since she is going to make it through this just fine, they will have a chance to mend and reconcile. Thank goodness, they are receiving this second chance. I have a feeling that they'll make the most of it.

Blue, I want to tell you something and I hope that it doesn't make you feel uncomfortable. I just realized that I have to tell you. Right now, I feel brave so I'm just going to say it before I lose my nerve.

I love you Blue.

During this past year, you have brought me so much joy and happiness and I do love you. How could I not because you are such a special wonderful person and I often ask myself how out of

six billion people I was lucky enough to meet you. I feel such a powerful connection with you and there are times when all I want is to be with you. I want to put my arms around you, I want to hold you close enough to feel your heart beat and I want the opportunity to tell you face to face that I love you. Do you believe in soulmates? I believe that you could be mine.

I guess that I'll end this email and allow you to digest all of this. I sincerely hope that I haven't freaked you out (smile). If you would like to talk on the phone sometime, I'll add my phone number to the end of this post. I know I've given it to you before, but I'll tell you again just in case you lost it (wink). Please feel free to call me collect. Hope to talk with you soon, whether it is here, on the phone, or in real time. Until then, take care. I love you.

~PG~

Madison (Sonny) Campbell

Home phone: 555-4342

Jack sat back in the chair as she reread the email half a dozen times. She was in shock. Pure shock. If she had been asked what she thought Sonny would write in this email, she never would have guessed in a million years that the woman would have declared her love for her. Pinching the back of her hand, Jack concluded that she wasn't dreaming as she stared at four little words that meant so much.

I love you Blue.

Those had to be the sweetest words that she had ever heard. Sonny loved her. Well technically, she loved Blue, but hey she *was* Blue. Therefore, she loved her too, she just wasn't aware of it yet. Beginning to smile again, Jack read through the email once more, as a thought came to mind. She had only one question. What did Sonny mean when she said that she loved her? After all, there were different variations of love. Did she love her like family, as a friend, as a potential lover and life partner? Jack momentarily crossed her fingers while hoping that it was the latter.

As for the issue of being soulmates, Jack definitely believed that Sonny was hers. Like Sonny had mentioned in her email, Jack felt a strong connection between them. A connection that she had never felt with anyone else on this planet. Now all she had to do was convince Sonny to give her a chance in real time as Jack. The brunette shook her head as she exhaled loudly. That was easier said than done. As moronic and crazy as it sounded, Jack had to figure out a way to eliminate herself--meaning Blue. Based on this email her Internet self was winning Sonny's love.

Jack: 0-- Blueyez: 1

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Unlocking the door, Sonny walked into her apartment, smiling fondly as she noticed her guest sprawled out on the couch dead to the world. Heading towards the hall closet, Sonny found a blanket on the top shelf and pulled it down before moving back to the living room and the couch.



Unfolding the blanket, she gently laid it over Jack before gazing at her for a few silent moments. The former Conqueror sure did look as innocent as that Snuggle fabric softener bear from the television commercials when she slept. Pressing two fingers to her lips, Sonny then briefly touched Jack's cheek with them. *Hope you're having sweet dreams.*

Walking into the kitchen, the blonde obtained a tall can of iced tea from the refrigerator before heading back to the living room and her computer. She was anxious to see if Blue had received her email and given her reply yet. Seconds later, as she waited to be logged on, Sonny popped the tab on her iced tea and then quickly looked over her shoulder to see if she had disturbed Jack by doing so. Relieved to find that she hadn't, she turned back to the computer screen and took a long sip from the can before setting it down on a napkin.

After successfully logging on, Sonny was delighted to find that she had new mail. Clicking on her mailbox, she saw two new emails, one of which was from Blue and the other from Laura. Surprised because she hardly ever received email from Laura, she clicked on her email first and started to read the short message inside.

*Hey there,*

*How are you doing? I hope that Jack's sister is doing all right. My prayers and thoughts are with them. I tried to call you both yesterday and this morning but it just rang until the answering machine came on and then I would hang up. I just wanted to check up on you and see how things were and I also wanted to know when I can come by and pick up the few belongings I have at your place. I'm not in any hurry to come get them, I was only wondering when it would be convenient for you. Just let me know when and I'll come over. I also have your key for you. Take good care of yourself Sonny. Talk with you later.*

*Laura*

Hitting the reply button, Sonny thought about her response to the email as she picked up her can of tea and took a long sip before putting it down again. Positioning her fingers on the home row of her keyboard, she began to type, tapping the keys as softly as she could manage so as not to disturb Jack.

*Hey Laura,*

*It's good to hear from you. I'm doing well. Jack and I just left the hospital earlier this afternoon after having been there all night. Thank God, Chloe is going to be just fine. She's going to need some extensive physical therapy and it'll be a while before she's truly back on her feet, but she's going to make it. She woke up this morning and both Jack and I had the opportunity to talk to her. She's a sweetheart.*

*As for your coming by to pick up your things, you're more than welcome to come at anytime. I trust you not to steal anything (wink and a grin). If I'm not here when you come, just be sure to lock up when you leave and put the key underneath my doormat. Hope you keep in touch Laura. I'd hate to lose you all together because you mean too much to me. You take care as well.*

*Love always,*

*Sonny*

After reading over the message, Sonny pressed the send button and watched as the email vanished from the screen before clicking on Blue's email in excitement. She felt like she had just won the lottery for a multi-million dollar jackpot. Glancing over her shoulder towards the couch, she then took a nice long swig from her can before starting to read.

*My Dearest PG,*

*What can I say? Your email has blown me away. I sat in my chair speechless as I read and reread your message. Your words touched me so deeply...I fail to explain just how much. I'm sorry to hear about your friend's sister but I'm so happy that she's going to be all right and that they have a second chance to work out whatever issues they may have. You told me something and now I have something to say in return.*

*I'm in love you PerkyGrrl.*

*I've wanted to tell you that for months now, but I've been too afraid that I might scare you away and the last thing I wanted to do was lose you. I'm sure you know by now how very precious you are and how much a part of my life you are although we have yet to meet in person **\*smiling at you\*** You are the kindest, sweetest, gentlest woman I have ever known and I can't wait to tell you in person how much I love you. What can I say? You rock my world and you blow my mind ;-)*

*Do I believe in soulmates? Do cats meow and dogs bark? Absolutely. No doubt it. Hell yeah! ;) And I am in agreement with you. I also believe that you could be mine. In fact, I'm one hundred and ten percent sure that it has to be you. I remember that night we first met in that Orlando Florida chat room, that I felt a strong connection to you before you even had the chance to acknowledge me. I knew then that PerkyGrrl was the one and only one for me. However, if I'd told you that then you probably would have ran as quickly as you could in the opposite direction and I wouldn't have blamed you one bit ;-)*

***\*laughing\*** And yes I still have your phone number and a couple of times I've even picked up the phone to give you a ring but then I metamorphosed into a chicken! Tell you what? I'm going to get up the nerve to call you within the next week. How does that sound? Until then please try not to wait anxiously by the phone until the day I call. I know it'll be hard **\*grin\*** I'm just kidding with you Madison. By the way, what a lovely name that is :-)*

*Well I guess I better get going now. I have some stuff to take care of. I'll talk with you soon **\*blowing you a kiss\*** In case I've neglected to mention it, I love you ;-)*

*Love always and 4ever,*

*Blue*

A bright smile was on Sonny's lips as she closed the email and logged off from the Internet before sitting back in her chair to reflect. Not only had Blue revealed that she loved her, but she also added the word "in", which often gave a whole new meaning to telling someone that you loved them. It suddenly occurred to Sonny that she didn't know whether the insertion of the word "in" applied to her. Meaning, was she in love with Blue or did she just love her as...what? A close friend or sister?

Picking up her can of tea and taking a long swig, Sonny shook her head negatively. No, she definitely had more than friendly or sisterly love for Blue. She couldn't honestly say that she was in love with her. Sonny found it difficult to be in love with someone that she had at the very least never spoken with on the phone. Their only way of communicating was via the Internet and that was too impersonal for her.

Her brow knitting, the blonde thought hard as green eyes stared unseeingly at the screensaver that had popped up on the computer due to inactivity. She wanted to hold Blue, wanted to kiss her, and even thought about what it would be like to make love with her. Sonny smiled a little as it came to her. She harbored a romantic love for Blue. She was romantically attracted to the woman and the next step was getting to insert the major "in". However, the only way she would get to hopefully achieve that was for them to actually meet.

While placing her can back on the desk, Sonny stared longingly at her phone, wanting desperately for it to start ringing. *Please pick up your phone and call me Blue*, she mentally implored. "I need you to reach out and touch me," she added aloud, chuckling softly at her own little joke.

Picking up her tea, she quickly finished off the rest before getting up and lightly stretching. Glancing at her sleeping guest, she strolled into the kitchen and tossed the empty aluminum can into a brown paper bag half-filled with others. Looking around the kitchen, a delighted smile appeared on Sonny's lips as she noticed how spiffy it was. The glare hitting the counter from the overhead lights was so bright that she almost needed a pair of shades. Well...the counter wasn't actually *that* bright, but it looked terrific along with the rest of the kitchen.

"I'm quite impressed Jack," Sonny softly stated before leaving the kitchen. Stopping in the middle of the living room, she glanced at her watch, noting that it was nearly a quarter passed six o'clock. For a split second, she started to wake Jack up so that they could head back to the hospital but changed her mind. Sonny concluded that the woman needed to get sufficient rest after these last couple of hectic days. Walking over to the phone, she picked it up before heading back into the kitchen so she wouldn't disturb Jack as she talked. Taking a slip of paper out of her pants pocket, she dialed the number written on it. Placing the phone to her ear, Sonny leaned against the kitchen sink as she waited for the other line to be answered.

"Hello?"

"Hey Leslie. This is Sonny. How's everything going there?"

"Hello there Sonny," Leslie warmly replied. "Everything is just fine. Chloe is awake and eating her dinner while we watch a game show. Would you like to talk with her?"

"No that's all right. I was just checking in to make sure all was well and to tell you that Jack and I should be back there within the next hour or two. She's sleeping now and I don't have the heart to wake her up."

"That's a good idea. Just let her sleep. It was obvious that she was tired when you two left this afternoon. And speaking of tired you could use some rest yourself. Have you been to sleep?"

"No, I haven't but I drank about a gallon of coffee," Sonny answered while chuckling.

Leslie chuckled a bit herself before replying, "Well coffee or not you need to get some sleep. Just a minute okay?"

"Okay." Keeping the phone to her ear, Sonny patiently waited as she detected the sound of voices in the background, though she couldn't make out the words. A moment later, Leslie returned to the phone.

"Sonny, Chloe told me to tell you and I'm in total agreement, you and Jack should just stay at your place for the rest of the night. She said that she will probably go right to sleep after she finishes eating because she's a bit tired." Leslie laughed before adding, "In fact, she's trying to get rid of me too. So, will you stay home?"

Sonny walked to the entrance of the kitchen where she could see Jack laying on the couch. "I don't know," she slowly replied. "I don't think I can keep Jack here all night." Also, she didn't think it would be such a wise idea for she and the flirty woman to spend the night alone in her apartment. Sure, they had spent the night at a Disney resort not two weeks ago, but since then, they had been spending more time together. And the more time they were in each other's presence, the more intimate they seemed to become. If she knew, what would Blue think about that?

"Hide her car keys and refuse to give them to her no matter how ticked off she gets," Leslie said, her voice slightly playful.

"Ha ha." Sonny smirked. "That's easy for *you* to say. *I'm* the one who has to put up with the possible attitude." The blonde glanced at Jack and decided that spending one more night with her wouldn't hurt. Maybe she would get lucky and Jack would continue to sleep until daybreak. Sonny shook her head. No, that probably wouldn't happen. "Okay, I won't guarantee that I can, but I'll *try* to make her stay here. That's the best I can offer."

"That'll do," Leslie answered, sounding pleased. "I'm going to stay here a little while longer and then head home myself. We'll see you two in the morning. Chloe says to tell you goodnight and sweet dreams."

Sonny smiled into the phone. "Please tell her sweet dreams and goodnight for me as well, Leslie. And the same goes for you."

"Thanks Sonny," Leslie gave a slight pause before adding, "Oh and Sonny?"

"Yes?"

"Thank you for taking such good care of Jack," the woman quietly said. "She has this problem with always wanting to be in control and never allows anyone to take care of her. I'm happy that you were able to break through her tough exterior. God knows I've tried, but always failed. Jack would probably never admit it in a million years, but she is about due for some TLC."

Deeply touched by the words, Sonny smiled into the phone. "Well I'll give her as much as I can. Goodnight Leslie. See you in the morning."

"See you then Sonny. Have a good night."

Ending the call, Sonny turned off the kitchen light before walking into the living room and depositing the phone back in the cradle. Moving over to the couch, she slowly and carefully took a seat on it before stretching her legs out in order to put her feet up on the coffeetable. Looking towards her left, she gazed at Jack for a few silent moments before reaching a hand up and running the back of it across her stinging eyes.

Deciding to take a catnap, Sonny laid her head back on the couch, closing her eyes as a yawn escaped her. With her eyes remaining shut, she thought back to the couple of hours she had spent at *Bean There, Done That* during the afternoon. To put it bluntly, business had been horrible. Sonny spent most of her time at the coffeehouse reading a magazine because she only had two customers. She was delighted when a third person entered the coffeehouse, but unfortunately, they had only wanted to use the restroom.

Sonny let out a soft sigh. It was time that she faced the music. Her business was practically over...finite...done. What did the Italian mobsters say? Oh, yes. She and Sarah's coffeehouse was sleeping with the fishes. After several years of flourishing business, *Bean There, Done That* had been there and done that and now was closing its doors forever. Last week, Sonny and Sarah had decided that this coming Friday would be the last day they were in business.

Sonny found that to be a highly depressing thought. After all, running a coffee establishment was all she had wanted to do since she was fourteen years old and truthfully, she couldn't think of another thing she was good enough at to make a living off of. Coffee was her niche. Her one and only niche. *I'm probably going to end up working at someplace such as a burger joint*, Sonny sadly thought. She shook her head, trying to get rid of these thoughts. She had to maintain a positive attitude. Somehow, some way everything would work out accordingly and she would find something else that she was good at.

Perhaps the closing of her coffeehouse was a blessing in disguise because she was destined to do something even better. It was fate that Jack built her coffeehouse right across the street

and...well steal she and Sarah's business. As strange as it sounded, if it weren't for Jack then Sarah, Hawke, and Peter wouldn't be having such good fortune now. Though she wouldn't admit that she set up their meeting, if it weren't for Jack insisting Hawke join in on the karaoke competition then she never would have met Dell Holiday and now signed with *Olympus Records*.

After much coercing, Hawke had managed to sign on Sarah as her songwriter, since over the time they'd known one another, Sarah had written close to a dozen songs especially for her. Ever since Sonny and Sarah were teenagers, she had been interested in writing songs and was obviously quite talented at it. By the time they entered high school, Sarah had two notebooks filled with different types of lyrics. Though when asked by her friends to sing them, she refused. Sarah was very talented at writing, but unfortunately, she couldn't carry a tune to save her own life.

As for Peter, he informed Sonny and Sarah last week that he had decided along with two other friends, one of which was his cousin, to open a coffeehouse that would have nightly entertainment. Both of his bosses had told him that they thought it was a great idea and that they wished him all the luck in the world. Since he was such a wizard when it came to coffee, Peter was sure to succeed with his own business. The coffeehouse was tentatively to be opened towards the end of December and Sonny, Sarah, and Hawke were all invited to the grand opening celebration. Sonny couldn't wait to see his establishment. It was sure to be a big hit.

Her mouth opening wide, Sonny yawned again before smacking her lips together. Enough thinking, it was time to get some much-needed sleep. With a little bit of effort, Sonny managed to let her mind go blank and before long, she was fast asleep. In fact, she was so deep in sleep, that Sonny never knew when Jack woke up and gently pulled her over until they were lying side by side on the couch. Placing the blanket over them both, Jack quickly fell back to sleep with an arm tightly wrapped around the small warm bundle pressed close to her body.

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Opening her eyes, Sonny woke up to quite a surprise. Actually, she woke up to a couple of them. One was that she was now lying right next to Jack, which meant this was the third time they had slept together...literally speaking. Two, her cheek was pressed against Jack's bosom. She had to admit that it was soft, warm, and very comfortable, yet it was a little dangerous being in this position. Raising her head, Sonny was startled to see two blue eyes filled with amusement staring at her.

"Hello," Jack said in a husky voice.

Sonny felt the color rising in her cheeks. The way Jack uttered that greeting affected her in a way she couldn't quite explain. All Sonny knew was that butterflies were a flutter in the pit of her stomach. "Hi," she shyly replied. "How did I get here?"

"I'm guessing your mama gave birth to you," Jack retorted, a large grin on her face.

The blonde smirked at her. So it appeared that out of the many alters she possessed, Jack the Teaser had come out to play. Oh, joy. "Very funny Jack. Now how did I get in your...in this position? I was sitting up."

Removing her arm from around Sonny's waist, Jack tucked both of her hands behind her head. "I woke up and saw that you were asleep. You looked uncomfortable with your head lolling forward the way it was, so I pulled you under this blanket with me. By the way, thank you for the blanket. I was a little chilly."

Noticing that her arm was laying across Jack's stomach, Sonny decided to leave it there as she propped her chin in her hand while looking up at the other woman. "You're welcome Jack," she paused. "So did you sleep well?"

The brunette nodded. "As a matter of fact I did. I had a very interesting dream and you were in it," she said, smiling.

One of Sonny's golden eyebrows arched up in curiosity though she was almost afraid to ask what had been going on in the dream. She attempted to find out by studying the expression on Jack's face, but found that it was indecipherable. For all she knew, in this dream, she could have been wearing nothing but a smile as Jack continuously used her as a sex toy. Sonny shook her head. On sleepless nights, she had been watching far too much cable.

"Don't you want to know what it was about?" Jack asked after Sonny remained silent for a considerable amount of time. She smiled a bit as Sonny nodded. "It's nothing bad, I promise you. I'd give it a PG-13 rating, so please don't worry." She smiled reassuringly.

Returning the smile, Sonny became bold and scooted up until she could lay her head on the woman's shoulder. She figured that she might as well get comfortable so that she could listen to this PG-13 dream. Plus, she enjoyed the warmth radiating from Jack and the woman didn't seem to mind their close contact. Though, she shouldn't since she initiated it in the first place. Sonny had to suppress a moan as a warm hand covered the nape of her neck and began to lightly massage.

"In the dream," Jack started as she continued her one-handed massaging, "I was at this elegant soiree where all the men were dressed in tuxedos and the woman had on expensive looking dresses. Though in my opinion, some of them looked garish and overdone. From what I could tell, I was the only woman not wearing a dress. Instead, I had on a pair of white slacks and a cornflower blue long-sleeved shirt with a white tuxedo style jacket over it. The wide collar of my shirt was folded over the collar of my jacket, which was by the way totally unbuttoned. I don't recall what type of shoes I had on."

"So in other words you looked like John Travolta in '*Saturday Night Fever*'," Sonny interjected with a grin plastered on her lips.

Jack laughed. "Um, yeah I guess so."

"Tell me, were there disco balls hanging from the ceiling?" Sonny asked, still grinning.

Jack laughed again as she lightly squeezed and kneaded the back of Sonny's neck. "Oh, you woke up as a comedian, hmm? No, there weren't any disco balls. I told you that this was a fancy shindig. Anyway, most of the people in the large ballroom were mingling but I had chosen to be by myself, observing everything and everyone around me as I occasionally took sips from a crystal flute of champagne I held. I don't know what this party was for, but I didn't want to be there. I was bored and all I wanted to do was go home. Suddenly, I looked up at the top of a flight of stairs and that was when I laid eyes on an angel. And do you know who that angel was?"

Sonny blushed from head to toe. "Was it me perhaps?"

The brunette grinned, noticing the blush. "Yes, it was you. And you did look beautiful as you stood at the top of those steps. You were wearing a gorgeous ball gown that matched the color of my shirt perfectly. It had a scoop neck and short sleeves. After your waist, the gown flowed outward a bit and I believe that there were tiny white pearls placed in patterns on the dress. You had on a pair of white gloves that stopped about half an inch from your elbow. You looked like a princess as well as an angel. The only thing missing was a crown."

"This reminds me of Cinderella." Unconsciously, Sonny started stroking up and down Jack's stomach with her fingertips as she listened to the dream.

Jack nodded, trying to concentrate with the sensations that Sonny's active fingers were producing. "Yeah, that's what I thought when I first woke up and reflected back on it. It was like a modern day Cinderella. So as my eyes made contact with yours, a song by one of my favorite jazz musicians began to play. Do you know the song "At Last" sung by Etta James?"

The title of the song nor the singer sounding familiar, Sonny shook her head. "No, I don't think I do."

Feeling in the mood to sing, (she figured that the Vicodin still must have been in her system) Jack lightly cleared her throat before starting to hum the opening music to the song. Soon in a melodic voice, the brunette started to sing.

At last, my love has come along

My lonely days are over

And life is like a song

Ooh yeah yeah

At last, the skies above are blue

My heart was wrapped up in clover

The night I looked at you

Raising her head, green eyes stared deeply into blue, almost being hypnotized by them as well as Jack's sultry voice. Both were weaving a spell on Sonny and she found it impossible to tear her eyes away from Jack's. Also, the hand still massaging the back of her neck was proving to relax Sonny as the seconds ticked by.

I found a dream, that I could speak to

A dream that I can call my own

I found a thrill to press my cheek to

A thrill that I have never known

Ooh yeah yeah...

You smile, you smile

Ooh and then the spell was cast

And here we are in heaven

For you are mine at last

Before she thought about the possible consequences of her actions, Sonny pressed her lips to Jack's in a tender kiss. Softly moaning, Jack wrapped both of her arms around Sonny as she eagerly returned the kiss. As the blonde's lips parted, Jack slowly almost hesitantly slipped her tongue inside, seeking out the other woman's. Like the lyrics to the song she had just sang, this really was heaven. It just had to be.

Score: Jack: 1-- Blueyez: 1

Growing a bit bolder, Jack slipped her hand under the back of Sonny's shirt, lightly brushing her fingertips across the woman's skin as their tongues dueled for space in each other's mouths. If she knew that she would have received this type of reaction, Jack would have privately serenaded Sonny long time ago. Just as her hand reached the middle of the smaller woman's back, fingertips touching the clasp of her bra, Sonny pulled away from the kiss and leaped off of the couch as though it was on fire. Jack inwardly sighed. So very close yet so very far. Well she was keeping the point regardless. This had to be progress.

A little winded, Jack looked up at Sonny who had by now taken a seat on the coffeetable. Jack attempted to make eye contact but the other woman refused to, as she looked down towards the floor in embarrassment. Sitting up, Jack pushed the blanket aside before reaching over and placing two fingers under Sonny's chin, gently pushing up until she could see to her amazement,

green eyes brimming with tears. As Jack softly inquired what was wrong, Sonny burst into tears, covering her face with her hands.

Although she hadn't started this, Jack suddenly felt like a scoundrel as she helplessly watched the love of her life sob. Getting to her knees on the floor, the brunette wordlessly wrapped her arms around Sonny, holding the shaking and crying woman to her tightly. As she felt a pair of arms slip around her, Jack started to gently rock Sonny from side to side as she stroked up and down her back hoping to soothe her. Sonny pressed her face into Jack's neck as she tried to get control of her emotions. Taking a series of deep breaths, she finally calmed down. Wiping at her cheeks, Sonny sat back, placing both of her hands in her lap as she regarded Jack with an apologetic look.

"I'm so sorry about this Jack," Sonny started. "I don't know what came over me. I mean when I kissed you."

The brunette arched an eyebrow. So, she was apologizing for being the best kisser that Jack had ever encountered? An apology definitely was not necessary. Placing a hand on Sonny's cheek and starting to caress the soft smooth skin, she told her as much. The blonde shook her head as she stood up and moved over to sit on the couch, putting one leg beneath her. Running a hand through her short locks, she took a deep breath, watching as Jack sat on the couch, choosing to leave ample space between them.

"Sonny tell me what's bothering you, please," Jack asked in a quiet voice, her blue eyes filled with concern. She craved to reach out and hold the woman, but figured that Sonny didn't want to be touched right now.

"I never should have kissed you," Sonny started in a voice that was so soft that Jack had to scoot towards her a bit to hear. "That was so wrong. So very wrong."

"But sweetheart I didn't have a problem with it. Did you see me complaining?" *It was so right. So very right!* She wished that Sonny would just stop fighting her feelings and give them a chance.

Distressed green eyes gazed into affectionate blue ones. "I still shouldn't have done it. Jack, I don't want to lead you on. That wouldn't be at all fair to you."

"What are you talking about?"

"Blueyez." Jack stared at her blankly. "You know, the woman from the Internet who I was supposed to meet at Disneyworld," Sonny went on to say.

"Oh!" Jack nodded as though she hadn't already known that. Blue was starting to be a real pain in the butt. "Right, her. What does she have to do with you kissing me?" *Like I don't already know the answer.*

"Jack I..." Sonny paused while trying to find the right words. She didn't want to hurt Jack, but there really was no easy way to say something like this. "I told Blue in an email I sent today, that I love her."

The brunette managed to look just a tad bit hurt by the 'new' information. "Define love please. I have a feeling that you love her more than as a friend. Am I correct?"

Sonny nodded, hardly being able to look at the hurt expression on Jack's face. The last thing she wanted to do was hurt her, but she had to be honest. "Yes, you are. Truthfully, I can't say that I'm in love with her, but my attraction and feelings are quite strong. And based on the reply she sent me, she feels the same way."

Jack nodded, appearing solemn. "I see." So, Sonny wasn't in love with Blue after all. Well that might turn out to be a good thing.

Reaching over, Sonny covered one of the other woman's hands with her own as she peered into her face. "Hey, are you okay?" Sonny softly inquired. Jack looked like someone who had just lost their very best friend.

Jack sighed softly as she placed her other hand over Sonny's, sandwiching it. "I will be," she silently replied. "Thank you for being honest with me. I appreciate it." She gave Sonny a slight smile. "That Blueyez is a very lucky woman and I hope she's aware of that fact. I hope she realizes just what a precious gift you truly are, Sonny." And this years Academy Award for best actress goes to Jacqueline Foster! She would be lying if she were to say that she didn't the least bit guilty about doing all of this, but Jack convinced herself that it was for the greater good. Yeah, that was it.

Sonny's cheeks became a nice shade of red as she smiled warmly at Jack, thanking her for the compliment. For an insane moment, Sonny fantasized how it might be if she had both Jack and Blue. She shook her head. She was going to have to stop watching television all together because it was proving to be a bad influence.

"Did you want to finish your dream?" Sonny asked, trying to change the subject.

"Yes, I'd like to. Where did I leave off?"

"You had umm...just finished singing the song that was playing in your dream," Sonny replied shyly as she remembered what happened next. "Oh, and your singing has jogged my memory. I remember hearing that song in that movie with Tom Cruise and Dustin Hoffman." She thought for a moment. "Oh, yeah. It was called '*Rain Man*'."

"That's right. It was in the scene where Raymond was trying to teach his brother to dance. I love that movie." Removing her hands from Sonny's, the brunette stretched out on the couch until her feet were in Sonny's lap and the back of her head was touching the arm of the couch. Noticing the eyebrow arched in her direction, Jack winked, the faintest hint of a grin on her lips.

"Who gave you permission to put your big stinky feet in my lap?" Sonny asked, her voice laced with amusement. Actually, Jack had a very nice set of feet, but Sonny just felt like teasing her. They were the kind that would probably be chosen to appear in commercials such as ones for sandals or toenail polish. Wondering if Jack was ticklish, Sonny had the sudden urge to run her fingertips along the bottom of the woman's feet.

A mock frown appeared on Jack's face. "Hey my feet may be big but they're not stinky!" Hearing Sonny chuckle, she joined in before adding, "And don't even think about it."

"Don't think about what?" The look on Sonny's face was pure innocence. At least she hoped it looked convincing.

Jack smirked, not buying the act. "You know what. I know what's going through that mind of yours. You wanna tickle me, but I wouldn't do that if I were you." A gleam appeared in those blue eyes.

Wearing a challenging look, Sonny raised a hand towards Jack's feet, her fingers a mere inch, or two from them. She started to wiggle her fingers as though she was threatening to attack.

"Sonny," Jack said in a warning tone, though she was grinning. "Be a good girl and allow the former Conqueror to finish telling her dream."

The other woman groaned as she dropped her hand to the couch. She gave Jack a "you're no fun" look, trying not to smile as the brunette richly laughed. Sonny failed as the corners of her lips lifted. She loved the sound of Jack laughing. Settling back into the couch, Sonny asked Jack to proceed with her dream telling.

"Much better." Jack stacked her hands behind her head as she looked up at the ceiling and began to speak. "As I said the song "At Last" began to play just as I laid eyes on you. My feet must have been drawn to you, because before I could even think about it, I was headed in your direction, weaving through the large crowd. Finally making it to stand at the bottom of the stairs, I outstretched my hand towards you and watched, as you seemed to glide down the stairs to me, a ghost of a smile playing on your lips. Our eyes kept constant contact as I wordlessly led you by your gloved hand to the dance floor where I pressed my body against yours and we danced to Etta James' song. Everyone else in the ballroom seemed to melt away as we danced, allowing the music to carry us away." Jack moved her eyes from the ceiling to Sonny, who was looking at her intently. "In the dream we had just met but it felt like we had known one another for an entire lifetime. And I remember thinking that I never ever wanted that song to end because I wanted to hold you in my arms for the rest of my life. I wanted to hold you in my arms and dance with you for an eternity." She grinned lopsidedly. "I know it probably sounds corny but it was true...it *is* true," Jack finished in a whisper, as her blue eyes remained glued to green ones.

Finally, Sonny broke the stare as she blinked rapidly. How were they going to be just friends if they kept having moments such as this one? Well somehow, Sonny vowed that it would work because she didn't have any intention of losing Jack. The mere thought of doing so saddened her.

"That's a very sweet dream, Jack." Sonny stated while smiling at the other woman. "I believe one of the best I've ever heard."

Jack smiled back at her. "And I believe it's one of the best I've ever had."

Feeling another moment coming on, Sonny asked Jack if she would like something to eat. Nodding, the brunette removed her feet from Sonny's lap and sat as she asked what time it was. Glancing at her watch, Sonny informed her that it was about a quarter to ten o'clock. Remembering that she hadn't told her about the phone call to Leslie yet, Sonny filled her in, making sure to tell her what Chloe said.

"I don't know," Jack slowly said. "Maybe I should just leave you home and go there."

Sonny shook her head. "Jack, she gave specific orders that she didn't want to see you until morning. She, Leslie, and I want you to rest. Now we can head over to the hospital first thing in the morning after I make us breakfast."

Jack smiled at her tenderly. "Sonny, you don't have to go with me. Chloe's out of the woods now so I'll be fine."

Reaching over, Sonny took the woman's hand in her own, giving it a light squeeze as she gazed into Jack's eyes. "I know I don't have to go. I *want* to be there with you."

Feeling overwhelmed with emotion, Jack swallowed hard before pulling Sonny into a warm embrace while wondering how it was she got so lucky. The more time she spent with Sonny, the greater her love became. It was on the tip of her tongue to tell the woman so, but she kept silent, knowing that it wasn't time yet. This was much too early. Quietly thanking Sonny for being such a great friend, Jack pulled back so that she could kiss her on the cheek.

"Now I believe you said something about food." Both women laughed as Jack's stomach chose that moment to grumble.

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After they finished eating, Jack washed the dishes before Sonny dried and put them away. When they were done, Sonny asked Jack if she would like some tea and started to make them both a cup after the woman said that she would. Walking over to the kitchen table, Jack took a seat before beginning to watch Sonny move around the kitchen. Grinning a little, she especially watched the blonde's rear end while thinking how lucky those pants she was wearing were.

Having the distinct feeling that she was being watched, Sonny started to blush as she poured steaming dark liquid into two mugs. While keeping her eyes on her task, she asked Jack if she would like anything in her tea.

"A little sugar would be nice." A slow grin curved Jack's lips. "I like my tea like my women. Sweet," she added in a low throaty voice.

Glancing over her shoulder, Sonny smirked at Jack though both the comment and the way it was spoken had affected her a great deal. She felt flushed from head to toe and those butterflies were moving around in her stomach again. Thinking it best to keep her mouth shut, the blonde added a couple teaspoons of sugar to both of their mugs before stirring them vigorously. She stirred much longer than was needed because she wanted to give the blushing time to fade away before she allowed Jack to see her face.

Grabbing a mug in each hand, Sonny finally turned around and walked over towards the kitchen table, setting one of the mugs in front of Jack before taking the chair opposite the woman's. Nodding as the brunette thanked her for the drink, Sonny brought her mug to her lips, blowing softly to help it cool faster. She made the mistake of glancing at Jack, noting that the woman's eyes were riveted to her puckered lips. Quickly relaxing them, Sonny took a cautious sip before setting her mug down on the table. She was about to say something, when Jack started speaking.

"Is this more chamomile?" she asked.

Sonny shook her head. "No, it's just plain lemon tea. Do you need more sugar?" The blonde could have smacked herself for the careless choice of words. She would have bet money on it that "Flirty Jack" would have a field day with the innocently asked question.

Jack inwardly grinned as she took her first sip of the tea while watching the expression on Sonny's face. *Nah, I don't have the heart to say anything. She looks almost terrified.* It was difficult...quite difficult but she refrained. It was time to be more nice than naughty. "No, it tastes great already," Jack said in a pleasant voice. "Thank you though." She smiled at Sonny, not commenting on the look of surprise that passed across the younger woman's face.

"You're welcome." Sonny shook her head a bit. *Good thing I didn't put money on it. Never know what you're going to do Jack.* "Jack, I'd like to resume our conversation from the bathroom."

The brunette sat back in the chair, bringing her right leg up until her ankle was resting on her knee. She folded her arms across her chest as she regarded Sonny with a curious look. "What conversation was that?"

"The one about you deciding to close your coffeehouse. Are you still planning on doing that?" When Jack nodded, she went on to say, "Don't do it, Jack. You'd be making a mistake."

"I would?"

Sonny nodded. "Yes! First, think of all the people you would be putting out of work if you were to close down *Brew n' Paradise*. And think of all the people that live in that general neighborhood you would be disappointing if they couldn't get their daily coffee in the morning before going to work, school or where ever they're headed. A lot of people would be affected negatively by this decision. So you see you have to stay in business for the people."

Jack looked at the blonde curiously while thinking that she sounded like a politician. "You make a lot of sense Sonny, but the workers I intend to layoff are all going to get severance pay. And

the customers always have your coffeehouse to go to. I never should have built there and coaxed them over in the first place. It was wrong."

The blonde shook her head in disagreement. "No, I understand now that it was business and the better business won. They need you Jack because if they don't have you then they won't have anyone. You see, Sarah and I have decided to shut down *Bean There, Done That* this coming Friday."

"You don't have to do that now. I'm closing down." Jack looked at Sonny imploringly. "I want you to stay in business. I know how much that coffeehouse means to you and Sarah. It's like a child to you both, whereas mine is like...a distant relative. You see what I'm saying? I'm only in it for the money, but you two genuinely love what you do. I never should have jeopardized that in the first place. I've done it time and time again and frankly, I've had enough of screwing other people over. Like I said before, I don't want to be the Conqueror anymore."

"Jack it's too late for me. Save your business."

Despite the seriousness of the conversation, Jack had to laugh at Sonny's statement. Looking surprised at first, the blonde then joined in with a small chuckle of her own. She then told Jack that she and Sarah couldn't keep their coffeehouse open even if she went out of business because they couldn't afford to. Saying that she would be right back, Jack stood up from the table and walked out of the kitchen leaving a curious Sonny behind.

Picking up her mug, Sonny took a few short sips as she heard the front door open and close. She wondered where Jack was going and for a moment started to go after her but then changed her mind, thinking that she would probably return soon. Sure enough, Sonny heard the front door open and close again a few minutes later. Entering the kitchen, Jack retook her seat carrying a pen and her checkbook in hand. Clicking the top on the pen, she asked Sonny to give her a number.

"No." The blonde looked just a tad bit perturbed.

Jack glanced up at Sonny after filling in the date on a check. "Why not? This isn't like what I tried to pull at the hospital when I injured you."

"What is it then?"

"It's business."

Sonny arched a golden eyebrow. "Business. Really? How is you giving me money considered business? Is it a loan?"

Jack shook her head. "No, it's an investment. You and Sarah can make me a silent partner. I'll take let's say five percent."

"That's not very much."

The brunette shrugged. "It's enough for me. So what do you say?" *Come on Sonny. Don't let pride get in the way here. Help me to help you.*

Shaking her head, Sonny replied, "I say no."

Jack frowned slightly. "Why?"

"Well for one thing Sarah probably won't even be involved in the coffeehouse because she's going to be Hawke's songwriter."

"Oh really? That's great!" Jack paused thoughtfully. "In that case I'll still be a silent partner and I'll take thirty percent which leaves you with seventy. How about it?" When Sonny shook her head, Jack gave her an irritated look. "Why must you be so difficult?"

"Why must you always try to pay me off?" Sonny countered, matching the woman's tone of voice.

"I'm not trying to pay you off. I'm trying to help!"

"Well I don't recall asking for your help and I sure don't need it!" Sonny shouted while starting to become quite irate. Right now, she felt like throttling Jack. Sometimes the woman just didn't know when to quit.

Blue eyes glaring at Sonny, Jack slowly shook her head from side to side. "Fine," she said between clenched teeth. "I don't even know why I bother with you. I'm just wasting my time." Snatching up her checkbook and pen, Jack pushed the chair back so that she could get up, almost knocking it over in the process. Without another word, she stormed out of the kitchen leaving a stunned Sonny behind.

Getting up, the blonde hurriedly left the kitchen and scanned around the living room not spotting Jack anywhere. A few seconds later, she heard the bathroom door slam and looked over noticing that Jack had her shoes and socks in hand. Asking the woman where she was going, Sonny waited for a reply but didn't receive one as she watched Jack quickly put on her socks and stick her feet into her shoes not bothering to unlace them first. Sonny repeated the question but didn't get so much as a glance in her direction. She jumped a little as Jack left her apartment, slamming the front door in the process.

Continued in Part 4.

"At Last" performed by Etta James



# ~ An Affair to Remember ~

by Ambrosia

**Disclaimers:** The characters in this story are figments of my imagination. They are solely the property of me, myself, and I ☺

**Sexual Content:** There are intimate/sexual/loving relationships between women occurring in this tale.

**Violence:** None. Nada. Zip. Just peace, love, and harmony. (Chuckle)

**Language:** Nothing that can't be aired on a network station.

**Special Thanks:** Thank you Hawke and Antigone for helping me by giving the names for the establishments mentioned in this story. I had no idea what to call them until you both offered your assistance. So thank you very much. I really appreciate it ☺

**Inspiration:** I would like to thank the creators of the movie "You've Got Mail" for inspiring me to write this piece. I've watched that movie so many times I just had to write a story loosely based on it. ☺

**Feedback:** All comments (please be gentle with me-for I'm a sensitive bard ☺) can be emailed to SumrBrezze@aol.com.

**~SPECIAL NOTICE FOR READERS~** I would like to apologize for the huge delay. I'm often like a turtle when it comes to writing (lil' smile) Anyhoo, today I decided that there would be a part 4 and 5, though I've told quite a few people that 4 was the conclusion. However, part 4 was becoming longer than I initially thought it would be, so 5 will definitely be the conclusion. Thank you for being patient with me and I hope that you enjoy this latest installment. I'm working on getting part 5 completed and hope to have it posted soon.

## Part 4

Finishing up her frozen yogurt, Chloe placed it on her tray before she turned her head to study her sister whose eyes appeared to be riveted on the television. However, Chloe figured that she wasn't really paying attention to what was going. No, her mind was a million...make that a billion miles away. And it had been that way for the past six days. Sure, Jack attempted to act like everything was copasetic, but her little sister was perceptive enough to know otherwise. She hadn't been able to get much out of Jack, but what she knew was that Sonny and her sister had exchanged words and were no longer on speaking terms. Chloe tried to talk to her on more than one occasion about it, but Jack made it abundantly clear that she rather not.

The twenty-year old shrugged. If at first... second and third you don't succeed, then try again. And she had to try again because although this was a hospital, Jack simply had to be the most depressing thing in it. All she had done the entire week as sit in that same chair or sometimes

move to the window and perch there. Thank goodness, she was being released tomorrow so she wouldn't have to watch Jack mope around all day. When she arrived home, she could retire to her bedroom until her sister snapped out of this despondency.

Noticing Jack's tiny black cell phone on the small dresser next to her bed, an idea formed in Chloe's head. She quickly weighed the pros and cons and was delighted when the pros won. Returning her attention to Jack, she quickly thought of way that she could get rid of her. Calling her sister's name, she waited until she had the woman's attention before asking her if she could go get her an ice cream sundae.

Jack glanced at the empty cup that used to contain frozen yogurt. "But you just ate that." She pointed at the cup sitting on the tray.

"I know, but they don't believe in giving decent portions of anything in hospitals and I'm still hungry. An ice cream sundae sure does sound tasty." Chloe gave her sister the smile she reserved for when she really wanted something a lot. "Please?"

Jack grinned. It never failed. That smile always seemed to get to her and the softly spoken please at the end was a nice touch. "Okay. I think I saw an ice cream parlor in this general area. What do you want on it?"

"Everything except sprinkles. Three cherries," she added as an afterthought. Chloe loved those sweet juicy maraschino cherries.

"You've got it." Standing up, Jack grabbed her cell phone and started to put it in her pocket when Chloe informed her to leave it. Looking at the younger woman curiously, Jack inquired why she should.

*Why? Why do you have to make this so hard?!* Chloe thought quickly, trying to come up with an explanation. "Um because if you take it with you, you might get a phone call, which will probably distract you and therefore you'll forget to tell them I want three cherries instead of only one." Watching one of Jack's eyebrows go up, Chloe almost rolled her eyes at how moronic that sounded. "Well the truth is...I'm expecting a call and instead of giving the hospital's number, I gave the person your cell phone."

"And from whom are you expecting a call from kid?"

Shyly ducking her head, Chloe replied, "A boy. I met him while I was staying at Leslie's house. He lives across the street. Well I called him yesterday when you went home to take a shower and a change and he asked if he could call me tomorrow which is now today, so I gave him your cell phone number." She glanced at the clock noting that it was almost four o'clock. "And he's supposed to call me at four."

Jack grinned again as she reached out and gently ruffled her sister's hair earning a grin in return. "I had a feeling you wanted me to leave. Okay, I'll be back in a bit with your sundae." Putting the phone back down on the dresser, Jack headed out of the hospital room.

Waiting a few minutes after Jack left to make sure that she was truly gone, Chloe then reached over and picked up the phone. After messing around with the phone for a little bit, she then found to her delight, that Sonny's number was preprogrammed. Putting the cell phone to her ear, Chloe tapped a hand on her knee as she waited, hoping that Sonny was home.

"Hello?"

"Hi Sonny!" Chloe cheerfully said. "This is Chloe. How are you doing?"

"Hey there Chloe!" Sonny returned just as cheerfully. "I'm doing good. And how are you? Are you gonna be able to go home soon?"

"A few aches and pains but I'm just fine. Jack's finally going to be able to break me out of this joint tomorrow! I can't wait to sleep in my own bed and eat some decent food." Glancing at a bouquet of gorgeous perky flowers and at the dark brown teddy bear laying next to her, Chloe thanked Sonny for them. She had been pleasantly surprised when they were delivered early last week along with a short but sweet note from the blonde woman.

The blonde laughed heartily. "I bet. And you're very welcome sweetie. It was my pleasure."

Chloe laughed as well. "That's the reason I called actually. You see, not tomorrow but the day after, Jack is going to have a little coming home dinner party for me. Just a few people are invited and you happen to be one of them."

Sonny arched in eyebrow as she took in that bit of information. She hadn't spoken with nor seen Jack since the woman stormed out of her apartment nearly a week ago and now she was being invited to a dinner party? This was very peculiar. "You mean Jack invited me?" Sonny dubiously countered.

"Yes, she did," Chloe fibbed, hoping that she sounded convincing. Lying wasn't exactly her specialty. "You see, she mentioned that the both of you had had a squabble, but she wants to put that all behind now and look to the future. She would have called you herself but she was afraid that you might not be willing to speak to her so I offered my assistance. Anyway, she wants you to know that she is deeply sorry and it would mean the world to her if you came to the party. I would love that as well because I'd like the opportunity to get to know you better." Chloe nodded, pleased. That sounded good to her. Now she hoped that it did the trick.

"Jack really said all of that?"

"You bet she did. All she's been doing since your argument is moping around looking so very sad. It's obvious that she misses you dearly and I'm relieved that she's finally come to her senses and is willing to apologize. So will you come?"

"I'd love to," Sonny earnestly replied. "Can I bring anything?"

Chloe smiled into the phone while delighted that her plan was going so well thus far. "Just bring yourself because everything has been taken care of already." Chloe then went into detail concerning what time the dinner party was and how the dress code was extremely casual. After they conversed for a few more minutes, Chloe ended the call. Placing the cell phone back on the dresser, she laid back in the bed, folding her arms behind her head with a broad smile spread across her lips.

Jack found her this way when she arrived moments later, carrying a small white paper bag that bore the title of an ice cream parlor across the front. Arching an eyebrow as she opened the bag and took out a medium-sized cup, Jack placed it on Chloe's tray along with a plastic spoon and napkin. She then asked her sister what she was smiling about, already figuring that it had something to do with this guy she met from Leslie's neighborhood.

"You'll never guess who I just got a call from. Well you actually," Chloe said, the smile still firmly planted on her lips as though it was permanent.

Her sister grinned. "You just got a call from me, eh? God help us all. There is a clone of Jack Foster running around somewhere!"

Chloe smirked. "No silly! *You* got a call on your cell phone. I'll give you a hint. She's someone extremely special."

Jack perched on the side of Chloe's bed as she smiled down at her. "The only she that I know who is extremely special is you."

The younger woman playfully rolled her eyes, though she was touched by the words. "I don't think so. I know there is someone else you think is special."

Cocking her head to the side, Jack asked, "And who praytell could that be?"

"Sonny of course!"

Both of Jack's eyebrows shot up high into her bangs. Had she heard her sister correctly or were her ears playing tricks. "Sonny called me?" Her sister quickly nodded. "Sonny Campbell?" Rolling her eyes, Chloe wordlessly nodded again. "Well...wh...what did she say?" Jack started to feel her heart thump harder beneath her chest and she found that she was holding her breath as she waited for her sister to reply. Countless times during the past week, she had been tempted to give Sonny a call, yet had always ended up changing her mind due to uncertainty and sheer stubbornness.

"She said that she was sorry for the disagreement you two had and that she wants to make up with you because she couldn't bear to lose you. You're much too important to her." While watching her sister's face light up, Chloe fought to keep a grin from showing on her face. *Though I'm doing this to help them, I'm so very bad! I must get it from Jack.*

"She said that?" Jack asked, her voice filled with amazement.

Her sister nodded. "Absolutely."

"And what did *you* say?"

"Well I told her that you would probably be delighted to hear that news and I took the liberty of inviting her to the dinner party. She said that she would love to come."

Instead of smiling like Chloe presumed she would, a look of dread appeared on Jack's face. Swallowing hard, the younger woman sensed there was a problem, but couldn't possibly think of what it might be. Finding her voice, Chloe asked her sister what was wrong. Blue eyes made contact with identical ones as Jack slowly shook her head.

"Ordinarily, I wouldn't mind you inviting Sonny over, but remember I told you that Leslie is bringing a friend to the dinner party?" She waited for Chloe to nod before continuing, "Well that friend is Sonny's ex-girlfriend Laura. They just broke up last weekend and I don't know how Sonny is going to take seeing her ex showing up with Leslie, although I'm told that they are just friends."

Chloe cringed. Oh dear that could be a potential problem. "Did Sonny take the break up badly?"

"No, I don't think so. In fact, I believe she's...well for lack of a better word relieved that they ended their relationship. But still...I don't know how she'll take that."

"It should be alright then," Chloe replied in a hopeful tone of voice. "Try not to worry Jack. I have a feeling that everything will turn out just fine. Mark my words." Giving her sister a bright smile, Chloe started to pull the tray up close. Her stomach was starting to growl in anticipation of the sweet cool treat that was mere inches away.

"I sure hope you're right kid." Jack chuckled as she noticed her little sister's attention was now focused elsewhere. Having an urge to, she reached out and ruffled Chloe's hair, earning herself a mock look of irritation, which caused her to chuckle even more.

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After taking nearly an hour to choose a pair of gray cargo pants along with a black v-neck short-sleeved top to wear, Sonny hurried down to her compact car, getting in. Before starting the ignition, she patted a pocket located mid-thigh to make sure that she had remembered to bring her wallet. Pleased to feel the slight bulge there, she quickly fastened her seat belt, started the car, and pulled out of the parking lot.

As she stopped at a red light minutes later, Sonny reached over and turned on the radio. Turning the stations, she stopped on one that was playing the song "From This Moment On" by Shania Twain. The blonde smiled while beginning to mouth the words of the beautiful song as she proceeded to drive. Today she had a larger appreciation of country music because it caused her to think of a very special person in her life. Sonny thought back to the surprise phone call she received yesterday evening.

With a chocolate candy bar in her left hand, Sonny manipulated the mouse with her right, moving the playing cards on the computer screen. This was her seventh game of Solitaire in the past half-hour, and she was determined to keep playing until she won. Bringing the candy bar to her open mouth, Sonny nearly took a bite when she stopped due to the phone ringing. Putting the candy on a napkin, she reached over, picking up the phone hoping it wasn't another journalist wanting to get the full story on her coffeehouse closing down a few days ago.

"Hello?"

"Howdy there," said a woman sporting a husky southern accent.

The blonde felt a searing heat rushing all the way to the apex of her thighs at the delicious sound of that voice. She'd always been a sucker for women with southern accents, having once dated one a few years back. If this turned out to be a journalist, she just might be tempted to give the caller her much wanted interview. Sonny shook her head to clear it of the mischievous thoughts. Jack, Blue, Leslie...Didn't she already have enough relationships going in one form or another with women? No, no use in her being intrigued by the southern belle currently on the phone.

"Hello," Sonny repeated. "May I help you?"

"You have no idea who I am, do you?" the southern woman chuckled richly. "Well I guess you wouldn't seeing how we've never orally spoken to one another."

Sonny arched a brow. No, it couldn't be...could it? "B..Blue? Is this you?" The rate of her heartbeat began to dramatically increase. She had all but given up on her online friend calling at the beginning of the weekend.

"Bing-o! I told you I'd call within a week. Sorry it took me so long to do it though. I barely beat the clock." She laughed again, sounding just a tad bit nervous.

Wiping suddenly wet palms up and down her thighs, Sonny inhaled deeply before trusting herself to speak. "Wow. I can't believe it's you," she gave a slight pause before continuing, "How did you know it was me answering the phone?"

"Simple. My heart told me so," the southerner earnestly replied.

Speaking of hearts, Sonny felt hers melt into a puddle. "Wow," she said, thinking it was lame, but at the moment she was having difficulty getting her brain to work properly. "H...How are you? It's so good to finally hear your voice." 'You're sweet, sexy, wonderful voice.' That heat between Sonny's thighs was steadily growing.

"I'm doing very well. And you Madison? Or would you rather I call you Sonny?"

'You could call me dumbbell and I would be just fine with it,' Sonny thought. "Either one is fine, but most people call me Sonny. What's your name?" She chuckled. "I feel kinda silly talking with

you on the phone and not knowing it."

"I'm sorry. I hope that I haven't come off as appearing secretive Sonny. My name is Dixie Monroe."

Dixie? Sonny smiled into the phone. Well that was sort of cute. She decided that the name fit Blue perfectly. "No, you haven't come off in the least bit secretive. Mysterious is more like it, and I find that to be very intriguing," the blonde replied in a flirty tone of voice. Her smile broadened as she heard the other woman laughing.

"Do you now?"

"Yes, indeed Dixie." Sonny grinned as she propped her feet up on the desk, crossing one ankle over the other. "So, what can I do for you, hmm?"

"Well that depends," Dixie said in a sexy whisper. "What would you be willing to do for me darlin'?"

Biting hard on her lower lip, Sonny was barely able to hold in a pleasurable moan. This was beginning to be sweet torture. "Just about anything you'd want me to," she replied, mimicking the other woman's soft whisper though Sonny didn't think that she sounded half as sexy.

Dixie chuckled. "You sound like a very naughty girl Sonny. Are you?"

"Would you have a problem with it if I was one?"

"Not at all!" the southern woman quickly replied.

Sonny laughed, thoroughly enjoying the easy flirtatiousness going on between them. "I had a feeling that you wouldn't."

Noticing the broad smile plastered on the young woman's lips as she looked out of her window, the driver in the adjacent lane returned it while wondering if he were to roll down his window, would he be lucky enough to get her phone number. By the dreamy look in her eyes, he figured he had a pretty decent chance of doing so.

Blinking, Sonny noticed the man in the BMW next to her was smiling quite broadly in her direction. She also noticed that he was starting to roll down his passenger window and was grateful when the light chose that moment to turn green. Giving the man an apologetic look, Sonny pressed her foot to the gas, proceeding down the street. Her thoughts returned to Blue aka Dixie as she started to smile again.

What a wonderful conversation the two of them had had yesterday! Sonny was relieved that they lived in the same city because she would have hated to see what Dixie's phone bill would have been like. They must have stayed on the phone for nearly an hour and a half chatting about everything and anything, not to mention doing a lot of flirting. Sonny grinned as she thought

about the flirting. After that phone call, she was in dire need of a very cold shower.

Ever since last night, Sonny could not get Dixie off of her mind. The woman had even invaded her dreams and what fascinating dreams they had been involving she and the blonde in a four poster bed doing naughty yet delicious things to one another. The only disturbing part of the dream was that she recalled Dixie looking precisely like someone she knew in real time. She and Jack could have been identical twins.

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On entering the den, Chloe spotted the huge array of appetizers that Jack had placed on the coffeetable earlier. Glancing behind her to see that her sister was nowhere around, the petite woman placed her hands on the wheels of her "vehicle" and began to move towards the coffeetable while she licked her lips in anticipation of testing each and everyone of the delectable looking items. Sure, she had been profusely informed to keep her hands off until the guests arrived, but what Jack didn't know wouldn't hurt her. Besides, would Jack really begrudge her little sister even the tiniest cracker when she was practically starving? Okay, perhaps starving was too strong of a word, but Chloe was a tad famished.

As she reached the table, Chloe glanced behind her once again, pleased to see no one before blue eyes turned back to the appetizers. Quickly deciding on which one to sample first, she stretched out an arm towards the basket of warm crisp tortilla chips, planning to dip one...or two in the bowl of chunky salsa sitting nearby. Fingertips came dangerously close to touching the treat when Chloe suddenly stopped as she heard a commanding voice behind her telling her to freeze.

Smirking, Chloe glanced over her shoulder to find her sister standing about eight feet away. "Am I under arrest?" she asked as she expertly maneuvered her wheelchair around so that she was facing her sister, taking in the long-sleeved black buttoned down shirt, crimson leather pants, and ankle length black leather boots. Chloe's expression became one of interest. The majority of the time when Jack wore leather, she was attempting to win the affections of a woman. It always worked. Something about her being in leather just seemed to drive the ladies wild. And men too for that matter.

Jack grinned at her little sister who put the 'a' in adorable. Chloe was wearing a pair of stark white pants overalls, of which the legs were loose enough to fit over the cast covering her right leg. Underneath was a navy blue short-sleeved cotton shirt with the picture of a kitten playing with a ball of yarn stitched on the front. Chin length dark hair was smoothed back with a matching navy blue headband. Choosing to go without shoe wear, Chloe simply wore a pair of white cotton socks over her small dainty feet.

Strolling over to the wheelchair, Jack knelt in front of it as she placed her hands on her sister's thighs. "I'm gonna let you go this time with a warning missy. But next time I'm afraid I'm gonna hafta take ya in," Jack said in a southern accent. Reaching up, she pushed on the brim of an imaginary cowboy hat.

Chuckling heartily, Chloe replied, "I promise there won't be a next time ma'am. I'm gonna obey the law from here on out." One dark eyebrow arched, perfectly mimicking those of her older



sister. "Question is, will you?" At the blank expression that appeared on Jack's face, Chloe smirked at her.

"What?" Jack asked. "Did I do something wrong?" She pointed at herself while sporting a look of total innocence.

Her sister smirked again as she folded her arms across her chest. "What do *you* think?"

Standing up, Jack walked behind the wheelchair and pushed her sister over to the couch before she took a seat on it, facing the younger woman. "Okay. Spill it because I have no idea what you're talking about kid."

"I'm talking about you being on the phone yesterday around oh say six o'clock in the evening. As I rolled by the living room, I couldn't help but to hear you talking and I would have kept going if it hadn't been for the *way* you were talking," pausing, Chloe slightly grinned. "So inquiring minds want to know what's up with the southern accent Jack? You did quite well by the way. If I hadn't known you, I would have thought you were straight outta Mississippi!"

Jack laughed though there was a tinge of a blush on her cheeks. "Oh, well I was..." How much should she tell? Deciding that if there were anyone on this planet that she could trust with a secret, it would be her sister, Jack said, "talking to PerkyGrrl."

Chloe's face took on a very interested look. "That's great! But why were you pretending to be a southerner?"

Softly sighing, Jack sat back on the couch while folding her arms in her lap. Looking at her sister, she replied, "Because PerkyGrrl is Sonny and Sonny doesn't know that I'm Blue."

The look on Chloe's face turned thoughtful as she absorbed that piece of information. "So...let me get this straight. You have somehow found out that Sonny Campbell is your online friend PerkyGrrl, but she doesn't know that you're Blue. And yesterday you called her pretending to be Blue, which you really wouldn't be pretending.... giving yourself a southern accent so that she wouldn't be able to tell that she was talking to Jack?"

Jack gave her a short nod. "In a nutshell yeah."

Chloe's eyebrows rose. "Jackie, you've got some 'splanin' ta do," she said, mimicking Ricky Ricardo.

The brunette laughed. She then began to tell her sister the whole story, starting from the day she arrived at Disneyworld to discover that PerkyGrrl was actually her business rival Sonny Campbell. When she finished, she observed the unreadable look on Chloe's face before asking what she was thinking.

The younger woman sighed. "Jack this could blow up in your face if Sonny were to find out what you're doing. Why didn't you just tell her the truth from the get go?"

"If I would have confessed at Disneyland that I was Blue she wouldn't have given me the time of day. That would have been it. She wouldn't have been open to giving us a chance because she sort of despised me."

"So what about now? You two are closer. You've bonded. Just tell her that you're Blue." Jack shook her head, causing her sister to sigh again. "Why won't you?"

"It's hard to explain."

Chloe indicated her wheelchair. "I've got plenty of time for you to do so because I'm not going anywhere anytime soon. You may start."

Reaching up, Jack ran her fingers through her raven locks. "Well, I want her to want me not Blue."

Chloe's eyebrows arched. "Umm...aren't you Blue though?"

"Yes, I am but in order for her to have Blue in a sense, she has to accept the whole package, which includes me and I know that she's not willing to do that. At least not yet. So, what I have to do is somehow eliminate Blue, or make Sonny choose to be with me instead. I know that's possible, because she has feelings for Blue, which means that she has feelings for me. She just doesn't realize it yet." Jack looked at her sister closely. "You follow me?"

"I think so," Chloe slowly replied. "So in the meantime you'll just continue to deceive her until one of these days she hopefully falls madly in love with you?"

Jack winced. "Deceive is such a harsh way to put it kid."

"And how would you put it?"

The look on Jack's face became thoughtful as she attempted to come up with an answer. However, someone must have been looking down at her and taking pity because the doorbell chose that moment to ring. Managing to give her sister an apologetic look, Jack stood up while saying that she had to answer the door. As she began to walk out of the room, she was unfortunately informed that they would continue this conversation later. She groaned.

Turning around, Jack asked, "You're not going to tell Sonny any of this are you kid? Maybe this isn't one of my smartest ideas, but I really love this girl and I just want her to feel the same way about me. Obviously you don't agree with my methods, but I think this is the best way to go about making that happen." Hearing the doorbell ring again, Jack looked over her shoulder and yelled for the visitor to wait a moment.

The look on Chloe's face softened as she released the brake on her wheelchair and rode over to her sister. Indicating for Jack to lean down, she wrapped her arms around the woman, hugging her close. Leaning back, Chloe looked into Jack's eyes saying, "Though you're right that I don't

agree with how you're going about this, I'm here for you one-hundred and ten percent. And no I won't breathe a word to Sonny."

Softly smiling, Jack kissed her sister's cheek. "Thanks Chloe. You're a great little sister, you know that?"

Chloe grinned. "Of course I know that!"

Laughing, Jack stood to her full height before turning around and hurrying towards the front door. Opening it, she smiled at the two women standing side by side. "Hello ladies. Glad you could make it. Sorry it took me so long to answer the door." Stepping aside, she indicated for them to enter. "Chloe and I were finishing up a conversation."

"Is everything alright?" Leslie asked as she reached for Laura's purse, hanging both of their purses on the coat rack next to the front door. "I hope we didn't come at an inconvenient time."

"Well actually you did. Therefore, I'm gonna have to ask you to go away." At the look that appeared on Leslie's face, Jack burst out in laughter. "I'm just kidding!" Gently pulling the woman to her, she wrapped her arms around her, smiling as Leslie gave her a light squeeze.

"So how are things going?" Leslie asked as their hug ended.

"They're going pretty well. Chloe is recuperating terrifically and she starts her respiratory therapy treatments next week." Jack touched her chest. "You know, for her lungs. Everything seems to be looking up and I'm quite thankful."

Leslie offered her a warm smile. "That's great Jack. I'm happy for both you and Chloe."

Reaching out, Jack gave her shoulder a brief squeeze. "Thanks Les."

Glancing between Laura and Jack, noting that the two had barely looked at each other, Leslie hoped that this wasn't going to be a tense evening. "Since you've already met, I suppose I don't have to introduce you two," she said while smiling at them both.

"Uh yeah we have," Jack replied as she turned to Laura. "I could never forget a fist like yours." She grinned and winked at the woman while holding out her hand. "Despite our past, it's nice to see you Laura. Perhaps we could start over if you're willing."

Laura gave Jack's hand a brief yet warm shake. "I would like that very much. And I'm glad to hear that your sister is doing well."

"Thank you Laura," Jack paused as she glanced back towards the den while wondering just where Chloe was. Usually she would have been at the front door to greet their guests by now. As a thought popped into her head, Jack arched an eyebrow. *Oh, I think I know exactly what you're up to you little minx.* Turning back to her guests, Jack asked them if they would like anything to drink as she indicated for them to follow her into the den.

"You know how I like my martini's Jack," Leslie replied as she slipped an arm through Laura's while they walked towards the den.

"One martini coming up." Jack glanced over her shoulder towards Laura. "And you Laura?"

"Ginger ale please, if you have it."

"I've got everything." Jack winked at her before turning back around and heading into the den where she unsurprisingly caught her sister sitting near the coffeetable with her right cheek bulging out. The brunette chuckled while thinking that Chloe looked like a chipmunk. "It seems that someone has got caught with their hand in the hors d'oeuvres tray." A grin spread across Jack's lips as she looked at her sister.

While looking at them all sheepishly, Chloe proceeded to chew the food in her mouth before swallowing. Noting their looks of amusement, she smiled at Leslie and Laura. "Hi guys," she cheerfully said. "What's up?"

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As Leslie introduced her new friend to Chloe, Jack strolled over to the stereo, examining the large assortment of compact discs. Choosing a Sheryl Crow CD, Jack inserted it into the CD player and pressed play before she headed towards the bar to fix Leslie's and Laura's drinks. Opening the mini fridge located behind the bar, Jack took out a chilled bottle of ginger ale, pouring some of the clear liquid into a glass before dropping in a bright red cherry. While mouthing the words to the current song playing, she added both gin and dry vermouth to a shaker filled with ice. Lightly moving her hips from side to side, Jack shook the ingredients as she caught Leslie staring at her from the couch. Winking and grinning at the gorgeous brunette, Jack proceeded to strain the concoction into a martini glass. By the time she added a green olive speared on a toothpick, Leslie had arrived at the bar, taking a seat on a barstool.

"I couldn't help but to notice the moving of your hips in those tight leather pants of yours," Leslie announced as Jack set the martini in front of her. "Pardon me if I'm being much too forward, but you look *very* sexy tonight." Leslie grinned as she noted the sudden red glow to the other woman's cheeks.

"Thank you Les. You're looking pretty terrific." Picking up Laura's drink, she informed Leslie that she would be right back. Moments later, Jack returned empty handed, as she took a seat on the barstool next to Leslie's. "So what have you been up to?"

Removing the olive from her drink, Leslie held the tip of the toothpick as she brought the olive to her lips, lightly running the tip of her tongue around it as she kept her eyes in steady contact with Jack's. "Oh, you know this and that."

The other woman softly groaned as she leaned towards Leslie whispering, "Stop it. You're being very cruel."

Leslie chuckled as she took the olive away from her mouth. "What? What did I do?"

Jack smirked. "You know exactly what you did."

"So are you saying that I still have an affect on you?"

Before answering, Jack glanced at her sister and Laura, noticing that they seemed to be deep in conversation. Looking back at Leslie, she quietly replied, "No. What I'm saying is that I haven't enjoyed the company of a woman in a long while and I'm a bit sensitive right now so I really don't need to watch you making out with an olive."

Leslie gave her a broad grin. "So basically you're horny?" She laughed, as Jack's face turned redder than a tomato.

Shaking a finger at Leslie, Jack replied, "You're too naughty."

"Nonsense Jack. You more than anyone should know there's no such thing as being too naughty." Picking up her glass, Leslie took a sip of her martini before asking, "So what's stopping you?"

Jack's brow knitted in confusion. "Stopping me from what?"

"What's stopping you from enjoying the company of a woman as you so gallantly put it?" Leslie grinned. "I think you could have just about any woman you wanted, whether she be gay or straight."

Deciding to be honest, Jack admitted, "Because there is only one woman that I want."

"Oh. That's right." Leslie put her martini back on the bar before returning her attention to Jack. "I had momentarily forgotten about the one you're in love with. How is that going?"

Jack sighed as she began to swivel from side to side on the barstool. "Let's just say that it could be better, but I'm working on it."

"I would think that it would be easier to win her heart since Laura is no longer in the picture..." Leslie trailed off as she brought the toothpick to her mouth and bit into the olive.

"You do, do you?"

Leslie chuckled. "Indeed. Just give it some time though. I'm sure that she'll come around."

Hearing the doorbell ring, the expression on Jack's face instantly brightened. Noticing it, Leslie looked at her friend curiously. "I think she just did," Jack said, while beginning to smile. She was almost hopping up and down on her barstool because she was so excited. Without seeing Sonny for an entire week, Jack felt as though she had been going through detox.

The other woman gave her a surprised look. "You mean Sonny was invited to the dinner party too?" She glanced across at Laura. Well this was going to be quite an interesting evening.

Jack nodded as she stood up. "Though it's too late to do anything about it, you think there might be a problem with that?"

Leslie shook her head as she stood up as well. "Nah. It should be just fine. You better go answer the door before she decides that no one is home and leaves." She started to chuckle as she watched Jack sprinting out of the den without uttering another word. Picking up her drink, Leslie strolled over to the two women curiously looking in the direction Jack had just gone.

"She's really in a hurry to answer the door, isn't she?" Laura asked, looking up at Leslie as she arrived.

Swallowing a guacamole laden tortilla chip, Chloe said, "That must be Sonny."

Nearly choking on her ginger ale, Laura asked, "Sonny's coming?" *I suddenly feel like I'm in a soap opera. Right about now the dramatic music should start playing as my ex walks through the door and discovers that I've arrived with another woman.* Laura glanced up at Leslie. *Not that there is anything between us, but still...*

Manipulating the wheels on her wheelchair, Chloe moved backwards enough so that she could have a clear view of the front door, which was now open. Managing to look around Jack, she could easily tell that the visitor was her sister's ex-business rival. Turning back to Laura, she replied, "She's arrived."

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She couldn't help it. There wasn't a thing she could do about the goofy smile on her face. Resisting the urge to pull Sonny into her arms, Jack waved at her, instantly feeling stupid after doing so. Off and on all day she had been practicing how she would behave when she opened the door to find Sonny standing there. The keyword was to act cool, so her original plan was to open the door and give the blonde a charming come hither smile as she moved to lean against the doorjamb while Sonny checked out her leather pants, noticing just how well they fit.

However, Jack had just blown it, but she really didn't care. The important thing was that Sonny had decided to come and now they could make up. Thinking that one of them should take the initiative to speak, Jack considered that it might as well be her. "Hey." Currently, it was all that she could manage to get out as her eyes roamed over Sonny. Was it just her imagination or did the blonde look even more beautiful than she remembered? *Oh, Sonny. May I have your hand in marriage?*

Sonny smiled at her. She was trying to come up with the correct word to describe how Jack looked in those tight red leather pants on legs that seemed to go on forever and the shirt that had just enough buttons undone that she could catch a glimpse of the black lacy bra underneath. Um, not that she was trying to look or anything. "Hi," Sonny shyly replied as she hooked her thumbs into the side pockets of her cargo pants. A light bulb switched on in her head as she came up

with the word that she wanted. To put it simply, Jack looked h-o-t hot! Though not that that fact meant anything to Sonny...

"I see you got your cast removed," Jack stated as she glanced at the blonde's now naked left arm. She could have smacked herself. *I haven't seen her in a week and this is how I decide to start a conversation?*

Sonny nodded as she unconsciously rubbed the arm being discussed. "Yes, it was taken off on Saturday. I'm thrilled too because it was a nuisance! Especially when it itched under there."

"For future reference, if you ever have an itch that you need scratching, I'm your woman." Jack slowly grinned at her as she wiggled her eyebrows up and down suggestively.

Instead of blushing at the comment, Sonny burst out in laughter when she noticed the dancing eyebrows. "I'll keep that in mind, Jack. Thanks a bunch."

Chuckling, Jack answered, "No problem. I think I've kept you standing on my welcome mat long enough. Would you care to come in?"

Sonny glanced up towards the starlit sky. "Though it's a lovely night, I sure would." Breezing by Jack, she caught a whiff of the woman's pleasant cologne. Turning around, she watched as the brunette closed the door before turning to her, wearing a smile. Caught off guard by the tenderness of it, Sonny felt a blush creeping up to her cheeks. Starting to turn away in order to hide it, she abruptly decided not to. Based on the grin on Jack's lips, it was already too late. *Jack, you can't wait five minutes to tease me can you?* She looked at the other woman, figuring that those wheels were probably turning in her head. *C'mon. I know you wanna do it.*

"Ah, there's that blush that I've come to know and love. I've missed it." The grin metamorphosed back into a tender smile as Jack softly added, "And I've missed you too. So very much Sonny girl." Jack's heart hammered beneath her chest as she waited for a reply, having no idea of what it might be. *What would you do if I kissed you right now?*

Sonny blinked rapidly in surprise, barely being able to believe her ears. That wasn't really teasing. Instead, it was rather.... sweet and heartwarming. Having a bit of difficulty finding her voice, the blonde finally managed to whisper, "I've missed you as well Jack."

Blue and green eyes met and gazed into each other while the rest of the world seemed to melt away for a few precious seconds. Thinking that they should join the others, Jack was the first to break contact as she slowly reached out for one of Sonny's hands, needing to touch her. The other woman watched almost in a daze as the brunette brought her hand to her lips and turned it over to place a feather light kiss in the center of Sonny's palm. Hearing Sonny emit a soft gasp, Jack smiled at her while letting go of her hand, though not wanting to.

"I um...I guess we better join the others in the den before they decide to come looking for us," Jack said, though she remained right where she was. What she really wanted to do was pick Sonny up and carry her upstairs to her bedroom where they could have some privacy. She

inwardly grinned as she imagined the scenario. *What would you do if I carried you to my boudoir right now?*

The blonde wordlessly nodded as she tried to ignore the pleasantly tingling sensations left after the brief touch of Jack's lips on her palm. She thought of Dixie, hoping that that would quell the sensations, but they only grew more apparent. Turning away from curious blue eyes, she headed towards the den while trying to get a hold on her emotions. *What in the world is the matter with me? This is Jack not Blue. My heart lies with Blue.* Sonny repeated that to herself a couple of times as she walked. Suddenly she stopped as a warm hand clamped down on her shoulder, proving to create a fresh wave of sensations. Turning around, Sonny stared up into blue eyes as she wondered why the woman's touches were affecting her so much. Perhaps it had something to do with that quote that stated absence made the heart grow fonder. *Well we best not spend too much time apart.* Sonny gave a slight shake of her head while thinking that didn't sound like a wise idea.

Forcing herself to remove her hand since she now had the shorter woman's attention, Jack quietly said as she stared into green eyes, "There's something I have to tell you."

Swallowing so hard that it was faintly audible, Sonny looked into open blue eyes filled with warmth while wondering what Jack was about to say. She decided to ignore the fact that her heart rate had increased considerably. "Yes?" the blonde softly inquired.

"I probably should have called you before to tell you this but Leslie invited Laura to the dinner party and they're in the den now."

Sonny blinked. Was that it? For some strange reason she felt disappointed. "Oh. Okay." She smiled because Jack was now looking at her peculiarly. "It's not a problem. I've accepted Laura and I not being together and it's perfectly alright for her to move on and see other people. I mean that's what you're supposed to do right?" Sonny laughed a little nervously because the brunette was giving her that same look. *Oh, Sonny just shut up! You sound like a rambling idiot!*

Cocking her head to the side, Jack studied the shorter woman wondering why she was talking so fast and nervously. She also wondered about the look of disappointment that had appeared on Sonny's face only moments before. Sensing that Sonny wouldn't want her to, Jack decided not to inquire about it. Instead she wrapped an arm around the younger woman's shoulders and asked if she was ready to greet the others. Thankful that Jack didn't comment on her suddenly odd behavior, Sonny quietly nodded her head while unconsciously wrapping her arm around the woman's waist. She missed the smile that crossed Jack's lips as they made their way into the den, their bodies brushing against one another as they walked.

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The evening was going along rather well. Everyone was talking amicably and generally having a fantastic time. All five women were outside now after having enjoyed a terrific Mexican feast that Jack had catered. Sitting around a patio table eating slices of flan, they chatted with one another. The current topic was about Hollywood and famous actors.

"So ladies let me ask you a question," Leslie said as she waved her fork as though she was the conductor of a musical group. "If you could date any famous actress," she glanced at Chloe while grinning, "or actor in your case darling. Who would you all pick?" She pointed her fork at Laura. "You first."

"Gee thanks." Laura grinned at her. "Well, there are so many beautiful actresses out there but I think my choice would have to be Andie MacDowell. I've always held a soft spot in my heart for her."

"Why Andie?" Chloe asked.

"One reason is I just love her southern accent." Laura raised her eyebrow as she glanced at Jack who was glaring at her sister after she started snickering. "What's so funny and why are you glaring at her Jack?"

Chloe shrugged. "Oh no reason. It's just that I know a southern woman and the mere thought of her causes me to laugh. You reminded me of her when you mentioned the accent." She looked at her sister who appeared to be a little tense at the moment. "Jack might have thought it rude that I laughed while you were trying to explain, right Jack?"

Her sister slowly nodded while turning to Laura. "Right. I don't want you to be interrupted."

Laura smiled. "Oh, that's okay. It didn't bother me. I was mostly curious about your reaction to her laughter. Anyway as I was saying, I also chose Andie because she seems like she would be a real sweetheart and I think we would get along well." She looked around the small group. "Who's next?"

After pointing her fork at Jack, Leslie had it swiped away from her by the woman. Jack placed the fork on her empty saucer. Noticing Leslie's little frown, she said, "It's not right to point your fork at people." The frown disappearing, Leslie started to chuckle. "Okay, who would I choose." A thoughtful look appeared on Jack's face. "Actually there's only one person on this earth that I want..." Her blue eyes fell on Sonny, who instantly started to blush. Successfully keeping the grin from showing on her lips, Jack returned her attention to Leslie who wasn't so successful with hiding a grin. Glancing at the others, she noticed they weren't either. "But if I simply had to choose someone famous, it would be Catherine Zeta-Jones because let's admit it. That woman has got it going on!"

Laughing, Jack and Leslie high-fived each other while Laura and Chloe spoke up with their agreement on the fineness of the Welsh actress. Meanwhile, Sonny fought hard with the sudden jealousy she felt. *What's wrong with me? So what if she thinks Catherine is hot. Hell, so do I and a lot of other people! Shouldn't affect me in anyway.* Pasting a smile on her lips so as not to draw any questions, Sonny then noticed that the group was looking at her expectantly.

"Oh, is it my turn?" They nodded. "I've always had this thing for Michelle Pfeiffer. I've liked her since I saw her in *Grease* 2 years ago." This earned her a few chuckles and she started to grin.

"Ooh, nice choice Sonny," Leslie said as she stole her fork back from Jack's plate because she wasn't done with her flan yet. "In her forties and she still as Jack put it has got it going on!" This time she and Sonny high-fived each other while breaking into laughter. After it died down, Leslie looked at Chloe. "And now it's your turn darling."

Shaking her head, Chloe replied, "Nope. You go first."

Leslie grinned. "Okay. Well my choice is Halle Berry because she puts the f-i-n-e in fine. Since she's a petite little thing, I imagine that she would be wonderful to cuddle up with." Her grin became broader. "And I could happily do that every single night. Um, along with much much more."

Laura whistled. "That's a pretty nice choice you made too."

Leslie winked at her. "Why thank you." Her eyes falling on Chloe, Leslie grinned at her. "And now it's your turn. So who would you choose to be your boy toy, hmm?"

"Yeah kid," Jack started. "Who's your man? Brad Pitt...Tom Cruise?" A grin curved her lips.

Shaking her head, Chloe said, "Nope. I've decided to pick a woman like the rest of you."

Leslie arched an eyebrow. "Ooh, am I going to have to purchase another toaster?" Jack, Sonny, and Laura burst into laughter as Chloe merely smirked at the one responsible for the joke. Somehow, Leslie managed to look innocent.

"Les, sorry to tell you this but I haven't been reverted. I still like men," Chloe said, chuckling as the woman pretended to look extremely sorrowful about this news. "I'm comfortable enough with my sexuality to admit that I do find women attractive. A lot *highly* attractive." She decided not to mention the fact that she'd had a crush on her eighth grade English teacher, Mrs. Arthur. There was no telling how much they would tease her for that.

"Well who's your pick? Brittany Spears? Do you want to like hit her one more time baby?" Leslie tried to maintain a serious expression but failed to as she broke out in a fit of giggles along with Jack. Sonny and Laura at least had the decency to cover their mouths with their hands before they started laughing.

Chloe smirked while thinking that she might as well have told them about her teacher. It couldn't have been any worse. "No, Miss Comedian not Brittany Spears."

"Oh, I'm sorry sweetie. I shouldn't tease you like that." Scooting her chair closer to Chloe's wheelchair, she kissed the young woman's cheek and then gave her a genuine smile that was quickly returned. "I think I had too many martini's." Winking at Chloe, Leslie asked, "So who would you pick to date?"

Chloe opened her mouth to answer but then shut it as she shook her head. "Nah, I don't feel like divulging that information now. I'll just keep her to myself." Grinning, she unlocked the brakes

on her wheelchair before starting to roll away from the table. "It's been real ladies but I'm gonna head on to bed now. I'm bushed." Declining her sister's offer to assist her to bed, Chloe waved at the others before heading toward the sliding glass doors leading into the house.

"Hey, wait a minute!" Leslie called after her as she arose from her chair. Chloe however, kept rolling along with a broad grin spread across her lips. "Tell me who she is. You've got me curious now!" Noticing that the young woman didn't intend to stop, Leslie added, "That's alright. I'll call you tomorrow. Sweet dreams kid!"

Chuckling, Chloe raised her hand and waved back at Leslie before continuing on her way, soon to be out of sight. Turning back to the group, Leslie noticed that Jack's attention was focused on Sonny, who didn't seem to notice as she chatted with Laura. Concluding that Jack might want some time alone with the gorgeous blonde, Leslie asked Laura if she would be interested in going to get a cup of coffee with her.

"That'd be great," Laura replied as she stood up and looked at Jack. "Thank you for a loving evening. I've thoroughly enjoyed myself. We got off to a rocky start, but perhaps you and I can become friends." She smiled at the woman.

Jack nodded as she returned the smile. "I'd like that very much Laura. I'll see you two to the door." She started to arise from her chair but was quickly advised by Leslie to remain seated. Watching as Laura gave Sonny a kiss on her cheek, Jack told herself that she wasn't at all jealous.

Leaning down, Leslie wrapped her arms around Jack while she whispered in her ear, "Go get her tiger." Standing up, she winked at Jack as the other woman simply shook her head while grinning.

Minutes later, Jack and Sonny heard the front door closing. Turning to each other they smiled, neither of them knowing what to say. This was the first time that they had been alone in a week and they were now at a loss for words.

"So...what have you been up to?" Jack asked as she gathered the dishes. She suddenly felt like a nervous teenager on her first date.

"Not too much. I closed up *Bean There, Done That* on Friday and now I'm trying to figure out what I want to do next. So I suppose you could say that I've been doing a lot of thinking."

"Have any ideas?"

Sonny shook her head as she lightly chuckled. "Not a clue. But I'm working on it," pausing, she looked at Jack. "How have things been going with you this past week?"

Jack shrugged. "Ah well...honestly?"

The blonde mutely nodded.

Averting her eyes to the pool, Jack quietly said, "I've felt kind of lost without you around. There were times that I almost called you or came over but I just couldn't bring myself to do it." Daring to look at the other woman, Jack tried to decipher the unreadable expression she wore. "I'm glad that you decided to make the first move because I don't think I would have lasted much longer without talking to you." A slight smile curved the brunette's lips as she suddenly ached to draw Sonny into her arms.

Though a tinge of a blush graced her cheeks, Sonny's brow knit in confusion. "Me make the first move?" she asked as Jack nodded. "But you had Chloe call me so in a sense didn't you?"

Both of Jack's eyebrows arched. "Um...no I didn't. You called me but since I wasn't there, Chloe answered the phone. She told me that you apologized for what happened between us and that you wanted to make up with me because you couldn't bear to lose me."

"Well that's funny because she told me that you were sorry for what happened and that you wanted me to come to her welcome home dinner party. She also said that you would have called me yourself but you were afraid so that's why she did it. Am I wrong?"

The brunette shook her head. *Why that little sneak. Chloe you've learned too much from me.* Looking at Sonny she said, "I do believe that we have been set up by my mischievous little sister. Though I suppose that I shouldn't be too hard on her since she was only trying to help."

"So you never apologized?"

"Why would I apologize for wanting to help you?"

Oh, brother, Sonny thought. *Here we go again.* "Jack you're idea of helping seems to always involve shoving money into someone's face. I didn't want to take a handout and though you referred to it as 'business' you and I both know different. Now when I didn't accept it, you got pissed off at me, claiming that you were just wasting your time and stormed out. Does it sound to you like *I* should have apologized?"

It suddenly dawned on Jack that Sonny wasn't in the wrong. It was she who should have made the first move and apologized for her behavior last week. Jack had just become so angry when Sonny refused to accept her offer. All she'd wanted to do was help but Sonny was correct. Jack relied on her money far too much. It wasn't the answer to everything.

As she softly sighed, Jack scooted her chair closer to Sonny's before gingerly placing her hand over the other woman's. She was relieved and happy when the blonde didn't pull her hand away. Blue eyes making contact with green ones, Jack quietly said, "I'm so sorry Sonny. I should have apologized to you days ago, but I was just too stubborn to see that this was my own fault. Sometimes I just get hotheaded and I don't listen. I didn't mean what I said about wasting my time. Nothing could be farther from the truth. I really am sorry. I hope that you can forgive me for once again acting like a jerk."

Surprising them both, Sonny arose from her chair and walked over to Jack. Taking the woman by

the hand, Sonny gently pulled until the brunette was standing as well. Smiling at her, Sonny wrapped her arms around Jack and squeezed her tight, smiling even more when she felt a pair of strong arms encircling her body. Wordlessly, the two women embraced each other for a couple of minutes before they let go, neither really wanting to do so.

"So does that mean that you forgive me?" Jack inquired, a faint grin on her lips. She desperately wanted an encore of that hug.

Sonny waved a dismissive hand. "Let's just forget about it. Doesn't matter anymore. Perhaps we both got a little too upset. The important thing is that we're talking now and that we're still friends. Okay?" She smiled at Jack.

Smiling back, the brunette nodded. "Okay."

After conversing over cups of coffee in the kitchen for nearly an hour, Sonny announced that she should be getting home. Unhappy to see her go, but knowing that it was inevitable, Jack walked the young woman to her car. After opening the car door for Sonny, Jack wrapped her arms around her, wanting to feel her at least once more before she left. *I have turned into such a sap*, Jack thought as they shared a brief yet tender embrace. It was on the tip of her tongue to ask Sonny to stay over, but she quickly thought better of it.

"So when will I see you again?" Jack asked after their hug ended.

Green eyes filled with amusement looked up at her. "That depends. When do you want to see me?" Sonny leaned back against the car as she waited for a response.

Jack arched an eyebrow. Was it just her imagination or was this woman flirting with her? She certainly hoped that it was the latter. Based on the expression written across Sonny's face, she definitely was. "Well if it were up to me I'd see you morning, noon, and night twenty-four seven," Jack replied in a low throaty voice. It had the desired effect because she instantly detected the red blush appearing on Sonny's cheeks.

Finding her voice, the blonde swallowed before softly saying, "I'll call you tomorrow. Goodnight Jack." Standing on her tiptoes, she lightly kissed the woman's cheek before disappearing inside her car.

Wearing a silly little grin, Jack watched while the car drove off until it was out of sight. Bubbling with excitement, she walked back into her house. She could hardly wait until the phone rang tomorrow and it was Sonny.

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After leaving her car with the valet, Jack walked into the restaurant carrying a bouquet of flowers. When she informed the maitre 'd of whom she was supposed to be meeting, the tuxedo dressed man plucked a menu from a stack before indicating for her to follow him. While doing so, Jack attempted to calm the racing of her heart but failed to do so. She was much too excited and nervous. *You would think that I'd get used to spending time with her, but every time feels like*

*the first*, Jack mentally said as she spied the blonde she had been looking. She was sitting at a small table near a window, which showed a spectacular view of the ocean.

Smiling as the taller woman neared, Sonny arose from the table and hugged her in greeting. As Sonny thanked Jack for the flowers, the two women sat down, their seats facing one another. After the maitre 'd gave Jack her menu and walked away, the brunette stretched her arm across the table, covering Sonny's hand with her own. Looking into her green eyes, Jack smiled broadly while absolutely thrilled to be in Sonny's presence again. True, just two days ago they had spent the evening with each other, catching a movie at a theater and then playing miniature golf which Jack found that she was quite unskilled at, but she had missed this woman terribly.

Jack lightly shook her head at the irony. She used to be known as the Conqueror and now she had been the one conquered. She just wished that soon Sonny would be open to the idea of giving them a chance. It had nearly been a week since they mended broken fences at Chloe's dinner party and Jack felt that she hadn't come any closer to making Sonny her own. However, Blue seemed to be getting closer based on the emails she had received last week. Jack shook her head again. How was it that she could beat other people in business, yet she couldn't defeat herself? *Wonder how upset Sonny would be if 'Blue' suddenly dropped off of the face of the planet?*

Cocking her head to the side, Sonny gave the brunette a curious look. "What are you thinking?" she asked, watching as the sudden faraway look in Jack's eyes disappeared with a blink.

"Hmm?"

Lightly chuckling, Sonny repeated her question. "Physically you're here yet you seem to be far away. Is something wrong? Is Chloe alright?"

Jack softly smiled at her while rubbing the hand beneath her own. Sonny's great concern for others only proved to cause Jack to love her even more. "I think she's becoming a little anxious to be free of that wheelchair but other than that she's doing well. And everything else is fine," she paused as she gazed into attentive green eyes. "I was just marveling over how beautiful you look tonight. Though to be honest you look beautiful every time that I see you." Jack mentally rolled her eyes though she was speaking the truth. Sonny looked positively breathtaking in the mid-thigh length red tank dress she was wearing. *Just call me Jack the Sap.*

Her cheeks turning a color that perfectly matched her dress, Sonny softly thanked the other woman for her compliment. Before either woman could say anything more, their waiter arrived at the table carrying a chilled bottle of champagne. After he opened the bottle and poured champagne into the two flutes already sitting on the table, the waiter informed Sonny and Jack to signal him when they were ready to order.

The brunette smiled at her dinner companion. "Did you set this up Sonny? The champagne I mean."

Nodding, Sonny replied, "Yeah. I told the waiter that I was expecting someone and when he

noticed a gorgeous blue-eyed woman sitting across from me that he was to bring this champagne."

A grin spread across Jack's lips. "Gorgeous?"

Sonny rolled her eyes while thinking that she should have edited out the gorgeous part. She tried to shrug nonchalantly. "Yeah, well you are gorgeous." Picking up her champagne, Sonny decided to change the subject. At least she hoped Jack would allow that to happen. "Anyway, I invited you to dinner because I have some terrific news and I was in the mood to celebrate."

"And out of everyone you know you chose to celebrate with me?" How sweet and touching was that? Jack instantly felt a lump forming in her throat, which was one of the signs of an impending cry. Grabbing her flute, she took a short sip while trying to get control of her emotions. *Just what have you done to me Sonny Campbell? I'm turning into an emotional cornball!*

Perhaps it was just the lighting in the restaurant or the candlelight but Sonny could swear that Jack's eyes looked glassy as though she was on the verge of crying. She was about to dismiss it when she noticed that the woman seemed to be swallowing an awful lot. Reaching across the table, Sonny took one of Jack's hands in her own.

"Hey are you alright Jack?"

Not trusting herself to speak right now, the brunette merely nodded as she gave the hand holding hers a brief yet reassuring squeeze.

"You look as though you're about to cry," Sonny quietly stated. "Are you sure Chloe is doing okay? You know that you can talk to me about anything. That's what friends are for." Smiling, Sonny squeezed Jack's hand back.

"She's fine. Really," Jack replied in a hoarse whisper. Quietly excusing herself, she arose and left the table as the blonde curiously watched her.

She didn't have to wonder for long where the woman was headed because Jack soon arrived at the small stage where a band was playing. Raising a curious golden eyebrow, Sonny continued to watch as she noticed Jack slipping the band members bills, though she couldn't tell which denominations. *What is she up to now?* Sonny wondered as she turned back around to take a sip of champagne. By the time she turned back to look at Jack, the tall woman was standing behind her chair, a soft smile on her lips.

"Dance with me please?" Holding out her hand, Jack said, "That is unless you have a problem with us being women, dancing together in public. I completely understand if you'd be uncomfortable."

Shaking her head, Sonny placed her hand in the other woman's as she stood up, a smile evident on her face. "I'd love to dance with you Jack. I don't care what other people think about that. Lead the way."

With the smile on her lips growing, Jack led them toward the dance floor, which happened to be empty. As Jack wrapped her arms around Sonny's waist, a familiar song began to be played by the band, the only female singing. Instantly knowing what song it was Sonny began to smile and blush simultaneously, as slipped her arms around her companion's neck and they started to dance close.

"All that's missing is your leisure suit and my ball gown," Sonny said, recalling Jack's Cinderella-like dream. Her green eyes twinkled merrily as she unconsciously pressed her body closer. She found that wanting to touch Jack was beginning to become a habit she had to break. Not that she and Blue had yet to make any type of commitment to each other, but she felt guilty all the same. Blue should be the only woman that she wanted to constantly touch.

Barely containing a moan of pleasure as Sonny pressed closer, Jack smiled down at her. Her body temperature has rose considerably and her heart was beating quite fast as Jack wondered if them dancing together was such a bright idea. *I can do this*, Jack mentally coached herself. *I am a grown woman and I can control my urges no matter how good she feels...no matter how good she smells...*

"Jack?" Sonny called for the fourth time, relieved when the other woman finally blinked before focusing on her.

"Hmm?"

"Are you okay? You look a little flushed." Sonny pressed a palm to Jack's cheek.

"You know what's one of the most spoken phrases in movies?"

Both of Sonny's eyebrows rose high as she wondered where this question was leading. She shook her head. "I haven't the slightest idea. Tell me."

"It's let's get out of here. You wanna?"

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A little under an hour later, both women were sitting at the edge of Jack's pool with their legs submerged in the water. Discovering that she and Chloe were the same size, Sonny wore a pair of the younger woman's shorts along with a tank top. It proved difficult to do but she managed not to ogle Jack in the black two piece bikini she wore. *Good gracious I knew she had a nice rack, but that bikini top just accentuates it!* Green eyes slowly traveled down Jack's body, completely unnoticed as the woman stared towards the empty beach. *And such beautifully long legs.* As Sonny looked up, her face turned as red as a tomato when she noticed amused blue eyes gazing at her. *Busted!*

"See something you like?" Jack asked in a husky voice. She'd picked this particular bikini on purpose, hoping that it would have the desired effect. Her lips curved upward into a smile. It seemed to be working perfectly.

It was on the tip of her tongue to flirtatiously reply that maybe she did, but Sonny quickly changed her mind. If she did there was no telling where this would lead. Instead, she decided to change the subject by informing the scantily clad woman seated next to her that she still had terrific news to tell her.

An apologetic look appeared on Jack's face. "Oh, yes. I never did give you the chance to tell me what we're supposed to be celebrating. What's your big news?"

"Yeah, that's when you got all weird on me," Sonny replied, a playful smile on her lips. "You never did tell me what that was all about," she added, wondering if she would get an answer now. After the bill for the champagne was taken care of, the two women got in their separate cars before Sonny followed Jack back to her mansion as the blonde referred to it. Still curiously quiet when they arrived, Jack suggested that they lounge by the pool, yet she didn't say much else.

"I'm interested in hearing your good news."

"And I'm interested in knowing why you suddenly became quiet back at the restaurant. What happened back there?" Sonny delicately inquired.

Unreadable blue eyes traveled to Sonny's face. "You've been wanting to tell me and I really want to know, so go ahead," Jack softly insisted. "Please."

Knowing when she was defeated, the blonde relinquished with a nod. "Okay. As you know I've been looking for employment all week and I have finally found a job. I start bright and early tomorrow morning in fact."

Jack brightly smiled as she congratulated Sonny while resisting the urge to use this new information as an excuse to reach over and embrace her. She figured that she might not be able to let go if she gave in to the urge. "So what will you be doing? Does it have anything to do with coffee?"

Sonny lightly chuckled as she shook her head. "No, I've decided that I'm probably going to be out of the coffee business from here on out. Have you ever heard of that women's resort called *Serenity Palace*?"

The brunette mutely nodded. In fact, when they were seeing each other, she had been to the resort numerous times with Leslie. It was one of their favorite spots. However, Jack decided not to mention that little tidbit.

"Well I'm going to be a masseuse there," Sonny stated, a smile on her lips. "Working from eight to four, Monday through Friday. Great pay, great benefits, and I'm quite pleased with the amount of vacation time I'm allotted."

"A masseuse? You're going to be a masseuse?" Jack questioned as one lone eyebrow raised. If asked, she couldn't have been able to tell what Sonny had said after relaying the news that she

was going to be a masseuse. That one word had gained her full and complete attention. Jack didn't like the sound of this. She didn't like it one bit and the scowl on her face made that obvious. It was bad enough that the love of her life was going to be interacting on a daily basis with solely women upon women by working at a female only resort. But now she learned that Sonny was going to be a masseuse, which meant that she would have her hands on these women. She would have her hands all over their bodies and quite possibly see them naked. Sonny would be subjected to naked or barely dressed women all day long. Women who wanted her to squeeze and knead their bodies. The scowl on Jack's face deepened.

Sonny cocked her head to the side as she observed the brunette's expression. Did she have a problem with it? "Yes, I am. Is there something wrong with that?"

Jack quickly shook her head as she forced a smile onto her lips. Well, a faint smile anyway. It was the best she could do because she felt a bit nauseous. "No, there isn't. I just umm...never knew you had those types of skills. Don't you need a license in order to be a professional masseuse?"

"Oh, I have one," Sonny quickly supplied as she glanced toward the ocean, missing the disappointed expression on Jack's face. "Back in college I took some courses dealing in massage therapy and that was around the time I received my license to practice it. I was a masseuse at a resort for a little over a year and though I don't mean to toot my own horn, I was pretty great at it," pausing, she broadly smiled as she winked at her companion. "It wasn't long after that that Sarah and I started our coffee business."

"So now you get to return to it, eh?" Jack asked, trying her best to sound upbeat. *Have I mentioned that I don't like this one little bit? She couldn't just work at McDonald's or something?*

Nodding, Sonny waded her feet back and forth in water. "I'm quite excited about it. I've always loved working with my hands."

Though it was innocently stated, Jack couldn't help but to wince while imagining just what the young blonde could do with those petite hands of hers. A rush of heat went through her when Sonny added that perhaps she could give her a massage sometime. A small smile tugged at Jack's lips as the less than desirable images roaming through her mind were replaced with sizzling ones of Sonny's soft palms slowly gliding over her body, bringing her pleasure that she never knew existed.

Starting to feel rather overheated, the brunette informed Sonny that she was going to take a dip in the pool. Without waiting for comment, Jack took a deep breath before diving headfirst into the Olympic-sized pool. Easily gliding through the lukewarm temperature water, Jack completed four laps within a matter of minutes before she heard a small splash. Glancing over her shoulder, she noticed that Sonny was swimming in her direction. Being on the shallow end, Jack placed her feet on the bottom as she leaned against the side of the pool.

Arriving in close proximity to Jack, Sonny gained her balance, standing in the water as well.

While smiling at the other woman, the blonde reached up and smoothed back the short strands of hair hanging on her forehead. Unconsciously, Sonny licked her lips causing Jack to softly mewl, as she moved to stand directly in front of her.

"Awesome pool you have here. The pool in my apartment complex is nice but it doesn't begin to compare to this one," the smaller woman stated as she looked up into blue eyes that were slightly darker than usual. She watched as Jack silently nodded her head in agreement and then grinned. "Cat got your tongue Jack?" she teasingly asked.

Jack felt her resolve melting away as she faintly smiled in return. "You want to know why?" she softly asked.

Raising an eyebrow, Sonny questioned, "Do I want to know why your pool is awesome?"

Bursting into laughter, the brunette shook her head. "No, do you want to know why I grew quiet at the restaurant?"

"Ooh, that. Yes I would."

"It was what you said," Jack briefly paused. "Well actually what I concluded that you were implying but you never really answered me so I'll ask you again. Out of everyone you know, you chose to celebrate with me?"

Warmly smiling, Sonny nodded. "Yes."

Jack's heart started to beat at a faster pace. "Not Sarah?" The blonde shook her head. "Not Laura?"

"Nope."

"Not Hawke or Peter?"

Green eyes twinkled as they gazed up at the taller woman. "Nope and nope. Truthfully, you were the first person to enter my mind and I thought it was a grand idea to celebrate with you which is why I gave you a ring."

A damp dark eyebrow quizzically raised. "You mean it wasn't Blue?" She was on Sonny's mind before the 'Southern' woman. Jack inwardly smiled, filled with glee. That had to be progress.

Sonny shook her head. "No," she whispered. "Jack sometimes it frightens me how much I think about you, how much you've come to mean to me within such a short amount of time. It feels as though I've known you far longer than a mere month."

Jack nodded in total agreement. "It feels that way for me too, though I'm not at all frightened by the depth of my feelings for you," she softly replied, a touch of a smile evident on her lips. "Sonny I feel that I've been waiting for someone like you all of my life and I'm thrilled that

you've finally arrived. I think about you the majority of the time and I welcome those thoughts. Before it was just Chloe, but you and she, both now mean the world to me. You two *are* my world." Noticing that Sonny was about to say something, Jack briefly touched a finger to her lips. "And the reason," taking a deep breath, the brunette started again as she stared into attentive green eyes, "the reason I became so quiet was because I truly touched that you would think of me first. You don't know how happy that makes me. Perhaps I'm making too much out of it, but it did me a world of good. My emotions got the best of me and I was nearly rendered speechless because I was so choked up. All I wanted to do was take you in my arms and hold you forever." Raising a hand, Jack gently cupped the younger woman's cheek. "I don't have a clue how you'll react, but there is something that I want to tell you," pausing again, Jack observed the blonde. She was so still that it didn't appear like she was even breathing. "Sonny girl I've always wondered what true love felt like and now I know because of you. I love you."

Her vision growing bleary, Sonny inhaled deeply before slowly letting it out. This was quite unexpected. Looking up into anxious blue eyes that were also bleary with unshed tears, she whispered, "I don't know what to say Jack."

Two tears ran down her cheeks, as the brunette softly replied, "You don't have to say a word." Her resolve completely gone now, Jack slowly leaned down aiming for the other woman's lips. Moments later, their lips touched in a kiss that at first was tentative as though it was their first one. Soon, the kiss grew bolder and more passionate as Sonny and Jack wrapped their arms around one another, both softly moaning. With her arms wrapped around Sonny's waist, the brunette turned them around in the water so that the smaller woman had her back pressed against the side. Breaking the passion filled kiss, Jack began a pleasurable assault on her companion's neck, her mouth tenderly sucking at the warm flesh.

Moaning, Sonny's body writhed against Jack's as she wrapped her legs around the woman's waist under the water. She was so turned on, she concluded that it should be a crime. *What am I doing?* She mentally asked herself. *I have Blue. Well I intend to have Blue so what am I doing making out with Jack?* Another moan escaped her as Jack's tongue laved the spot she had been nibbling on. *God, it feels so incredible.* Sonny let out a small yelp as a pair of strong arms suddenly lifted her out of the water. Hanging on for dear life while being transported, the blonde soon found herself laying on a wide padded chaise lounge. As Jack's hot mouth descended upon her neck again, one of the woman's hands slipped up the front of her tank top, a warm palm coming to rest on her stomach.

Her hands seeming to have a mind all their own, trailed up Jack's smooth and damp back until they touched the tied strings holding her bikini top together. Deft fingertips tugged at the strings until they were untied, each limply falling on either side of Jack's back. Releasing the patch of skin she had been laboriously working on, Jack knelt on the chaise lounge between the blonde's legs, her darkened blue eyes gazing into Sonny's equally dark green ones as she removed the bikini top, tossing it over her shoulder. Swallowing with much difficulty, the blonde gazed up at the beautiful full breasts that she had only caught a glimpse of on a particular day weeks ago at the local gym. They were as marvelous as ever. Simply two works of art.

A sexy little grin appearing on her lips, Jack took a hold of the small hands grabbing at the

padding of the chaise lounge rather tightly and placed them over her breasts. As she swallowed again, Sonny gave the breasts she was now touching a light squeeze, eliciting a deep moan from their owner. Spurred by this, she allowed the edge of her thumbs to lightly graze back and forth across Jack's rose colored nipples, gaining more moans in the process.

"Oh, Sonny do you have any idea what you're doing to me?" Jack asked in a throaty whisper, loudly groaning as nimble fingers gently tugged at her sensitive tips, stimulating them all the more.

"I think I have a vague idea," the blonde whispered thickly as she left Jack's breasts, fingertips traveling down to the woman's taut stomach. She was debating on whether to remove those bikini bottoms when Jack seemed to become temporarily psychic, disposing of the flimsy piece of cloth within seconds. Now Sonny had a full frontal view of Jack and she had to admit that it was quite lovely. Having lost her ability to think correctly, the blonde's right hand continue traveling down, until the back of it came in contact with a delicious heat. A pair of tanned strong thighs slightly quivered as Sonny started to brush her fingertips against a rather damp mound. Hearing soft moans, Sonny increased the pressure of her fingertips, almost mesmerized by what she was doing.

"Sonny, I need you," the brunette breathlessly stated as she gently removed the younger woman's pleasure giving hand before moving to lay on top of her, capturing Sonny's mouth in a scorching kiss. Straddling one of Sonny's thighs, Jack began to press her thigh into the woman's center through her shorts as their kiss continued, tongues dueling for space in each other's mouths. The brunette moaned as a thigh was placed at her own center, beginning to create friction by rubbing up and down. Succeeding in not breaking the kiss, Jack started to slide her hands under the woman lying below her tank top. She craved to feel more of the blonde's soft skin.

Ending the kiss, blue eyes filled with love, affection, and desire gazed into green ones. The blue eyes closed as a soft hand lifted to caress Jack's cheek, fingertips lightly trailing over her skin. They grazed across her forehead to her eyebrows, down her nose, across to her other cheek, chin, and finally up to her lips, which were slightly parted. Opening her eyes, Jack looked at Sonny as she took the woman's middle finger into her mouth, beginning to run her mouth back and forth over it. Shuddering in delight, Sonny kept eye contact as Jack started to suckle on her finger, her tongue rolling around it. She moaned, pressing her thigh harder against the other woman as Jack increased her own pressure.

Continuing to suck on the blonde's digit, Jack pushed her dampened tank top up far enough so that her pert breasts were in view. Allowing Sonny's middle finger to slip out of her hot mouth, Jack leaned down, starting to place butterfly kisses across the tops of the other woman's breasts, her strong thigh still grinding into her. Sonny arched her back as a warm tongue began to circle around her right nipple and then her left. Softly moaning, she rocked her body against Jack's, her hands sliding down to cup the woman's rear, pushing Jack into her.

"Ooh, Jack. God you're incredible," Sonny called out in a husky voice, knowing that she was close to climaxing. Small hands squeezed Jack's naked buttocks as a thigh slick with her natural juices moved against her mound faster and harder. Sonny arched her back more as the brunette

tenderly suckled her nipples. Quickly running her tongue across dry lips, the blonde whispered, "I'm almost there...I'm coming..."

Hearing the bittersweet declaration, Jack left a trail of hot damp kisses starting in the valley of Sonny's breasts up her neck, her chin, and then her lips where the brunette lingered for a few moments, her teeth gently nipping at the soft flesh. Finally leaving that sweet mouth, Jack placed tiny kisses along the blonde's jaw, steadily making her way to the woman's left ear whispering, "Let's do it together. I want to come with you."

A rush of delicious heat sped through Sonny at the words softly spoken in her ear. The mouth now sucking on her earlobe only proved to feed the fire that had been ignited within her. Moaning into the balmy night, the new lovers rocked their bodies in perfect rhythm, both nearing the precipice. Letting go of Sonny's earlobe, Jack gazed into the woman's eyes as though she was trying to see deep into her soul. Their breaths mingled as they kept eye contact, holding on to each other tightly. Only when twin orgasms arrived did Sonny and Jack break their steady eye contact, the blonde opting to close her eyes as she focused on the mind-blowing pleasure rippling through her and the brunette pressing her face into her companion's neck.

"Sonny I love you," Jack called out as she felt the last vestiges of her orgasm. "I love you so much." Tenderly, she pressed her lips to the blonde's neck while waiting for a response, though she was greeted with mere silence. Raising her head, Jack looked at the woman lying beneath her, noticing that she was looking toward the sky. After softly calling her name, Jack was relieved when Sonny looked at her, warmly smiling. "Are you alright darling?" the brunette quietly asked.

The blonde nodded. "Yes, I'm fine thank you," she replied in an equally quiet voice as a tinge of a blush appeared on her cheeks at the endearment. "I really should head on home now though. I have to get up early in the morning and I'd hate to either be late, sleepy or both on my very first day." Reaching between them, Sonny pulled down her tank top far enough so that her breasts were completely covered.

Ignoring the alarm bells trying to warn her that Sonny was pulling away both physically and emotionally, Jack replied, "You can stay here if you like. I'm sure we could find something for you to wear tomorrow."

Shaking her head, the blonde tried to sit up, managing to do so when Jack helped by moving off of her. Placing her feet on the ground, Sonny glanced at the woman sitting next to her saying, "That's really sweet of you Jack but I have a specific outfit that I have to wear for work and it's at home so..." she trailed off, softly sighing. "I...I better go. It's getting late." Standing up, Sonny indicated for Jack to stay put when she started to arise as well. "No, I can see myself to the door," she quickly explained. "You need to put something on before you catch a cold. Wouldn't want you to get a case of the sniffles." Sonny smile, however it looked forced.

Giving her a wan smile in return, Jack merely nodded. She knew that something was wrong but she didn't know what to say in order to fix it. Half of her wished that she had never kissed Sonny back in the pool, yet the other half was glad that it had happened. If it weren't for that kiss that

had broken down what remained of their defenses, they never would have made love that night. *And it was so beautiful. Didn't you think so Sonny? Or are you repulsed by what we did?* The brunette felt like crawling into her bed and weeping. How could a person be so overjoyed one moment and in the next feel such pain and desolation?

"Talk with you later okay?" Sonny asked, barely making eye contact with the seated woman.

After Jack silently nodded, Sonny began to walk toward the sliding glass doors leading into the house. Jack gave the young woman ample time to collect her belongings and leave before she grabbed her string bikini and wrapped a towel around her body before heading inside the house. She managed to hold the tears at bay as she wandered into the kitchen to make herself a cup of tea. Deciding to take the tea to her room, she stopped by Chloe's temporary bedroom located on the first floor. Looking in on her, she found her little sister to be sleeping peacefully and managed a soft smile as she closed the door before heading upstairs.

On reaching her bedroom, Jack walked over to her bed taking a seat on the side of it as she cautiously sipped from the cup in her hand. She tried not to think about what had just taken place. Instead, she focused on finishing the contents of her cup. Within ten minutes she was finished and placed the now empty cup on the nightstand before heading toward her private bathroom, removing the towel wrapped around her body on the way.

Turning on the shower, Jack walked inside, closing her eyes as the hot water fell on her body. As an unbidden image of Sonny walking away from her entered the brunette's mind, her legs buckled, causing her to slide down to the floor of the tub. Tears fell down her cheeks as she wrapped her arms around her legs, pressing her face against her knees.

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"Have you talked to Sonny lately?" Leslie inquired as she reclined back in her king-sized bed. A delightful smile appeared on her lips as she gazed at the lovely nude woman coming toward the bed with a bag of chips that she had just found in the kitchen. The smile changed into a slight grin. *Guess it was so good that she got the munchies. Actually, I'd like to have some of those chips too. And some more of the gorgeous girl carrying them.* The grin widened.

Nodding, Laura slipped into the bed, snuggling close to the other woman as she began to open the bag she held. "I saw her Tuesday when I stopped by the women's resort she's now working at. I wanted to see how it was going for her. We had lunch and chatted a bit."

"How did it go?" Reaching inside the now open bag, Leslie grabbed a couple of chips, popping one inside her mouth.

Laura shrugged as she munched on a chip. "I don't know. She seemed like she wasn't all there. I don't mean crazy not all there but...like she'd lost a huge chunk of herself. The sparkle was gone from her eyes. I tried to ask what was bothering her but she kept saying that everything was just fine, though I know different. I just have no idea what it is." Swallowing, she added, "I've talked with her on the phone a couple of times since then but she doesn't sound any better. I feel helpless because I don't know what I can do to help her."

Finishing her other chip, Leslie replied, "I know what's bothering her."

"You do? What is it?"

Leslie looked at her lover, nodding. "Yes, it's the same thing that's bothering Jack. Apparently, they're not on speaking terms."

"Again? What happened this time?"

"Well she wouldn't go into much detail, but basically she and Sonny spent this past Sunday evening together celebrating Sonny's new job. As the evening worn on they got a little 'close' and afterwards Sonny sort of closed herself off saying that she had to go home because she had to get enough sleep for work in the morning. Jack hasn't heard a word from her since that night. She called twice and left a message both times but Sonny didn't return either one. So, it appears that she's avoiding her and I'm thinking that Jack is slowly slipping into a depression because of it. If it wasn't for Chloe who knows what shape she'd be in right now."

Sitting up in the bed, Laura folded her legs beneath her. "I don't understand this. It's so obvious that they should be together. I knew that even before Sonny and I broke up. I just don't know why *she* doesn't realize it."

Glancing at the phone, Leslie said, "I have an idea. I think I might know a way that we can get them in the same place and hopefully they'll take the opportunity to talk." With a curious look, Laura silently waited for her to continue. "You know how we're going disco bowling tomorrow?" Laura nodded. "Well what if I were to ask Jack to come along and you asked Sonny? Except we don't tell either one that the other is coming."

The expression on Laura's face was apprehensive. "I don't know. They might not take too kindly to us tricking them like that."

Leaning toward her new lover, Leslie tenderly kissed her lips and then waited for Laura to reopen her eyes before asking, "Don't you want them to be as happy as we are now that we've found one another?" Looking into Laura's eyes with a little smile planted on her lips, Leslie trailed a lone finger up and down the woman's naked thigh. "They just need a boost. Don't think of it as trickery. We're helping. I just want them to be as happy as I am with you baby."

*Ah, damn. I can't object to this idea now.* The sweet kiss on the lips, the light stroking on the thigh and the tenderly spoken endearment had made up Laura's mind. She hadn't quite figured it out yet, but somehow Leslie Antigone knew how to press all the right buttons. Not that she minded, but it was just bewildering how well this woman seemed to know her in such a short amount of time. Laura inwardly smiled. *Maybe it's because she's my soulmate.* Though this all appeared to be happening fast, she instinctively knew that it was right. She and Leslie were right for each other.

"So?" A dark eyebrow raised as Leslie gazed at her lover, waiting for an answer.



Nodding, Laura said, "Let's do it."

A grin slipped onto Leslie's lips. "Sure, I would absolutely adore doing that again with you, but first things first lover."

Smirking, Laura playfully slapped her on the arm, eliciting a chuckle from the older woman. "You know what I mean. Let's call them. Who first?"

Turning slightly, Leslie reached for the cordless phone. "I'll call Jack." Glancing at the clock, she noted that it was a few minutes after nine in the evening. "Hopefully, she'll still be awake." Having her ex-girlfriend on speed dial, Leslie simply punched a couple of buttons before bringing the phone to her ear. Coming to a decision, she reached over and pressed the button so that the speakerphone would be activated. Now both she and Laura could listen though she indicated for the other woman to remain silent. On the fourth ring, Jack answered the phone, her voice sounding dry as the Sahara desert.

"Well don't we sound cheery," Leslie said as she reached into the bag for another chip.

"Sorry to disappoint you Leslie but I don't have much to be cheery about as of late," Jack remarked, the tone of her voice bordering on anger.

The older woman sighed. This might be tougher than she had originally thought. "You haven't spoken with Sonny yet?"

"No and please don't mention that name to me. I don't care to hear it."

Leslie and Laura shared a look, both wincing at the other woman's statement. *Someone sounds royally pissed off*, Leslie thought to herself. "Okay, I promise to not say the "S" word again. Jack I think you need to get out of the house and have some fun, which is why I'm calling. I want to invite you to go bowling tomorrow night with Laura and I. How about it?"

"No."

Leslie sighed. If it were possible, she would have reached through the phone and throttled the woman. "Okay, I'm going to ask again and this time I want you to respond with yes. Now Jack would you like to go bowling tomorrow evening? Just get out of the house for at least a couple hours? You remember how much fun we used to have bowling." It was true. During the time that they had dated, they visited one bowling alley or another at least four or five times a month. Having quite a few skills at the sport, Jack had won her fair share of trophies.

"Yes...I remember. But no I don't want to go."

A small frown appeared on Leslie's face. "Jack, I think you're in desperate need of some f-u-n and I plan on making that happen. Now, you *are* going disco bowling tomorrow night with us. We need a fourth so we can pair up into teams. It'll be you, Laura, her friend, and me."

"Who is her friend?" Jack's voice sounded suspicious to both women's ears. They both wondered if she thought Laura's friend was the one whose name was the "S" word.

Leslie thought quickly. "It's Betty." Glancing at the crispy treat still in her hand, she added, "Chip. Betty Chip." Catching movement out of the corner of her eye, Leslie looked up to see her lover's shoulders shaking as she tried to stifle a laugh. Her lips curving into a smile, Leslie softly chuckled, hoping that Jack hadn't heard it.

"Betty Chip?" Jack repeated in a disbelieving tone of voice. "Her friend's name is Betty Chip?"

"Yes, it is," Leslie replied. "Do you have a problem with her name?"

A loud sigh emanated through the speaker. "No I don't. Listen can't you get someone else to go? I don't want to leave Chloe on her own."

"You're just using that as an excuse. You know that Chloe will be just fine for a couple hours. She's capable of taking care of herself. Now please Jack don't make me beg. Please come with us. I want you to. You might actually end up enjoying yourself. All you've done this week is work and take care of your sister." In a gentle tone of voice Leslie added, "Honey you need to have your own life."

There was a brief silence from the other end of the line before Jack sighed in resignation. She knew that the business consultant/agent was not going to give up until she got her way. "Alright, I'll go. What bowling alley should I meet you guys at? And what time?" She didn't sound the least bit thrilled.

Laura and Leslie smiled triumphantly at each other as they soundlessly clapped their hands together. Looking back at the speakerphone, Leslie informed Jack that she would pick her up around seven o'clock the next evening. Moments later, the call ended, and Leslie smiled as she slipped the chip into her mouth. Picking up the discarded phone, she handed it to Laura so that she could call "Betty". As Laura punched in her ex's phone number, she was informed to ask Sonny to pick her up.

"That way if they fix things between them, Jack could go with Sonny in her car and you with me," Leslie explained, her eyes twinkling. Reaching over, she grabbed the base of the phone and placed it on the bed between them so that Laura wouldn't have to yell toward the speakerphone.

Laura grinned at her as she waited for her call to be answered. "I love how your mind works," she said while leaning toward the woman, giving her lips a quick yet sweet kiss. Her call was then unfortunately picked up by the answering machine. "Hello Sonny, if you're there please pick up. This is Laura. I need to talk with you about something. It's very important." She was to end the call just as the other line was picked up. Unlike Jack, the blonde attempted to sound courteous as she greeted Laura, though there was a tinge of sadness in her voice, which both Laura and Leslie were able to easily detect.

"Is something wrong?" Sonny asked, sounding genuinely concerned.

"No everything is just fine," Laura quickly assured her. "I was just wondering if you had any plans for tomorrow night."

"No, I don't. Why?"

Laura smiled toward the speakerphone. "Good. How about we go bowling?"

"You know I'm not any good at that game. My last bowling score total was lower than the IQ of a rock."

Laura lightly chuckled at the admission. "It doesn't matter Sonny. We'll simply be going to have a good time, not compete. So, what do you say? Leslie, her friend, you, and I. We can even be partners."

"And who is this friend of Leslie's?" Sonny asked, sounding just as suspicious as Jack had.

"Her name is Wilma." As soon as the name was out of her mouth, Laura watched as Leslie covered her face with a pillow in the vain attempt to smother her laughter. She bit hard on her lower lip to keep from joining in.

"Wilma? Are you serious?" Sonny asked, almost certain that she heard laughter in the background.

Laura nodded, though the other woman couldn't see it. "Yes, I am. It's not her real name though. Leslie informed me that she's called Wilma because she's slim, has red hair, and dated a guy named Fred, but they broke up a while back. Obviously, the nickname stuck though." Laura smiled as Leslie gave her thumbs up for the smoothly delivered explanation.

"I see." Sonny fell silent for a thoughtful moment before saying, "Okay, I suppose I can go for at least a little bit. Should I meet you guys there?"

"Actually, if you don't mind could you pick me up? We're supposed to meet Leslie and her friend at the bowling alley at seven thirty."

"Sure no problem. What time do you want me to come get you?"

Leslie and Laura exchanged another silent high five. "Seven o'clock alright?"

"It's perfect. I'll see you then Laura."

"Okay. See you tomorrow night. Bye now." Ending the call, Laura placed the phone back on its base before delivering it into the waiting hands of her lover. "Mission accomplished," she happily stated.

Winking at Laura, Leslie placed the phone back on the nightstand before she reached for the bag of chips and rolled it up tightly. After dropping the bag on the floor, she scooted closer to her new love, a grin now on her lips. "Come here Bam Bam," she said in a low sexy voice, both the words and voice earning her a chuckle. Wrapping her arms around Leslie's neck, Laura smiled as she was gently pushed down to the bed and lips descended upon her neck. A delightful shiver went through her as Leslie left a trail of kisses leading up to her ear where she whispered, "Let's make this 'bed rock' baby." Before their passion overtook them for the second time that evening, both women had an attack of the giggles.

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Standing in total darkness, her eyes became riveted on the door, which appeared to be quite a distance away. There was a light bulb hanging from above it, which brightly illuminated the door. Once again knowing what she had to do...what she had to at least attempt to do, she began to move toward the door, her speed increasing with every step that she took. The familiar fear and anxiousness crept upon her, driving her. Like every other time, she vowed that this time she would make it there before it was too late. This time she was going to prevent it from happening. There was no way that she was going to fail. Their lives depended on it so she couldn't.

Her calves began to tighten and cramp up but she kept running just as hard and fast, ignoring the pain. She had to get there. She had to. Sweat poured down her face but she was chilled to the very bone as she ran with all her might. As puffs of frigid air wafted out of her mouth, she kept her eyes focused on the door, which appeared to be getting just a tad bit closer. She attempted to scream that she was coming, but her voice box wouldn't work properly. 'Please, please don't let me be too late,' she thought as she continued toward the light.

This time instead of opening the door like she regularly did by turning the knob, she simply raised a foot and kicked it in, causing the big wooden door to slam back against the wall. Her scream echoed off the walls of the tunnel as saddened eyes zeroed in on the small lifeless body hanging from the shower stall. She hurried over to the body and gently lifted it before removing the short rope tied around its neck. Tears of frustration and anguish came as she lay the body on the floor before she caught sight of the face. All movement ceased to exist as she looked at a pair of lifeless green eyes staring at her. The usually long dark hair was now short and blonde.

Completely horrified, she stared into the face of the woman responsible for her broken heart. Her head shook in indignation. "No." This couldn't be happening. Reaching out, she gave her beloved a light shake. "No, wake up." She shook harder, though unseeing eyes merely continued to stare at her. "Nooo! You can't go! Not you too! No, no, no."

"NO!!!" Jack bolted up from the couch momentarily disoriented as she looked around the room, finding that she was completely alone. Taking in deep gulps of air, she collapsed back onto the couch as sweat poured down her reddened face. Feeling her dampened flannel shorts and T-shirt clinging to her body, the woman found that she was anxious to be out of them. Standing up, she hurriedly headed upstairs to her bedroom, glancing at the clock on her nightstand. It was a few minutes before six thirty, which meant that Leslie would be here to collect her soon. Groaning because she still didn't want to go, Jack headed into her bathroom, shucking all of her clothing on the way there.

After turning on the light and the shower, the thirty-two year old looked at her reflection in the mirror, noting the dark circles around her faintly reddened eyes and her overall haggard appearance. Blue eyes traveled up and down her body. Though others might not be able to tell, it was plainly obvious to Jack that she had lost around four or five pounds over the course of the past few days. Losing weight tended to happen when one hardly ate anything and exercised like they were going to receive five hundred dollars for every calorie they burned. *If I keep this up I'm going to end up either doing permanent damage or kill myself.*

Loudly sighing, Jack turned away from the mirror not being able to stand looking at herself anymore. Walking over to the shower, she walked inside, closing the shower curtain. Closing her eyes, she allowed the hot water to lightly massage aching and tired muscles as she reflected over the nightmare she just had. Envisioning those lifeless green eyes again, Jack took deep calming breaths in order to settle the nausea that threatened to come. She'd been having similar nightmares all week, which was why she had barely been sleeping, but none of them were about Sonny. The one she had this evening made the brunette wish that she could go the rest of her without sleeping again.

Pushing all thoughts of the nightmare and Sonny out her mind, Jack proceeded to cleanse every inch of her body from head to toe. Less than ten minutes later, she was done and started to dry off as she moved into her bedroom and turned on the stereo, not being able to take the silence any longer. Selecting a CD, she inserted it and pressed the play button before walking into her closet to find something to wear. Choosing an outfit, Jack finished drying before putting on her underclothes along with a pair of black slacks and a long-sleeved silk black shirt. Heading toward her bathroom, she buttoned the shirt on the way, leaving the first four buttons undone.

Plugging in her blow dryer, Jack began to move it around her head as she brushed out the tangles. Within minutes, her raven hair was dry and brilliantly shining. Deciding to leave it down, she brushed it some more until she was satisfied with how it looked. Adding baby powder, deodorant, and some *Calvin Klein* cologne to various body parts, Jack then reached into her drawer, obtaining a tube of lipstick, which she proceeded to put on. Glancing up and down at her reflection, the brunette then nodded, pleased with the results though the dark circles remained under her eyes. A pair of dark shades could fix that problem although the sun had set a couple hours ago.

After straightening up the bathroom, Jack switched off the light and entered her bedroom. Noting that it was nearly seven o'clock, she grabbed her watch, a pair of black leather ankle boots, her black leather jacket, and of course a pair of black shades and headed out of the room. As she walked down the stairs, Jack heard the doorbell ring. Quickly making it to the bottom of the stairs, she put on her watch and then her boots before walking toward the front door. When she arrived, she slipped on the tinted shades before opening the door to see Leslie standing on her doormat. She offered the woman a smile, albeit a strained one.

Leslie took in the outfit Jack was wearing before looking at her, grinning. "Well hello there Zorro. Where's your whip?" Her grinned widened as the other woman smirked.

"I believe I left it at your mama's house."

Leslie burst into laughter. "Ooooh. Jackie's trying to be witty!"

The taller woman rolled her eyes though it was concealed behind the dark shades. "Let's go shall we?" she asked as she put on her leather jacket. Reaching down, Jack picked up her *Prada* black leather bowling bag.

"Wait a minute. I wanted to holler at Chloe before we left."

"You can holler at her but you'll have to do it pretty loud because she's about twenty miles away. She went to stay at a friend's house tonight."

Leslie cocked her head to the side as she watched Jack come outside, closing and locking the door behind her. She then softly called the woman's name.

Turning around, the blue-eyed beauty looked at her. "Yeah?"

"Could you possibly make an attempt not to be so...dry? That's liable to put a real damper on the evening."

The blank expression on her face not changing, the brunette shrugged. "Yeah, 'spose I could give it a shot." With bowling bag in hand, Jack headed in the direction of Leslie's car, the other woman following along behind her thoughtfully.

Minutes later, they were headed toward the bowling alley. The only sound in Leslie's car was the soft rock playing on the radio. As she drove, she glanced at Jack, noting that her earlier blank expression had been replaced with one of desolation. Returning her eyes to the road, Leslie hesitantly brought up the "S" word.

"Told you yesterday that I didn't want to discuss her," Jack replied as she continued to stare out of the passenger side window through dark shades.

Leslie softly sighed. "Jack maybe she has a good reason for not contacting you all week. You don't know what's been going through her mind." She was greeted with mere silence and started to drop the subject but changed her mind. She was determined to get Jack to talk about Sonny and what happened between them. "Jack please open up to me," Leslie softly said in a pleading tone. "We're friends. You can talk to me about anything. I'm here to listen. You shouldn't keep your feelings bottled up. It's not healthy." There was more silence until she heard a barely audible sigh.

"Fine. I-"

"Wait a minute," Leslie quickly interjected as she pulled into the parking lot of a grocery store. Finding a space, she pulled into it before cutting off the ignition. Reaching up, she switched on the overhead light, illuminating the car and turned in her seat in order to face Jack. "I want you to

have my full attention," she explained. "Now go on." Leslie gave the other woman an encouraging smile and received a faint but genuine smile in return.

Running a hand through her hair, Jack quietly asked, "Where do I begin?"

Leslie shrugged. "Anywhere you want. Just talk to me. Tell me what you're feeling right at this moment," she paused. "But before you do please remove the glasses. The sun went to bed a while ago." Half expecting an argument, Leslie didn't receive one as the other woman obediently removed the shades, folding their legs before slipping them into an inside pocket on her jacket. Though she instantly noticed the dark circles around Jack's eyes, Leslie chose to refrain from commenting. *Jack, you look like you haven't had a decent amount of sleep in days.*

"What am I feeling right at this moment," Jack repeated mostly to herself as she lay her head back against the headrest while looking out the windshield. "I feel a bundle of emotions. Fear, anger, pain and confusion."

"Why? Explain to me why you feel each of those emotions."

Jack continued to stare out of the windshield as she replied, "Fear because I don't want to be alone. Anger because she's the cause of my feelings of loneliness. Pain because it seemed very simple for her to leave me. And confusion because I don't even know why she walked out."

"Are you referring to Sonny?" Leslie watched as the other woman mutely nodded. "Do you really think that it was simple for her? Jack I know that Sonny cares deeply for you. She's probably just as confused."

Inhaling sharply, Jack turned her head in Leslie's direction, her blue eyes filled with hostility and hurt. "She cares for me so much that she won't even talk to me? You know I tried to call her twice and left messages and has she bothered to get back to me? No. She hasn't called, hasn't written, visited-nothing. How do you think it made me feel when after we shared such an intimate beautiful experience her leaving in a hurry?" The dark head shook as Jack attempted to keep the tears from falling. "I've been behaving like some love sick puppy and you know what? I'm thoroughly disgusted with myself. I mean look what I've allowed this woman to do to me. I used to be the Conqueror. Highly respected, sometimes feared...a force to be reckoned with. Sonny Campbell enters my life and I grow softhearted, mushy, and most of all completely blind and stupid."

"Jack, " Leslie nervously licked her lips as she attempted to prepare herself for whatever response she might receive for her next words, "Sonny brought out the best in you." She unconsciously held her breath as she closely observed her passenger for a negative reaction due to the declaration. Surprisingly, Jack said nothing as she returned to staring out the windshield. As she released the breath she had been holding, Leslie realized that she would have preferred an outburst instead of this silence. When she uttered the woman's name, she still received no response. Shoulders slumping, Leslie turned back around and secured her seat belt before restarting the car while feeling that this short conversation hadn't helped in the least bit. *Hopefully, when we get to the bowling alley you and Sonny can work through this mess because I*

no longer have a clue.

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Sitting side by side on the bench designated to Lane 12, Sonny and Laura busied themselves by putting on the bowling shoes they had just rented. While tying her shoelaces, the blonde tried not to think about how many pairs of feet had been in these particular shoes. She was informed by the woman she rented them from that the shoes were regularly cleaned, but was still apprehensive about sticking her sock covered feet into them.

After finishing, Sonny looked around her, noticing all of the people having fun bowling, socializing and dancing to the disco music playing over the loudspeakers. The thirty-two-lane bowling alley was crowded this Friday evening with the occupants ranging from preteens to elders. Since this was disco bowling night, the usually bright lighting had been significantly dimmed and the brightest lights stemmed from the multicolored flashing bulbs lining the lanes and the disco balls strategically placed around the large establishment. Even the bowling pins were multicolored and neon bright.

Laura chuckled as she followed her friend's observing eyes. "Really groovy isn't it?" she asked, a huge grin on her face.

Chuckling, Sonny crossed one leg over the other as she sat back on the bench. "Oh, yeah man. Totally outta sight!" They both burst into laughter. A couple minutes after the laughter died down, the blonde looked at the woman sitting next to her and smiled. "You know Laura I think I needed this." Reaching out, she fondly squeezed the woman's shoulder. "Thank you for thinking of me and inviting me along."

Laura smiled in return though she couldn't help but to feel the least bit guilty about what she and Leslie were up to. *I hope this plan of ours doesn't blow up in our faces*, she thought as the butterflies started in her stomach. Glancing at her watch, she noticed that the other two were late. It was a few minutes passed seven thirty and she hadn't heard a word from Leslie. Laura was beginning to wonder if Jack had changed her mind about coming when she suddenly caught sight of them walking through the entrance. However, Sonny had yet to see them since she was avidly watching a man trying to teach his young son how to expertly roll the bowling ball down the lane in the opposite direction of the entrance.

Raising her hand high in the air, Laura waved to get Leslie and Jack's attention. Her heart beginning to hammer beneath her chest, she steadily watched as her lover along with Jack headed toward them. Just as they arrived, Sonny turned back around intending to say something to her companion when her green eyes fell on the near six foot Amazon standing close to the bench. Blue eyes stared into green for a few silent seconds before Jack blinked, breaking the steady contact.

Her throat suddenly feeling extremely dry, Sonny swallowed as she continued to gaze up at the woman she hadn't seen since Sunday. Feeling compelled to break the total silence, Sonny opened her mouth simply saying, "Wilma."



Jack loudly sighed as all three pairs of eyes fell on her. "Betty," she shortly replied. She then glanced between Leslie and Laura as she shook her head in astonishment. "I don't believe this. First Chloe and then you two. What? Does no one think I'm capable of running my own life anymore?" Leslie opened her mouth to say something but Jack succinctly told her to shut up as she glared at the matchmakers. "If I wanted your help, which I don't I would have asked for it. I'm tired of people butting in. If Sonny and I aren't communicating then it is not your duty to force us into doing so. You have no business getting involved, I don't give a damn how good your intentions are. In short, what I'm trying to say is stay the hell out of my life! I'm out of here." Turning around, Jack marched away with her heavy bowling bag in hand, all three women looking after her in varying stages of shock and sadness.

Glancing between Sonny and Jack, Leslie told the blonde, "You should go after her hon. She's hurting and I think you're the only who can truly help. In fact, I think you two can help one another. Don't just let her walk away." She gave Sonny a pleading look.

Slowly nodding, Sonny stood up and began to run toward Jack. By the time she was able to catch up with her, the tall woman was already outside. Sonny watched as Jack extracted a small cell phone from her bowling bag and began to dial a number. She stopped when she heard the blonde's voice behind her, informing her not to. Punching one more button, which must have been the end button, Jack dropped the phone back into her bag before slowly turning around to face Sonny. The expression on her face was unreadable as she waited for the other woman to say something. Hesitantly, Sonny walked toward her until there was only about a foot of space between them. Looking up into guarded blue eyes, she offered a faint smile that she wasn't surprised to not have returned.

Dropping the bag onto the ground, Jack folded her arms across her chest as she studied the smaller woman. "What do you want?" she wearily asked.

"I want to talk with you."

The brunette humorlessly chuckled. "Oh, I see how it is Sonny. We can talk when *you* want to but not me. Well you know what? I don't care to talk to you so please leave me alone." Leaning down, Jack started to pick up her bag when a small hand managed to grab the straps before she could. Ignoring the glare she received, Sonny picked up the rather heavy bag, giving a fleeting thought to how big the bowling ball inside was. "Give that to me."

The blonde shook her head as she attempted to keep from dropping the bag. *What do you have in here? A hacked body?* "No. Maybe...okay, I *don't* have any right to think that you should talk to me but I have something to say. Please hear me out. I'm just asking for a few minutes of your time."

Looking irritated Jack replied, "Fine, but we can't talk in there. It's too rowdy." She pointed toward the bowling alley. Agreeing, Sonny said that they could talk in her car. Nodding, Jack indicated for her to lead the way as she gently pried the heavy bowling bag from the smaller woman's fingers.

Arriving at Sonny's car a few moments later, the blonde opened the car doors before both women slipped inside. After placing her bag on the floor, Jack turned toward Sonny and waited for the younger woman to get the conversation rolling. It appeared that she was having a difficult time doing that based on the fact that her mouth kept opening and closing as though she either didn't know where to start or what to say. *At this rate we'll be here all night*, Jack thought.

"I guess you might want to know why I've been avoiding you," Sonny finally started as she looked at the other woman, waiting for a response. Almost imperceptibly, Jack nodded. "Well it's because I felt guilty and confused over what we had done. I mean, I did like what we did Jack," she quickly added. "In fact, it was absolutely incredible, but immediately afterwards I felt horrible about it and all I could think was that I had to get away. So many times I wanted to call you or come see you but I couldn't bring myself to do either one. Jack, I really have missed you, this has torn me apart, and I'm sorry for hurting you. I honestly never meant to. You do mean a lot to me and the last thing I'd want to do is be the source of your pain. I hate myself for what I've probably put you through." The apologetic look on Sonny's face was completely sincere.

"I don't understand why you'd feel guilty about us making love," Jack said, her voice filled with emotion. For the thousandth time that week, she felt like crying. "I mean it's not like you're with Laura anymore."

The blonde head shook. "This has nothing to do with Laura," she gave a slight pause. "It's Blue."

*I'll be damned. There I go getting in my way again.* Jack gave a slight shake of her head as she let out an exasperated sigh. She should have known all along that Sonny's sudden withdrawal from her had something to do with Blue. She was starting to think that maybe she should have just been honest in the first place when she found out that PerkyGrrl was Sonny back on that fateful day at Disneyworld.

"Still how could you feel guilty?" Jack inquired. "It's not like the two of you are an item. Or are you?" She added, knowing full well that they weren't. And she planned on it remaining that way. Blue was never going to ask Sonny for a commitment.

Shaking her head negatively, Sonny explained, "Although we haven't officially made a commitment to one another, I feel that we have without words. That makes me feel terrible about what happened between you and I this past weekend." Seeing a flash of pain in Jack's eyes, Sonny paused as she gathered her thoughts. "Jack I never meant to hurt you. You have to believe that. I know how you feel...or rather how you felt about me and I never should have let it go that far but I couldn't stop. I wanted it...I wanted *you*. But you and I can never be. I have to give Blue and I a chance. I feel that she could be my true love and I just can't walk away. I need to see if we are made for each other because my heart tells me that we are," Sonny finished in a gentle tone of voice.

*I don't know whether to be happy or saddened by that revelation. In a way, her heart is telling her that I am her true love since I'm Blue and Blue is me.* Jack inwardly sighed. *Problem is she just doesn't know it yet. Well I've decided not to give up hope. She and I can be together. It might just take time. I just have to be patient and careful.* Glancing at the anxious expression on

Sonny's face, the brunette slowly nodded as her lips quirked into a small smile. Reaching over, she briefly squeezed the other woman's hand before letting go.

"I understand," Jack softly stated. She then was totally unprepared for what happened next. Covering her face with her hands, Sonny burst into tears. Quickly getting out of the car, Jack ran around and opened the driver side door before kneeling on the ground. Reaching in the car, she gently took the sobbing woman into her arms, rocking her back and forth, as soft palms caressed her back. Jack continued to quietly hold the smaller woman until minutes later when the crying passed. Leaning back so that she could look into Sonny's eyes, she asked what the tears were about. Without giving it a second thought, Jack grabbed the tail end of her shirt and gently dabbed at the tear-streaked face in front of her. She earned a smile and a soft thank you for the sweet gesture.

Lightly sniffing, Sonny whispered, "I couldn't stand the thought of you being angry with me and I'm just so relieved that you're talking to me now. When I saw the look on your face back in the bowling alley I was certain that you hated me." Taking in a sharp breath, she felt the tears threatening to intrude again. "I was beginning to think that I was going to lose a very dear friend forever. And I don't want to lose you Jack," pausing, Sonny adamantly shook her head as a few more tears fell down her cheeks. "I really don't."

Pulling Sonny to her again, Jack held on tightly as she fervently whispered, "Sonny I could never ever hate you. I know you might not want to hear it, but I love you too much." Though it wasn't likely to be returned anytime soon, Jack concluded that it felt wonderful to utter those three precious words anyway. Leaning back again, the brunette cupped Sonny's cheeks as she looked at her tenderly. "You should have just talked to me in the first place. I didn't know what to think these past few days. Please know that you can tell me anything. I don't want you to ever hide anything from me no matter what it is."

Cocking her head to the side, Sonny gazed at the kneeling woman before her for a few silent moments. "Jack can you honestly settle for us just being friends? You know that happened at your house can never happen again."

*Sure, I can do the just friend's thing until I successfully eliminate my Internet self.* Removing her hands from Sonny's face, Jack picked up one of the smaller woman's hands and brought it to her lips, tenderly kissing the back of it before adoring blue eyes met green ones. "Sonny I want you in my life no matter if we're lovers or just friends. If Blue is what you want then I accept that. Now I don't have to like it." At this point, Jack grinned a bit. "But I accept it. I hope she knows just how lucky she is to have someone as incredible as you Sonny girl. As for what happened between us Sunday I have no regrets. I will always cherish it. Twenty...thirty years from now I'll think back to that night and smile." *Ooh! Perhaps I should get myself an agent and go to Hollywood!*

Squeezing the hand holding hers, Sonny leaned down and briefly touched her lips to Jack's before straightening. Life suddenly seemed much brighter now that they were on speaking terms again. A broad smile spread across the blonde's lips as she stood up and helped Jack to her feet. Closing the door behind her, she looked up at the other woman who was currently gazing at her

with much affection and blushed. This just friend's pact was going to be tough to deal with if Jack kept giving her those looks.

Lightly clearing her throat, Sonny said, "Why don't we go play?" Noticing the lecherous grin on her companion's lips, Sonny quickly amended her words. "I mean umm...let's go back inside and bowl."

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When Jack and Sonny arrived back in the bowling alley, the brunette headed straight over to Leslie and Laura, who were just sitting on the bench at Lane 12 talking and apologized to both for her earlier behavior. After they assured her that an apology was not necessary, the quartet got down to having some serious fun. They stayed at the bowling alley nearly to closing time playing games, dancing and singing to the loud retro music and eating their fair share of hot dogs, french fries, and some messy yet delicious nachos.

Mostly all of the games they played, the women chose to have a partner, however after observing her first game, Leslie, Laura, and Sonny practically fought over whom was going to get Jack. Though she hadn't played in months, Jack still had many skills when it came to this particular sport. Using her very own bowling ball, which beautifully sported her initials in gold script, Jack managed to roll a strike on every turn except one. One gutter ball cost her a perfect game and it was all because of Sonny who just as Jack started to roll decided to lean over and tie her shoe therefore giving the brunette a lovely view of yummy cleavage. Before she could stop it, the perfectly polished black bowling ball slipped from her long fingers and headed straight into the gutter. Jack insisted that she be allowed a do-over but the others wouldn't hear of it.

Since they were seemingly the best players out of them all, Jack and Laura teamed up for the majority of the games to the chagrin of Sonny and Leslie. As other inhabitants of the bowling alley observed, Jack and Laura who nicknamed themselves "Bowler Babes" completely annihilated the other two in four out of five games. Being paranoid Sonny and Leslie kept insisting that they let them win the last game, but were repeatedly told that they won fair and square. However, when they turned away from the pair, the Bowler Babes shared a knowing smile.

At a quarter to eleven, the quartet decided to call it a night, promising to one another that they would get together again soon. It was quickly settled that Laura would catch a ride home with Leslie (though actually she would be going home with Leslie) while Sonny took Jack home. After hugs and a few words were exchanged in the parking lot, both pairs headed toward their destinations.

As Sonny drove toward Jack's home, she and the brunette chatted about what had been happening during the week and about how well Sonny's new job as a masseuse was going thus far.

"Have you gotten many clients?" Jack asked while mentally telling herself that there was no reason to be jealous or uncomfortable by her friend's choice of employment. Sonny's new job was just that-a job. *I still don't like the idea of her putting her hands on all those naked women.*

A small frown creased her brow. *I bet they've been flirting with her all week. Grrr.*

Nodding, Sonny turned her car into the other woman's driveway and pulled up as close as she could get to the front door before turning off the ignition. "Yes, I have actually. They've been great. I haven't received a single complaint." A broad smile fell on lips that Jack eagerly watched. "And a lot of them tip well too."

"Well when you're good you're good." Jack slowly grinned as she gazed into Sonny's eyes. "And Sonny you are *very* good." The expression on her face let the other woman know that she wasn't referring to massage therapy.

Lightly clearing her throat as she felt a blush creeping up, Sonny softly replied, "Well umm...eer...thank you Jack." She felt her cheeks growing hotter as she attempted not to think about that night.

The brunette's grin widened. "You're quite welcome." Turning her head toward her front door, she added, "I better get inside." Looking back at Sonny, she wished that she could lean over and kiss those soft sweet lips. She missed the feel of them. "I had fun tonight and I'm relieved that we're talking again. Let's not make this fighting thing a habit, eh?" Jack displayed a cute little crooked smile.

Softly chuckling, the blonde nodded. "It's a deal," she paused as she came to a decision. Leaning over, she quickly but tenderly touched her lips to Jack's cheek before sitting back down. "And I had a lot of fun too except for the parts where you and Laura kicked Leslie's and my butt." She chuckled again as the other woman joined in.

Though not wanting to get out, Jack unbuckled her seat belt and reached out to open the car door when she felt a small hand on her arm. Looking back expectantly, Jack remained quiet as she waited for Sonny to speak.

"My parents," Sonny started as she removed her hand from Jack's arm and wrapped it around the brake, "fortieth wedding anniversary is coming up next weekend and they're going to have this big party next Saturday in honor of it. I'm going to their house in Canova Beach next Friday-I managed to get Friday off-- and will be staying there until Sunday. Anyway, I was wondering if you'd care to join me? You'll get to meet my family and it might be some real fun. They're a great bunch." She smiled fondly as she thought of her siblings and parents. "You and Chloe can come with me. I'd really love that."

If the smile on Jack's face grew in bigger her face might have been in jeopardy of shattering into a million tiny pieces. Did she want to go to Canova Beach with Sonny for the entire weekend? Do apples grow on trees? Does a cow moo? Did Jack find this woman totally irresistible? In other words, heck yeah, she wanted to go! *Hmm, she's taking me home to meet the family already.* Jack bit back a potentially large grin. *Eat your heart out Blue!* The brunette gave herself an imaginary smack on the back of the head. *Great, now I'm referring to myself in the third person.*

"I'd really like it too," Jack offered with a smile. "I can't wait to meet your family."

"Wonderful." Sonny smiled as well, thoroughly delighted that Jack wanted to come. She had been thinking about inviting the woman all night and had finally built up the courage to do so. "We can get together for lunch tomorrow and discuss the details and what not if you're not busy?"

"Nope, my schedule is pretty bare tomorrow," Jack replied, winking at her. "How about you come over for lunch say around one o'clock?"

The blonde nodded. "That'll be great. Then I'll see you tomorrow afternoon Jack."

The other woman smiled once more before she opened the door and got out of the car, making sure to grab her bowling bag. Turning around, she leaned down softly saying, "Goodnight Sonny girl. Drive carefully."

To be continued in Part 5

"At Last" performed by Etta James

The Athenaeum's Scroll Archive

~ An Affair to Remember ~

by Ambrosia

Disclaimers: The characters in this story are figments of my imagination. They are solely the property of me, myself, and I ☺

Sexual Content: There are intimate/sexual/loving relationships between women occurring in this tale.

Violence: None. Nada. Zip. Just peace, love, and harmony. (Chuckle)

Language: Nothing that can't be aired on a network station.

Special Thanks: Thank you Hawke and Antigone for helping me by giving the names for the establishments mentioned in this story. I had no idea what to call them until you both offered your assistance. So thank you very much. I really appreciate it ☺

Inspiration: I would like to thank the creators of the movie "You've Got Mail" for inspiring me to write this piece. I've watched that movie so many times I just had to write a story loosely based on it. ☺

Feedback: All comments (please be gentle with me-for I'm a sensitive bard ☺) can be emailed to SumrBrezze@aol.com.

Part 5

Arriving at Sonny's apartment ten minutes early on Friday morning, Jack rapped on the door as she tried to conceal the goofy grin on her lips, but she failed to do it. She was so excited about spending this weekend with the gorgeous blonde that she'd hardly gotten any sleep last night. All she did was think about Sonny and her family and hopefully the fantastic time they would have the next couple of days. *Perhaps I'll be able to eliminate Blue this weekend and Sonny and I will return as much more than friends.* It was worth a try and Jack was more than willing to give it her best shot.

Moments later, the door was opened by a brightly smiling little blonde who looked positively adorable in the outfit she had chosen to wear. Sonny was wearing a pair of stark white cargo pants along with a short-sleeved red cotton shirt which sported tiny white stars all over it. On her bare feet were tennis shoes that precisely matched the shade of her shirt. Not only did she look good she smelled good as well. Jack caught a pleasant whiff of vanilla and naughtily wondered if the blonde would taste like it.

"Hey you," Sonny said in greeting, still sporting a smile that could light up a room as she observed the woman before her, thinking how cute she looked in her casual clothing. Her black silky looking hair pulled into a ponytail, Jack wore a backward purple baseball cap with an embroidered dark blue 'J' on it. A pair of tight blue jean shorts clung to those strong thighs that she remembered all too well, while a sleeveless purple pullover shirt hugged a pair of firm high breasts and showed off well defined upper arms. On sock-covered feet, she wore a pair of white high top sneakers trimmed with shades of purple and blue. Suddenly desiring a glass of ice cold water for her dry mouth, Sonny managed to say, "Come on in. I was just trying to zip up my suitcase." She pointed to a large rectangular navy blue suitcase laying on the couch as Jack walked into the apartment.

"I'll take care of it for you," the brunette stated as she strode over to the suitcase feeling eyes upon her but declining to make a comment. She merely grinned in delight. Picking the suitcase up, she was careful not to tip it so that the items within would fall out and placed it on the floor before looking up at Sonny wearing a bewildered expression. "What the heck do you have in here? A ton of bricks? We *will* back on Sunday won't we? *This* coming Sunday?" Jack chuckled richly.

Softly chuckling, Sonny closed the door before replying, "Yes, we will be back this Sunday. I just tend to pack a lot of stuff. Clothes, shoes, toiletries, etceteras."

As a finger was crooked in her direction, the blonde obediently walked over to where Jack was. After being informed to sit on the suitcase, she did so. Moments later Jack successfully had the suitcase completely zipped up and ready to go. Smiling at her, Sonny arose to her feet while

thanking the other woman for her help. Smiling in return, Jack got up from her kneeling position on the floor before she grabbed the handle located on the suitcase and picked it up.

"So are you ready to roll?" Sonny asked as she reached out for her suitcase. However, Jack wouldn't allow her to take it, remarking that she would take it down to the car. Based on the resolute expression on Jack's face, Sonny knew it was fruitless to argue that she was perfectly capable of carrying her own belongings, so she gave up.

"Let's be on our way," Jack said with a cheery smile on her lips that the blonde found contagious. "You sure you have everything?" Jack inquired as she opened the front door. She'd checked, double checked and triple checked to make sure she had everything she wanted to bring along before she left her house.

Nodding, Sonny joined the other woman out in the hallway before she turned toward the door and locked it. They began to walk down the hall as the blonde inquired about Chloe, asking if she was waiting for them in the car. Shaking her head negatively, Jack replied that when she asked her sister if she wanted to come along to Canova Beach with them, she had declined saying that she already had plans to spend the weekend at a friend's house. Sure she left out a few details from the conversation she had with Chloe concerning this weekend, but Jack decided that it wasn't necessary for her friend to know every little detail.

A smile spread across Chloe's lips as she placed her fork down on the plate, having had her fill of the tasty dinner her older sister had whipped up. "So Sonny invited us along to meet her family for the weekend, hmm?"

Nodding, Jack could just imagine the wheels turning round and round in her sister's head. Wearing a slightly curious expression, she wondered what Chloe was thinking. Remaining quiet, Jack picked up her glass of lemonade and took a few sips while she waited for the younger woman to continue.

The smile remained on Chloe's lips as she casually stated, "Well that's a shame her parents anniversary is next weekend because I can't go. I already have plans for the entire weekend to spend with Antonia at her parent's beach house. Justine and Mary are coming along too. Antonia's parents are going to be out of town so we'll have it to ourselves." She attempted to look sorry that she couldn't make it, but her expression wasn't very convincing.

Sitting back in her chair, Jack regarded her sister thoughtfully. "Hmm, I thought you told me a couple days ago that you didn't feel up to going?"

Chloe nonchalantly shrugged. "Well I changed my mind. I'm not going to let this wheelchair slow me down." She offered her sister a dazzling smile, which Jack quickly returned.

"I'm glad to hear you sounding so upbeat kid, but what's the real reason you don't want to go to Canova Beach? Sonny mentioned that she has a sister around your age so I'm sure you two could hang out together and have some fun. Plus, the Campbell's live on the beach too so, the water will still be at your disposal."

Not being able to come up with a valid excuse, Chloe decided to tell the truth. "Well this is the perfect opportunity for you and Sonny to have some alone time together on the road trip there and back. And sure, you guys will be surrounded by family once you arrive but the two of you will still have ample time getting to know one another and maybe just maybe," a sly smile appeared on Chloe's lips as she paused for effect, "you'll be able to successfully woo her." Her dark eyebrows wiggled up and down causing her sister to burst out in laughter.

Though she had tried her best to convince her sister to come along, Chloe wouldn't budge. Later that day she had called her friend Antonia, who was thrilled to find out that she had changed her mind about going to the beach house with her, Justine, and Mary. The three friends had picked up Chloe earlier that morning, almost an hour before Jack left. Just like Hawaii, Jack informed her little sister to call her daily on her cell phone.

Minutes later, Jack and Sonny arrived in the parking lot and the blonde started to search for her companion's black Mercedes as they walked through the crowded lot. Glancing up at the other woman, she asked where her car was. Concealing a little smile, Jack reached out for her hand and gently tugged Sonny toward an automobile that had to be the most beautiful one in the entire lot. Her green eyes becoming as wide as saucers, Sonny slowly walked toward the vehicle, carefully looking it over. Never had she seen such a powerful magnificent car right before her very eyes that she could reach out and touch. Sidling up next to her, Jack allowed a grin to show on her face as she watched the other woman's reaction to the car.

"This is yours?" Sonny finally said as she looked up at her grinning friend.

The purple cap covered head nodded. "Yep, this is my baby." Jack looked between Sonny and the car. "You like it?"

Slowly nodding, the blonde observed Jack's brilliantly shining midnight blue Lamborghini Diablo VT. Though the windows were tinted, the driver's side window was down just enough that she could make out the tan leather interior. It was truly exquisite and looked brand new. Turning to Jack, Sonny asked if she had just bought it as she lightly ran the palm of her hand across the sloping hood.

Shaking her head, Jack replied, "No. I've had her for almost a year now. I just don't use her much. I figured since we were going to Canova Beach, though it's not too far of a trip, that we could ride in my Lamborghini." She gave her companion a mischievous grin. "Not scared are you? I won't go too fast."

Though the thought of flying down the freeway in such a car as this one was a tad frightening, Sonny offered Jack her best confident look. "I have a need for speed."

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"Slow down you maniac!!!"

Releasing a devilish snicker, Jack eased her foot off the accelerator as she glanced at her

passenger. As Sonny clutched onto her seat rather tightly, she stared out of the windshield, her green eyes wide. When the speed of the car decreased to a normal rate, those green eyes glared at Jack, who fought hard to keep from laughing again.

Jack unsuccessfully snickered, but just a little bit. "Gee Sonny, thought you said you had the need for speed?" She looked at the other woman, smiling innocently. "I was merely trying to give you what you asked for."

"I...lied," Sonny replied through clenched teeth. Instead of clutching the seat now, she felt like clutching onto Jack's neck and not letting go for at least five minutes. She gave Jack another glare before settling back in her seat, releasing a loud exasperated breath.

Feeling just a tad bit guilty, Jack removed one hand from the steering wheel and reached over to squeeze one of Sonny's as she looked at her apologetically. "I'm sorry Sonny girl. That was terribly childish of me."

Smiling now, the blonde lightly patted the hand still settled on her left one. She had a sudden urge to add a kiss to the other woman's cheek, but quelled it. "It's alright Jack. No harm done."

Reluctantly, Jack took her hand away and placed it back where it belonged as she flashed her passenger a charming smile. "We're cool now right?" she asked, seeking confirmation that all was well between them.

Lightly chuckling, Sonny warmly smiled in return. "Cool as a pair of cucumbers."

For the next fifteen minutes or so, the two women were completely silent before Sonny decided to open the lines of communication. Turning her head to the left, she asked Jack if she would like to hear about her family. Giving Sonny an interested look along with a nod, she waited for her to begin.

"Well this weekend you will be meeting around thirty of my relatives." As the brunette's blue eyes opened wide, Sonny laughed. "And a good percentage of those are immediate family members." The blonde paused, gathering her thoughts. "Let's see, I told you that I have a sister around Chloe's age, but I've neglected to tell you anything about her or my other siblings."

"How many do you have?" Jack interjected.

"Four." When she gained another wide eye look, she burst out in laughter again.

"Geez, Sonny." As she shook her head, Jack chuckled a bit. "Haven't we been keeping the Campbell family a secret? I've known you for nearly two months and I just now find out that you have four siblings. Tsk tsk. Do you have a husband and a couple of kids too?" *How could I know her for over a year via the Internet and not know that she comes from a big family?* Jack mentally chastised herself. *The answer is quite simple. I never bothered to ask.*

The blonde smirked at her. "Haha, very funny. I haven't been keeping them a secret. They just

never came up." Reaching over, she lightly slapped Jack on the arm, earning herself a playful scowl. "And quite frankly dear Jacqueline you never inquired about them. I would have been more than happy to tell you all about the Campbell clan had you done so."

The brunette arched an eyebrow at the usage of her full first name, but didn't make any comment about it. Having always found her name much too formal, which is why she reduced it to just Jack, she actually liked the way it sounded coming from Sonny's lips. She briefly imagined how the blonde would utter her name while they rolled around in a king-sized bed all sweaty, hot, and filled with unwavering passion for one another. Jack wiggled a little in her leather-covered bucket seat, feeling a slight tingling sensation coming from the apex of her thighs. Perhaps it wasn't wise to think such thoughts, no matter how delicious and enticing they were, as she drove. *If I keep up the vivid imagination I'm gonna wrap this Lamborghini around a tree!*

"You're right fair Madison. Please excuse my sarcasm," Jack replied, gracing her companion with a cute little grin. Sonny playfully rolled her eyes at both the name and the endearing grin. "Do continue telling me about your siblings. Are any of them as cute as you?"

Starting to blush, Sonny reached into her pants pocket and pulled out her wallet. Opening it, she found a photograph, which she removed and silently handed to Jack. The brunette managed to pay attention to the road and observe the picture simultaneously. The picture was obviously taken on the beach, where four women, Sonny among them along with one man posed for the camera, all of them sporting bright cheery smiles. Sonny and one of her younger looking sister's were reclining on the sand while the other three, with the tall young man in the middle stood behind the pair, their arms wrapped around each other's shoulders. Jack decided that all of them were indeed cute, the brother included in the observation, but not as cute as Sonny. However, she could have been biased. All five had the same green eyes and fair hair, except for the guy, whose hair was dark brown. A slight smile curved Jack's lips. *Makes me wanna sing the theme song to the Brady Bunch.*

"Wow," Jack started as she took one last look before giving the picture back to its owner. "It's the attack of the killer blonde's!" She laughed as Sonny lightly slapped her on the back of the head, causing her baseball cap to become askew. Chuckling now, Sonny watched as Jack reached up and carefully put her cap back the way she wanted it. Turning to the young woman, Jack stuck her tongue out and briefly crossed her eyes, causing her to chuckle even more. The brunette joined in, a delighted smile on her face. "No seriously, they look like a great group. I know you're not the baby, so are you the second youngest?"

"Yes, as a matter of fact I am." Sonny looked down at the picture of she and her much loved sisters and brother. A slight chuckle escaped her. "Briana and I were sort of 'happily welcomed' accidents." She pointed to the young woman sitting next to her on the photograph. Jack observed that she and Sonny resembled each other the most out of any of them.

Sonny began to tell Jack a few details about her siblings, as she pointed to them on the photograph. Candace, who was standing on her brother's right in the picture, was the oldest of them all at thirty-seven years old. She and her husband Matthew lived in Tampa and were both doctors at the same hospital, which was where they met over a decade ago. Whereas Matthew

was a pediatrician, Candace was an oncologist. They had two children, Ian who was eight, and Amanda who was four.

Next, was thirty-three year old Isaac. To be totally truthful, their father Paul was a tad disappointed in his only son because one, Isaac felt the need to wander aimlessly from job to job, and two, he had yet to give his father any grandchildren. The majority of the Campbell's knew that more than anything, Paul wanted a grandson in order to carry on his name, which meant that his only hope of that ever happening was through Isaac. Unfortunately, the young man didn't show any signs of wanting to settle down anytime soon because he went through jobs almost as fast as he went through women. Because of his 'pretty boyish' looks, Isaac could have just about any woman that he desired and he desired to have a quite a few on a regular basis. He was both sweet and charming, but he appeared to lack any real direction.

Next, was Melanie who was thirty years old. Like her eldest sister, she was married and she and her husband Brian lived in Antioch, Florida with their thirteen-year-old son Jayme. Jayme was actually just Melanie's biological son from a previous relationship in high school, but since his real father had never really taken an interest in his life, Brian adopted him nearly four years ago when he married his mother. The happy couple was now expecting their first baby together, though they didn't know the sex since they wanted to be surprised. A few nights ago Sonny had spoken with her sister on the phone and had been told that Melanie was expected to give birth any day now. Melanie was in real estate and Brian was a high school math teacher. They met through the real estate agency that Melanie worked for. She ended up helping him to buy a condo and found her soulmate at the same time.

After Sonny came Briana, years after Paul and Annette decided not to have any more children. Somehow, she slipped through no matter how careful they were not to get pregnant. However, they soon warmed up to the idea of having another baby, Paul secretly hoping that it would be another boy, though if anyone asked what he preferred he gave his standard answer of "I don't care what it is as long as it's healthy." Now nineteen years old, Briana still lived at home with her parents while she attended college as a freshman. She'd wanted to gain some independence by telling them that she could live in a dorm, but neither parent would hear of it. They insisted that she live at home at least during her freshman year and then promised that they would help her to get an apartment near campus the summer before her sophomore year started. Briana was sold the minute she heard apartment. That was much better than living in a dorm. Though she was a science major, she wanted nothing more than to be a professional tennis player and planned within the next few years to reach her most desired goal. She was well on her way, having not lost a single match since her sophomore year in high school. Being on the women's tennis team at her college, Briana was the most valuable player.

After having named and spoken about all of the people in the picture, Sonny placed it back in her wallet before she went on to talk about her parents as Jack intently listened, trying to remember all of these names.

Sixty year old Paul Campbell was the commissioner of the police department in Tampa, Florida for nearly thirty years before he retired last year along with his wife who retired from being a nurse. After Briana graduated from high school, they moved to Canova Beach to live on right

next to the beach. When Paul and Annette met a little over forty years ago at a restaurant Annette had been working at as a waitress, it was love at first sight. Within a couple of months, they were married despite the warnings from their parents to wait at least a year. Now forty years later, they were as much in love as they were the day they said their wedding vows. Everyday was like their honeymoon.

"So those are the immediate relatives," Sonny said, finishing up. "They'll all be staying at my parent's house, so you'll meet them today. I'll tell you about the rest of the family tomorrow when you see them at the party."

"Where will they be until then?"

"Although Mom and Daddy have a big home, there's not enough room for everyone, so they'll be staying nearby at a hotel," Sonny explained as she spotted a sign on the road, noting that they were nearly in Canova Beach. Turning back to Jack, she asked if she had any questions.

The brunette nodded. "Yes, I do. Do your parents know that you're bringing a friend?" At Sonny's nod, she went on to ask, "And do they know that it's me?" Jack was beginning to get nervous. She could just imagine Sonny's retired police officer father glaring at her as he asked why she had put his daughter out of his business. *I sure hope he doesn't still carry a revolver. He might take a notion to use it on me. I know I might want to if I was him.*

Sensing Jack's sudden nervousness, the blonde reached over and patted her thigh, deciding to leave her hand there a few moments. "I've told them who you are Jack. Don't worry. It's going to be alright." She grinned at the dark haired woman. "I wouldn't knowingly take you into dangerous territory so relax." Patting the woman's thigh again, she added, "I'm sure they'll love you." *I do. Um...as a friend that is.*

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It was nearly ten o'clock when Sonny and Jack pulled up next to the two-story beach house belonging to Paul and Annette Campbell. Instantly noticing the red Honda parked next to them, Sonny informed her companion that Melanie was already there. Getting out of the car, the two women walked up to the front door, Sonny almost skipping along in her excitement. She hadn't seen her family in months and was anxious to do so. After they stepped on to the porch, the blonde continuously pressed the tiny round white button next to the door, hearing the bell ring four times before she stopped pushing.

Moments later, the door was opened by a tall young man who Jack noticed as being Isaac. After politely smiling at Jack in greeting, he gave his little sister a mock frown while putting his hands on his hips. "What are you trying to do girl? Break the doorbell? No one here is half deaf!"

Laughing joyously, Sonny threw her arms around Isaac's neck, happily screeching as he twirled her around a couple of times before setting her back down on her own two feet. Chuckling, Isaac grinned down at his younger sister. "Missed me, eh?" He looked behind her to Jack, still grinning. "What can I say? I'm her favorite brother."

Jack chuckled as she watched her friend lean up on her tiptoes to give Isaac a sweet kiss on the cheek before she stated, "You're my only brother silly." Sonny smiled at him, thoroughly glad to see him. "May we come in?"

The dark haired man glanced behind him and then looked at Sonny, the expression on his face apologetic. "No, sorry I don't think so. We're kinda all booked up here at the Campbell house. Though I could give you directions to a hotel not too far from here."

Smirking, Sonny gently pushed past him while indicating for her silent friend to follow. Smiling and waving at Isaac almost shyly, Jack slipped into the house making sure to stay close to the blonde she had come with. After he closed the door, Sonny introduced her brother to Jack. The brunette shook the warm hand offered to her while looking up into a pair of green eyes, which were identical to Sonny's.

"It's nice to meet you Jack," Isaac sincerely said, deciding not to mention anything about she and his sister having been business rivals not too long ago. *I'll just let sleeping dogs lie.*

Jack smiled, liking this man already. "And good to meet you Isaac."

"Is that my little sister that I hear?" asked a female voice coming from upstairs. The trio looked up to see a very pregnant blonde carefully making her way down the steps with the help of a young boy. Smiling broadly, Sonny walked toward the stairs and greeted her with a big hug as she made it to the bottom. The two women examined one another, making sweet comments before Sonny turned to the boy standing next to her sister. Remarking that he was as tall as she was now, they hugged too, the boy revealing a shiny set of braces when he smiled. After they parted, Sonny turned and indicated for Jack to come over.

"Jack, this is my sister Melanie, though you know her from the picture I showed you. She's even prettier in person. And this is my hunk of a nephew Jayme." Jayme blushed as he reached out and shook Jack's hand while not being able to make full contact because he already had a crush on the blue-eyed beauty. On first sight, he decided that she was the hottest woman he had ever seen. However, he noticed the gazes she had been bestowing on his aunt when she wasn't looking so he knew he didn't have a snowball's chance in Tartarus. *Plus, there's the fact that I'm a little on the young side.*

As Jack and Melanie greeted each other, Sonny turned toward her brother asking where their parents were. She didn't inquire about Briana, because she knew that her younger sibling was either in a class or on her way home from one.

"Mom sent Dad and Brian to the store with a grocery list." Isaac grinned. "A long one." He then pointed toward the sliding glass doors leading outside as he added, "And she is reclining outside on the deck reading a magazine. Though with all that doorbell ringing you did, I'm surprised she didn't hear you." He smirked as he headed in the direction of the deck with both his sisters and Jack following along. Jayme decided to go back upstairs since he was in the midst of playing a very important video game.

Once they made it out to the expansive deck, Isaac cleared his throat, successfully gaining his mother's attention. As her hazel eyes fell on her second youngest daughter, Annette quickly dropped the already forgotten magazine as she stood up to her full height of five feet five inches. Giving Sonny a smile filled with love, she gently pulled the younger woman into a tender embrace, both not saying anything for a few moments. Finally, Annette pulled back so that she could take a good look at her daughter, smiling all the while. She acted as though it had been years instead of months since they'd see each other. However, she'd done the same exact thing with Melanie, Brian, and Jayme when they arrived. She would have with Isaac too, however since he lived in town, and made a point of stopping by at least three times a week, Annette was quite used to his presence.

"You look terrific Madison," Annette said, using her daughter's full name like she always did. Not once in the past twenty-seven years had she slipped and called her Sonny.

Sonny smiled at the fair-haired fifty-eight year old who could have passed for being in her mid to late forties. "So do you Mom. So do you. I've missed you."

There were tears in her eyes as Annette drew her daughter to her again, embracing her tightly as she replied, "And I've missed you sweetheart. How have you been?" she asked as she withdrew.

The younger blonde smiled at the sweetest woman that she had ever known. "I've been just fine Mom. I'd like to introduce you to someone." Looking behind her, Sonny indicated for Jack to come near. Wearing an expression filled with shyness and nervousness, Jack complied, smiling at the woman who was an older version of Sonny. "Mom, this is my friend Jack. We've become quite close in the last month or so," Sonny started as she placed a hand on her tall friend's upper arm while smiling up at her. "Jack this is my mom Annette, one of the most terrific women that you'll ever meet."

Blushing and playfully rolling her eyes at her daughter's compliment, Annette turned to Jack, smiling at her warmly as she subtly appraised her. Her mind still sharp as a tack, Annette acutely remembered having seen Jack on the news speaking about her new coffeehouse. She also remembered wanting to get in her car and drive straight to Orlando so she could give the cocky sounding woman a piece of her mind for trying to destroy her baby's business. Now Annette looked up into the gorgeous face and didn't detect a trace of the arrogance, which had been plainly displayed on the television week's prior. *Hm, looks as though the Conqueror has left the building*, Annette thought, sensing nothing but gentleness and warmth, along with a bit of anxiousness. *I'll give her a chance. I know my Madison is a good judge of character, so if she trusts this woman then far be it from me not to give her one.*

"Jack, it is wonderful to meet you," Annette graciously said as she ignored the hand that was held out to her. Instead she walked up to the brunette and wrapped her arms around her in a tender hug. Though very surprised by the display of affection toward her, Jack wound her arms around the smaller woman, fervently returning the hug. As thoughts of her own mother hugging her, entered her mind, Jack blinked back the tears, not wanting anyone to see them.

"And it's wonderful to meet you Mrs. Campbell," Jack thickly replied as the embrace ended. She

instantly found that she missed the contact. Glancing at Sonny, the brunette smiled again at the older woman standing before her. "Sonny calls you terrific and now I know where she got *her...*'terrificness' from."

"Oh, that's pretty slick," Isaac interjected, playfully smiling at Jack. "Complimenting both Mom and Sonny within the same sentence." He winked as she faintly grinned at him. "I'll have to remember that one."

Mother and daughter blushing, Annette reached up and gently padded Jack's cheek as she thanked her. She noticed the hint of sadness and pain in those big blue eyes, but decided that now was not the time to inquire about it. Annette made a mental note to have a private talk with Jack later. "And please call me Anne," she said as she looped an arm through Jack's and turned her toward the sliding glass door. "Now let's all go inside, have some coffee, and chat while we wait for Paul and Brian to return from the store. I'll then make everyone a big breakfast." She shook her blonde head as they all headed inside the beach house. "They've been gone for quite a while. I do hope they know what they're doing."

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Less than twenty minutes later, Paul and Brian arrived, carrying three full bags of groceries each. After setting his part of the bags on the kitchen counter, Paul walked over to the kitchen table where his wife, Melanie, Sonny, and Jack sat. Getting up to hug him, Sonny then introduced her father to her guest while her mother and sister arose to help Brian put the groceries away and to get breakfast started. Towering over Jack by five inches, the imposing man gave her a firm handshake as he greeted her.

His mother-in-law telling him that she and Melanie could handle everything, Brian walked over to the table to meet Sonny's friend. Though Jack extended her hand for him to shake, he declined to do so. Instead, he brought it to his lips, lightly touching the back as his wife gave him a mock glare near the refrigerator, where she stood with a carton of eggs in her hands. Extracting a pristine white egg from the carton, Melanie pretended like she was going to throw it at him. Brian ducked underneath the kitchen table, causing everyone in the room to burst into laughter, as they heard the front door close.

Moments later, a pretty young blonde woman appeared at the kitchen entrance, her green eyes traveling around the room in amusement. "What's so-" She stopped speaking as she noticed the short-haired blonde who hadn't been there when she left a little over two hours ago. "Sonny!"

Turning around, Sonny grinned widely at the young woman who had just excitedly called her name. "Briana!" Emitting cute little squeals, both women started to run towards each other, meeting somewhere in the middle, as they threw their arms around one another. Nearly bubbling with excitement, Briana hugged her favorite sister (though she would never admit that) for a full minute before she let go, taking a step back to look Sonny up and down. A tiny frown creased her brow as the teenager put her hands on her hips, remarking that her sister looked as though she had lost weight.

Sonny inwardly sighed, about to refute her sister's claim but then quickly reconsidered. *She's*



*always read me better than anyone so there is no use lying. She would see right through that. I'll just see if I can get away with a little white lie.* Sonny shrugged, attempting to look nonchalant. "Just about a pound Bri. I've been busy lately."

Briana smirked. "That's no excuse. You're already small enough and you can't afford to lose too much weight. Plus, I'm willing to bet that you've lost five...maybe six pounds." Crossing her arms over her chest, Briana gave her older sister a stern look, making Sonny feel she was behaving more like her mother than her sibling.

Before Sonny could offer a reply, Isaac meandered into the kitchen saying, "Don't worry Bri." He winked at Sonny. "We'll fatten her up real good this weekend."

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"Hey Jack is that your Lamborghini parked outside?" Briana asked as she speared a couple pieces from her pancake stack on a fork. Having always loved automobiles, when the young woman pulled up earlier in her Nissan, she had walked around the Lamborghini a few times, aching to reach out and touch it, but resisting. It was one of the most beautiful cars Briana had ever seen in person, including the ones from various auto shows she had went to.

Nodding, Jack smiled at her. "Yes, it is. You like it?"

Briana granted Jack with a dubious expression. "Are you kidding? I love it. It's totally sweet!" She was nearly bouncing up and down in her chair, her food completely forgotten as she beamed at the brunette sitting directly across from her.

Putting her fork down on her near empty plate, Jack fished into the pocket of her shorts and pulled out a ring of keys. Dangling the keys in the air, she grinned at Briana as she asked, "Would you be interested in taking her for a spin?"

Practically salivating as she quickly nodded, Briana made to catch the keys as they were tossed in her direction. However, before she could, Sonny snatched the keys out of the air and held onto them tightly as she ignored the disapproving expression on her younger sister's face. Sparing the curious looks her family members gave her a glance, the blonde quietly asked Jack if she would meet her in the living room for a private conversation. Without waiting for a reply, Sonny excused herself from the table and walked out of the kitchen.

Reaching the living room, Sonny chose to stand as she folded her arms over her chest while waiting for Jack. Moments later, the brunette ambled out of the kitchen with a near fuming Briana close on her heels. Situating her baseball cap back on her head, Jack walked up to Sonny, asking if she had a problem with Briana driving her car. The blonde answered her with a curt nod, causing her younger sibling to glare at her.

"Why?" Briana asked. "It's not *your* car."

Jack nodded in full agreement. "Yeah, Sonny it's not *your* car. It's mine and I can let whoever I want drive it without having your permission." Turning to Briana, she asked, "You have a

driver's license, correct?"

The longhaired blonde beamed at her while nodding enthusiastically. "I do. Plus, Daddy taught me how to drive when I was only fourteen. I'm a very responsible driver Jack. Just ask anyone. Never had an accident or a ticket."

Ignoring her sister, Sonny looked up at Jack. "Jack are you really going to trust your expensive sports car to a teenager? That car cost what? A quarter of a million dollars?"

"A teenager?!?" Glaring at her sister again, Briana wondered what would happen if she were to slap Sonny. "For your information Sonny I am almost twenty years old. I am not a child and I resent you treating me like one."

Feeling partially responsible for this argument, Jack decided to intervene as she indicated for both women to be quiet. Looking thoughtful for a few silent moments, the brunette then turned to Sonny, announcing that she had a compromise. Neither uttering a word, Briana and Sonny waited for her to continue.

"Why don't we do this?" Jack started. "I won't allow Briana to drive the Lamborghini, but I'll take her for a little spin so she can ride in it to see how it feels." She grinned adding, "And I promise not to drive like a maniac." Catching the younger blonde's look of protest at not being able to drive the car, Jack gave her a conspiratorial wink. Having been about to verbally announce her protest, Briana quickly shut her mouth, instantly comprehending what the wink meant. The protesting expression slipped into a pretend one of mild irritation.

In full agreement with this compromise, Sonny nodded her head, the look on her face plainly showing her relief. Turning to her sister, she asked if she would be all right with merely riding along in the passenger's seat instead of taking control of the wheel. Managing to still look slightly irritated with the 'change of events', Briana nodded her blonde head as she emitted a sigh of resignation.

"You're bumming me out Sonny, but I'll take whatever I can get," Briana replied, sticking her tongue out at her sister, the action causing her to briefly look sixteen years old again. Sonny lightly chuckled as she shook her head at her younger sibling's antics. "At least I still get to ride in the Lamborghini." Bright anticipating green eyes and a pair of smiling reddish lips turned to regard Jack. "Can we go now or did you want to eat some more breakfast?" *Please say you're full! A person could get filled up on just one of Mom's thick yet delicious pancakes. You **must** be full after consuming three!*

Jack chuckled heartily, finding the younger woman's enthusiasm contagious. Out of everyone she had met thus far, Briana was her favorite with her sweet and charming mother coming in at a close second. Replying that she was finished with breakfast, Jack grinned as Briana let out a small yelp of excitement. Looking at Sonny, she held out her hand expectantly, her fingers closing around the keys after they were placed in her palm. Looping her arm through one of Briana's, she started to lead the young woman towards the front door when she noticed that Sonny was following them. Stopping, Jack turned around to face the smaller woman as she

quickly came up with a plan to get rid of her long enough for she and Briana to make it to the Lamborghini.

"Sonny I'm a bit thirsty, so could you do me a favor and go pour me a glass of orange juice? I'll take it with me in the car."

The blonde nodded, not having the slightest idea that those two were up to no good. "Sure Jack. Not a problem." Looking at her sister, Sonny asked, "Bri, would you like me to bring you some juice too?"

Smiling, Briana nodded while thinking that if her sister had to pour two glasses of orange juice, it would buy them more time. "That would be awesome Sonny. Thanks."

After Sonny left to obtain their beverages, Jack and Briana fled from the house, running toward the Lamborghini. They were settled and ready to leave by the time that Sonny walked out of the beach house carrying two cups of orange juice, both sporting plastic tops with straws inserted into them. Only making it a few feet passed the threshold because she stopped walking, Sonny observed the person in the driver's seat through the sloping windshield. Green eyes narrowed in suspicion. Now unless Jack had a blonde wig that she had just put on, Briana was going to drive the Lamborghini.

Sonny shook her head. *I've been duped!* Before she could utter a word, Jack and Briana poked their heads out of the windows, both women wearing mischievous grins that they directed at the previously clueless blonde. It must have been planned because simultaneously they said, "Sucker!!!" before the ignition started, the sports car peeling out of the driveway moments later, two hands waving back at Sonny as they flew down the street.

Quietly, Sonny watched the midnight blue Lamborghini until it was out of sight, wearing an expression of amusement the entire time. Raising one of the cups of juice to her lips, the blonde took a long sip as she turned around and headed back into the house while thinking of ways to retaliate on the mischievous duo. She started to lightly chuckle as she pushed the door closed with her foot. *I'll get you my pretties!*

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Around two thirty that afternoon found Paul, Annette, all five of their children, grandchildren, son-in-laws, and Jack out on the deck enjoying each other's company. Everyone patiently waited for Paul and Brian to finish cooking the hamburgers and hot dogs on the grill so they could dig into them and the array of food placed on a picnic table. Currently, Sonny, Jack, Briana, and Isaac were playing their second game of Scrabble. Having decided to play in teams, Jack and Briana had annihilated the other two during the first game, so now Sonny and her brother were on the warpath. Neither intended to lose again to the bragging and triumphantly grinning duo. However, so far Jack and Briana were in the lead by twenty-two points.

Watching her closely, Sonny narrowed her eyes as Jack methodically arranged her tiles on the board, creating a triple word score that gave she and her teammate fifty-four points. Emanating a joyous whoop, Briana shared a high five with her partner, both wearing broad grins. Meanwhile,

Sonny and Isaac graced them with suspicious looks.

"What the heck is a zither?" Sonny asked, green eyes narrowed in Jack's direction. "I've never heard of it."

"Well dear I'm quite certain that there are a lot of things you've never heard of." As the blonde woman smirked at her, Jack flashed her a saccharinely sweet smile before explaining the word she used. "A zither Sonny girl is a stringed musical instrument shaped like a flat box. A person who plays it would be considered a zitherist." When the expression on her friend's face remained doubtful, Jack shrugged as she pushed the dictionary they had been frequently referring to, over to her. "If you don't believe me then check for yourself. I assure you that it's in there."

Concluding that the dark haired woman wasn't trying to cheat her and Isaac, Sonny shook her head as she pushed the dictionary back in Jack's direction. "I guess that's not necessary. I'll take your word for it." Glancing at her brother, she quickly discovered that he agreed.

"That's *real* gracious of you Sonny," Jack replied with a grin planted on her lips. "I believe it's your turn now." Turning towards Briana, the dark haired woman started to say something when she spotted Paul purposely heading in her direction. Looking up, she offered the older man a smile, which he returned. Warmly greeting all of his children, he then asked if Jack would follow him. Managing to look both quizzical and nervous, she nodded as she arose to her full height. Announcing that she would return soon, Jack then followed Paul inside of the beach house, a million questions running through her mind.

Leading her into a room that Jack figured was the study, Paul then closed the door before pointing to a small couch while asking the young woman if she would like anything to drink. Nodding as she took a seat on the comfortable piece of furniture, Jack informed him that she would have whatever he did. Sitting back on the couch, Jack drew her right leg up, placing her ankle on her left knee as she watched Paul move over to a drink cart. Pulling the stopper from a decanter, he poured an amber colored liquid into two short glasses before replacing the stopper and bringing the drinks over to the couch. Thanking him, Jack accepted one of the glasses, taking a short sip as the big man sat next to her, turning a bit so that he was facing her.

Wearing a thoughtful expression, Paul took a tiny sip of brandy before leaning over and placing it on a cherry wood coffeetable. "Jack, I've noticed that no one has said anything to you about what went on between you and my daughter professionally," Paul started as he closely looked at the woman quietly sitting next to him. "I'm going to be brutally honest with you Jack. I hated what you did to my daughter. It doesn't bother me so much that you put her out of business because that often just happens. You open your own business and you run the risk of someone coming along and beating the pants off of you, which is what occurred in this case. What really angers me is the way you went about it. From what I saw on television, you were so indifferent and cocky about putting she and Sarah out of business. As if you really got off on making that happen and what I want to know is why? Obviously, you've changed because weeks later here you and my daughter are friends, but what was going through your mind then?"

While inwardly sighing, Jack suddenly felt like draining the whole glass of brandy in her hand.

Instead, she took a few more small sips before resting the glass on her bent knee. Turning her attention to Paul, she slowly shook her head saying, "To be honest with you sir, I behaved the way I did just because I could." Jack shrugged. "At that time I didn't care very much about the effect my actions had on others and I was merely looking out for myself. My main goal was to run your daughter's business into the ground until I really got to know her and care deeply for her. That was when my conscious kicked in, but by then, it was too late. The damage had already been done," pausing, the dark haired woman collected her thoughts. "I apologize for my behavior sir and I'm extremely ashamed of myself for the way I treated Sonny and other business owners in the past. I swear that I will never ever again do business in such a tacky and thoughtless manner. It's greatly due to your daughter that I've changed my ways. She's been an excellent influence on me and I can't tell you how much her friendship means to me. I can't tell you how much *she* means to me." Finishing off her drink, Jack then had the glass silently plucked from her fingers. Her nervousness growing, she watched as Paul took the glass back to the drink tray and refilled it. *I hope he's not putting arsenic in it this time, though I half wouldn't blame him if he chose to.*

Moments later, Paul handed the anxious young woman her refilled glass and took his seat. Gracing Jack with an unreadable expression he asked, "Have you told her that you're in love with her?"

The surprise she felt was plainly shown on her face. Totally caught off guard by the question, it took Jack a few moments to find her voice before she hoarsely whispered, "How did you know?"

Smiling for the first time since they had entered the study, Paul reached over, covering Jack's empty hand with one of his own. "Jack, I used to be a police officer and the police commissioner. Over the years I've learned and mastered how to read a person's face." He grinned, suddenly looking younger than his sixty years as he added, "I'm more accurate than a lie detector test. I could tell just by the way you looked at her and by the way you speak of her. It has to be love. I know the look well because I give it to my wife each and every day." Paul cocked his head to the side. "So does she know?"

Jack nodded. "I told her in late October." Thoughts of she and Sonny starting to make love right after she made the declaration flooded the dark haired woman's mind. With much effort, Jack managed to push the sensual thoughts out of her mind so that she could focus on her conversation with Paul.

"Did she tell you that she feels the same way?"

The dark head shook. "I know that she doesn't feel that way about me. I just wanted her to know how I felt."

"I didn't ask if she felt the same way, I asked if she told you that she does. Obviously, she didn't say."

Jack's face filled with confusion as she stared at Paul. "What do you mean? What's the difference?"

"I know that Sonny feels the same way, I just wanted to know if *you* knew she did."

Blue eyes opening wide, Jack regarded the older man with a bewildered expression, not offering a reply right away. "What are you saying sir? That Sonny loves me too? That she's *in* love with me?"

Paul nodded. "I'd be willing to bet all of my worldly possessions on it," he said in a confident voice.

"Did...did she tell you that?"

"Jack, just like you she didn't have to. My daughter looks at you the same way you do her."

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Exiting the study fifteen minutes later with Paul's blessing that she may pursue his daughter, Jack took a seat in the empty living room as she allowed the conversation to sink in. Obviously comfortable with his daughter's sexual preference, Paul had informed Jack that he thought they would make the perfect couple and that he would be proud to be able to call her his daughter-in-law someday. Being unusually highly emotional today, Jack promptly burst into tears after hearing the surprising yet welcome words. Paul spent the next few minutes holding and comforting her with his words and warm inviting presence. It dawned on Jack, that before Paul no man had ever embraced her with such tenderness since her father.

Thinking of her father and Paul, she considered the similarities between the two men. They were both big strong men who cared for the well being of their families and openly displayed their love and affection for them. Being in Paul's arms caused the long buried deep ache to resurface. This resulted in Jack missing her father's embrace and overall presence immensely. Her lower lip starting to tremble, the brunette covered her face with her hands as fresh tears came. *Oh God, what's the matter with me?*

Not being able to put an end to the tears, Jack prayed that no one would come in and see her in this condition. However, God must have had other plans because moments later Jack felt a warm palm stroking up and down her back and looked up to see Annette sitting next to her on the couch. The compassionate expression that Annette wore caused Jack to burst into wracking sobs. Wordlessly, she was pulled into a motherly embrace as the older woman continued soothingly stroking the length of her back. While comforting the obviously distraught woman, Annette glanced up to see a concerned Sonny headed towards them. Silently shaking her head, she watched as her daughter helplessly looked at Jack for a few seconds before deciding to obey her mother's wishes. Turning around, she walked back outside with a million questions roaming through her mind.

Never knowing that her friend had been in the room, Jack pulled away from Annette's welcome embrace moments after she left. She started to wipe at her wet cheeks with the back of her hand when the blonde woman seemingly pulled a neatly folded handkerchief out of nowhere, giving it to her. Thanking her, Jack dabbed at her face with the lightly scented handkerchief as she

sniffed. Breaking the silence, Jack apologized while gazing down at her lap. Two small fingers gently pressed on her chin until she was looking into a pair of warm hazel eyes.

"You have nothing to apologize for Jack," Annette softly said. "What has you so upset? Paul didn't say anything he shouldn't have, did he?" She asked, sounding like she was ready to reprimand her quite outspoken husband.

Quickly shaking her head negatively, Jack replied, "No, he was great. We had a nice talk." A small smile tugged at her lips as she admitted this. "Actually, I was...I was just thinking about my parents and how much I miss them. Experiencing how welcome you and your husband have made me feel makes me wish so much that I still had them."

Reaching for the younger woman's hand, Annette gave it a gentle squeeze as she looked into saddened blue eyes. "How long ago did they pass?" she softly inquired.

"Eleven years." Wiping away another tear that fell down her cheek, Jack added, "And it suddenly seems like just yesterday."

Scooting closer to her, Annette wrapped an arm around Jack's shoulders. "Do you want to talk about it sweetheart?"

Smiling a little at the endearment, Jack nodded and took a deep breath. "I think I would."

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Having been told by her mother that Jack was in the guest bathroom, Sonny went in search of her, lightly knocking on the closed bathroom door. A moment later, the door was opened to reveal a though red-eyed, fully composed brunette. Concern plainly written across her face, Sonny walked into the bathroom and closed the door behind her before looking up at her previously sobbing friend. Having not yet uttered a word, the blonde wrapped her arms around Jack, the other woman quickly doing the same. Silently, the two women held the embrace for a few seconds before Sonny let go, asking her friend if she was all right.

Nodding, Jack offered her a reassuring smile. "Yes, I'm fine Sonny girl." She pointed toward the sink. "I just needed to wash my face."

"Jack, I know something is wrong," Sonny replied, her voice laced with worry. Leaning against the door she said, "I want you to open up to me."

The other woman started to grin. "Am I being held hostage until I do? Because if I am, there is no one I'd rather be kidnapped by then you." When Sonny didn't so much as crack a hint of a smile, Jack leaned down until their noses were nearly touching. "Really honey, I'm just fine. There is nothing wrong so you need not worry." Drawing back, she smiled. "Now if you'd be so kind as to move away from the door I believe there are a couple of hamburgers with our names on them."

The blonde head stubbornly shook as Sonny remained where she was. "We're not leaving this

bathroom until you tell me what's wrong. Did my father say something that upset you?"

Jack almost burst out in laughter while thinking that Sonny sounded just as reprimanding as her mother. Instead, she shook her head, though her lips were curved into a tiny smile. "No, your father was a perfect gentleman."

"Then what's the problem? Why were you crying?"

"Just because my eyes are red doesn't mean I've been crying. I have allergies," Jack lied, she hoped effectively. Noticing Sonny's disbelieving expression, the brunette inwardly sighed. *Nope. She sees through me like a roll of transparent scotch tape.*

Sonny folded her arms over her chest, as she remained pressed against the door. "Then what did you call that when you were sitting on the couch with miniature drops of water falling down your cheeks while Mom held you?"

"So you were eavesdropping?"

"Don't try to change the subject Jack."

Placing a hand on either side of Sonny's head, Jack leaned down toward her, briefly making the blonde wonder if she was about to be kissed. When it was apparent that she was not, Sonny didn't know whether she was more relieved or disappointed. She watched as a slow grin appeared on Jack's face and felt the tiny butterflies take flight in the pit of her stomach.

"Sonny girl, if you don't move your body I won't hesitate to move it for you," Jack stated in a low sexy purr that sent delightful chills up the other woman's spine.

Moving her head forward until her lips were less than a fourth of an inch away from the brunette's, Sonny whispered, "Do it if you can."

While resisting the urge to devour the sweet lips so close to her own, Jack silently placed her hands on Sonny's hips so that she could move her out of the way. However, before she could successfully do so, a pair of cargo pants covered legs locked around her waist and bare arms around her neck, holding on as tightly as an octopus might. Cocking an eyebrow, Jack released her hold on Sonny's slim waist, choosing to rest her hands directly on a pair of warm firm buns. Giving them an experimental squeeze, Jack watched as her actions caused the smaller woman to blush.

"So...what is this all about?" Jack asked in a conversational tone. "Not that I mind you wrapping your legs so very tight around me. I just want to know what your motive is."

Sonny blushed even hotter. "I want to know why you were crying, so I'm not letting you go until you tell me." The blonde held on tighter while she adopted a mixed expression of determination and stubbornness.



Looking at her for several silent moments, Jack then nonchalantly shrugged as she wrapped one arm around her burden's waist before opening the door. Because of the extra hundred plus pounds, the brunette walked slowly and carefully out of the bathroom, nearing colliding with one of Sonny's sisters in the process. Jack gave the curious woman a sheepish grin while Sonny chose to bury her face in the tall woman's neck.

"Um...hello," Candace said while placing her hands on hips. "What are you two nutball's up to?" she inquired in a teasing tone.

Jack inwardly beamed. She hadn't known Candace for very long and hadn't gotten the chance to speak with her much but she was already considered a nutball. How very sweet. The brunette suddenly felt like one of the family. Placing her hands back on her hanger-on's buns gained Jack a curious eyebrow lift from Candace.

"Well eer...Sonny here...you see-"

Starting to laugh, Candace waved a dismissive hand in the air. "It's okay Jack. You don't have to tell me because I already know and I think it's sweet."

It was Jack's turn to raise an eyebrow. "You do?"

The curly haired blonde nodded. "Absolutely. A little afternoon romance in the bathroom is totally cute." Smiling, she scrunched up her nose in a way that Jack considered cute too. "Matt and I used to do stuff like that too, but then suddenly became an old married couple," she paused thoughtfully. "You know it's a lucky thing that I found you guys instead of Melanie. Because she would have blabbed it to anyone that would listen!" Laughing again, Candace moved around the strange looking pair, making sure to squeeze Jack's shoulder and pinch her sister's rear before walking into the bathroom and closing the door behind her.

Groaning, Sonny finally raised her head and looked at Jack. "My God, she thinks we were making whoopie in my parents bathroom!"

Jack fought hard to keep from laughing. "Relax Sonny girl. Based on what she said, I don't think she'll tell anyone what she saw so we're cool." She winked at the red-faced woman.

Sonny smirked. "You don't know my sister. Melanie isn't the big mouth...Candace is. Candace is the one who used to tell my parents when I would sneak out at night. Whereas Melanie would often cover for me, often going so far as to vertically place pillows in my bed to make it look like I was there."

Throwing her head back, Jack let out a rich chuckle. "Perhaps Candace was only being protective of you. She didn't want you to get hurt."

Her friend smirked again and added a roll of her eyes. "Yeah, yeah. She used to feed me that 'I'm your big sister and therefore I'm supposed to protect you' crap. I never bought it."

Jack chuckled again. "Well maybe she really won't tell this time. After all, she *is* all grown up."

"Hmm, maybe she won't. Only time will tell," Sonny thoughtfully paused. "So...where were we? Ah, yes. You were about to tell me why you were crying." She innocently looked at Jack while still clinging to her.

"You're like a dog with a bone." Jack wiggled, trying to shake the petite blonde loose. "Never thought I'd say this, but get off of me Sonny girl. I ain't talkin'."

"Fine. Then I won't let go until you do."

The brunette arched an eyebrow. "Oh, really? I bet you will if I walk out to the ocean and dump you there."

Sonny observed her face closely, getting the feeling that her threat might not be an empty one. Sighing, Sonny quietly asked, "Why can't I know?"

"Because I don't care to get into that right now. I told your mother but I can't bring myself to repeat that story again. Not today Sonny." Jack shook her head, suddenly looking morose. "I'm sorry, I just can't do it. I do plan on telling you eventually though. I've always intended on doing that."

Having a sudden urge to do so, Sonny lightly kissed the tip of Jack's nose, delighted when a smile spread across the woman's lips. "I'm so sorry Jack," Sonny softly replied in an apologetic tone. "I feel so bad for trying to force you. I should have backed off the moment I knew you didn't want to talk about whatever it was that caused you to become upset."

Slipping her arms around Sonny's waist, Jack gave the smaller woman a light squeeze. "It's quite alright Sonny. No harm done." The brunette started to grin. "So do you want me to escort you to the post office so you can fill out one of those change of address cards?"

Sonny cocked a curious brow. "Pardon?" She had the sneaking suspicion that a blush was in her immediate future. Her cheeks were already feeling much warmer due to that mischievous grin alone.

The grin on Jack's face grew broader. "Well it seems that you've taken up permanent residence on my body."

Right on cue, the blonde started to hotly blush as she carefully disengaged herself from Jack, straightening her clothing after her feet touched the ground. Coming out of the bathroom, Candace flashed the pair a knowing smile, which was complete with a conspiring wink as she headed in the direction of the deck. Rolling her eyes heavenward, Sonny made a mental note to explain what was really going on in the bathroom between she and Jack later.

"How about those burgers?" Jack asked as she placed an arm around the younger woman's shoulders. "I don't know about you, but I'm starved!"

Sonny smiled up at her. "So am I. Let's go."

They weren't able to complete five whole steps before the doorbell rang. Loudly announcing to those on the deck that she would answer it, Sonny walked towards the front door, looking out through the peephole. Standing about a foot and a half behind her, Jack's expression grew curious when she heard the blonde emit a low groan. *Must be someone selling stuff or a Jehovah's Witness.* Jack personally preferred the former because they were much easier to get rid of in a polite manner.

*Great,* Sonny mentally said as she began to unlock the door. *I would choose to answer the door when the visitor is my irritating and snotty cousin.* Pasting on a smile that was almost too bright, the blonde threw open the door. "Alicia!" she shouted in mock joy. "I'm so happy to see you!" After displaying much talent by hugging each other without a lot touching, the two women swapped air kisses before starting to look each other up and down, though Alicia with a much more critical eye. Granting her cousin with another smile that didn't even come close to reaching her eyes, Sonny said, "You look very good."

Alicia gave her a high voltage smile, showing a set of pearly white and nicely capped teeth. "Don't I though?" she said in a teasing voice, though it was painfully obvious that she meant every word. Not bothering to mention how she thought Sonny looked, the redhead closed the door just as her cousin turned to Jack to make the introductions.

"Alicia, this is my friend-"

"Hello Jacqueline," Alicia softly said in a voice smooth as honey.

Smiling, Jack held out a hand to the other woman. "Hello yourself Ali."

Ignoring the hand, the gorgeous redhead walked right up to Jack and brazenly kissed her squarely on the lips. All three women had different reactions to the sudden kiss. Snapping her open mouth closed, Sonny attempted to conceal and deny her jealous anger while shoving her hands into the pockets of her pants, afraid she might reach out and slap a certain someone. Jack adopted a calm friendly expression though she was surprised by the kiss and nervous because Sonny had witnessed it. She glanced at the blonde's expression, not being able to tell what she was thinking. Alicia openly showed just how much she enjoyed kissing Jack. It was obvious that she wouldn't object to doing it again and again.

"So..." Sonny started, breaking the tense silence that had settled between the trio, "you guys must know each other." She looked at them both, waiting for someone to explain.

"Yes we do." A saucy smile slipped onto Alicia's reddened lips. "Jack and I know each other very well. Don't we Jack?" she innocently asked, gazing at the woman through hazel eyes, which reminded Jack of Annette's.

Jack mutely nodded, feeling quite uncomfortable. She glanced toward the deck fervently wishing

that someone would come into the house, but evidently, they all felt content to remain outside. *Certainly, someone must need to use the bathroom, make a phone call, or get something out of the kitchen!*

Sonny's hands remained in her pockets as she clenched her teeth, her fertile mind imagining all sorts of sexual scenarios involving her cousin and Jack. Sure, she'd rather not think about them in that way, but it was impossible to get the images out of her head. *Of all the people in the world she slept with this...this snobby twit?!? Just what were you thinking Jack???* She could see how Jack would be attracted to and involved with Leslie for instance, but Alicia? Of course, she was beautiful, standing at five feet nine with a slim hourglass figure, finely chiseled features, a fair complexion and a flaming curly red mane, but it's what's on the inside that counts. Or at least it should be. And inside, Alicia Hastings, daughter of business tycoon Charles Hastings III, was a spoiled, conceited ice princess who wouldn't know common courtesy if it walked up and bit her square on her perfectly round rump.

"Were you a...couple?" Sonny haltingly inquired, wondering why she was putting herself through this torture.

Alicia nodded as she winked at Jack. "Indeed we were for about four months back in college, which was where we met. At the time Jack was a freshman and I a sophomore. I guess you can say that I took her under my wing." The redhead let out a small chuckle as she appraised the now powerful, wealthy and self-assured beauty before her. A lot had changed since the last time she saw Jack thirteen years ago. "I must say that you look incredible Jack," Alicia honestly admitted, suddenly feeling nostalgic. The only person that she had ever loved more than herself was Jacqueline Foster. That was one of the reasons she'd had to end their relationship. The then nineteen-year-old made her feel things that she was incapable and unwilling to deal with, so Alicia deemed it safer to just let go before she got to the point where she couldn't.

The brunette smiled at the compliment, still hoping that someone would interrupt them. "Thanks Alicia." Someone high above must have been listening, because Briana chose that moment to saunter into the beach house and toward them, the smile on her face slightly dissolving when she caught sight of her cousin. Having been taught to be polite, the nineteen-year-old warmly greeted Alicia, even going so far as to give her a quick hug. Taking note of Jack's near panic-stricken face, Briana slipped a hand into hers as she smiled at the other two women.

"I hate to steal her away, but I have something important to show her." Looking up at the brunette, Briana asked, "Jack will you come with me please?"

*Oh, bless your young heart Bri!* Trying not to look too relieved, Jack nodded. "Sure hon. Lead the way." She glanced at Alicia and Sonny saying, "We'll catch up with you two in a bit."

Lightly tugging on her hand, Briana led Jack up the stairs to the second level. They walked to the door farthest down the hall and entered, Briana firmly closing the door behind them before she indicated for Jack to take a seat on her bed. Leaning against the door, the blonde asked if she was all right.

Smiling at her gratefully, Jack nodded. "Thanks to you, my heroine I am." She winked at the younger woman, gaining a slight blush in return. "You're a lifesaver."

Briana's nose crinkled up as she grinned. "Well I'm about to be even more of a lifesaver 'cause I'm gonna go pilfer us some food. We can hang out here for a while if you like. What do you like on your hamburger?"

Smiling again, Jack nodded. "I would very much like to hang here with you. And I like everything on my hamburger. Pickles, mayonnaise, tomatoes... whatever you've got, I want it." The brunette winked, grinning broadly as she stretched her arms high above her head, languidly stretching.

Displaying a broad grin of her own, Briana replied, "Lucky for you, I've got a lot Jack. A *whole* lot." Wearing an impossibly wider grin now, the young blonde turned and headed out of the bedroom, making sure to close the door.

Arching a curious brow, Jack stared at the wooden door while deep in thought. *Whoa. Was it just my imagination or was there some flirting going on there?* Blue eyes grew wide as Jack evaluated her last statement. *Whatever you've got, I want it. Geez, it sounds like I was blatantly flirting with her, though I honestly didn't mean to. Question is, did she?* Leaning back on her hands, the brunette thought about Briana's reply to her accidental flirtatious comment and that borderline naughty grin on her lips. Jack slowly nodded as she answered her own question. If that wasn't intentional flirting than her name wasn't Jacqueline Foster.

Writing it off as innocent flirting, Jack let the issue drop as she looked around the bedroom, her attention occupied by the posters on the walls. Growing more curious, she observed each of the five posters. The poster directly above Briana's bed was of the world-renowned tennis great Martina Navratilova. On the wall opposite the bed was a poster of another tennis champ named Conchita Martinez. To the left of the bed were two posters of musicians side by side. One was a picture of K.D. Lang and other Melissa Etheridge. Now Jack didn't have a vast amount of information on any of these women, but there was one thing she knew they had in common. All four of them played for the same team. As far as she knew, Briana was straight so why were four out of five of her posters of lesbians? Not that Jack thought that heterosexuals couldn't appreciate Martina or K.D., but it was quite peculiar that the only straight female poster present was of Minnie Mouse. Jack's face grew thoughtful. That is unless Minnie had dumped Mickey and was recruited into the Lesbian Nation without her knowledge. She had an image of Mickey Mouse and Donald Duck looking miserable as Minnie and Daisy joyously ran off into the sunset together.

Lightly chuckling, the tall woman arose from the bed and strolled over to a desk, which had a three-shelf bookcase attached to it. The top of the bookcase and the first shelf were littered with shiny looking trophies of all sizes, most of which were for one tennis competition or another. Closely observing the trophies, Jack found a few for basketball, two for softball, and one for being the best all around camper during the summer of 1996. The remaining shelves were filled with novels, which had been placed in alphabetical order according to the author's last name. After skimming over the book spines, Jack grew suspicious once again. She recognized most of

the author's and knew that at least two of them were lesbians whose characters tended to be gay. *Hmm, she has all of these books and the majority of them were written either by Rita Mae Brown or Leslea Newman. Interesting. Very interesting.*

Turning around, Jack headed back toward the bed and took a seat before observing the contents of the room again. There was nothing truly 'girly' about it unless you wanted to count the furry brown teddy bear wearing a pink bow that was sitting against the headboard. Not that she deemed it any of her business, but she wanted to figure out this 'mystery'. Jack started to tick off the evidence she had on her fingers. *Let's see...one evidently she's fond of famous lesbians. Two, if those trophies are any indication, she loves playing sports, especially tennis, which she wants to make her profession. Three, she loves cars and knows quite a bit about them based on what she was telling me earlier when we went for that drive.* Jack thought about what Briana had on. The young woman wore a pair of baggy white cotton shorts that reached down to her knees along with a striped blue and white tank top. Completing the casual ensemble were a pair of blue sandals. Also, when they'd gotten into her Lamborghini, Jack noticed the blinding white edge of Briana's underwear above the waistband of her shorts. She figured that the blonde must have done it on purpose because it was arranged too neatly. *So she likes the "ooh, look at the rim of my undies, aren't I cool" look.* Jack shook her head, never having understood why today's youth thought wearing their pants low enough so that people could see what they were wearing beneath them cool and attractive. *Well at least Briana's shorts don't start below her butt.* The brunette started to smile. *And she does look a little cute.*

A light knock on the door broke Jack free of her musings. Thinking that Briana might be having a difficult time opening the door because she was carrying their meals, the tall woman quickly arose from the bed and walked over to open the door. The smile on her lips faded just a fraction when she saw that the person knocking was not her new little buddy, but her old and very first lover Alicia. Obviously not noticing, the redhead gave her a bright smile as she asked to enter. Moving toward the left, Jack indicated for Alicia to come in. After she did so, the brunette quickly peered down the hall, chagrined to not see Briana. Inwardly sighing, she softly closed the door before turning around, nearly colliding with the other woman who had been standing directly behind her. Taking a step back, Jack hooked her thumbs into the side pockets of her jean shorts and glared Alicia with a questioning look.

The thirty-four year old chuckled. "Jack, am I making you nervous? You seem tense and I'm guessing that it has something to do with me."

"I'm not nervous...just surprised to see you. It's been a long time."

Alicia nodded in agreement. "What a small world it is huh? You and I meeting up again because you became friends with my cousin," she paused while looking at the other woman thoughtfully. "I really have missed you Jacqueline. I don't know if you'll believe me but I do think about you often."

Jack shrugged, wondering if there was a way that she could calmly bolt from the room. "Is that why you came up here? To tell me that you think of me?"

A smile curved Alicia's reddened lips. "Actually, I wanted to invite you to a girl's only nightclub that's having its grand opening tonight. It's supposed to be awesome and I just wondered since you're here, would you like to go with? I'm meeting a few friends there, so if you're worried about being alone with me then don't." The smile on her lips grew.

Jack started to shake her head. "Though I appreciate the invite Alicia, I'm going to have to decline. You see I'm in love with someone and going out on a date with you is not going to help me win them over."

Throwing her head back, Alicia heartily laughed. "Jacqueline, who said anything about a date? I just wanted to have some fun and I wanted you to be a part of that. C'mon, it'll be great. And if at any time you don't think it's great then I'll take you home." Alicia smiled. "I promise."

Before Jack could open her mouth to reply, the door opened revealing Briana carrying a plastic sack. After giving Jack a bright smile and her cousin a much dimmer one, the young blonde walked over to the bed, depositing the sack there. Reaching into the deep pockets of her baggy shorts, she pulled out two ice cold cans of soda and placed them on the nightstand before she turned to regard the other women, a smile still evident on her lips.

"What's up guys?" she asked, not in the least bit liking the fact that her least favorite relative was in her room.

Sliding over to her, Alicia casually wrapped an arm around Jack's shoulders as though she did it all the time. Grinning at the woman she glanced at Briana replying, "I was just trying to get Jack here to join me in having some fun tonight," she paused, giving the brunette her most pleading look. "So will you? For old times sake?"

Starting to decline the invitation, Jack suddenly changed her mind when a random mischievous thought was formed. Looking down at the slightly shorter woman, she nodded a smile appearing on her lips. "Sure, why not?"

Squealing in delight, Alicia impulsively smacked Jack's cheek, marking the tanned skin with a portrait of crimson lips. Smiling, she jubilantly said, "Terrific! I'll pick you up tonight at eight o'clock alright? We can have dinner before we meet my friends at the club."

"Perfect."

"I can't wait." Winking at her, Alicia then turned toward her young cousin and blew the blankly looking woman a kiss, which Briana didn't respond to. She wanted to roll her eyes, but managed to keep them still. "I'll see you later little Bri. You two have fun with your little picnic here," she said in a derogatory tone, though she was smiling all the while. Giving each woman a small wave, the redhead left the room, causing Briana to let out a huge sigh of relief as she sank down onto her bed.

Softly chuckling, Jack walked over to the bed and took a seat next to the other woman. "Something tells me that you and Sonny aren't particularly fond of your cousin Alicia," she

stated as she pulled the sack over and began to open it, unconsciously licking her lips after catching a whiff of the food inside. So intent was she on extracting the food from the bag, that she missed the longing expression that briefly appeared on Briana's face.

Briana smirked. "Gee, however did you guess?"

Laughing, Jack thanked her as Briana handed her a soda. While popping the top she asked, "What's the problem? Sure, she seems a little...brash."

As she finished smothering the homemade french fries on her plate with ketchup, Briana snorted. "Brash is putting it mildly. She's much more than brash. She doesn't care about anyone else's feelings but her own. She's constantly reminding everyone of just how much money she has by telling us in detail what she purchases and how she travels all over the world on a whim," pausing, the blonde angrily shoved a french fry into her mouth as she looked at Jack. "I'm not jealous, I'm just sick of hearing all about her life. I couldn't care less about what she does." Feeling that her new friend had more to say, Jack merely nodded in understanding, watching in a bit of amusement as Briana quickly chewed the fry in her mouth and then grabbed two more, eating those before continuing, "Alicia is a rude, cocky, belittling cold-hearted bitch...please excuse my french...and I wouldn't trust her if my life depended on it!"

Both of Jack's eyebrows rose as high as they could manage. "Whoa...she wasn't half that bad in college." The brunette almost laughed at the sympathetic expression she got. "Yes, I knew her," she went on to say before Briana could inquire. "Though I haven't seen her since I was nineteen."

"Well she got worse over the years."

Jack nodded, blowing out a loud puff of air. "Evidently." Lifting her soda to her mouth, she took a long swallow before putting it down on the carpet and grabbing her juicy looking hamburger.

"So..." Briana casually started as she idly twirled a fry in a glob of ketchup, "are you still intending to go out with her tonight?"

The brunette was quiet for a few moments as she mulled it over. Though there was a major part of her that wanted nothing more than to cancel this 'friendly' date, she decided not to. Looking up at Briana she smiled saying, "Yes, I am. Don't want to be as rude as she is and cancel on her." Jack inwardly grinned as she took a huge bite out of her hamburger. *Besides, I'm curious to see if my going out with Alicia will gain a satisfactory reaction from Sonny.*

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Later that evening as she added a little color to her lips, Jack peered at a grumpy looking Sonny through the mirror. *Well I got my reaction. She's ticked off with me though trying her best not to show it.* Ever since Jack informed her friend that she was going to a nightclub with Alicia, the blonde had been unusually quiet and reserved. However, when she did speak to Jack, the tone of her voice was laced with irritation.

Capping the tube of lipstick she had been using, Jack placed it in a small makeup bag before

zipping it up and turning around to face Sonny. Leaning against the vanity table, Jack crossed her arms over her chest as she quietly observed the other woman who stared right back at her. Finally sighing, Sonny crossed one leg over the other as she leaned back on the bed she was sitting on while successfully keeping eye contact. Noticing the grin that was tugging at Jack's lips, she had an urge to wipe it off none too gently. However, instead of marching over and doing so, she merely frowned.

"Is something wrong Sonny?" Jack quietly asked.

One golden eyebrow arched. "Wrong? What makes you think that something is wrong Jack?" As had been the case since that afternoon, the irritation in Sonny's voice reigned supreme.

"Well you're frowning for one thing and you've been snippy with me ever since I told you that Alicia and I had plans. I know it's not my imagination, so what's up?" Cocking her head to the side, Jack regarded the blonde with a patient look while waiting for her response.

The fair head shook. "Nothing's wrong," Sonny unconvincingly replied. "I hope you and Alicia have a good time tonight," she added, sounding like she wanted to say just the opposite.

Giving her a disbelieving look, Jack asked, "Do you have a problem with my going out with her? Please be honest."

Sonny shook her head negatively. "Of course not. You can do whoever you want." Realizing what she had just said, the blonde quickly amended her statement as a blush rose on her cheeks while Jack grinned. "I mean you can do *whatever* you want."

"You truly mean that? Because if you don't want me to go out with her, then I won't."

Suddenly feeling like an immature child, Sonny softly sighed as she stood up and walked over toward Jack. Placing a hand on the woman's shoulder, she gave it a light squeeze as she looked into warm blue eyes. "I'm sorry for behaving like a jerk the past few hours Jack. I don't particularly like the idea of you going out with Alicia because I don't care for her and I think you could do so much better." *Plus, I'm insanely jealous though I would never admit that to you. Lord knows you don't need anymore ammunition to tease and taunt me with.*

Smiling at Sonny, Jack gently lifted the petite hand still resting on her arm and turned it over to lightly kiss the palm before letting go. "Thank you for looking out for me Sonny girl, but it's just one evening. I'm not looking to rekindle a relationship. Especially after hearing what you and Briana had to say about her." She grinned at the smaller woman. *Oh, Sonny I do believe the green-eyed monster has invaded your body. I know jealousy when I see it and I have to admit that I'm loving every moment of this!*

"So everything is okay between us, right?" Jack asked.

Gracing her with a smile though she fervently wished that Alicia would either forget how to get to her parent's house or call and cancel she and Jack's date, the blonde nodded. "Yes, everything

is perfect."

Dazzlingly smiling, the brunette performed a three hundred and sixty-degree turn. "How do I look Sonny girl?"

Taking a couple of steps back, Sonny openly admired the outfit, which she had previously been surreptitiously admiring. She thought it would have been next to impossible to do, but Jack had managed to look even more spectacular than she did the night of Chloe's welcome home dinner party. That night she was nearly six feet of pure sexiness, but tonight she was sexy with a dash of butchness. The simple word that kept flashing in Sonny's brain was hot. The blonde slightly shook her head. No, on second thought hot wasn't nearly good enough. Sizzling hot and incredibly scrumptious was much better.

Starting from the bottom of her outfit, Jack was wearing the pair of short black leather boots she'd had on the night of Chloe's party. Next, was a pair of dark blue straight leg jeans that hugged every delicious curve of the tall woman's body. They fit so well that Sonny got the impression that they had been especially made for her dark-haired friend. Though it wasn't needed, a slim black leather belt neatly rested within the belt loops of the formfitting jeans. Whether she refused to admit it to herself or not, Sonny's favorite part of Jack's outfit was the tight black leather vest she wore, which showed off a delicious amount of creamy cleavage. Forcing green eyes away from the enticing mounds of flesh, Sonny took in the black leather Kangol cap, which Jack was wearing backwards. She inwardly smiled, thinking how adorable it looked.

Nodding, the blonde allowed the smile to show on her lips. "You look good Jack. Real good." *Too good for the president of Snobs 'R Us!*

"Really?" Starting to grin, Jack turned towards the mirror checking herself out. Removing the cap, she ran her hand through the dark locks, which she had brushed until they practically shined. Resettling the cap on her head, she looked back to Sonny. She could have sworn she detected a slight frown on the younger woman's face, but it vanished the moment Jack made eye contact.

Sonny's head bobbed. "Really," she replied, not trusting herself to speak much. Her teeth were clenching so much, that her jaw had started to ache.

"Cool." Winking at the younger woman, Jack looked around for her wallet, which of course was leather. Locating it, she pushed it into the back pocket of her jeans just as there was a knock on their door. Simultaneously, she and Sonny told the knocker to come in.

Opening the door, Isaac merely stuck his head into the bedroom, offering both women a smile, which they readily returned. "Jack, wanted to tell you that your date the ice prin-" pausing, he grinned mischievously as the brunette playfully smirked. "Pardon me. I mean Alicia is here to pick you up. I left her at the front door." After informing him that she would be right down, Isaac left, closing the door behind him.

Turning toward Sonny, Jack pulled her into a hug that the blonde hadn't been expecting though

was glad to receive. Returning it, Sonny placed a feather light kiss on the taller woman's cheek before letting go. Letting her know that she would be home at a decent hour, Jack headed out of the room, giving Sonny a wink before she disappeared. Emitting a loud sigh, the small blonde walked back toward the bed and collapsed in the middle of it. While trying not to think of Alicia and Jack spending the evening together, Sonny gazed up at the ceiling, idly twirling her thumbs. A thoughtful look appeared on her face as she murmured aloud, "Somewhere in animal heaven there is a gigantic herd of cows cursing Jack's name."

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"So Sonny," Candace grinned devilishly as she reached into the big bowl of popcorn that she and her sisters surrounded. Grabbing a fistful of the buttery puffed kernels she asked, "was it good?" She merely grinned more when she received a glare from the younger woman. Meanwhile, Melanie and Briana glanced between the two curiously.

"Drop it Candace," Sonny responded in a tone of warning. Since they had decided to have a good old fashioned slumber party in Briana's room tonight, for the past three hours the four of them had been snacking, playing games, talking (a.k.a. gossiping), and just thoroughly enjoying each other's company. Sonny had been waiting for Candace to bring up what she saw earlier that afternoon. She knew her oldest sibling was dying to blab what she had promised would be kept a secret. Sonny inwardly smirked. *Thirty-seven and still can't hold water, eh Candy?*

"Drop what?" Briana inquired in interest as she looked at Candace. "What'd she do?" A grin settled on the teen's lips as she waited for an answer. She chuckled when she heard a low growl emanating from Sonny's throat. Glancing in her direction, Briana's eyebrows raised high. "This must be something big."

Sonny shook her head. "It's nothing. Nothing at all." Green eyes zeroing in on Candace's she said, "Right?" Noticing the mischievous glint in her eyes, Sonny sighed. It was no use. She wondered why she had even bothered in the first place.

"I don't get it Sonny," Candace started, wearing a thoughtful expression. "Why don't you want our sisters to know what you were up to this afternoon?"

Briefly, Sonny wondered how long a sentence she would get for eliminating her oldest sister. Perhaps she could plead temporary insanity. "I wasn't up to anything Candy Cane," Sonny replied, reverting to the nickname that her sister had always detested. Apparently, she still did based on the deep frown she now sported. Sonny smiled sweetly in return.

"C'mon Candace, leave her alone," Melanie spoke up, coming to her little sister's rescue. "Are you thirty seven or seven?" As Candace smirked, she grinned. Leaning forward in the comfortable beanbag chair she was reclining in, she grabbed the large pickle lying in front of her. She then dipped the tip of it into a jar of super chunky peanut butter before taking a big bite. When Sonny gave her a grateful smile, Melanie winked in return while chewing in delight. After swallowing, she added, "If she doesn't want to talk about it then that's her business. Let's talk about something else."

Candace sighed deeply, thinking that the fun was over. It was now time to act her age again. "You're right Mel." Leaning over, she placed a kiss on Sonny's cheek as she sincerely apologized.

Smiling at the display of affection, Sonny said, "It's cool sis. Though just so you know nothing...absolutely nothing was going on. I swear."

Slowly shaking her head, Candace replied, "Well I don't know why not but I won't pry any further." Grinning, she began to consume the popcorn she held in her hand.

"So that's it? We don't get to know what you two are talking about?" Briana inquired, looking a bit disappointed that the secret was going to remain just that. Her mouth gaped open when a kernel hit her square in the middle of the forehead. Arching an eyebrow, she stared at the culprit, who was Sonny. "No you did not just throw popcorn at me."

Sonny grinned. "Yeah, I think I did." Grabbing another piece from the bowl, she threw it but this time missed because her sister dodged. However, Briana had perfect aim as she quickly grabbed a couple pieces of popcorn and threw them at Sonny, managing to hit her nose twice.

Chuckling richly, Melanie grabbed a handful of popcorn, "Let World War three begin!"

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Sitting with her hands in her lap in the back of the limousine, Jack watched as Alicia poured them both a glass of champagne. As soft romantic music played, the dark haired woman had a feeling that this was a setup. Glancing at her watch, she noted that it was nearly midnight. An hour and a half ago they had left the nightclub where Alicia's friends had never showed up. Although, Jack had an idea that they were never supposed to meet her ex's friends. By ten-thirty, she was missing Sonny so terribly (and wanting to get away from the flirtatious redhead terribly as well), she faked a headache, informing Alicia that she had to go home right away.

However, Alicia had other ideas before she allowed Jack to go home. Giving the younger woman something to take for her headache, she convinced Jack to take a short stroll with her through the city via her limousine. Their 'short' stroll had landed the pair on a steep cliff that overlooked Canova Beach. When they had arrived, Jack happened to look out of a heavily tinted window seeing a car parked about fifteen feet away from them. A couple inside of the car was making out like they deemed the Apocalypse was among them.

Displaying a smile that she didn't feel, Jack thanked her date as she handed her one of the flutes of champagne. Though she'd explained to Alicia that champagne would not help her headache, the woman insisted that she have at least one glass. As she gazed down at the glass in her hand, Jack wondered if Alicia could have slipped something into the alcohol. For some reason, she wouldn't have put it passed her and therefore decided not to drink a single drop of the champagne just to be on the safe side.

Deciding that a toast was in order, Alicia recited a brief one before she leaned over and clanked her flute against the brunette's before taking a sip. After pretending to take a drink of hers, Jack

then placed her glass on a small tray where the champagne bottle rested. Surreptitiously glancing at her watch again, Jack wondered what Sonny was doing at that moment. *She's probably not being seduced. I wonder if I was to tap my boots together and recite 'there's no place like home' will I end up in Sonny's arms?*

As a couple of fingers snapped in her face, Jack rapidly blinked while trying to focus. Looking up, she offered the woman sitting across from her a smile. "I'm sorry. Did you say something?"

"I asked if the Percodan was working yet." Crossing one long leg over the other, Alicia provided Jack a good view of the red lace panties she wore underneath an extremely short red skirt. Too bad Jack was not in the least bit interested or aroused by the action.

If she had any doubts before, Jack truly knew after tonight that she was deeply in love with Sonny and that there was no other woman on this planet that she desired. She had lost count of how many women at the nightclub had flirted, hit on, and blatantly asked her to come back to their place. Not once had she been tempted to flirt back or follow home. In fact, ninety nine percent of her time tonight had been consumed by thoughts of a certain fair-haired beauty. *Sonny Campbell, you have ruined me for every other woman in existence.* Jack inwardly grinned. *Thank you very much!*

Suddenly remembering that Alicia was waiting for an answer, the brunette looked at her, noting the curious expression she wore. "Um, it's actually not working at all." Jack tapped the tiny bulge in her jean pocket, where the small round pill was. "So I think it would be a good idea for you to just take me home Ali. I'm really not feeling my best."

Shaking her red head, Alicia placed her flute next to the other woman's before coming over to sit next to Jack. In fact, she was now sitting so close that there was barely half an inch of space between them. Though she was growing uncomfortable with her seducer's nearness, the brunette attempted to hide it as she felt a long arm wrapping around her shoulders. Quelling the urge to bolt from the limousine, Jack looked out of the window. She observed as the car containing the make out couple started to drive away. *Please take me with you!*

Suddenly feeling a pair of lips just barely touch the ridge of her ear, Jack returned her attention to Alicia and started to say something when the woman pressed a lone fingertip to her mouth. Her reddened lips curving into a smile, she seductively whispered, "Jacqueline, I think I know something that will make you feel much *much* better." Before the brunette could offer a reply, those red lips were being pressed against hers. Raising her hands, Jack gently yet firmly pushed Alicia back as she scooted as far away as she could get, which wasn't more than two inches. Instead of looking disappointed, Alicia's smile grew as she scooted closer in order to deliver another kiss. However, she missed as Jack scrambled to get to the other seat her date had previously been occupying. Although Jack was now scowling, Alicia seemed not to notice as she licked her lips like a wild animal that was on the verge of attacking its prey. Jack was about to open her mouth to reject Alicia's advances when the woman cut her off. "Why are you being so difficult Jack? You know you want this."

"The hell I-"

Jack's reply was cut short when the randy redhead pounced on her, straddling her lap. Against their will, her lips found themselves occupied again and when Jack tried to push Alicia away, the edge of the woman's teeth sank into her lower lip causing Jack to cry out in pain. Growling in anger, the brunette lost her patience, roughly pushing the other woman off of her. Screeching, Alicia fell to the floor with a loud thump. As the redhead glared daggers at her, Jack wondered if the limo driver was able to hear the commotion. She hoped that he would come investigate but doubted it.

Sticking the tip of her tongue out, the blue eyed woman tasted the tang of blood on her lower lip. "Alicia," she started between clenched teeth, "I want to be taken home...*now*."

Slowly shaking her head, Alicia moved on the floor until she was kneeling. Hazel eyes looked at Jack with determination. "Not until I get what I want."

Suddenly, a chill coursed up and down Jack's spine. She realized that her ex-girlfriend was not a well liked person but would she really go so far as to force her? Observing the gleam in her eyes, Jack answered her own question. Alicia without a doubt would go that far. Glancing at the door, Jack wondered if she could exit the limousine without either of them getting injured in the process. Before she would attempt it, she decided to try reasoning with Alicia. Taking a deep breath, she looked down at the kneeling woman.

"Alicia, I think that you are a very desirable woman. I'm just not interested in getting involved so I would appreciate if you'd just take me back to Paul and Annette's. This has been a fine evening. Let's not ruin it now. Okay?"

After staring at the brunette for a few silent moments as though she was seriously considering giving in to her request, Alicia then started to slowly grin as she inquired, "I kind of like it that you're trying to play hard to get Jack." Quickly reaching out, the redhead grabbed at Jack's vest. Showing a great amount of strength that one wouldn't suspect that she possessed, she tugged until the bigger woman landed on the floor, Jack's Kangol cap flying off of her head. Straddling the backs of the brunette's thighs before she had the opportunity to arise, Alicia moved until she was lying along the length of Jack's squirming body.

Trying to buck her off, Jack demanded that she get up, but of course Alicia didn't listen as she snaked a hand under the woman's body. Struggling, Jack let out a scream trying to get the chauffeur's attention as Alicia quickly managed to unbuckle her belt and then unbutton her jeans. Once more, she demanded that the redhead get off of her, only to receive a manic chuckle in reply as deft fingers pulled her zipper down.

Leaning close to the younger woman's ear, Alicia whispered, "Why are you fighting me Jacqueline? Don't tell me I'm not turning you on."

Turning her head to the side, Jack glared at her, her face flushed with anger. "You...are...not...turning...me...on," she replied, clearing enunciating each word. Just as Alicia began to slide her hand beneath the waistband of Jack's underwear, the brunette growled low in

her throat as her blood began to boil. She failed to remember the last time she had been this pissed off. All of her patience vanishing, Jack reached back and grabbed a fistful of crimson hair. She then proceeded to tug none too gently, almost grinning when Alicia yelped in pain. Jack continued to pull until the woman wisely dislodged her hand from the brunette's underwear and then removed herself from her body. Only then did Jack let go before she hurried into a sitting position, breathing harshly as she and Alicia exchanged glares. Her hands nearly tingling with the idea of slapping Alicia, Jack refrained from doing so, not wanting to make the situation any worse than it already was.

The redhead obviously didn't care about the situation escalating as she reached out toward Jack. Before the brunette could even think to move out of the way, an open palm struck her left cheek causing it to begin stinging within seconds. Though her hands balled into tight fists, Jack didn't reciprocate while attempting to draw in deep calming breaths.

"How dare you!" Alicia bellowed, surely loud enough for inhabitants of China to hear.

Blue eyes opened wide in indignation. "How dare I?! How dare I what? How dare I defend myself against your unwanted advances? You've got some nerve!"

Alicia pointed an accusing finger at her. "You've been giving me signals all night and now you act like you don't want me. You're a tease!"

Looking at her as though she was a rose short of a dozen, Jack slowly shook her head from side to side. Not once that evening had she given the woman any indication that she desired her. "I think you need to seek psychological help Alicia," Jack somberly stated. "I really do."

Scrambling to the seat, Alicia tugged on her skirt, which had somehow slid up to her waist. Reaching over, she unlocked the door before pushing it open with a great flourish. Turning back to regard Jack, she said, "I really don't care what you think." Pointing toward the open door she heatedly added, "Now get out of my limo. Your ass can walk home."

"My ass would be more than happy to!" A little apprehensive about passing Alicia, Jack nonetheless did it, quickly exiting the black stretch limousine. Buttoning, zipping, and clasping her clothes, Jack didn't notice that she was being watched until she looked up to meet angry hazel eyes.

"By the way, I'm not coming to that stupid party tomorrow."

Jack gave her a look of mock disappointment. "That's too bad Alicia. I'm sure everyone will be heartbroken that you won't be gracing them with your spectacular presence," she said, her voice laced with sarcasm.

Her eyes narrowing, the redhead obviously decided not to comment as she slammed the door shut. Within moments, the limousine started as Jack took a few steps backward, running a hand through her disordered hair. It was then that she noticed her cap was missing. She started to shrug it off, but found that she couldn't. The leather Kangol cap was one of her favorites and

though she could easily purchase another, she didn't want to lose it. Releasing a loud sigh, she walked towards the car and light rapped on the window. When she didn't get an immediate response, she knocked a bit louder until the tinted glass started to lower. Giving the woman an irritated look, Alicia silently waited for her to say something.

"Could I have my cap please?" Jack inquired in as polite a voice as she could muster. "It must have fallen off my head during our...scuffle."

Mutely turning away from her, hazel eyes roamed around until they zeroed in on the black cap lying on the floor. Reaching over for it, Alicia grabbed the cap before she pressed a button, which caused the sunroof to open. While Jack watched her curiously, Alicia carefully stood on the seat and poked her head out of the sunroof. Looking down at Jack, the redhead grinned sardonically as she held the cap up for the other woman's inspection.

"You want this?" When Jack wordlessly nodded, Alicia flipped the cap over and showing just how ladylike she could be, spit in it...twice. Drawing her arm back as though she was about to pitch a baseball, the redhead then swiftly brought it forward, releasing the cap in the process. Both women watched as Jack's favorite Kangol cap soared over the edge of the cliff where it would most likely not be seen again unless some animal with a keen fashion sense decided to retrieve it. Her eyes suddenly blazing, Alicia glared at Jack, who now wore an apathetic expression. "Then I suggest you go after it! Goodbye Jacqueline. If I don't see you again until the year 2050 it'll be too damn soon!" With that said...or shouted, Alicia vanished inside the limousine, which took off seconds later.

Good riddance. Releasing a breath that she wasn't aware she had been holding Jack watched until the limousine disappeared from view. That was by far the worst date she had ever had. Jack wondered what had happened to Alicia to turn her into such a...was monster the right word? She shook her head. It would do.

Looking around, Jack was chagrined to notice that not a single car remained. Didn't people want to venture here on a Friday night to make out with their sweeties? The brunette sighed. Apparently not. Reaching into her back pocket, Jack extracted her wallet and opened it, gasping as she stared inside. *What a freaking moron!* Displaying the maturity of a five-year-old, she stomped her feet on the ground as she snapped the wallet closed and shoved it back into her jeans. Having packed two different wallets, Jack had somehow forgotten to transport the contents of her other wallet into the one she now had. Since that was the case, she had no identification, no credit cards, and most importantly zero money. After patting her pockets, Jack deduced that she didn't even have so much as one little penny. She had planned on taking a taxi home, but now couldn't afford to make a phone call in order to get a taxi. *This is turning into my worst nightmare!*

Shoving her hands into her pockets, Jack assessed her situation. One, she had no money. Two, she didn't know where she was and therefore had no clue on how to get back to the Campbell household, which in a nutshell meant that she was lost. Pulling her hands out of her pockets, Jack restlessly ran one through her hair as she contemplated the edge of the cliff. For a split second she thought about joining her Kangol cap, but then quickly decided that she had too much to live

for. Despite enduring an evening that she had no wish to repeat ever again, Jack was quite satisfied with life.

Glancing at her watch, the brunette started walking as she threw her hands up at her sides. "What else could go wrong tonight?"

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Someone would have to vacuum all of the popcorn from the carpet tomorrow, and each woman in the room wondered which one of the others she could cajole into doing it. The majority deemed that they could get Briana to. One, it *was* her bedroom, therefore she should be solely responsible for keeping it in order. And two, she was youngest which meant that she might be the easiest to manipulate. Sure, they felt the slightest bit guilty about planning to manipulate their little sister, but who in their right mind truly wants to vacuum?

After the four blondes had finished a rousing game of *Monopoly* and were just settling in their sleeping bags on the floor to tell ghost stories, Melanie's stomach started to gurgle. The pickle smothered in peanut butter she'd consumed earlier had long been gone. Since Sonny was directly to her left, she slipped a hand out of her sleeping bag and tapped the younger woman on her shoulder. Looking at her sister quizzically, Sonny remained silent, listening as Melanie asked if she would do her a favor. Slowly nodding, Sonny waited for her to explain what this favor would be and nearly pouted when she found out.

"You mean you're gonna make me go out at," glancing at the clock on the wall Sonny continued, "nearly two o'clock in the morning because you have a craving for vanilla ice cream and olives? And you're in your ninth month, so aren't you supposed to be over the cravings by now?"

Shaking her head, Melanie replied, "That doesn't always have to be the case. When I was pregnant with Jayme, I craved until I gave birth to him." She graced her younger sibling with a super sweet smile, which she knew would be difficult to deny. "Please Sonny? I can't get it out of my head and it sounds *so* delicious!" Keeping her eyes riveted to Sonny's, the pregnant blonde ignored the dramatic gagging sounds stemming from Briana and Candace. "I wouldn't ask if I didn't need this treat so very badly." Melanie fluttered her eyelashes for good measure.

Playfully rolling her eyes, Sonny nodded. Reaching toward her, she gently pinched her sister's cheek as she grinned at her. "How could I possibly say no to that face?"

Melanie grinned in return. "Thank you Sonny." As she watched the younger woman start to extract herself from her sleeping bag, Melanie reminded her to get the green olives, not the black ones.

Quickly nodding as she stood up, Sonny repeated, "Right. Green olives not black ones. I've got it sis." Her green eyes traveled to Briana when she heard the teenager calling her name. "Yes?" she managed to draw out the word as though it had four syllables instead of just the one.

"Could you get me something too?" Briana asked, a charming smile pasted onto her lips.

"Since I'm apparently the designated store flunky, sure," Sonny good-naturedly replied.

"Awesome. I need tampons. Preferably *O.B.* because that's my favorite brand." As an afterthought she added, "Oh, and just regular absorbency please. I'm almost done so the flow is very light."

"T.M.I. sweetness," Melanie stated while slightly smiling at Briana. "I know we're siblings, but we don't need to know the details of your menstruation cycle."

Looking a bit sheepish, Briana apologized.

Sitting up, Candace crossed her legs as she thoughtfully looked at Melanie. "Oh, but everyone *loves* to hear how much you adore ice cream and olives, pickles and peanut butter, cottage cheese with *Bacon Bits* tossed in it...I could go on." Candace arched a challenging eyebrow at the pregnant woman. Out of all four sisters, she and Melanie were the most likely to get into an argument. On the occasions that they did argue, most of their disagreements pertained to either Sonny or Briana.

Melanie scoffed. "Cravings and periods are two very different subjects."

Sonny inwardly groaned as she told her sisters to shut up. That was one of the last things she wanted to purchase. She hated buying feminine products for herself! No matter how hard she tried not to be, she was always embarrassed when it was time to bring her feminine items to the check out line. However, deciding to be a good sport, Sonny informed her sister that she would gladly get her tampons.

Casting Melanie an annoyed look, Candace called out to Sonny as she headed toward the door. Turning back around to face her, Sonny had a feeling that her sister was about to make a request. At this rate, she would need to write down a list. Wordlessly, she raised an inquiring brow.

Looking almost as sheepish as Briana had moments before, Candace asked, "Mind picking me up some...uh...protection?"

Sonny's eyebrow elevated even further. Had her sisters secretly congregated to play an outrageous practical joke on her? That must have been what this was. "Please...oh *please* tell me that you need some tampons too?" As Candace shook her head negatively, Sonny sighed. "Can't you get it tomorrow? It's not necessary to have it now since you're with us, unless you two can have sex via osmosis." Briana and Melanie shared a chuckle while their oldest sibling smirked.

"While you do raise a valid point Sonny, I think it would make sense for you to get them since you're going to the store anyway," Candace matter-of-factly replied. "That way I'll have them in the morning just in case." She wiggled her eyebrows up and down, causing Briana and Melanie to break into another round of chuckles.

Sonny rolled her eyes. "Whatever. I'll get them." Without waiting for a reply, she headed towards the door again just as Candace began to speak.

"Sonny please get the *Trojan* extended pleasure. Remember that. *Extended pleasure*. You should be able to get a twelve pack for around six bucks. I'll reimburse you for all of us when you return."

Hearing the short-haired blonde groaning as she silently left the room, all three remaining siblings burst into laughter.

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Since there were very few customers in the grocery store this time of night (or early morning depending on your opinion), Sonny quickly obtained her items before walking up to the checker with a bright orange basket in hand. Trying to act as calm as possible though she was feeling beyond embarrassed, the blonde placed her few items on the conveyor belt. She had hoped that the cashier would at least be a woman, thinking that a fellow female could sympathize but that of course was not the case. Sonny had been forced to come to checkout line number seven, which was currently the only checkout open where a teenage male stood wearing a bored expression.

Flashing her a half-hearted smile, Danny (that was what his nametag read) began to swipe the items across the scanner, his pimple ridden face growing more animated as he did so. Noticing, Sonny grew alarmed while wondering what he was thinking but not wanting him to verbalize his thoughts. Her cheeks started to redden as the cashier glanced up at her, wearing a hint of a smirk. *Oh, please just finish scanning them, bag them, and let me pay so that I can get outta here!*

The last item was the condoms. After running them over the scanner several times, the teenager finally gave up. To Sonny's great horror, he picked up a phone and punched a button before speaking into it. Unfortunately, everyone in the grocery store was able to hear what he said due to the fact that he announced the message over the loudspeakers. "This is Danny at checkout #7. I need a price check on some *Trojan* extended pleasure condoms. They're the twelve pack." When people began to look in their direction, Sonny didn't think the situation could get any worse. However, she was wrong. Just as he was about to put the phone down, Danny's sadistic streak must have kicked in full force as he raised the device to his mouth again. "And please hurry because the petite blonde woman here is undoubtedly waiting to take these home and try 'em out!"

Wishing that there was a convenient hole in the glossy floor that she could vanish into, Sonny attempted to block out the chuckles and whistles Danny's last comment produced. As she glared at him, he innocently smiled in return. While they waited for a reply, the teenager thoughtfully observed the other purchases before looking at Sonny, with the smirk in place again.

"So...olives, ice cream and tampons," he started in a conversational tone. Remembering the box of *Trojans* in his hand, he raised those. "Oh, and let's not forget the condoms." Danny's smirk grew, as did his customer's glare.

"Please don't say anything else," Sonny demanded in an equal parts angry and embarrassed tone of voice.

Ignoring her warning, the teenage comedian snickered. "I guess if you're buying tampons then

you're not pregnant, eh? And the condoms are to guarantee that you don't get knocked up! But you do know, as they tell us in school, the only way to one hundred percent guarantee that you won't get pregnant is through abstinence."

"You *really* need to shut up now." Balling the hands at her sides into fists, Sonny internally began to slowly count to ten while trying to tune out the obnoxious twerp. Though it seemed that the harder she tried, the louder he became. Pleadingly gazing at the phone, Sonny wondered *how long does it take to look up the price for one measly pack of condoms?*

Leering at her, Danny said, "Though if I was the guy you were buying the *Trojans* for, no way in hell would I abstain because you have a knockout body."

Cocking her head to the side, Sonny gave him a look that could kill. Well, it would have killed if looks had the ability to truly do that. *My God, he's even more annoying than Jack was when we first met!* "Did you leave your brain at home? It's like *American Express*. You should never leave home without it."

Continuing to ignore her, Danny's lascivious brown eyes moved up and down her body. Well at least to her hips, this was as far as he could see, but he figured that she probably looked good all the way down. "We would use up those dozen condoms with extended pleasure quickly 'cause I would ride you all night long baby!"

The next few things happened in rapid succession.

Danny's unconscious body slumped to the floor due to a tight accurate fist slamming into the left side of his jaw.

A woman approaching checkout line number seven with a cart laden with groceries gasped as she witnessed it happening.

Someone in the store yelled for someone else to call the police because the insane horny blonde hit the 'innocent' teenage cashier.

And the voice on the phone announced that the twelve pack *Trojans* with extended pleasure cost \$6.32, tax included.

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After thanking the driver for giving her a lift, Jack walked up to the beach house and started to ring the doorbell when she remembered that Annette had informed her to use the key under the welcome mat. Taking a step back, the brunette leaned down, pulling up the welcome mat. Locating the key, she opened the door before putting it back where it belonged. Walking inside the darkened house, she switched on a light before closing and locking the front door behind her. Just as she started upstairs, she heard the telephone ringing. Hurrying toward it, Jack picked up the phone while hoping that no one had been disturbed.

"Hello?"

"Jack?"

"Is that you Sonny?" Blue eyes curiously looking towards the stairs, Jack wondered why Sonny was calling when she should have been home. She tried to quell her jealousy, thinking that perhaps the young blonde had found someone to spend the evening with. When the caller confirmed that she was indeed Sonny, Jack asked her where she was, her eyes widening at the answer. "You're where?!?"

"I'm in jail," the blonde repeated with deceptive calm.

"Why?"

"Ah...well...for assault."

"What?!"

Jack could feel the other woman's smirk through the phone as she remarked, "Geez, Jack. Where, why, what. Now all you need is when and who."

"Don't get smart with me young lady!" Jack rolled her eyes. *Don't get smart with me young lady? I sound like her mother. And believe me that is the last thing I wanna be!* "I mean, I'll um...be right there."

"No that's alright," Sonny replied rather quickly. "Could you just go get my dad? He can come get me."

"Nonsense. There's no reason to wake your parents when I'm fully capable of bailing you out. I'm on my way. Hang tight."

Before Sonny could protest, Jack ended the call before hurrying up the stairs. Entering the bedroom she and Sonny were bunking in, Jack removed her vest and boots before putting on a red pullover along with a pair of sneakers. It felt incredible to remove the boots, which had started hurting during the three miles Jack walked before she obtained a ride. After switching wallets and making sure that she had identification and money, Jack left the room. Just as she began to descend the stairs, the brunette turned around when she heard someone calling her name.

"Hey Bri," Jack said, while smiling at the younger woman, who was peeking out from her bedroom.

The younger woman returned the smile as she took a step out. "Hello Jack. I thought I heard footsteps. Hoped they belonged to Sonny. Did you just get home?"

Jack nodded. "Yes, about ten minutes ago. So you're aware that she's missing?" Jack waved as Candace and Melanie appeared behind their sibling.

"How do you know she's missing?"

While walking toward the trio, Jack replied, "Actually, she just called and I'm on my way to go pick her up."

Candace gasped, as the brunette drew nearer to them. Noticing the faint bruise on Jack's cheek and her split lower lip, the blonde asked, "What happened to your face?" Switching into doctor mode, Candace walked up to Jack and gingerly touched her left cheek. Noticing faint outlines, Candace guessed that an open palmed slap had caused them.

"Did Alicia do something to you?" Briana inquired, her eyes narrowing in anger. She had visions of herself playing tennis and her least favorite cousin being the ball. For years, she had been desperately waiting to kick the stuffing out Alicia and now it seemed that she had a good reason to.

Shaking her head, Jack momentarily sandwiched Candace's hand between both of hers. "No, she didn't lay a hand on me. I just had an accident." When all three women looked unconvinced with her reply, Jack added, "It's not a big deal. I'm fine ladies."

"What kind of accident did you have?" Melanie spoke up. Folding her arms across her chest, she closely eyed Jack, giving her the same look she gave Jayme when she knew that he was trying to lie to her.

The look almost worked because it was on the tip of Jack's tongue to admit that Alicia's temper was the reason for her minor injuries. "Well...Alicia and I went to a nightclub and while we were there a fight broke out between these two women and I decided to get involved despite the fact that Alicia told me not to. And well..." Jack pointed toward her mouth and cheek, "these are what I get for butting in on someone else's business."

Melanie curiously arched an eyebrow. "And one of the women bit you on your lip?"

Jack quickly nodded, not knowing if they were buying her story or not. "Yes. In fact, she's the same one that slapped me."

"You poor baby." Leaning on her tiptoes, Briana gently kissed Jack's bruised cheek and fleetingly thought about kissing her lips, but decided that might not be a smart idea. "Is there anything I can do for you?"

The brunette smiled down at her. "You just did Bri. Thank you." *Oh, yes she definitely plays for my team. She has to 'cause my gaydar is practically screaming!*

"You said that you were going to pick Sonny up. What happened? Did she have car trouble?" Candace asked, deciding to return the discussion to their sister though she knew there was more to Jack's story. There would be time to prod the truth out of her later.

Deciding that it would be up to Sonny if she told her family about her sudden run in with the

law, Jack said, "That's it. She has a flat tire." Giving them a reassuring smile, she added, "But not to worry ladies. She's just fine. I'll just go get her and then you can see for yourselves." Noticing that all three women wore the same guilty expression, Jack asked them if something was wrong.

"Well," Melanie started in a hesitant voice, "we're the reason...actually *I'm* the main reason she went out in the first place. You see I had a craving for ice cream and olives and asked Sonny to go to the store. If I hadn't done that then she'd be here right now, safe and sound."

Reaching out, Jack squeezed the pregnant woman's shoulder. "Don't blame yourself Melanie. This isn't your fault." She smiled at Melanie, gaining one in return. "Things happen, and sometimes people just get flat tires. It's no biggie. Now why don't you three go back to your slumber party and before you know it, your sister will be rejoining you. She might not have the ice cream and olives though." Jack grinned as her small joke caused the other women to chuckle. After thanking her, they headed back into the room. The brunette was about to leave when Briana turned back around to face her. She could tell by the look on the younger woman's face that she wanted to ask something. "Yes?" Jack prodded, wearing a hint of a smile.

Cocking her head to the side, Briana allowed a smile to surface as she asked, "Could I tag along with you Jack? I'll even let you drive."

Jack burst into laughter. "That's very sweet of you to allow me to drive my own vehicle Bri." She grinned, as did the other woman. "Unfortunately, you can't go sweetie because my car as you know is a two-seater."

"That's right. I wasn't thinking," pausing, Briana grew thoughtful. "Well we could take my car." The teenager looked happy to have come up with what she thought was the perfect solution.

Jack inwardly sighed, not wanting to say no to Briana, but feeling that she must. If she were to tag along, then she would discover that big sister was sitting behind bars. Why? Because Sonny had assaulted someone before she reached the grocery store, at the store or afterwards. Jack wasn't sure which scenario it was, but if she were betting, she would put her money on the store. Perhaps Sonny and another woman had gotten into a physical altercation because they both wanted the last jar of olives.

"Why don't you stay here with your sisters okay?" Jack gently asked. "And in the morning you and I can go for breakfast and a little drive. You may be the driver the entire time." The brunette grinned as she fished a set of keys out of her pocket and dangled them in front of Briana.

The disappointment melting away as she ogled the keys, Briana nodded enthusiastically. "You've got a deal if when you guys return you'll join our party."

"The next time you see me I'll be wearing my pajamas."

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Alone in the jail cell, Sonny quietly sat on a wooden bench while lightly running her fingers across the bruising knuckles of her right hand. Starting to flex the hand, the blonde slightly

wincing. What had she done? She had allowed the annoying comments of a seventeen-year-old checker to get the best of her and slugged him because of them. Many people probably would admit that he had it coming, but that wouldn't stop Sonny from feeling a great deal of guilt. How was she going to explain this to her family? Before the blonde could answer her own question, she heard the door leading to the cells opening. Looking up, she watched as someone entered. Though she could not see the person's face since they were turned away from her talking with the guard, Sonny instantly knew that it was Jack. She sighed, wondering how much teasing she would get for her current predicament. Surely, Jack would take advantage of the situation because after all she *was* Jack and teasing Sonny appeared to be one of her favorite pastimes.

Remaining silently seated, the blonde quizzically watched the guard as he left, closing the door behind him. She wondered where he was going since his job was to keep an eye on the prisoners. Now the only people present were Sonny, Jack, and another prisoner who was in the cell adjacent to the blonde's.

As Jack turned toward her, Sonny knew she was in for trouble based on the mischievous expression the other woman wore. However, she immediately forgot about that as she studied Jack's face. Rising from the bench, Sonny hurried towards the bars, wrapping small hands around them as she continued to stare at the bruises.

"Hello jailbird." Jack grinned at her as she arrived at the cell bars. Before Sonny could question her she added, "Don't worry about my face. I had a little accident but I'm fine."

"Bullshit!" Sonny blurted out, uncharacteristically using extremely foul language. "Why did she do that to you?" Petite hands gripped the bars tighter, suddenly wishing that they were her cousin's neck. She'd already assaulted someone. Might as well add homicide to the list.

All thoughts of mischief having suddenly vanished, Jack curled a hand around Sonny's. "Sweetheart, I'm alright. They don't even really hurt." *Just as long as I don't smile too broadly or touch my cheek.*

"Though I'm glad you're alright, that's not what I asked you."

Knowing that she couldn't keep the truth hidden from Sonny, Jack sighed before starting to tell the younger woman what had happened. During the entire retelling of the evening's events, the blonde remained quiet while she listened intently, her hands managing to clutch even tighter to the cell bars in anger at what her cousin had done. She had known that Alicia was a snobby jerk, but had no idea that she was capable of attempting to force someone into having sexual intercourse with her. *If I ever see that bitch again, I'll probably spend the rest of my life behind bars for what I intend to do to her!*

"So after I find out what direction to go in order to get to your parent's house, I walked a few miles before I was lucky enough to obtain a ride. I know it's not a good idea to hitchhike nowadays, but my feet were hurting and my instincts told me that I could trust the people that offered to give me a lift." As she finished, Jack noticed that Sonny's vision had become blurry. Reaching between the bars, she gently caressed the younger woman's cheek. "Hey sweetheart,

don't cry. I'm all right. Honest."

Despite her best efforts not to, Sonny broke down into tears as she hung her head. Her heart breaking in two at the sight before her, Jack reached into her pocket and pulled out a large ring filled with keys. Finding the correct key, she inserted it into the lock, quickly unlocking the cell door. Pushing the bars backwards, she then reached inside and drew the sobbing blonde to her, wrapping her arms tightly around her. While whispering words of comfort into her ear, Jack rubbed up and down the woman's back. Clinging to the taller woman, Sonny concealed her face in Jack's chest as the tears poured down her flushed cheeks.

Though they had only spoken a few words to one another thus far, Sonny's neighbor walked to the bars and looked toward them, her face showing concern for the cute little blonde. Having decided that she had a crush on Sonny, the woman (who had been arrested because she attempted to lift a box of cigarettes from a gas station mini mart-she claimed to the police that she had been intending to pay) felt envious of the brunette who was holding her so close. *Lucky broad. What I wouldn't give to be able to wrap my arms around that sweet little thing.* Blinking, she would be thief shook her head, thinking that she was supposed to be concerned not lusting.

Opening her mouth, she asked Jack if Sonny was okay. Blue eyes quickly shifting to the other cell, Jack looked at the other woman in surprise, as though she had forgotten she and Sonny weren't the only ones there. While her companion continued to cry, albeit a bit softer now, the dark-haired woman shook her head, even going so far as to give the slightly heavy blonde looking at Sonny a reassuring smile. Satisfied that her crush was in good hands, the prisoner returned Jack's smile before returning to her bench so they could have some privacy.

When Sonny grew quiet except for a few sniffles, Jack gently lifted her face before planting a tender kiss on her forehead. Softly smiling at the action, Sonny wiped at her wet cheeks. She apologized for crying, however Jack informed her that it wasn't necessary to. Nodding and smiling again, Sonny looked around, noticing for the first time that she was no longer inside of the cell. Raising a curious brow, she looked up at the taller woman questioningly. A grin working its way upon her lips, Jack fished the keys out of her pocket again and dangled them in front of the blonde's face, almost bursting into laughter when the expression on Sonny's face turned comically shocked, her green eyes widening considerably.

Looking around as though she expected someone might be listening in on their conversation, Sonny asked in a hushed whisper, "Where did you get those? You wanna end up in here with me for stealing property belonging to a police department?! I can just see the headlines now. The owner of *Brew n' Paradise* and the former owner of *Bean There, Done That* end up in the big house together. One for assault of a minor and the other for thievery." When Jack started to chuckle, Sonny granted her with an incredulous expression. "Just what do you think is so funny Jack?"

Her eyes dancing with mirth, Jack smiled at the smaller woman. "You are my dear." Tossing the heavy ring of keys high into the air, she effortlessly caught them before explaining, "Relax Sonny girl. One of the police officers allowed me to borrow these keys."

"Why would they do that?"

Jack shrugged. "I dunno. Maybe they couldn't resist my charm." She grinned as her companion rolled her eyes. "I talked with them a little bit and then asked if I could borrow the keys to let you out of here and they acquiesced."

"So you bailed me out already?" Reaching up, she squeezed the woman's arm. "Thanks Jack. I'll pay you back the money. It might take me a couple of paychecks but I'll get it done. I promise."

"Even if I had bailed you out, which I didn't you should know that I wouldn't accept your money."

"Wait a minute." The look on Sonny's face changed into confusion. "You didn't bail me out yet a police officer gave you a key to let me out? I don't understand Jack."

"I don't need to bail you out because you're free to go."

"How is that possible?"

Starting to grin, Jack wrapped an arm around Sonny's shoulders before leading her back into the cell. When they took their seats on the bench, the brunette started to relay what happened after she arrived at the police station.

After having been given the details of what occurred at the grocery store between Sonny and the checkout boy, Jack spotted the 'victim' quietly sitting on a chair holding a plastic bag filled with crushed ice to his face. As she began to stroll over to him, the teenager gave her a quizzical look while wondering who she was and what she wanted. Perhaps she was the blonde's attorney. Whoever she was, she looked like the type of person who would not take crap from anyone. Loudly gulping, Danny attempted to keep his hands from shaking as he diverted his eyes from her.

"You're Danny right?" Jack asked, as she towered over the teenager. Glancing up at her, he mutely nodded. He was relieved when she graced him with a friendly smile. "I thought so. Could you and I have a little chitchat?" After he nodded again, the brunette asked him to follow her. Putting his ice pack on the floor, Danny followed the older woman outside of the police station. His heart rate started to considerably speed up as he wondered why it was necessary for them to be out of sight from the police officers while they had this little chitchat.

As she leaned against a wall, Jack looked at the teenager standing before her. "How is your jaw?" she asked.

Shrugging, Danny replied, "Okay, I guess. Hurts a bit."

The brunette slowly nodded. "Hmm."

Shuffling from foot to foot, Danny asked, "Are you her lawyer?"

Lightly chuckling, Jack shook her head. "No, I'm not a lawyer. I'm actually a friend of Ms. Campbell's."

"Oh." The teenager shoved his hands into his pants pockets. "So what did you wanna talk to me about?"

"Are you intending to go through with filing charges against Ms. Campbell?"

Danny adamantly nodded. "Yeah, of course I do. She never should have put her hands on me. If she'd been cooler, I wouldn't have this bruise on my face and she wouldn't be locked up behind bars. I know she's your friend lady, but you need to tell her to chill out."

Though she raised one eyebrow and the expression she wore turned mildly amused, Jack refrained from commenting on the teenager's suggestion. "From what I've learned, your behavior at the grocery store prior to being hit was a bit...lewd. Are you going to deny that?"

Danny shrugged. "I might have said a thing or two that I shouldn't have, but I was only playing around lady. She still shouldn't have touched me."

"One or two things Danny?" Tsking, Jack pushed away from the wall and took a couple of steps towards the teenager, who instantly took two steps backwards. Noticing the action, the brunette attempted to look non-threatening as she stated, "In Ms. Campbell's report of what happened, she said that you told her such suggestive things as what you would do to her and how the both of you would use up the condoms she attempted to purchase within one night. She also said that she tried to appeal to you to be quiet but that you totally ignored her. So finally, she couldn't take it anymore and she struck you. Now is she lying?"

Looking up into those clever blue eyes, Danny knew that he wouldn't be able to get away with a lie. Sighing, reluctantly he shook his head. "No, she's not lying. I did say all of that and she did try to get me to shut up but I didn't listen."

"Having admitted that are you going through with filing charges?" At his quick nod, Jack sighed. "Are you close with your mother Danny?"

Danny looked confused as he wondered what the change in subject was all about. What did his mother have to do with anything? Despite not having a clue as where she was headed with this line of questioning, the teenager nodded, while telling her that he still lived with his mother. Next, the brunette asked what his mother's name was and he told her, growing more confused by the second.

"So is Debra a good mom?"

The teenager nodded. "Yeah, she's the best. My dad skipped out on us when I was in kindergarten and she's done a great job of taking care of me all by herself. She's been both Mom and Dad to me and I appreciate her for always being there for me and for loving me."

Jack slowly nodded. *"That's wonderful Danny. Speaking of appreciation, overall do you think that women should be appreciated? Not to knock men, but women rock Danny. They are the ones responsible for us being on this earth."*

"I do appreciate women. Hell, I love women." The teenager grinned broadly.

Despite her best effort not to, Jack chuckled. "Cool. That's something we have in common," she paused, before continuing, "I want you to think about Debra, Danny. Picture your mother in a grocery store and she walks up to the cashier with her items. He proceeds to tell her the same things that you told my friend earlier and finally she gets fed up and hits him. Do you think she should be arrested? How would it make you feel to learn that that happened, hmm?"

Without even thinking about it, Danny replied, "Hell no she shouldn't be arrested and I would be pissed! I'd wanna get my hands on that guy and kick the sh-" Suddenly taking note of the tall woman's arched brow, the teenager trailed off while sighing. While shuffling from foot to foot, his expression became thoughtful for a few silent moments before he looked back up at Jack and slowly nodded. "I see where you're coming from lady. I wouldn't want anyone to do to my mother what I did to your friend so how can I blame her for striking me?" He shrugged. "I was way out of line." Reaching up, he touched his sore jaw. "I deserved this."

Reaching toward him, Jack lightly squeezed the youngster's shoulder. "You're wise beyond your years Danny." At that comment they both smiled. "So I take it that..."

Nodding, the teenager dramatically rolled his eyes. "Yeah, yeah of course I'm dropping the charges. Will you tell Ms. Campbell that I apologize for my behavior?" Jack shook her head negatively. "No, I won't tell her but you can. That is, after I talk with her first."

Danny nodded. "Alright." Glancing over his shoulder, he pointed towards the police station. "So do you wanna head back inside now?" He watched as Jack shook her head while reaching into her back pocket. When she said that she had something for him first, the teenager became alarmed, inanely thinking that she was about to pull out a gun. His first instinct was to collapse to the ground but the youth decided to appear brave by just standing there to see what happened next. Relief flooded his body as the woman merely withdrew a slip of paper, which she handed to him. Noticing his relieved expression, Jack gave him a questioning look but remained silent as she watched him open the small rectangular piece of paper. Danny's lips formed into the shape of an O as he realized that he was holding a check that had more zeros on it than what he made at the grocery store in six months. His hand starting to shake, he looked up into amused blue eyes. "Th...this is for me?" At the brunette's nod he added, "Why?"

"Actually, if I couldn't appeal to your sense of decency I was going to bribe you with that check. However, since you obviously have a conscious, I started to keep the check but then decided to give it to you anyway. Are you a senior?" When Danny wordlessly nodded, his eyes riveted to the check Jack asked him if he planned on going to college.

Tearing his eyes away from the check, the teenager looked up at Jack replying, "Yes, I do. Probably Notre Dame next fall."

Jack looked impressed. "Wow, good school Danny. How are your grades?"

"Pretty good. My best subjects are chemistry and calculus." Glancing at the check he added, "I like working with numbers and symbols," pausing, Danny held the check up to Jack, a look mixed with apprehension and hope on his face. Although he had a feeling that he would be able to obtain at least a partial scholarship, this check would be a great help towards his tuition, boarding, and books. However, Danny wasn't positive that it was right to accept the money. Guilt ridden due to his earlier actions, he felt that he didn't deserve this. "Are you sure you wanna give me this? This is an awful lot of money."

Smiling down at him, Jack nodded. "Absolutely. It should help with your college fees. I know Notre Dame isn't one of the cheapest schools to attend. Now put it in your pocket so you won't lose it."

Deciding to give in, Danny refolded the check before slipping it inside his jeans pocket. Surprising them both, he stepped forward and gave the woman a slightly awkward hug before letting go, earnestly thanking her as he did so. Announcing that he was welcome, Jack playfully ruffled his hair while deciding that the kid was all right. Despite his earlier actions, she liked him and felt that he was basically a good kid. Suddenly thinking about it, Jack asked Danny why he was still at the police station.

"The police brought me here to make a statement and now I'm waiting for Officer Hoyt to give me a ride home. I don't have a car. I walk to work 'cause I don't live far from the grocery store." Glancing at his watch, the teenager added, "Officer Hoyt should be ending his shift within the next hour so I don't have much longer to wait."

"Can't you call your mom to come pick you up?"

"No, she went out of town with her sister for the weekend." Danny started to grin. "My aunt dragged her to some retreat. She didn't look too happy when they left."

Jack chuckled. "Tell you what. I'll give you a ride home just as soon as I talk with my friend." Cocking his head to the side, Danny asked her why she was being so nice to him. Wrapping an arm around his shoulders, the tall woman began to lead him towards the police station entrance. "'Cause despite your annoying behavior earlier I think you're a cool guy and I'm willing to give you a chance." When Danny smiled at her, she smiled back.

*"Plus, I've displayed an annoying behavior towards Ms. Campbell **plenty** of times and she's always given **me** another chance." The pair laughed as they walked inside the building.*

"...and shortly after our little talk I came in here," Jack finished as she smiled down at the blonde sitting next to her.

Sonny looked at her companion in amazement, relieved to hear that she no longer had a record. "So the charges have truly been dropped?" Jack mutely nodded. "And I'm free to walk out of here right now," it was said in more of a statement than a question.

Jack nodded again. "That you are. You're free as a bird." She smiled broadly as she started to rise, Sonny doing the same. For the second time in fifteen minutes, the brunette found herself wrapped in someone's arms. Except this time there was nothing awkward about it as she eagerly returned the warm embrace. Holding on to Sonny a little longer than was necessary for a complete hug to last, Jack finally forced herself to let go, pleased to see that the blonde had a bit of trouble releasing her as well.

Looking down into emerald green eyes, Jack saw...was that adoration? *Well, well, well. Sonny girl, I do believe that I'm steadily wearing you down. Then it'll be sayonara Blueyez!* The brunette gave a slight shake of her head. *There I go referring to myself in the third person again.* Focusing on the gorgeous blonde standing before her, Jack decided to take a chance. Her lips curving into a tender smile, she placed her hands on the smaller woman's waist before her mouth started to descend towards Sonny's. However, before she could fully complete her journey, a petite hand placed in the middle of her chest stopped her. Sonny then gave her a smile that appeared apologetic.

"Jack...thank you for coming to my rescue," the blonde sincerely stated as she allowed her hand to linger on Jack's chest a moment before she removed it. *I cannot fall for Jack. Don't fall for Jack! Remember Dixie? She's the one for you not Jack.* Having mentally chastised herself, Sonny looked up at the other woman. By the expression on her face, it was evident that Jack had just said something and was waiting for a reply. Sheepishly, Sonny asked her to repeat.

"I said that I'll be there anytime that you need me. That's a promise." Smiling as the other woman blushed, Jack leaned down placing a chaste kiss on her rosy cheek. "Are you ready to go?"

Sonny nodded enthusiastically. "Let's break outta here."

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Having dropped a grateful Danny off at his home, Jack and Sonny were now headed back to the grocery store in order to retrieve Isaac's car. During the ride there, both had been silent while lost in their respective thoughts. Glancing at her companion, Jack suddenly broke the silence by relaying to Sonny the explanation she had given to the woman's sisters earlier on why she was late returning home.

"However you can tell them the truth if you want, " Jack further explained. "I just wasn't sure that you'd want everyone knowing what happened."

The blonde chuckled. "We'll just let them continue to think that I had a flat. Last thing I want is everyone at the party prodding me about the details. And knowing my dad he'll march right down to the police station and berate them about arresting me in the first place." Resting the back of her head on the headrest, Sonny covered her mouth while yawning. "I just want to forget this ever happened, you know?"

"You want to forget *what* ever happened?" Jack regarded the blonde with a blank expression as though she had no clue of what she was speaking about.

While gazing at Jack, a smile slowly appeared on Sonny's face. Shaking her head, she reached over and squeezed the other woman's knee before forcing herself to release it. "Anyone ever tell you how cool you are Jack?"

Jack shrugged nonchalantly. "Mostly their opinion is that I'm hot." Flashing Sonny an impish grin, the brunette wiggled her eyebrows.

Starting to laugh, Sonny pointed in the direction of her brother's car as Jack pulled into the parking lot belonging to the grocery store where Sonny had been arrested. Driving up next to the blue Nissan Jack shut off the ignition before turning her attention to her passenger. Though they would be reunited shortly, Jack found that she would miss Sonny during the few minutes they would be separated. *Could I be anymore sprung? Surely, this woman must have put a spell on me!*

Finding it a bit difficult to remove herself from the car, Sonny smiled softly at Jack as she said, "Thank you again for helping me tonight Jack and for not telling anyone what happened. You've become my second best friend."

As Jack arched an eyebrow, Sonny laughed. "Second? I'm second?"

"Well, yeah Sarah comes first," the blonde replied, broadly smiling.

Jack started to chuckle. "Oh, yes sweet and sassy Sarah. How is she anyway?" The brunette inquired, trying to delay Sonny's imminent departure.

"She's doing great. I told you that she's now Hawke's songwriter didn't I?" At Jack's nod, she added, "Sarah and I often chat on the phone or on AOL Messenger and she told me that they're now working on Hawke's first CD. It's going terrifically and they hope to have it out by early January."

"That's wonderful news!"

The blonde nodded. "Absolutely. Oh, and you know how CD's have titles? Sometimes it's just the artists name?"

"Yep."

"Well check this out! They've decided to name Hawke's CD *Been There, Done That!* They just changed the bean to been. Isn't that cool?"

Finding Sonny's enthusiasm catchy, Jack smiled broadly while eagerly nodding. "Absolutely! I think that's an awesome title name."

Sonny nodded in agreement. "And the name of the number one track on the CD is *Been There, Done That*. I downloaded a demo which Sarah sent me of the song and it goes something like this..." Having started to sing, Sonny abruptly changed her mind. "Well um...I'll just tell you the words-"

"No," Jack interjected. "No, I'd like to hear you sing." She gave the younger woman an encouraging smile.

"Trust me, you don't want to hear me sing." Sonny chuckled a bit nervously.

Having decided to try a little reverse psychology, the brunette shrugged as though it didn't matter one way or the other what Sonny did or didn't do. "Okay, it's fine then. Not a big deal." Offering her passenger a smile, Jack turned toward her steering wheel as though she was ready to go. She had a difficult time hiding a triumphant smile when Sonny quickly changed her mind about singing. *It worked like a charm*. Turning in Sonny's direction, Jack said, "You know, you really don't have to sing. It's not necessary. I would never...*ever* want you to do anything that you're not one hundred percent comfortable with."

She didn't completely understand why, but now Sonny wanted to sing more than ever! She gave her companion a slightly suspicious look, thinking that somehow Jack had messed with her mind. Green eyes narrowing she thought, *you're a crafty ex-Conqueror, aren't ya Jack?* Despite having a strong feeling that she was being played like a fiddle, Sonny decided to sing anyway. Announcing that she was about to start, the blonde replayed the words to Hawke's song in her head before starting.

*I've been there and done that  
And I won't go down that road again  
I've been there and done that  
I know it's just a dead end*

*So if you decide to travel that way  
Then you're going on your own  
That's all I have to say*

*Now I know the difference  
Between right and wrong  
I've been there and done that  
Now I'm headed where I belong*

Finishing, Sonny's cheeks turned a beet red as Jack started to clap and holler like she was at a concert. Starting to chuckle, the blonde shook her head from side to side. "Though we both know that my voice isn't at all good, thank you for your enthusiasm Jack." She smiled.

Jack shook her head in disagreement as she captured Sonny's hand and brought it to her lips, kissing the back of it and in the process causing Sonny's cheeks to further redden. "No, Sonny



girl. I think your voice is positively beautiful." Jack tenderly smiled, still holding Sonny's hand in her own. She began to stroke back and forth across the smooth skin with the padding of her thumb. "Thank you for sharing."

Trying to ignore the pleasurable tingle in her hand, Sonny slowly nodded. "You're welcome." *I better get out of here pronto!* Glancing out the window toward her brother's car, Sonny informed Jack that they should head home. Agreeing, Jack reluctantly released her grasp on the blonde's hand. Just as Sonny started to exit the car, she heard her name being softly called and turned back to Jack with questioning eyes.

"There's something I've been wondering all day..."

Sonny raised a golden eyebrow in a fairly good imitation of Jack. "Yes?"

"Well," Jack started, smiling a bit mischievously, "is anyone else in your family gay?"

The expression on Sonny's face registered surprise at the unexpected question. She wondered where Jack could possibly be headed with it and asked why she wanted to know. Shrugging, the brunette simply replied that she was curious. Though suspicious, Sonny closed the door, the overhead light shutting off as she turned in her seat to face the other woman. As Jack quietly listened, Sonny informed her that besides Alicia (who the blonde had a difficult time referring to as family-especially after what she had pulled earlier) the only other family member that she knew to be gay was her cousin Robert. He was the youngest son of Paul's 'little' brother Ronald. Since they were small children, Sonny and Robert had always gotten along fantastically and shared what they considered a special bond. Robert was one of Sonny's favorite family members and the feeling was highly mutual.

Sonny excitedly informed her friend that she would get to meet Robert tomorrow at the party along with his small son Thomas. Smiling, Jack replied that she couldn't wait to meet them both before she asked Sonny if she was sure that no one else in her family was gay. Arching a curious brow, the blonde simply stared at the woman for a few silent moments while thoughtfully biting on her lower lip. She would have stopped had she noticed the effect this action was having on Jack, but instead failed to detect the hint of desire in the expressive blue eyes.

"Not that I know of," Sonny finally replied. "I mean I don't know the sexual orientation of every single person in my family, but I'd bet that everyone else is straight."

*I'm guessing that's a bet that you would lose Sonny girl.* "I see. What about immediate family members?" Jack casually inquired. "Siblings perhaps?"

"What?!" Sonny laughed in a 'you've got to be kidding me' sort of way. She then stared at Jack as though she had just discovered that the woman was a being not of this planet. "Are you seriously asking me this Jack?" When the brunette mutely nodded, she sighed. "Okay," Sonny started, drawing the short word out, "I doubt that my *married* sisters Candace and Melanie are into women, since they are very much in love with their *husbands*. And before Matthew and Brian entered the picture, I can assure you that they enjoyed being courted solely by the male half of

the population. And Isaac..." Sonny laughed finding the mere thought of someone thinking that her brother might be gay amusing, "he's probably had more girlfriends than you, Laura, Leslie and I combined! He *loves* women...he worships the ground they walk on. He's been flirting with women since preschool. And just in case you're thinking it, Isaac's not using women as a cover because he doesn't want people to find out that he's "in the closet". He honestly adores the fairer sex."

"And Briana?" Jack quietly questioned.

"She's not gay either," Sonny stubbornly retorted. "I'm the only offspring of Paul and Annette Campbell who is." Looking at Jack, she noticed her disbelieving expression. "Where is all this coming from? Why the sudden interest in one wanting to know if any of my other relatives are gay?"

"Because I think Briana is." Taking in Sonny's shocked expression, Jack barely refrained from rolling her eyes. Did none of the young tennis player's family see it? *Talk about being in denial! Either that or just totally clueless!* "Don't tell me you've never had your suspicions that she might be," Jack said, giving Sonny a 'you've got to be kidding me' look.

"She's not," Sonny almost whined. She suddenly had a longing to strangle Jack. Was it truly possible for them to spend any significant amount of time together without getting into an argument? How were they going to be friends if every now and then they wanted to slap each other silly? Sonny concluded that somehow they would have to make their relationship work because no matter how much she wanted to kick the sometimes annoying and pretentious ex-Conqueror's butt, the fact remained that she adored her and needed Jack in her life. *I really do need her*, Sonny thoughtfully admitted to herself. *This nut really is my second best friend and you know what? I wouldn't change a thing about her, because then she wouldn't be the person that I...well...love.*

"Does she now or have you ever known her to have a boyfriend?"

Giving it some thought, Sonny then shook her head negatively. "No, but that doesn't mean anything."

"It's a clue."

A pair of green eyes rolled. "You need to listen to yourself Jack. This is ridiculous. You can't say someone is gay just because they've never had a boyfriend or girlfriend."

Cocking her head to the side, Jack gazed at her friend thoughtfully. "Are you in denial Sonny? Would you have a problem with your sister being a lesbian?"

"No! Of course not," Sonny added a bit more quietly. "I would support her just like our family did me, but she's not gay."

"Speaking of your family, do you think she could just be afraid to come out?"

The blonde head shook. "No way. Mom and Daddy took my news about being a lesbian surprisingly well."

When she was sixteen years old, Sonny had worked up the courage she needed in order to inform her parents of her sexual orientation. Having decided to tell them separately, she flipped a coin to see who would be first, since she had a difficult time choosing. If it turned out to be heads then her father. If tails, her mother would be first. After the penny landed in the palm of her hand, the face of Abraham Lincoln was staring to the right of her. Listening to honest Abe, the teenage Sonny went in search of Paul, finding him in the den watching football.

*Sitting next to her father, Sonny silently watched him as he yelled at a player for fumbling the football. Having a feeling that his daughter wanted to have a "serious talk" he looked at her, offering her the bowl of popcorn that he held. He wouldn't ask, he would instead wait until she was ready to talk about whatever was on her mind. Granting him with a grateful smile, Sonny reached into the bowl and grabbed a handful of the fluffy buttery stuff.*

*They both proceeded to watch the game as Sonny popped a piece of popcorn into her mouth and chewed one at a time. When the palm of her hand was empty, she looked up at her father again while nervously swallowing. Noticing out of the corner of his eye, he offered her a sip of his beverage, but the blonde shook her head.*

*"Daddy?" she finally got out. It was the first thing she had said to him since arriving in the den.*

*"Yes?" Paul answered while looking at the television. He had the ability to concentrate on multiple things at once and was currently paying attention to both the football game and his daughter, although it wouldn't appear that way.*

*"Daddy, I'm a lesbian," Sonny blurted out before she could even think about changing her mind. She was tired of being in the closet and she was anxious for her parents to meet her girlfriend.*

*"That's great honey." Ungluing his eyes from the television, Paul gave his daughter a broad smile. "I'm happy for you."*

*Sonny stared at him in confusion and bewilderment. "What? Did you just hear me correctly?" The teenager had the urge to grab the remote control in order to switch off the television. Her own parent wasn't paying her any attention and she was trying to have a very important conversation!*

*Paul nodded as he reached over and placed the bowl on the coffeetable. "Yes, I heard you correctly love. You said that you're a lesbian." He continued to smile at her, though he had turned it down a little.*

*He's lost his mind! "And? That's it? You're happy for me?! What parent says they are happy for their child after that child just admitted that they were gay?! There's usually shock, surprise, disappointment, denial, and even revulsion in some unfortunate cases, but I've never heard of*

*'I'm happy for you!'*

*"Well now you have!" Winking at her, Paul glanced back toward the television after hearing a great hoopla. Seeing that his team was still lagging behind, he scowled before turning back to his daughter. "Sonny, I just want you to be happy and I want you to know that I support this. I love you and it doesn't matter to me what your sexual preference is."*

*Though still a bit dazed, Sonny left her father to the rest of his game after they had a small discussion. That had gone almost too well! He was so understanding and accepting that it was freaky! Pinching herself, Sonny decided that she definitely was not dreaming. She took a deep breath as she located her mother in the kitchen cooking dinner. One down and one to go. She figured that her siblings would be easy. She had already told Melanie months ago and that had gone well.*

*Standing in the entryway to the kitchen, Sonny called out her mother's name (which was Mom to her). Looking up, Annette stopped stirring the contents of the pot on the stove and smiled at her second youngest.*

*"Dinner will be ready soon sweetie," Annette stated, before she closely read the expression on Sonny's face. Growing concerned, she put the wooden spoon down and walked over toward the young girl. Placing her hands on her daughter's shoulders, she asked, "What's wrong Madison?"*

*"I'm gay," Sonny whispered.*

*"Don't tell me you're okay. I know something is wrong," Annette replied. "Now tell me what it is sweetie," she gently added.*

*Sonny would have laughed had the situation been different. "No Mom, I didn't say that I was okay. I said that I was gay," she clearly enunciated.*

*"Oh." Annette's mouth formed into the shape of an almost perfect O. She then squeezed her daughter's shoulders. "Well it's about time you figured it out."*

*Staring in disbelief, Sonny found that she was rendered speechless. Both of her parents had lost their minds! She didn't know which was harder to absorb. The fact that her father had told her he was happy for her or that her mother acted as though she had already known about her being a lesbian. This was all so unreal!*

*"Madison?"*

*Rapidly blinking, Sonny focused on the concerned face of her mother. "Sorry umm...guess I zoned out there for a minute. Mom...you already knew?"*

*Annette nodded. "Yes, I did."*

*"How?"*

*She took a deep breath as she sat down on a chair at the table, Sonny joining her by plopping into one. "I already had my suspicions, but then you confirmed it one evening when I saw you and your friend Gina..." Annette blushed as she added, "studying each other's lips in the den instead of the ignored books surrounding you."*

Jack laughed as Sonny finished telling her the story of when she came out to her parents. Her lips curving into a smile, the petite blonde had to admit that it was sort of amusing. Very strange but amusing all the same.

"So...are you going to drop this crazy idea of yours that my baby sister is gay?"

Jack shrugged. "Yeah, sure." Since Sonny looked like she could use a good eight or nine hours sleep, Jack decided to take pity on her. They could resume this conversation later. "So I'll see you in a few minutes then."

Sonny smiled again. "Yeah, you will." Turning she opened the door before glancing over her shoulder at her friend. "Drive carefully you speed demon."

Jack merely grinned.

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After finishing a delicious breakfast consisting of Belgian waffles, cheese omelets, crisp bacon and tender sausage, Sonny went out to the beach with her nephews and niece in tow. While everyone enjoyed breakfast, she had been cajoled into promising the little rugrats that she would help them build a sandcastle. Sonny smiled, not minding one bit as she instructed Ian and Jayme to fill the plastic buckets they had brought along with them. As she and Amanda waited, collecting sand as they did so, she recalled the last time she and her niece and nephews made a sandcastle. Sonny didn't mean to gloat, but with her helping, it was a thing of beauty! She hated for it to be destroyed, but the thing about sandcastles was that one couldn't admire their beauty forever. They were like snowmen. Only available for viewing for a limited amount of time.

As the four started working on their sandcastle after having thoroughly discussed a plan on how they wanted it to be built, Sonny's thoughts drifted to Jack, who she expected to be back at any moment with Briana. The two women had been the only ones missing from the breakfast table since they had decided to go out for breakfast and then a drive around the city with Briana behind the wheel. While she helped Amanda to dig the moat with plastic shovels that matched the buckets, Sonny kept repeating to herself that she was not jealous that Jack and her younger sister seemed to be spending so much quality time together. It didn't bother her that whenever Briana granted Jack with a worshipful expression that the brunette in turn gave her a heartwarming smile that could melt all the ice in Alaska. Nope, she had not a care in the world. They could bond all they wanted to!

Noticing that she was digging into the dirt with much more force than what was needed, Sonny eased up, sitting back on her haunches. This kind of attitude was ridiculous. Where did she get off having a problem with Jack and her sister bonding? It wasn't as though she owned Jack and

the woman was free to spend time with anyone that she wanted. Even if that person was Sonny's kid sister. Suddenly, Sonny began to frown as she thought of something that had never crossed her mind before.

Wait a minute. Just wait one darn minute! While Jayme, Ian, and Amanda continued to faithfully work Sonny thought back to the conversation she and Jack had shared in the early hours of the morning. Jack had been awfully interested in wanting to know Sonny's views on Briana's sexual preference. Last night after they returned to the house, Jack and Briana had stayed up until nearly dawn whispering and giggling like schoolgirls while Candace and Melanie slept and Sonny attempted to. Now this morning they had declared that they were going out for breakfast and that they would be back in a little while.

Sonny's eyes narrowed. That couldn't be it, could it? Jack would never stoop so low as to...Briana was even younger than Chloe! That would be totally robbing the...A thirty-two year old woman and a nineteen-year-old girl just didn't sound like a grand idea! Sonny started to rise to go back into the house, but then changed her mind. She had promised the sandcastle building trio that she would help them and she was not intending to break that promise. Glaring toward her parents beach house, the blonde then got to work, pasting a smile on her lips for the rugrats benefit.

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Finally finishing the sandcastle, Sonny and her niece and nephews stood back to admire their handiwork. As she had suspected it would be, this sandcastle was another thing of utter beauty. In fact, it was better than the last one they had made. Nearly as tall as Amanda, it was around four feet wide. They had put some water in the moat, but unfortunately, the dirt had soaked it all up within a matter of minutes. Telling them that she had a plan on how to get it to stay, Sonny heard footsteps behind her and looked around to see Jack headed toward them, a bright smile on her gorgeous tanned face. The smile faded away when she caught sight of the glare being directed at her. What had she done now? Perhaps she should have invited Sonny to come along with her and Briana to breakfast. Sure, she would have had to take Isaac's or someone else's car since the Lamborghini only seated two people, but it was doable.

Arriving at the quartet, Jack smiled at the sand-coated children and clapped hands with Ian who held his small one up to her. Reaching out, she gently ruffled Jayme's hair, causing him to playfully roll his eyes in the process. Even at the young age of thirteen, Jayme could detect the tension between his aunt and his secret crush, so taking each of his cousin's hands he asked them if they would like to go watch Saturday morning cartoons. Jumping up and down in excitement, they eagerly accepted the invitation. Giving Jack and Sonny a smile that they returned with a grateful one, Jayme led his sudden charges into the house.

After they disappeared, Jack turned to Sonny asking her if something was wrong. She then rolled her eyes. Evidently, something was wrong if the woman was giving her that seething look. Before Sonny could answer, Jack corrected her question by asking instead what was wrong. Remaining silent, the blonde folded her arms across her chest as she indicated for Jack to follow her with a shake of her head. Deciding to be obedient, Jack quietly followed the other woman. They kept walking until they were nearly half a mile from the beach house. Sonny then sat down

in the sand about ten feet away from the shore with Jack choosing to be on her left. There was maybe six inches of space between them. For a few seconds they silently watched the waves gently breaking against the shore before Jack repeated her question.

Keeping her eyes riveted to the ocean, Sonny asked, "What's going on between you and my sister? Or better yet, what do you *want* to be going on between you and my sister?" Not receiving a quick reply, Sonny turned her head and looked at Jack, who wore an incredulous expression. The blonde lightly snorted. "Please don't pretend like you have no idea what I'm talking about. I've finally figured it out Jack. You...for some reason have an interest in Briana, but let me tell you that nothing will happen between you two. You have to accept the fact that she is *not* gay and plus she's young enough to be your...well...sister." Turning her head away, Sonny rolled her eyes at her 'brilliant' argument. Still not gaining a response, she looked back at Jack quizzically. "Well?"

"Have you totally lost every bit of sense that you possessed?" Jack inquired in a low and almost pained tone of voice. Upon hearing it, Sonny started to feel just a tad bit guilty. "Nothing...and I mean absolutely nothing is going on between Briana and I. I like her but I don't like her that way! In case it slipped your mind there is only one woman that I want, no matter how much she just insulted my integrity!" Jack started to rise, intent on leaving in a huff when a restraining hand landed on her arm.

"Please Jack don't go," Sonny pleaded, all traces of anger having melted away. Of course, what had she been thinking? Now her entire argument sounded ridiculous! Looking sheepishly at Jack, Sonny said, "I'm sorry. I should have known that you would never...that you wouldn't try to go after Briana. I apologize for my outburst."

Jack slowly shook her head as she looked at Sonny with an unreadable expression. "When will you admit it Sonny?"

"Admit what?"

*That you love me you goof!* Starting to smile, Jack shook her head again. "Nevermind. It's not important," pausing, she collected her thoughts, "So are you done being pissed with me? I think there's been enough hostility between us to last a lifetime, don't you think?"

Turning around so that she faced Jack, Sonny wrapped her arms around the woman in answer. Quickly wrapping her arms around the petite blonde, Jack hugged her with all her might while placing a tender kiss on her cheek. "I love you Sonny," the brunette uttered in a barely heard whisper. She got a good squeeze for the declaration. Though this wasn't the answer she preferred, it was more than she had expected. Staying in the embrace for a few moments, the two women then released each other, sharing a warm smile.

The majority of the time having the ability to come up with something to talk about, Sonny got a conversation started and soon the two had been yapping away for a good half hour on one topic or another. It had gone unnoticed by them when Jayme slipped outside to make sure that they hadn't murdered each other. He saw them peacefully chatting a ways from his grandparents

home. Smiling in delight, the young boy had drifted back into the beach house.

"I'm ready to tell you," Jack stated, having waited for a lull in their conversation so that she could bring up this subject.

"Tell me what?"

"What I told Anne yesterday." Jack looked down at the sand as though it was suddenly of extreme interest. She soon found herself staring into a pair of concerned green eyes when Sonny gently lifted her chin. Quietly, the blonde earnestly stated that it wasn't necessary and that she didn't have to if she rather not. Jack shook her head. "No, I want you to know and there's no time like the present."

Reaching over, Sonny pulled Jack's hand into her own. "Are you sure? I'm not in any hurry. I can wait until you're ready."

The brunette tenderly smiled, loving this woman more every second. "I've never been more ready than I am at this moment Sonny girl. I've related this story to two other people in my life and those were Leslie and your mother. Well now, I'm ready to tell *you*...to tell you about what happened to my parents all those years ago. How they died." Remaining silent, Sonny gave the hand she held an encouraging squeeze. Jack had told her early on in their friendship that her parents had died, but she never went into detail. Sonny had assumed that they might have been in an automobile accident. "They died when I was in college and Chloe was just a little thing."

"Was it an accident?" Sonny gently prodded.

Jack shook her head as she looked out toward the ocean. "No, their deaths were very intentional," she softly replied. "My Dad...his name was Jack too, short for Jackson, he died a few days before my Mom did. He was on his way home from work one evening when three younger men assaulted him in the parking lot. I know the details of what happened because they were caught within a couple of hours. There was so much evidence against them that they couldn't possibly deny what they had done. Anyway, they ordered my Dad to give them his wallet and the keys to his car. He willingly gave up both. They said that they were about to leave him alone when they spotted the wedding ring on his finger and told him to give them that too, but he refused to. They put a gun to his..." trailing off, Jack wiped at the tears that had started to fall down her cheeks. Though she had not been a witness, for the past eleven years she had played the scene from what happened that night repeatedly in her mind.

As Sonny began to stroke the length of her back, Jack attempted to get her emotions under control before she continued. "They umm...they put a gun to his head and repeated for him to give them his ring, but he still wouldn't do it. Even after they threatened to shoot him, he refused. So finally, one of the other two grabbed the gun from the guy holding it and shot my Dad. Afterwards, they pried the ring from his finger, piled into his car, and sped away. A witness saw them driving off and quickly called the police and an ambulance but it was too late. Dad died immediately after they shot him," Jack paused before adding, "And for that I'm grateful. At least he didn't suffer." Starting to cry, Jack felt a pair of arms wrapping around her and buried her face



in the crook of Sonny's neck. Though it had happened eleven years ago, the pain was still fresh. Beginning to cry as well, Sonny held on tight while she gently rocked the upset woman in her arms.

"Why couldn't he have just given them the ring? I miss him so damn much," Jack whispered in a heartbroken voice.

"I know you do baby. I know."

Neither woman said anything else for the next five minutes as they continued to embrace. As the tears ceased to flow, Jack disengaged herself from Sonny while telling her that she was only halfway through the story. The blonde asked if she wanted to go on, to which Jack nodded.

"Yes, I want you to know this," she quietly stated.

Sonny nodded as she once again slipped her hand into Jack's. "Then I'm ready when you are."

There was a brief silence before Jack started, absently rubbing her thumb against the skin on Sonny's hand. "Two days after we buried my Dad, I was helping Mom to pack his belongings-clothes and such-and then she suddenly stopped folding a shirt and looked at me saying..."

*"Jack, I can do this. Why don't you take Chloe to the park?" Ellen offered as she resumed folding the cotton shirt in her hands. "She's been spending so much time in her room and I think getting out would do both of you some good."*

*Jack glanced around the bedroom, looking at all of the unfilled cardboard boxes. "Maybe later. We still have a lot of work to do."*

*"But I can do it. You can help me some more when you return. For now, I want you to drop that tie and go to the kitchen. Make you and Chloe some sandwiches to take along with you. I think we have some chips to. That child needs to get out of this house and so do you."*

*Tossing the tie on the bed, Jack placed her hands on her waist. "And what about you?"*

*"Jacqueline I am your mother. Do what I say." Ellen attempted to look scolding, but a small smile found its way to her lips. "Please, just do this for me?"*

*Sighing, Jack faintly smiled in return. It was the first time she'd done so since before her father died. "Okay, okay. I'll take Chloe to the park for a couple of hours but then I'm coming back here and helping you with all this stuff."*

*Ellen's smile widened. "Deal."*

*Fifteen minutes later, Jack and Chloe were about to leave for the park, the older of the two carrying a picnic basket. As they walked through the living room, they spied Ellen sitting on the couch, looking up at her daughters as though she had been waiting for them. She shook her head*

*after Jack asked if she wanted to come along. Arising from the couch, she replied that she just wanted to see them off. Walking over to her daughters, Ellen gave each a soft smile complete with a warm and tender hug. While she had her arms wrapped around them, she told the young girls that she loved them and they in turn said the same.*

*Albeit a bit curious as to her mother's sudden behavior, Jack kissed the woman's cheek before she ushered her sister out of the front door. Getting in Jack's dark blue Hyundai, they were about to take off when they noticed Ellen standing in the front door blowing kisses at them. After tossing kisses back at her, they backed out of the driveway and then headed down the street. As she drove, Jack twice attempted to get a conversation started with Chloe, but the young girl only gave one or few word answers. Sighing, Jack hoped that a trip to the park would do the nine-year-old some good.*

*About to make a right turn at the end of their street, Jack pressed her foot to the brake as a sense of foreboding swept through her. Something was wrong. Terribly wrong. Her thoughts drifted to her mother and how she had been acting just before they left. Sure, Ellen had always been affectionate with her children, but something just didn't seem right about the display of affection she had just bestowed on them. It almost seemed as though she was saying goodbye...*

*"Oh my God," Jack whispered much too softly for Chloe to hear. That's why she wanted me to take Chloe to the park. Pulling over to the curb, Jack switched off the ignition before she turned toward her little sister who was staring dejectedly out of the passenger side window. "Chloe, honey let's play a game. I want you to stay here in the car until I get back. If you are still sitting in your seat by the time I get back to the car then I'll give you ten bucks, okay?"*

*Though giving her sister a quizzical look, Chloe shrugged. She had never heard of this game but it sounded easy and all she had to do was remain seated, which was what she wanted to do anyway. "Okay."*

*Reaching out, Jack ruffled the young girl's hair. "Great. Be right back." Grabbing the keys from the ignition, she bolted from the car and headed in the direction they had come, running as fast as her long legs would allow. Jack faintly heard someone calling her name but merely kept running instead of stopping to see who it was. She had to focus all of her concentration on getting home. Hopefully, her instincts were wrong and she would arrive home to find her mother still busy folding her father's clothing.*

*She has to be all right, she has to be, Jack kept thinking as she furiously pumped her legs. Her lungs started to burn and her breathing was labored as her feet pounded a steady rhythm on the sidewalk. Finally reaching the Foster home, Jack bounded up the few steps leading to the porch. Turning the knob, she found that the front door was locked. She was about to attempt to knock it down when she remembered that she had her keys. Lifting her right hand, which held the keys, Jack shakily found the correct one and inserted it into both locks. Seconds later she was inside the house and anxiously calling Ellen, only to receive silence as an answer.*

*With sweat pouring down her face and heart beating rapidly beneath her chest, Jack ran from room to room all the while calling her mother. Entering her mother's bedroom, she spotted*

*clothes and various other belongings of her father's scattered around the room.*

*"Mom where are you?!" Jack shouted as her eyes focused on the closed bathroom door. She recalled that it had been wide open when she left the room earlier to make she and Chloe's picnic lunch. Telling herself that Ellen was probably just washing up or using the restroom, Jack knocked on the door, not hearing a muffled reply as she had hoped. "Mom answer me!" Placing her hand on the doorknob, the brunette turned. She was chagrined to find that the door wouldn't budge. "Damn it." Jack could never recall her mother locking the bathroom door, even after she and Chloe walked in without knocking on more than one occasion.*

*Walking across the room, Jack gritted her teeth as she stared at the bathroom door. On the count of three, she hurried toward the door and slammed her body against it, causing parts of the wood to splinter as the door swung open. Not noticing the immense pain that one experienced after dislocating one's shoulder, Jack stormed into the bathroom only to stop dead in her tracks after just a few steps. As soon as she located her voice, she let out a piercing scream while looking at the woman who had given birth to her twenty one years ago, hanging lifelessly from the shower stall with one of Jack senior's belts.*

*Though she knew that it was much too late to help her mother, Jack carefully lifted the woman and removed the belt from around her bruised neck. Gently lowering her to the cold bathroom tile, Jack kneeled next to her while tears coursed down her reddened cheeks. She tipped her mother's head back and proceeded to perform CPR while alternately pressing on Ellen's chest between the breaths. Jack did this for a full five minutes before she checked her mother's motionless pulse once more before finally giving up.*

*Her tears ceasing to fall, Jack arose from the floor and walked out of the bathroom almost in a zombie like state. Sitting on her parents' bed she picked up the phone and punched in the three-digit number used for an emergency. Bringing the phone to her ear, Jack heard a female voice immediately answer her call.*

*Getting her mouth to work properly after a few seconds, Jack apathetically said, "My mother just committed suicide by hanging herself from her shower stall. I tried CPR but it was no use therefore there isn't any reason for you to rush getting here. Just do so soon. Thanks." Before the woman could offer a reply, Jack placed the phone back in its cradle before she arose from the bed and walked back into the bathroom. Stepping over her mother's prone body, she sat down on the floor with her back against the tub. Drawing her legs up until the bottom of her feet were touching the tile, she wrapped her arms them and rested her chin on her right knee. Blue eyes devoid of any emotion fell on Ellen and silently watched for nearly five minutes before Jack spoke.*

*"Dad didn't have much of a choice but you left us intentionally," the brunette flatly started. "You left your nine-year-old daughter without a single parent to guide her and for that I will never shed another tear for you, you spineless coward." Done, Jack fell silent again, not speaking until she had to answer the questions of the ambulance team when they arrived.*

*Speechless, Sonny stared out toward the ocean while she gave the hand she still held a light*

squeeze. Although they hadn't died at the same time, she never would have guessed that Jack's mother had committed suicide. Slowly turning her head, she looked up at Jack's face which was as emotionless now as she guessed it might have been moments after the woman ceased to give CPR to her mother all of those years ago. *That must have been so hard for you and Chloe to deal with.* Deciding to, Sonny softly voiced her thoughts, instantly drawing Jack's attention to her.

"It was for Chloe. Imagine being a child and losing your parents within days of each other. And in such violent horrible ways."

"It wasn't for you?"

There was a healthy dose of silence before Jack gave a response. "My Dad yes...my Mom...to a certain extent."

"Meaning?"

The brunette released a long sigh. "Moments after I accepted her death, I lost all respect for her and I was angry because she willingly left her children and Chloe needed her." Jack paused before admitting, "Hell, though I was an adult I needed her too. And she made it perfectly clear by taking her life that she didn't give a damn about us. I will never forgive her for abandoning her family. Sonny, her death wasn't as hard for me to deal with because I have too much hostility and anger built up to be truly saddened by it."

Sonny didn't believe for a minute that Ellen's death hadn't evoked any feelings in her daughter other than anger. It was obvious that Jack was perturbed, but she must have grieved the loss of her mother.

"I don't condone what your mom did, but Jack I'm sure that she loved you both. She was just hurting too much," Sonny softly stated as she noticed a pair of saddened blue eyes starting to glisten with unshed tears.

"And we weren't?" Jack retorted a little more sharply than she had intended. Quickly apologizing for her tone of voice, she then calmly repeated her question.

"Of course you were." Placing her hand on Jack's back, Sonny began to rub it. "Think about it. She lost her husband...the other half of her soul in such a senseless act. I don't know what state of mind I would be in if I were to lose y--...the person I wanted to spend the rest of my life with." Biting her lower lip, Sonny hoped that Jack hadn't caught what she had been about to say. Since the brunette's expression didn't change, Sonny figured that she hadn't noticed. *That was far too close.*

"Would you kill yourself? What if you had children? Would you?"

Giving it a considerable amount of thought, Sonny then answered, "I would like to think, especially if I had children that I would not go that far. Ending my life would not be the right solution and it would not make anything easier."

Jack slowly shook her head. "I don't see how a person could do that. I thought my mother was such a strong woman and in the end, she proved me wrong. I don't think I can ever forgive her for that," pausing, the brunette took a shuddering breath. "I do love her, but I don't like her."

"Have you honestly tried to?"

After a few silent moments passed, Sonny started to think that her companion did not intend to answer the question, until she shook her head negatively, blue eyes glued to the sand. Snaking an arm around the taller woman's waist, Sonny gave a gentle tug until Jack scooted close to her. Resting her cheek on Sonny's shoulder, the brunette slightly smiled as she felt the faint pressure of lips on the top of her head. Before she could even think to stop them, the tears began to fall down her cheeks, her shoulders shaking with the force of the sudden sobs.

Remaining silent, Sonny moved so that she could wrap both arms around the crying woman. Feeling a longer pair of arms encircling her, she placed soft kisses on Jack's cheek as she held on tight. Only when Jack's crying settled down until she was just sniffing, did Sonny speak as she pulled back slightly to look into watery azure eyes.

"Jack, I know it might be difficult for you to do, but forgiveness is an important step if you want to heal and I know you do. No matter what she did, your mother loved you and Chloe and if she could now she would apologize for her actions." Removing an arm from around her, the petite blonde touched her palm to Jack's chest. "Look deeply into your heart and it'll lead you in the right direction. It'll show you that forgiveness is the correct path."

Gently lifting Sonny's small hand from her chest, Jack placed a tender kiss in the palm of it, all the while watching as green eyes started to gather moisture. As a tear escaped, Jack quickly reached up and wiped it away with a fingertip before kissing the smooth soft cheek. Taking a deep breath, she rested her forehead against Sonny's, both women instantly closing their eyes as they enjoyed this intimacy. Though one of them would never want to admit it, neither wanted this moment to end. More than ever before, Jack wished that she had the ability to freeze time.

"I love you Sonny girl," she whispered after a considerable length of silence settled between them.

Sonny tenderly smiled, her eyes still closed. "And I love you Jack."

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Three hours later, Paul and Annette's anniversary party was in full swing! Everyone was having a grand time conversing, dancing, playing games, and munching on snacks while their mouths watered waiting for Brian (the designated chef) to finish barbecuing with Jayme his assistant. The party taking place directly on the beach, Jack sat there at a picnic table talking with Sonny and her cousin Robert. Although Paul had referred to him earlier as "Gay Robert" when he informed Isaac that even his cousin "Gay Robert" had a child and most importantly it was a boy, which meant that he would be carrying on the Campbell name. Paul had promptly ceased to use the nickname after his wife who had been in hearing distance at the time scolded him. Of course,

the retired police officer had not meant to offend his nephew. He only wanted to make a point that his thirty-three year old son should settle down and finally give him some grandchildren and most importantly grandsons.

Jack smiled as she listened to Sonny and Robert excitedly conversing, taking turns telling her wacky stories from their youth. She started to laugh as they relayed to her the story of how they obtained fake ID's in order to get into a gay & lesbian nightclub, which had a minimum age requirement of twenty-one. At the time Sonny had been sixteen and Robert nineteen. Having just come out to her parents nearly a week ago, Sonny had wanted to celebrate and with little effort coaxed Robert into joining her in a night of fun. Soon after they arrived at the nightclub, they found themselves participating in a rambunctious game of "who can swallow the most tequila shots without falling down drunk on their rumps". Of course, they both lost. They lost the game and the contents of their stomachs all over the dance floor while attempting to do the electric slide, but looking more like a couple of bumbling drunks with two left feet.

Bursting into tears because she was thoroughly humiliated and felt like someone was setting off firecrackers in her tummy, Sonny was ushered off of the dance floor, the protective arms of her though equally inebriated, dependable cousin around her. Having enough sense to know that they shouldn't be driving in their condition, they reluctantly called Sonny's parents to come pick them up. The next day, they had to endure an extreme hangover along with a lecture from their parental units and although he was nineteen Robert had his license taken away for a week for being so irresponsible and for not looking out for his "innocent, impressionable baby cousin". It was on the tip of his tongue to tell his mother and father that it had all been Sonny's idea, but he quickly decided that it wouldn't do any good. Plus, he would never rat out Sonny. He loved the mischievous little blonde too much.

"Aaw, that's sweet," Jack remarked, grinning as the other two finished up their latest story. "Sounds like you two have had a lot of good times over the years."

Robert playfully nudged his cousin's shoulder with his own. "She drives me buggy sometimes but I gotta love her!" Both Sonny and Jack chuckled with the blonde adding a playful eye roll. Before anything more could be said, a tow-headed toddler carefully waddled over towards the trio. Bypassing his father, the little boy stretched his arms out to Jack, silently asking to be picked up. From the moment they had been introduced when he arrived earlier, he'd wanted to inspect the shiny thin gold chain wrapped around Jack's neck and now was as good a time as any.

"Hey you," Jack crooned as she gently lifted the toddler onto her lap. Not liking the fact that he was facing away from the object of his interest, the baby carefully turned around with some assistance from his human chair. Content now, Thomas Campbell got to work. Boldly wrapping his tiny fist around the expensive jewelry, he gave it a good shake, joyously giggling as the rays from the sun danced off the gold. It was very lovely and he would have said so had his vocabulary been more extensive.

"Thomas no!" Bolting from his seat, Robert profusely apologized as he reached out for his son.

Shaking her head, Jack refused to let him take the boy. Meanwhile, Thomas continued to play as

though he hadn't heard his father's warning. Actually, he heard him loud and clear but chose to ignore him. His need to explore his human chair and her shiny gold stuff was just too great. "Robert it's just fine," Jack stated, a smile on her lips. And it truly was just fine. She didn't mind in the least bit and enjoyed watching the fascinated expression on Thomas's adorable little face as he lightly tugged and shook her chain. Jack felt a sudden maternal urge tugging at her. *I want one of these!*

"Are you sure?" Robert inquired, worry etching his brow as he slowly sat down on the bench. "Once he was playing with my mother's pearl necklace and the next thing she knew she looked down and tiny white balls were falling all over the floor." Not being able to stop herself, Sonny broke into laughter as did Jack. Despite his best efforts not to join in, so did Robert. "So you see Jack, my little bundle of love can be quite destructive."

She grinned at him. "I'll take my chances."

"Do you have children Jack?" Robert asked, as he plucked a small carrot from the array of appetizers the three were sharing as they anxiously waited for the real food.

The brunette shook her head wearing a wistful expression as she glanced at her new little buddy. "No, but I'd like to someday soon." She chuckled. "I can just hear my biological clock ticking away."

Robert waved a hand at her as he crunched on his carrot a few moments before swallowing. "Nonsense. It can't be ticking already. What are you? Twenty-five?"

"Ooh, marry me Robert," Jack replied in a serious tone before she allowed a playful grin to surface.

Chuckling richly, Robert stood up and stretched as he said, "Me a gay man marries a lesbian and we along with the mother of my child raise Thomas together. Now *that* would be an unconventional family!" As the three adults shared a laugh, Thomas took the opportunity to join in, though he hadn't a clue as to why he was laughing. "Do you ladies mind if I go join them for a game?" Robert pointed to where various family members and in-laws were about to start another game of beach volleyball. After Sonny and Jack replied that they didn't mind at all, Robert started to take off before he turned around and asked them if they would like to play. He already knew that his cousin's answer would most likely be no since she was always self-conscious about her height when it came to sports which were better suited for those who were not vertically challenged. Getting two simultaneous no's, Robert kissed his preoccupied son on the top of his head before he trotted off to join one of the teams that consisted mostly of those with the Campbell last name.

"I like him a lot," Jack said as she unconsciously nuzzled Thomas's soft pale blond hair.

Sonny smiled at the scene before her. It occurred to her that Jack would probably make an excellent mother. In a way, she already was to Chloe, having raised her on her own. "Now you can see why he's my favorite." She started to say something else, when she noticed the rakish

grin on her companion's lips that hadn't been there a second ago. *Uh oh. I sense that Mischievous Jack is on the loose. Jack you are a near six foot chameleon!* Sonny thought rather fondly. "Yes?" she drew out the single syllable word, unknowingly holding her breath in anxious anticipation.

Taking her sweet time responding, Jack chose a celery stick from the platter on the table and heavily dipped it into a cup filled with ranch dressing. Knowing that Sonny was watching her every move, Jack brought the coated light green vegetable to her lips and proceeded to gently suck off the ranch dressing alternately rolling her tongue around it. Noticing that her mouth was hanging open, Sonny snapped it closed before glancing around to see if anyone was looking. She was relieved to not detect any witnesses and glared across the picnic table at Jack, who had finally taken a bite into her celery.

"What?" Blue eyes widened in innocence causing Sonny to lightly snort.

"Jack, in case it slipped what is left of your mind," pausing, the blonde grinned at the smirk her statement was responsible for, "you are holding a child who doesn't need to see you erotically eating your food."

Jack glanced down at Thomas, who still held a fistful of her chain while he contentedly slept, his left cheek pressed against her bosom. Giving the sleeping baby a tender smile, Jack gently stroked his cheek with a lone finger as she looked at Sonny again. "He didn't see me," she responded, grinning. Before Sonny could reply, the brunette announced that she was going to deposit Thomas inside the house. Securely wrapping her arms around him, Jack arose from the bench and headed toward the deck, carefully walking up each stair leading to it. Disappearing inside the beach house, she strolled over to wear a playpen had been set up for Thomas and his twenty months old cousin Andrea. Carefully placing him inside it on his stomach, Jack pulled a small blanket around him and rubbed his blond head for a few moments before she headed back outside.

Instead of sitting across from Sonny, Jack slipped in next to her, close enough to feel her body heat and craving to feel her body. *Every single inch of it with my hands and-*Jack shook her head, trying to clear it of the deliciously naughty thoughts. *Now, now, let's not get off track here Jackie.* She was just about to speak when Sonny turned so that she facing her and straddling the bench. Sonny wore a look of interest as she waited for her friend to start talking. Standing for a moment, Jack mirrored the other woman's position.

That rakish grin made its appearance known again. "So...Sonny you love me, eh?"

Arching a golden eyebrow, Sonny gazed at Jack in confusion. "Umm, that *is* what I said. I've realized during this weekend that I do and I figured that was a good time to announce it."

Her grin broadening, Jack placed a warm palm on Sonny's knee. "Did you mean that you love me or you...*love* me?" Her sneaky palm somehow found its way to the blonde's exposed thigh, caressing the smooth skin as blue eyes held contact with green ones. When it became apparent that Sonny was having a difficult time forming words, Jack slowly leaned toward her, intent on

giving her an earth-shattering kiss. Perhaps it would help her to decide. However, Cupid must have been feeling particularly puckish today because the kiss didn't happen due to Melanie trotting over and unknowingly breaking the heated moment. Holding in a groan, Jack removed her hand from Sonny's thigh as they both looked up, smiling at the pregnant blonde standing before them.

"Hi guys," Melanie stated jovially. "I'm not interrupting anything, am I?" Pleased when they announced that she wasn't, she asked Jack if she could help her with something.

"Of course. What's up?"

"Brian ran out of barbecue sauce and I volunteered to go get some more. However, I refrained from driving when it got to the point where I could no longer stand up and see my feet." Melanie along with her sister and Jack laughed. "So I was wondering if you would be so kind as to drive me there Jack?" Actually, Melanie could have asked almost anyone else at the party to go get the barbecue sauce, but this gave her an opportunity to get Jack alone for a little bit, so that they could have a chat.

Jack smiled while thinking that Melanie had something up her sleeve. Though not literally because she was wearing a sleeveless shirt. Turning toward Sonny, she told her that they would be right back before she stood up. Jack was about to go get her keys, when Melanie stopped her with a gentle yet restraining hand on her arm while shaking her head. Fishing her own keys out of her pocket, Melanie gave them to Jack as she said that they would be taking her car because Sonny had told her that Jack drove like a bat out of hell when she was in her Lamborghini. Giving Sonny a wordless smirk, Jack gently ruffled her short blonde do before she was led away by Melanie.

Easily managing to ditch her constant sidekick, who was too busy playing a competitive game of volleyball to notice that she was leaving, Jack headed into the beach house with Melanie and soon out the front door. Getting into the drivers' seat of Melanie and Brian's Ford Explorer, Jack adjusted the seat before she put on her seatbelt. Noticing that her passenger was having a difficult time with her seatbelt, Jack helped her to buckle up. Melanie thanked her while giving her a grateful smile.

Inserting the key and starting the car, Jack wrapped her hands around the steering wheel as her eyes moved around the interior of the car. She'd never been in an SUV before and thought that this was one was pretty snazzy. She told Melanie as much while starting to pull away from the curb.

"Thank you. When we found out that we were pregnant, Brian suggested that one of us trade in our car and get an SUV. It took some getting used to, driving so far up from the ground but I like it." Pointing for Jack to make a right, Melanie slipped a sheet of paper out of her pocket and unfolded it. She then informed Jack that these were the directions on how to get to the gourmet grocery store, which happened to be in the next town.

Jack arched a quizzical brow. "Couldn't we just go to a regular grocery store? All he wants is

barbecue sauce right?" Noticing another pointing finger, Jack made a quick left.

Melanie shook her head. "My Brian should have been a chef instead of a school teacher. He doesn't think that *Kraft* or *Bullseye* are worthy of being lathered on his meat. No, the only barbecue sauce he'll use is from this gourmet market. There is one in Antioch and after a little searching on the web, I found one near here in a town called Rockledge. Do you mind driving seventeen miles just to get a couple bottles of barbecue sauce?"

Jack chuckled as she dutifully made a right turn. "Not at all."

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Sonny along with a few other family members was growing worried as well as even hungrier. It had been an hour and there was no sign of Jack and Melanie. Having decided to call Jack on her cell phone, Sonny gave up after discovering that her friend had left her little electronic device upstairs. She irritatingly wondered what was the use of Jack having a cell phone if she neglected to have it with her.

After she along with Candace convinced Brian to at least let those under the age of sixteen eat hamburgers, hot dogs, and shis kabob, Sonny pulled the man inside the house where they could speak privately in the living room. However, before she could start Thomas awoke in the playpen and started crying for both his mama and daddy. Telling her brother-in-law that she would be right back, Sonny picked up the distraught and confused toddler and comforted him while she walked outside to find his parents Lisa and Robert. After depositing him with them, she hurried back into the house, finding Brian sitting on the couch, a contemplative look on his adorable face. Walking over to him, Sonny plopped down next to the man before lightly slapping the back of his head. His eyes widening, he asked her what that was for.

"For making your pregnant wife traipse around Florida looking for your precious gourmet barbecue sauce!" Sonny had an urge to slap him again but controlled it. Barely.

Brian instantly went on the defensive. "I didn't make her. She volunteered! And don't be so dramatic Sonny. The market I sent her to is less than twenty miles away from here," he paused, ducking as a hand came flying at the back of his head again. Glaring just a tad he added, "I'm sure they are fine. There was probably just some traffic, which is why it's taking so long. Just relax."

Standing up, Sonny began to pace back and forth across the carpeted floor. "I can't shake the feeling that something is wrong Brian. Call it women's intuition. Those two are in some kind of trouble."

"What do you think could be wrong?"

Both Brian and Sonny turned toward the source of the voice, which was Paul. Annette was standing beside him, the expression on her face mixed with concern and worry. Trying to calm down for her mother's benefit, Sonny stopped pacing and sat down on the couch again, waiting until her parents were seated before speaking.

"I'm not sure..." Sonny hesitantly started. She then looked at Brian as a sudden realization struck her. "Maybe Melanie went into labor. You did say that it could happen at anytime, right? Maybe today is the day." Glancing at her parents, she studied their faces for a reaction to her best and only theory.

"Then we need to call all of the hospitals in this area," Paul spoke up before anyone else had the opportunity to.

Quickly coming up with a plan, Paul used the phone in the living room while Annette hurried into the study to use the second line. Meanwhile, Sonny and Brian remained on the couch as they both looked at the retired commissioner hopefully. Within ten minutes, Paul and Annette were done calling local hospitals. Unfortunately, they hadn't turned up anything. Silently, the quartet sat in thought before Sonny brightened with an idea. Turning her head, she looked at her brother-in-law.

"Brian, does Melanie by any chance have her cell phone in the car?"

He grimly shook his head, now as worried as the others, wondering if his baby was somewhere in labor having his new little baby without him being there to comfort her. "No, she only uses it when she's working. It's been in the drawer at home for the past three months." As he noticed the look of dejection that appeared on her face, Brian reached out and gently patted her back while he offered her a smile. "But that's a good try though."

"They haven't returned yet?" Isaac inquired as he walked into the house with Briana tagging along behind him. After hearing that one of her favorite people in the entire world was missing in action along with her beloved big sister, Briana became anxious. Everyone silently shook their heads before Isaac asked them if anyone had called the gourmet store which Melanie and Jack had been headed to.

"It's not as though they'd know the identities of the people we asked about," Brian stated.

"True, but how many female pairs consisting of a medium height pregnant blonde and a tall brunette with piercing blue eyes do you think have entered that particular market during the last hour? Believe me, I think they might be memorable to *someone* who works there."

Getting up, Paul walked over and clapped his son on the shoulder while giving him a smile filled with pride. "And you always said that you didn't want to follow in my footsteps."

Isaac smiled a little. "And I *still* don't relish the idea of having a job which might result in bullets flying at me."

Before Paul had the chance to reply, his wife was on the phone with an employee of *Epicure Market*. All eyes in the room turned to her as she spoke describing Melanie and Jack to the employee. She was then put on hold as the male on the line went to inquire with his co-workers. Within five minutes, he returned to the phone with the unfortunate news that no one had seen

anyone with those descriptions. Thanking him, Annette hung up the phone. It wasn't necessary for her to tell her family that she hadn't discovered anything because they could tell by her disappointed expression.

Turning to her father, Briana asked, "Should we call the police Daddy? Or maybe go look for them?" She was already patting the pockets of her jean shorts looking for her car keys.

Glancing at his watch, Paul noted the time. "Let's give them a little while longer. Perhaps we're jumping to conclusions much too quickly. If they're not here within the next thirty minutes then we'll take action," pausing, Paul's eyes darted toward the front door. "I'm sure they'll come barreling through the door any minute, claiming that they couldn't find the market."

Listening to his father-in-law's last statement, Brian grew anxious anew. He audibly gulped before asking, "You don't think they'll come strutting in here with *Bullseye* barbecue sauce, do you?" His question successfully breaking the tension in the room, everyone laughed.

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Meanwhile, Jack and Melanie had a bit of a dilemma. Okay, actually it was much bigger than a bit. For one, they hadn't a clue as to where they were and there wasn't anyone they could ask, because they had seen neither hide nor hair of another living, breathing soul for miles. Up until a couple of miles ago, Jack showed her stubborn streak by refusing to admit that they were completely lost and kept driving, evidently thinking that they would magically happen upon *Epicure Market* eventually. They now figured that they never even made it to Rockledge. The second reason they had a dilemma was because the Ford Explorer had suddenly stopped running. She just gave up and died. They had no idea why and Jack now had the hood up and was tinkering around the engine acting as though she knew what she was doing when it all actuality she hadn't a clue.

While fanning at her face with a hand, Melanie realized that they now had yet another dilemma. This dilemma was much bigger than the first two combined. As she felt warm water sliding down her bare legs, Melanie poked her blonde head out of the passenger side window and called out Jack's name. Appearing from under the hood, the brunette looked at Melanie questioningly, small black smudges on her cheeks and a few on the front of her sleeveless black and white plaid shirt. However, most of those were camouflaged by the dark color.

"I have sort of good news and sort of not good news-at least not with the situation we're in."

A dark eyebrow slowly rose as Jack walked up to the passenger door, leaning her folded arms on it. "What's the sort of not good news first?"

Melanie shook her head. "I'll tell you the sort of good news first. That is I know what the problem is. Why the car will no longer start," she paused, wincing just a bit as a sharp pain struck her abdomen. "It's easy to fix. Well it would be if conveniently there was a *Chevron* around here. We're out of gas." *How many times have I told Brian to make sure he kept gas in the tank when he drove the SUV? It's always left up to me. Well, now I'm gonna have to kill him! Too bad, he'll never see his son or daughter.*

That same dark eyebrow rose again, looking dangerous this time. "And how long have you known this?" Jack inquired in a voice so low that it was almost impossible for Melanie to decipher her words.

Gritting her teeth as she felt another sharp stab of pain, the blonde then answered, "About two or three minutes. I was going to tell you right when I found out but during that time you were cussing like a sailor so I decided to keep my mouth shut until you had calmed down a bit."

Jack almost imperceptibly nodded. "And what's the other bit of news you have for me?"

"My water just broke."

It seemed as though an hour passed before Jack finally was able to locate her voice.

"Plea...*please* tell me you have a bottle of *Arrowhead* in there somewhere."

Despite her discomfort, Melanie managed to find that humorous and chuckled. "Sorry, no bottled water. This is the real thing." She gave Jack, who was starting to look like a deer caught in the headlights of a car, a meaningful look. "It's time."

"Oh, God no. This simply cannot be happening," Jack muttered as she started to pace just outside of the passenger side door, a dreadful look on her semi dirty and sweaty face. As she took quick short steps, blue eyes were riveted to the ground while she repeated the words 'not now' over and over as though she expected by saying them several times Melanie's labor pains would miraculously cease. However, Jack found that her mantra wasn't doing a bit of good when her passenger suddenly gripped the window ledge tightly as she let out a short scream. In sympathy and in fear, Jack winced as she detected the expression of pain on Melanie's equally sweaty face. Stopping her pacing and telling herself that she had to get a grip because she was needed right now, Jack gently placed a hand on the other woman's forearm, giving it a small squeeze. She even managed to dredge up a reassuring smile, which the pregnant blonde returned.

"Okay, Mel, let's just try to calm down." Though she said this to Melanie, Jack realized that she was solely speaking to herself. Despite her pain-ridden face, Melanie didn't appear to be the least bit afraid. A person might have thought she had given birth a half dozen times before instead of just the one. "I don't know much about giving birth, but if you just started having contractions then the baby probably won't be born for hours, which means we still have a chance of getting you to a hospital." Jack smiled again. "I know this Explorer is cool, but an epidural would be even cooler." Her smile broadened when she received a chuckle for her little joke.

Melanie shook her head. "Actually, Jack I'm not sure we have much longer before the baby arrives because I..." she trailed off as another wave of pain went through her middle. When she felt a warm palm covering and lightly squeezing the one she still had attached to the window, Melanie managed a slight smile before slipping her hand out from underneath Jack's. It was getting to the point where being touched was more of an annoyance than comfort although Melanie knew that the other woman was only trying to be helpful. The blonde recalled her first delivery. She had nearly given one of the nurses a black eye for attempting to massage her

shoulders.

Taking a deep breath, Melanie continued. "I'm not sure how much more time we have because I started having contractions hours ago. I swear that I could push at any moment." Biting on her lower lip, Melanie's brow furrowed as fat drops of sweat slid down her flushed forehead.

Blue eyes widened in part disbelief and trepidation. "Hours? Why didn't you say anything?"

"Because I've lost count of how many times Brian and I have hurried to the hospital only to find out that they were false alarms. Though I'm due any day now, I figured I might as well wait and be sure." Melanie glanced down at her damp legs. "I'm quite sure now." Letting out a low, pain filled moan, Melanie tried to remember her Lamaze breathing.

Wincing, Jack grabbed the latch and opened the door. Leaning across Melanie, she pushed the release for the seat belt before carefully removing the long straps. Informing her passenger that she was going to escort her to the back of the SUV, Jack helped the moaning woman out of the car. Slowly but surely, she began to lead her toward the back where there would be more room. Hoping that she had watched enough episodes of *ER* and *Chicago Hope*, Jack prepared herself. Unless someone happened to pass by, she was going to deliver this baby alone. She attempted to comfort herself with the fact that Melanie had experience. *I can conquer businesses, make improvements and millions on them, but I'm afraid to deliver an itty bitty baby? Can't be that hard right? Right. Just tell her to push. It will be a piece of cake.* Jack rolled her eyes with that last thought.

Within a couple of minutes, Melanie was settled on the floor of her Explorer, lying on her back. She practiced her breathing techniques while Jack knelt in front of her, a worried look on her face as she nibbled on her lower lip. She knew what she had to do next; it was just difficult to come up with the words. Jack opened and closed her mouth several times before she finally got up the courage to ask.

"Um Mel...could you lift up so I can um...remove your pant-your underwear?" Jack could have rolled her eyes again. Since when did the ex-Conqueror stutter? She gave herself a mental slap. *Jack get a hold of yourself! You've got to take care of business now. Melanie is depending on you, so you better not let her down!*

There was a hint of amusement in Melanie's eyes as she got a slight reprieve from the contractions. Nodding her dampening blonde head, she slowly raised the lower half of her body so that Jack could remove her unmentionables. With slightly shaky hands, the brunette hooked her fingers into either side of Melanie's underwear before starting to gently pull them down and off. She took the time to neatly fold them before setting them aside. Jack nearly blushed when she was graced with an amused expression for her actions. Moments later, she succeeded when Melanie bent her knees until the soles of her shoes were flat against the floor. The blush grew deeper as the legs spread open and Melanie pulled up her skirt so that Jack had an excellent view of what lay beneath. Knowing that her face was glowing, Jack caught sight of golden curls before she looked away. *God, this was a side of Sonny's sisters that I did not intend on seeing!*

Despite the fact that her contractions had started again, Melanie couldn't help but to chuckle as she softly called the obviously embarrassed woman's name. Looking up, blue eyes locked with green. "Jack, there is no reason for you to feel embarrassed. I'm not, and I'm the one who's on display here." Reaching for Jack's hand, she encased it in her own while keeping eye contact. "I know we can do this. Let's just work together, 'kay?"

Smiling reassuringly, Jack suddenly felt five times better as she nodded. "Let's."

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Exiting *Epicure Market*, Sonny and Briana got into the car with dejection expressions. They had shown a picture of Jack and one of Melanie to every worker they could find at the market but no one had seen them or anyone that could have remotely looked like them. Having a lot of weight with them, Paul had called the police department and they were on the look out for the two women and the Ford Explorer. Meanwhile, other family members were on their way to various hospitals as others drove around Canova Beach and the surrounding cities, hoping to get lucky by spotting Melanie's car.

Sitting behind the wheel, Briana pulled on her seat belt while she glanced at her watch, releasing a loud sigh. Glancing at her sister, she said, "It's been over three hours and we haven't found a thing! Where could they be?" The nineteen-year-old looked on the verge of tears and Sonny reached over to give her a reassuring hug while telling her that everything would be fine, although she still had a gut feeling that something was amiss. She hoped and prayed that her sister and Jack would turn up soon and that they would be okay. Maybe they really were just lost. Sonny tried to create an image of the two arguing right that moment on which way to turn. It made her smile just a little. *I'm gonna strangle those two for making all of us worry like this. Don't they know how to pick up a phone?*

Quietly thanking her sister for the hug and patting her on the back, Briana disengaged herself before reaching for her cell phone, which was clipped to the side of her shorts. Informing Sonny that she was calling home, she did so. Candace, being the only adult there answered the phone before the first ring was complete. She had chosen to stay at the beach house to watch after everyone's children and to monitor the phone just in case Jack and Melanie were to call. Quickly finding out that Candace hadn't heard anything, Briana ended the call before passing along the information to Sonny.

The two women sat in the parking lot of the gourmet market in silent thought. It wasn't until nearly five minutes passed before Sonny turned to her, getting ready to ask if Briana was going to drive. However, before she could, her younger sibling uttered something in a soft tone of voice. Having not heard a word of it, Sonny asked her to repeat. Prying her eyes away from the steering wheel, Briana looked at Sonny, her lower lip trembling as though she would cry at any moment.

"Why don't you see Sonny?"

Growing confused, Sonny slowly shook her head. "I don't understand. What are you getting at Bri?"

"Perhaps this is an inopportune moment to ask, but why are you not willing to give Jack a chance? Don't you see how much she loves you? I could tell at the party today. The way she looks at you...how she finds little ways to touch you...why are you trying to ignore that?"

Momentarily rendered speechless, the older woman then located the whereabouts of her voice. "I know how Jack feels and I'm not ignoring it...I just don't return those same feelings. I mean, I do have feelings for her, but I can't force myself to be in love with her." *Why does it feel like I just lied through my teeth?*

Briana smiled, though there wasn't a hint of amusement in it. It was akin to a sympathetic smile. "You just lied to two people in this car Sonny." Turning ahead, she turned the key in the ignition. Before pulling out, Briana's inquisitive eyes fell on her sister again. "Now I just wonder how long it will take you to figure that out?"

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"OH SWEET JESUS TAKE ME NOW!!!" Sweat pouring down her reddened face, Melanie pushed with as much force as she could manage. It felt as though she had been pushing for an eternity and she didn't feel much closer to delivering this baby. Right now, she hated every man on the face of the earth and sympathized with every woman that has had the courage to experience childbirth. This was torture, plain and simple. Melanie didn't recall it being this bad when she had Jayme. However, she had to remember during that time she was in a hospital and had been pumped up with as much drugs as the doctor would allow. Sure, it still had hurt like hell, but this put the H-E-L and L in the word!

And bless her heart, Jack was being a real trooper, trying to calm her down as much as possible while coaching her through the delivery. In fact, after she got over her initial embarrassment, the businesswoman had indeed gotten down to business and almost acted like an expert. She hadn't even so much as flinched when a pain riddled Melanie had called her just about every improper name she could come up with. After all, Jack realized that it had only been the pain talking and she didn't take an offense.

Her hands resting on Melanie's knees, Jack closely inspected her vagina, thinking that she was beginning to see something. Becoming almost giddy with relief, she informed Melanie that the baby was on its way. Replying with a tight smile, though she looked a tad relieved, Melanie continued breathing loudly. Her relief was short lived when her 'doctor' informed her to start pushing again. Gritting her teeth, the blonde managed to hold in another colorful name that she had just invented as she prepared to start pushing. Leaning up on an elbow, Melanie grabbed Jack's left hand like she'd done the last few times and nearly squeezed the life out of it while she began pushing for all she was worth. Ignoring the pain flowing from her hand and through her wrist, Jack started spouting encouraging words, sounding just like a football coach who was revving up the team because they were about to take part in the Superbowl.

"I can see the entire top of the head!" Jack suddenly said, as she looked at the glistening crown in amazement. This was one of the most remarkable things she had ever been lucky enough to witness. She softly sighed as Melanie released her death grip after ceasing to push. Looking at

watery green eyes, Jack offered a tender smile, hating to say her next words, but knowing that it was necessary. Slowly counting to fifteen, in order to give the blonde some time to rest, Jack then stated, "Okay sweetie, just one more good push and I think this baby will enter the world." Rubbing Melanie's left knee with her free hand, she added, "C'mon. You can do it Mel. One more baby...just one more for me."

Hissing through her teeth, Melanie then took a few deep breaths before she silently counted to three before starting to push with all her might. Loudly groaning as both tears and beads of sweat poured down her face, the blonde tightened her hold on Jack's already aching hand. If it hadn't been firmly attached, surely it would have popped off like a cork shooting from a bottle of champagne.

Managing to disengage her hand so that she could grab the infant, Jack's eyes and mouth opened wide as she watched the miracle unfolding before her. Within a few more moments, she had a screaming and slippery newborn in her hands. Grinning much like a proud parent, Jack closely examined the baby from head to toe, thinking that it looked plump and healthy. And if the earsplitting crying was any indication, the baby was sporting an excellent pair of lungs. As she and Melanie shared a triumphant smile, Jack asked her if she would like to hold her baby. Nodding eagerly, Melanie attempted to sit up but found that she was much too weak to do so. Noticing her dilemma, Jack carefully set the baby on her lap before removing her shirt. Wrapping it around the baby, she placed it on the floor before crawling over to help Melanie sit up with her back against the wall for support.

Moments later, Melanie was holding her tiny bundle of joy, who by now had grown quiet and was staring up at the sweaty, haggard and happy looking blonde. "Beautiful. Simply beautiful," Melanie uttered in a soft voice while caressing the baby's cheek with a finger.

Smiling, Jack nodded her agreement. "You don't by chance have any sharp objects do you? We should cut the baby's umbilical cord."

Melanie was about to shake her head but then remembered the all-utility pocketknife that Brian had bought nearly a year ago when they along with Jayme went camping. Brian had insisted that the expensive knife would come in handy, but during the entire trip, they didn't use it once and to this very day had yet to use it for anything. Now Brian would be happy since it would come in finally come in handy. Well, that's only if Melanie would allow him live since he neglected to keep the tank full.

Informing Jack that the pocketknife was in the glove compartment, Melanie proceeded to count her newborn's fingers. For a split second, she grew alarmed when she counted nine, but then realized she'd counted too fast and overlooked one. All ten were there and surely, they were the cutest little digits she had ever seen.

Returning with the heavy pocketknife, Jack proceeded to look for the blade. This proved a difficult feat since there were so many gadgets. She discovered there was a corkscrew, spoon, fork, nail file, and magnifying glass before finally pulling on the sharp looking blade. After being informed that she could do the honors, Jack pulled back her shirt turned baby blanket, and

gingerly grabbed a hold of the umbilical cord. Having seen this done many times on television, she was confident that she knew where to make incision and proceeded to do so with much care and diligence.

Already knowing that she looked a mess, Jack wiped the blade clean on her shorts before carefully pushing it back in. She then noticed another gadget peaking out that could have made her job of cutting the umbilical a lot easier. Chuckling, the brunette pulled out a pair of scissors and showed them to Melanie who chuckled as well.

"Those could have come in handy," Jack stated, smiling as she placed the pocketknife on the floor. Looking at the baby, her smile broadened, as tired little brand new eyes looked her way. "Do you and Brian have a name picked out for her yet?"

Excited green eyes locked on blue and then Melanie laughed. "I was so happy to have the baby I didn't even notice what the sex was. I have a girl?" Pulling open the shirt again, she discovered that her newborn was penis-free. Though she would have been ecstatic either way, Melanie had been hoping for a girl.

Jack snickered. "Yes, you do unless I accidentally pulled a Lorena Bobbit."

Laughing, Melanie indicated for the other woman to come nearer. Doing so, Jack was promptly rewarded with a kiss on each dirty cheek. "Thank you so much for your help Jack. I couldn't have done this without you. You're a lifesaver." Pausing, Melanie cocked her head to the side thoughtfully. "You know, I think my sister would be lucky to have you. Well actually, you'd be lucky to have each other. I think you compliment one another extremely well."

A lump forming in her throat and tears stinging her eyes, Jack didn't quite know what to say. After a few moments of speechlessness, she managed to croak out a heartfelt thank you before gently hugging Melanie and the baby. After adding a kiss to each of their foreheads, Jack sat back on the floor, a thoughtful expression on her face.

"What are you thinking?"

Softly sighing, Jack made eye contact with Melanie. She hadn't watched all of those medical shows for nothing and therefore knew that her job was not quite complete. And though she loathed bringing it up, she felt that it was important.

"I'm thinking that there's one more thing we must do before I go get us some help."

A thoughtful expression on *her* face now, Melanie inquired, "What's that?"

Jack sighed again while hoping that the blonde wouldn't have an urge to smack her right cheek, which was currently free of bruises. Unconsciously, Jack gingerly touched the left side of her face. That morning she had been irritated to find that there was a significant purplish mark. "Your placenta needs to come out."

"Now?" Haven't I went through enough pain without drugs already?!? I might have to kill Jack along with Brian. What a pity.

The brunette pasted on an upbeat smile. "No time like the present."

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"What business is it of yours anyway?" Looking rather annoyed, Sonny eyed her younger sibling questioningly.

Her brow crinkling in confusion, Briana glanced at her sister for a split second before returning her attention to the road. "Huh? What are you talking about?"

"I'm responding to your last statement."

There was a full minute of silence before Briana chuckled. "I haven't said anything since we left the market. It took you this long to come up with a response?" An amused smile curving her lips, she added, "A little slow, aren't we Sonny?"

Not the least bit amused, Sonny grew more annoyed as she looked out the passenger side window. Noticing a small mini-mart and that one of the buildings was a coffeeshop, she asked her sister to take them there. Silently obeying, Briana made the necessary turns in order to drive into the mini-mart. Easily locating a parking space, the sisters then went inside and took their seat at a booth, choosing to sit across from each other. The waitress appearing seconds later, the two women both ordered coffees.

"Where were we?" Briana asked in a conversational tone as she sat back in the booth. "Ah, you were telling me that...what? Your love life is none of my business?"

Sonny gave a short nod. "Precisely. You hit the nail right on the head. I'm tired of people telling me how I feel. None of you know how I feel because I am the only one inhabiting this body. I know myself better than anyone does, and I *know* that I do not love Jack. At least not in the way you guys seem to think I do."

Before Briana could respond, the waitress returned with their hot drinks. Both women became lost in their thoughts as they proceeded to doctor up their coffees and take experimental sips. Content with the way her coffee tasted, Briana took another sip before putting it down and looking across the table at her sister.

"You love her and for the life of me I can't figure out why you're denying it." Briana thoughtfully paused. "Wait a second. Does this have anything to do with that woman you met over the Internet? Her name is Pixie?"

Sonny frowned, knowing that her sister had mispronounced the Southerner's name on purpose. "Dixie. And she's the one that I want. She and I would be perfect for each other and we will be together."

Briana rolled her eyes. "You don't even know her. For God sakes the woman stood you up at Disneyworld!"

"I've known her for over a year and I told you that she was just scared. That happens to the best of us," Sonny replied in a defensive tone. "We've been talking on the phone and we're probably going to meet soon."

Briana softly snorted into her coffee before taking a cautious sip. "Look Sonny, my gut feeling tells me that Jack is the perfect one for you."

"Bri, my gut feeling tells me that you should mind your own business. You along with everyone else who has the insane idea that Jack and I are meant to be." What was it with everyone? Why were they so intent on playing matchmaker with her and Jack? Even her own parents were rooting for them to be a couple. Sonny thought back to that morning when her mother pulled her aside and asked why she had yet to tell Jack that she loved her. When she replied that she didn't love Jack in a romantic way, she could tell that her mother didn't believe a single word coming out of her mouth. Before she allowed the conversation to end, Annette gave her daughter what she deemed wise advice: Don't let this one get away. After those words were spoken, Sonny had an image of herself standing at the edge of a lake with a fishing rod and a wriggling fish in her hand, which she promptly threw back into the water. What they all didn't realize was that Jack was the wrong fish. Sure, she would be an incredible catch but Blue was the perfect trout for Sonny. The blonde suddenly scowled. *What in the world am I talking about?* Glancing at her sister, Sonny noticed that the younger woman was looking at her expectantly. Apparently, she had missed something while pondering women and cold-blooded vertebrates. Sheepishly, Sonny asked her sister to repeat.

Sighing, Briana leaned forward, clasping her hands together on the table as she eyed the other woman thoughtfully while choosing her next words. Suddenly feeling brave, the young woman decided to bite the bullet and tell her sister something that she had been keeping a secret. Well at least, from the majority of her family. When Sonny started to speak, Briana indicated for her to be quiet. Doing so, Sonny curiously waited.

"Sonny, do you have any idea how lucky you are to have found someone that practically worships the ground you walk on? And I'm not saying that you should be with Jack just because of the way she feels for you, but because of your own feelings toward her. I know you love her and I think deep down inside you know it too," pausing, Briana licked her lips nervously. She indicated for her sister to remain silent as she lifted her cup and took a few more sips from the rapidly cooling beverage before looking at Sonny. "If Jack looked at me that way, I wouldn't hesitate for a second. She's everything that I could ever want in a woman." Her heart beating furiously beneath her chest, Briana anxiously waited for her sister to respond to her declaration. Her nervousness grew every second that Sonny remained silent, a surprised expression on her face. "Aren't you...aren't you going to say anything Sonny? Are you in a daze?" Raising her hand, Briana snapped her fingers several times in front of her sister's face, finally getting her to blink. *You'd think I'd just told her that I killed someone!*

"Are you telling me that you're gay?" Sonny asked in a whispered tone.

Briana nodded. "Yes. And why are you whispering? Are you embarrassed?"

"No," Sonny whispered. "I mean no! Of course not," she added in her regular voice. "That wouldn't make any since. I don't...it doesn't matter to me what your sexual orientation is. It's just a shock is all." Jack was right! Inwardly groaning, Sonny could just imagine the woman later stating that annoying phrase "I told you so" that no one wants to hear.

"You never suspected? You were in my room. You didn't look around?"

Sonny shrugged. "I didn't think anything of it."

"Clueless *and* slow, eh?" Grinning, Briana ducked when a sugar packet suddenly flew in her direction.

"Am I the first person you've told?"

"No, I've already told Melanie. Plus, my friends know." Gaining their waitress's attention, Briana mouthed for her to bring the check.

Sonny's eyebrows drifted skyward. "You told Melanie before you told me?" She and Briana had always shared everything. Well, mostly everything and Sonny would have thought that she would be the first to hear this. "When did you tell her?"

"*You* told her before you told me. She found out back in February." She ducked again as another sugar packet soared her way. Briana mocked scowled as she glanced at the check, which the waitress had just placed on the table. Reaching into her back pocket, she extracted her wallet.

Smirking, Sonny replied, "You were eight at the time!"

As she chuckled, Briana deposited three one-dollar bills on top of the check before replacing her wallet back in her pocket. "Good point."

The two women were just about to leave when Briana's phone started to play the tune from a certain television show's theme song. As she unhooked the cell phone from her waistband, her sister chuckled.

"Is that from that show you're totally obsessed with?" Sonny asked, grinning. She suddenly wondered why her sister didn't have a poster from it hanging in her bedroom. *I know one item a certain someone is getting for Christmas.*

Briana stuck her tongue out, temporarily looking ten years younger. "I am so not obsessed with it. Just an intensely devoted fan." Just before she pushed the button to speak, she asked, "Hey don't you think that Jack looks like-"

Throwing her head back, Sonny burst out laughing. "Oh my God! She does!"

The younger woman grinned while picturing Jack in a leather skirt. "One more reason you've simply gotta love her." Focusing her attention on the phone call, Briana listened, her grin drifting into a broad smile as she did so. Suddenly rising, she asked a waitress if she could borrow her pen. After obtaining it, Briana scrawled directions on a paper napkin before ending the call and looking at her sister excitedly. "That was Candace. She doesn't have all the details, but apparently, Jack and Melanie ended up lost in Kissimmee. Mel went into labor and Jack had to deliver the baby in the car." Briana showed her sister the ink-laden napkin. "They're at this hospital so let's go." Getting up, Sonny began to follow her sister out of the coffeeshop while asking if they were all right. Briana eagerly nodded. "Yes. Candace said that Jack, Melanie, and the baby are all doing fine." After getting in the car, Briana smiled at her sister. "Now she's a heroine. How could you not love her?"

Sonny growled, though she merely looked jubilant. "Just drive the car Aphrodite."

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Finally making it to the hospital nearly an hour later, Briana and Sonny went to the Obstetrics Unit via an elevator. As they stepped out of it, they caught sight of Jack dressed in blue hospital scrubs drinking from a water fountain. Hurrying up to her, they took turns hugging the startled woman.

"Hey! When did you guys get here?" Jack inquired.

"Just now," Briana spoke up as her eyes moved up and down the taller woman's body. She then grinned as she stated that Jack looked cute in the scrubs. Her grin grew when she noticed that her compliment caused the brunette to blush.

"Thank you," Jack replied. "You want me to take you to your sister? When I left they were about to bring the baby in so that she could feed her."

Briana and Sonny beamed as they simultaneously asked, "It's a girl?"

Nodding, Jack smiled. "Yes, and she's a beauty. Cute little blonde curls and gorgeous green eyes. You'll melt when you see her."

Asking what room Melanie was in, Sonny informed her sister to go ahead of them after Jack explained where it was. Sonny wanted to speak with her friend alone. Heading in the direction of Melanie's room, Briana suddenly turned around and gave her sister two thumbs up along with a bright smile. Sonny merely smiled and shook her head. Waiting for her sister to disappear around the corner, she then looked up at an expectant brunette.

"You are something else," Sonny softly admitted.

A grin turned up one side of Jack's mouth. "I'm assuming you mean that in a good way."

Warmly smiling, the blonde wrapped her arms around her friend. "I mean that in a very good

way. You never cease to amaze me." Loosely keeping her arms around Jack's waist after giving her a good squeeze, Sonny asked, "Have I told you how happy I am to have your friendship?"

Resisting the urge to kiss the soft pink lips so close to hers, Jack rested her forehead against Sonny's. "You've shown me. And I'm absolutely thrilled to have yours."

Sonny stared up into blue eyes filled with adoration, tenderness, and love. "Jack...when I said I loved you I-

The blonde didn't get to finish as two fingertips pressed against her lips. "I know," Jack whispered as she took a step back, breaking their contact. Both women missed it instantly. "I know exactly what you meant Sonny girl." *But did you?* "You want to go see your newest niece now?"

Sonny smiled, relieved that there wasn't a misunderstanding between them. The last thing she wanted was for Jack to get the wrong idea. "Absolutely."

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Sitting in the back seat of Briana's Nissan, Jack beamed a smile brighter than the sun's rays as she looked out of the window. Earlier that afternoon after she and Sonny arrived in the hospital room, Melanie, and Brian had made the announcement of what the baby's name would be. For months, they had been trying to come up with the perfect name but had yet to agree until then. The newest addition to the Welch family was to be named Jacqueline Annette. Both Jack and Little Jack's (everyone caught on quickly to calling her that) grandma instantly became teary-eyed and were extremely touched.

Jack had a difficult time parting from her namesake when Briana and Sonny decided that it was time to head back to Canova Beach. Kissing the little girl on her forehead, Jack promised to visit regularly and was rewarded with a smile. At least, she insisted that it was a smile, ignoring the fact that Little Jack was only a few hours old and therefore should not have mastered the art of smiling just yet.

Munching on a package of peanut butter crackers that she'd bought from a vending machine in the cafeteria, Sonny ruminated on the conversation that she had with Melanie less than an hour ago. Evidently, her sister had officially joined the "we want Jack and Sonny together" club because she ushered everyone out of her hospital room so that she could talk to her younger sibling about her love life. After announcing that she knew she was sticking her nose where it didn't belong, Melanie informed Sonny that she should stop being stubborn and just admit her feelings for Jack. When Sonny refused to admit that she loved Jack "in that way", her sister told her that life was much too short to ignore love.

Finishing the package, Sonny balled up the plastic. Opening the small ashtray compartment, which was almost sparkling clean, she pushed the plastic inside before closing the tiny door. Catching the disapproving expression on Briana's face and knowing that her sister was thinking that she didn't want her clean ashtray used as a trash can, Sonny quickly looked in the opposite direction, keeping silent. Now *that* was a classic case of ignoring! The blonde gave a short nod

of her head. She wasn't ignoring her love for Jack because there was no love. At least, not the kind everyone seemed to think she had. Really, what was their problem? It was strange how so many people were wrong and how insistent they were that their theories were correct.

Laura was one of the very first people to accuse her of being interested in Jack in a romantic way. When they broke up, Laura had insisted that Jack was the one for her. She insisted that there were sparks between them. After her there was Sarah, who constantly teased her best friend about "having a thing" for Jack. Just about every time that they spoke, Sarah asked Sonny if she had declared her love for the ex-Conqueror yet and when she was given a no, asked why her friend was taking so long. Sonny didn't know exactly when or why it happened, but suddenly Peter and Hawke had joined the club as well. Deciding not to beat around the bush, Hawke told her ex-boss that she would be crazy not to nab Jack while she had the chance. If she didn't, eventually someone else would and then Sonny would be extremely sorry that she'd let the blue-eyed beauty slip through her fingertips. Peter had basically said the same things, but in a gentler way.

And then there was her blood-related family. Her parents, sisters, and various relatives who had met and instantly taken to Jack at the party earlier all thought that she and Jack would be the perfect item. Sonny was waiting for Isaac to jump on the bandwagon. So far, he hadn't said a word about it. *Hmm, maybe he won't*, Sonny thought as she ran her tongue along the roof of her mouth, dislodging a bit of peanut butter that had gotten stuck there. *After all, it's not as though he's an expert on love since he has a different woman every time that I see him. That would be like a person who can't even boil water trying to give someone advice on how to cook a five course meal!*

No, they were all wrong. Dead wrong. Blue was the only person on this earth that Sonny was meant to be with and she would in time prove them all wrong. Soon they would see how happy Blue made her and would give up on their insane assumptions that she and Jack were meant to be. And though she knew how Jack felt about her, she was sure that the businesswoman would find her one and only. Sonny chose to ignore the fact that thinking of Jack with another woman made her stomach churn. Sonny shook her head as she released a small sigh. They were definitely wrong.

As she pulled on to the street leading to her parents beach house, Briana opened the ashtray compartment and pulled out the plastic, which faintly smelled like peanut butter. Giving her sister another disapproving look, she tucked the plastic into her pocket so that she could correctly dispose of it later. Seeing that Sonny was trying to look in the back seat (undoubtedly at Jack) via the mirror on the passenger side, a knowing smile making its way to Briana's lips as she slowly shook her head. *We are so not wrong.*

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Glancing at the clock, Jack noted that it was nearly midnight. Suppressing a yawn, she folded her hands beneath her head as she looked toward the ceiling, thinking that Sonny was in the bathroom and would be joining her any moment now. A slowly forming smile appearing on her lips, Jack felt like a giddy teenager. Though she had been told in no uncertain terms that there wouldn't be any hanky panky, she was still excited that she would get to share a bed with the

love of her life. This would be what...the fourth time that they'd slept together? Twice on a bed and once on a couch. Though the hospital bed had been uncomfortable and small, it had been wonderful to get the opportunity to hold Sonny.

Hearing a faint click, blue eyes darted toward the door as it began to slowly open revealing a blonde angel dressed in silk cornflower blue shorts along with a matching short-sleeved night shirt. Remarking on how adorable she looked, Jack watched as a blush reddened the other woman's cheeks. Quietly thanking her, Sonny closed the door before she walked towards the bed. Instead of getting in, she knelt beside it and proceeded to say her prayers while Jack watched, wearing a tender expression. Done minutes later, Sonny slipped between the sheets, practically gliding on them due to her silk clothing.

Reaching over, Jack turned off the lights before scooting over and wrapping an arm around the smaller woman. Easily giving in to the temptation to cuddle, the blonde scooted closer and slipped an arm around Jack's middle while resting her head on the woman's shoulder. Unconsciously, her fingers began to caress up and down Jack's side, delighting in the smooth warm skin. Sonny's brow furrowed as her hand slid to Jack's stomach...her naked stomach. Hurriedly sitting up, the blonde turned on the light before whipping around to face Jack. Pulling down the covers, she lightly gasped before covering the brunette.

"You're naked!"

Jack smirked. "You should have went to Harvard. It's amazing that you managed to figure that out!"

Growling low in her throat in what Jack thought was such a sexy way, Sonny moved so that she was no longer under the covers. Looking at the mischievously grinning brunette, Sonny calmly inquired why she had chosen not to wear clothing to bed. Jack offhandedly replied that she hadn't wanted to. Smirking, Sonny slowly shook her head while insisting that Jack should get dressed.

"Why?"

"Because...because I said so." Sonny mentally rolled her eyes at her brilliant reply. Honestly, the idea of sleeping with a completely nude Jack was just too tempting and Sonny currently did not feel trustworthy of her self-control. *Hey, I'm only human.*

A trace of her grin still in place, Jack turned on her right side so that she was now facing the other woman. As she perched her chin in the palm of her hand, the covers slid downward, enticingly revealing the very top of her breasts. Instantly, green eyes zeroed in on creamy cleavage before slowly tracing the contours of two plump globes. After a few moments of inspection, Sonny realized what she was doing and turned the other way, unable to look Jack in the face. Her cheeks growing hot along with other places on her body, Sonny excused herself and all but ran from the bedroom. Consciously not knowing where she was going, her feet led her to the kitchen, where she sat at the table not bothering to even turn on the light. Folding her arms over her chest, the blonde quietly sat in thought.

So what if she had openly admired Jack's body. Did that mean that she wanted her...loved her? It absolutely did not. If anything, that was hormone's not love. A soft sigh escaped Sonny's lips. No matter what it was, she was sure that she would receive some ribbing from Jack. There was no way that she was going to let this opportunity pass her by.

As though she knew that she was the subject of Sonny's thoughts, the brunette wandered into the kitchen and felt along the wall for the light switch. Finding it, she flicked it and the kitchen was instantly illuminated. Both women blinked at the brightness before their eyes quickly adjusted. An unreadable look on her face, Jack now dressed in plaid yellow and blue boxer shorts and a bright yellow tank top, asked if she could have a seat at the table. Silently nodding and feeling embarrassed all over again, Sonny kept her eyes riveted to the table as her friend chose to occupy the seat next to her own. When she heard a heartfelt apology, the blonde looked up at the other woman in surprise, not having expected that. She should have learned by now that Jack could be unpredictable.

"What are you apologizing for?"

"For behaving like an idiot. There was a small part of me," Jack held the thumb and forefinger of her right hand close together, "that insisted I should have put my pajamas on but of course I chose not to listen and I am sorry Sonny girl. It wasn't my intention to embarrass or upset you." Jack morosely looked down toward her lap. "Sometimes I just don't think before I act."

Unfolding her arms, Sonny arose from her chair before kneeling in front of the brunette and taking her hands in her own. Peering up at her, she waited for Jack to make eye contact with her before saying, "It's okay Jack. Don't beat up on yourself. I wasn't upset with you but embarrassed that I was openly staring at your body," pausing, Sonny then whispered, "I liked what I saw." Instantly catching sight of a slight grin before it quickly vanished, the blonde head shook. *I just had to give her ammunition.* However, to her credit Jack didn't comment on Sonny's last statement. Instead, she chastely kissed her cheek before asking if she was ready to go to bed now. Nodding, Sonny began to smile as Jack almost shyly offered a hand to her. Slipping her hand inside of the bigger one, the blonde allowed herself to be led out of the kitchen and up the stairs to their room.

Within moments of entering the bedroom, Jack and Sonny were again snuggling beneath the covers. Resting her head on the brunette's chest, Sonny listened to the steady soothing rhythm of her heartbeat allowing it and the long fingers gently massaging her scalp to lull her to sleep. Just before she drifted off, Sonny softly wished Jack to have sweet dreams. A contented smile on her lips, Jack bid her the same.

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Since Jack insisted that they must go to the hospital in order to see Little Jack and Melanie before they left today, she and Sonny had just returned from Rockledge and now the blonde was just getting ready to pack her belongings. As she neatly placed clothing into her suitcase, she thought of what a terrific weekend it was despite Jack having been attacked by her psycho cousin Alicia, in spite of she herself being arrested, and Jack and Melanie being lost for hours. Sonny lightly chuckled. No one could say that this had been by any means a boring weekend.

The blonde smiled, thinking how much closer she and Jack had become during the weekend. She felt the beginnings of a bond between them, and it thoroughly delighted her. No, with she and Jack becoming closer, with her friend instantly connecting with her family and the addition of Little Jack to the family, it had been a spectacular weekend never to be forgotten. Sonny was extremely happy that she had asked Jack to come along. It was probably one of the best decisions that she had ever made.

So lost in her thoughts was she that the blonde failed to hear the knocking on the door and therefore was nearly scared out of her wits when she felt a light tap on her shoulder. Gasping, she turned around to see her brother standing behind her, a smile on his handsome face, which he tried so desperately to conceal. Smirking, Sonny placed her hands on her hips before asking him what he was smiling at. Shaking his head, Isaac evidently declined to answer since he continued to silently stand there.

Arching a golden brow, his sister looked at him curiously, wondering what was on his mind. She had a feeling that he most likely had something to say that she didn't care to hear. "Well? Is there something I can do for you Isaac?"

Wordlessly nodding, Isaac walked back toward the bedroom door and peeked out looking both ways. Relieved that no one was coming, he closed the door walking back to the bed and taking a seat on it, Sonny doing the same. Drawing a leg beneath him, Isaac turned so that he was facing her. Sonny watched as he cupped his left hand in his right and proceeded to crack his knuckles. Wincing because the sound always grated on her nerves, Sonny also slightly grew alarmed. The only times she'd known Isaac to crack his knuckles was when he was nervous or upset about something. Observing the expression on his face, she concluded that he was now nervous. She inwardly sighed. *About what? He hasn't said one single word!*

About to scream due to the obnoxious habit, Sonny reached out and covered one of Isaac's hands with her own before he could start to crack the knuckles of his right hand. Again, she asked him if there was anything that she could do for him.

Gently disengaging his hand from hers, Isaac folded his together in his lap. "Actually Sonny I wanted to speak with you about something. Something that I've been thinking about for the past couple of days. Now I-"

Isaac suddenly stopped speaking when his sister held up a hand. Looking at her bewildered expression, the man wondered what she was thinking. He had no idea that she was thinking he had just jumped on the bandwagon and wanted to become a member of the "we want Jack and Sonny together" club.

"Isaac I know that you're just trying to help but whether Jack and I end up together or not is solely our business and I'm a little bit fed up with everyone trying to get involved. The last time I checked this was my life and *only* my life. It's my decision what I choose to do with it and with whom. Understand?" *I can't believe that my playboy brother is trying to give me advice on love! He wouldn't know romantic love if it came up and bit him on the butt!*

Albeit thoroughly confused, Isaac slowly nodded. "Um, yes I understand Sonny, but I didn't want to talk about you and Jack and your relationship...or lack thereof."

Albeit now thoroughly embarrassed, Sonny managed to locate her voice. "Oh?"

Nodding again, her brother gave her a sweet smile. "Oh."

She apologized although Isaac said that it wasn't necessary. Sonny then asked him to continue what he had been trying to get out when she interrupted. Isaac positioned his hands to crack them again, but then recalled that his sister didn't care for it. Instead, he shoved his hands into his pockets before quickly getting out what he wanted to say. He spoke in such a rush that it was questionable if he was breathing at all while doing so. When he finished, he offered Sonny a charming smile--the one he used when he really *really* wanted something. It very rarely failed him where the ladies were concerned, but thus far, it wasn't working on his sister, who was adamantly shaking her head in the negative.

"Why not?" To his own ears, it sounded as though he was whining, which was a rarity. The handsome and debonair Isaac Alexander Campbell didn't have to whine in order to get his way. All he had to do was flash one of those patented adorable smiles and allow the smoothness of his words to caress a woman's ear and she was putty in his hands. Hey, it was a gift and he had been using it to suit his purposes since he was a preschooler and wanted fellow classmate five-year-old Susie Thompson to give him one of her cookies during snack time every day. Isaac wasn't a jerk, just a man who had been successful with the fairer sex for the past thirty years. What good would it do to let his talent go to waste?

For the second time in the last twenty-four hours, Sonny gave an answer that really wasn't an answer at all. "Because...I said so." *When exactly was it that I lost the ability to reply in an intelligent manner?*

"That's not an answer."

Shaking her head, Sonny admitted, "I just don't think it's a good idea." Jumping up from the bed, she continued to pack her belongings.

"And why isn't it? And don't say because you said so!" Isaac quickly added before his sister had the opportunity to speak.

Practically throwing her toothbrush in her suitcase, Sonny then looked at her brother, slightly irritated. "I like my peace Isaac. I don't think it's a good idea for you to move in with me because I know you'll have women coming in and out. I don't want that."

Isaac shook his dark head. "No I won't!"

"Yes you will!"

"Will not!"

"Will too!"

"Na ah!"

"Ya ha!"

Both promptly burst into laughter at their childish and silly words. Thinking that the sudden laughter might have softened his sister's resolve, Isaac smiled at her very sweetly as he arose from the bed and gently ruffled her hair.

"So may I?" he softly inquired, his long dark eyelashes blinking as he gazed at her.

Sonny rolled her eyes. "Good gracious Isaac I am not one of your women who would melt like a ball of wax that's been tossed into a bonfire." She pointed at his face while shaking her head. "That look won't work on me."

"Aw c'mon Sis." Isaac was well aware that he was whining again, but he was way past caring. He needed to get out of Canova Beach and pronto! Right now Orlando sounded like a great city to move to and plus he had already landed a job there so now all he needed was a place to live. Thinking that it might work in his favor, he told Sonny that he had employment and therefore would be able to pay half the rent and utilities. He even offered to give her back all the money she had already paid toward the November rent. Based on the expression on her face, Isaac could tell that she was thinking about it. "I won't be any trouble, I promise. Rule number one-I won't bring any women back to your apartment. I promise you that Sonny. And I won't be there long. Just until I get a place of my own."

"If you already have a job then why can't you find an apartment too? I'm sure there are even empty apartments in my complex and the rent is affordable."

"That might take a little bit of time and I must leave now."

Two curious eyebrows lifted, as a petite blonde became suspicious. Those last three words 'must leave now' left her feeling uneasy. And looking at him closely, Sonny noticed that her brother looked a bit desperate as though there was a reason why he needed to leave Canova Beach as soon as was possible. As she zipped up her suitcase, she asked him to explain his last statement. *What have you gotten yourself into now big brother?*

"I just uh," trailing off, Isaac shrugged while offering his sister a smile that appeared more sickly than charming. Thinking that the truth was his best option, the young man loudly sighed as he ran a nervous hand through his hair. "Sonny, I've gotten myself into a little bit of trouble." He watched as a pair of golden brows managed to elevate further. "Okay, *a lot* of trouble."

"What kind of trouble are we talking about here?" Sonny inquired in a deceptively calm tone of voice.

"You know my girlfriend Veronica right?" Isaac asked as he retook his seat on the bed. Joining him, Sonny's brow furrowed, as she grew thoughtful.

"I thought her name was Ronda?"

Isaac looked clueless. "Ronda?"

"Yes Ronda, the woman you called to speak to me about two weeks ago. You described her as a cute little Irish redhead with verdant eyes that sparkled like a sun-kissed diamond."

Recognition dawned on his handsome face and he nodded. "Oh, yeah! Ronda O'Connell." Isaac waved his hand dismissively "She and I parted ways just a few days after I talked with you." Trying to formulate his thoughts, he missed his sister rolling her eyes heavenward. Sonny didn't think that it was possible for her brother to stay interested in one woman for any period longer than two to three weeks. So far, he wasn't proving her wrong and Sonny was starting to get the impression that he never would. *He'll probably be a playboy for life!*

"Last week I met this incredible tall buxom blonde with a body to die for," Isaac started, his green eyes glazing over with evident lust. Rolling her eyes again, Sonny quickly snapped her fingers in his face, causing the man to blink twice before he looked at her in embarrassment. "Anyway, Veronica and I instantly hit it off and things were going just fine until her husband came home unexpectedly Wednesday night to catch us in umm...a compromising position. And..."

"Wait a minute!" Sonny interjected. "I thought you decided that you weren't going to court any more married women?" The last time she knew of that her brother dated anyone wearing a wedding band was when he had to take a leap out of a two-story window in order to avoid a confrontation with an angry six feet and seven inches tall husband. While a doctor reset his broken arm Isaac vowed to only date unattached females from then on.

Isaac nodded. "I had, but Veronica informed me that she and her husband were separated and that they would most likely be getting a divorce so I thought what the heck ya know?"

A blonde head slowly shook at this foolish line of reasoning. "Uh huh, sure Isaac. Please proceed. What happened after he found you doing the dirty with his tall buxom blonde wife?"

"Well to say the least, he was very upset and though he didn't lay a hand on me, he did tell me that if he ever laid eyes on me again that he wouldn't hesitate to kick the crap out of me," Isaac briefly paused. "Of course, he didn't put it quite that nicely."

"So in order for that not to happen you think it's best to leave town?"

The dark-haired man nodded. "Exactly."

"Are you never coming back to Canova Beach? I mean, our parents do live here."

"Oh, I'm not worried about visiting. I think that after a while has passed, he's bound to cool off. Plus, I doubt that marriage is going to last much longer. I just think it's best if I leave now. You know, while it's still fresh in his mind. So please Sonny?"

Sighing loudly, the blonde looked at her brother, a thoughtful expression on her face. Perhaps it wouldn't be so bad having him around for a few weeks. After all, they didn't get to see each other that often. Plus, if she kept an eye on him perhaps he would stay out of so much trouble where women were concerned. Sonny shook her head, quickly disagreeing with that thought. *I've got about a snowball's chance in hell of keeping Isaac out of trouble.*

Sonny was quickly pulled into a pair of strong arms when she informed her brother that he could be her temporary roommate. Placing a semi wet kiss on her cheek, the delighted young man told her to expect him in Orlando later that evening. After talking with her for a few more minutes, Isaac stood up to leave, heading toward the door when she called him back. Asking him where he had obtained a job so quickly, Sonny curiously watched as a grin spread on Isaac's lips.

"I'm the newest employee at *Brew n' Paradise*. I figured that since you and Jack are such close buds now that you wouldn't mind a family member working for the 'ex-enemy'." Flashing a mischievous smile, Isaac quickly fled from the room, missing his sister's chuckle.

"Well, well, well," Sonny said aloud to herself. "Seems that my brother's record remains unbroken. Not only did he charm me into giving him a place to stay, but he charmed the ex-Conqueror into giving him a job." Fully laughing now, she arose from the bed and continued her packing. "Big brother you are good!"

*To be concluded in Part 6*

## The Athenaeum's Scroll Archive

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# ~ An Affair to Remember ~

by Ambrosia

**Disclaimers:** The characters in this story are figments of my imagination. They are solely the property of me, myself, and I ☺

**Sexual Content:** There are intimate/sexual/loving relationships between women occurring in this tale.

**Violence:** None. Nada. Zip. Just peace, love, and harmony. (Chuckle)

**Language:** Nothing that can't be aired on a network station.

**Special Thanks:** Thank you Hawke and Antigone for helping me by giving the names for the establishments mentioned in this story. I had no idea what to call them until you both offered your assistance. So thank you very much. I really appreciate it ☺

**Inspiration:** I would like to thank the creators of the movie "You've Got Mail" for inspiring me to write this piece. I've watched that movie so many times I just had to write a story loosely based on it. ☺

**Feedback:** All comments (please be gentle with me-for I'm a sensitive bard ☺) can be emailed to SumrBrezze@aol.com.

## Part 6

The time was just reaching one o'clock p.m. when Jack pulled up in front of Sonny's apartment complex. The blonde had been thrilled to find that her friend drove less like a maniac on this return trip. She only had to remind Jack to slow down twice and both times the brunette had easily complied.

Though she was extremely glad to be home, Sonny already missed her family. Being the closest, it had taken Briana and she nearly ten minutes to finish saying their good-byes as they attempted to squeeze the life out of each other. Though the entire Campbell clan would not be getting together this coming Christmas, (Paul and Annette were going on a second honeymoon) Sonny and Briana had made plans for the younger sister to come visit while on winter break. That was something to look forward to.

Informed that it wasn't necessary, Jack still escorted Sonny along with her belongings up to her apartment. Being invited inside, the brunette jumped at the chance, smiling as she entered the apartment and took a seat on the couch while Sonny went to fetch them something to drink. Noticing the November issue of *Climax*, the magazine which Laura worked for, Jack picked it up and began to leaf through it, stopping when she came to a page that sported a rather gorgeous yet professional picture of her ex-girlfriend Leslie. Grinning, she settled back on the couch and proceeded to read the two-page long article, thoroughly impressed with Laura's writing as she carefully read.

By the time she had finished half a page, Sonny had returned with two tall glasses of slushy lemonade, which she had blended with ice in a blender that was rarely used. The blonde also set a plate of oatmeal cookies before them as she quietly waited for her friend to finish reading the article. Her eyes still glued to the magazine, Jack thanked the other woman for the snack as she reached out for a cookie, managing to easily swipe one from the plate without using her vision. Amused, Sonny washed down three cookies with nearly half a glass of lemonade before Jack was done reading.

Pointing at the article, Jack looked up at Sonny, remarking on how well done it was. A blonde head nodding, Sonny agreed. In her opinion, it had been one of Laura's best articles that she had



ever had the pleasure of reading.

"Isn't it something how our ex's hooked up?" Jack inquired in a casual conversational tone while reaching for another cookie.

Sonny nodded. "It definitely is. I think that Laura and Leslie make an adorable couple," she earnestly replied. She wished them nothing but the best and sincerely hoped that Leslie was the one for Laura. Sonny had a feeling their relationship would be a strong and lasting one.

"They absolutely do," Jack agreed as she swallowed the remaining part of her cookie before regarding the other woman with a sly grin. "So, do you think that you and I could make an adorable couple Sonny girl? Personally, I think so."

Though she rolled her eyes, there was a slight smile on the blonde's lips. "You don't give up easily, do you Jack?"

Jack shook her head. "Giving up is not in my vocabulary. I mean I didn't become the ex-Conqueror by giving up." She grinned as she glanced at her watch. "Ooh, I've gotta get moving. Chloe's friends were supposed to have her home by early afternoon and I'm anxious to see her." Looking at Sonny, the brunette noticed a bright smile on her face and inquired about it.

"It's just so sweet how you are about your sister. I can tell that you're real excited about seeing her and it's only been a couple of days." Arising from the couch, Sonny began to walk her friend to the door.

Jack shrugged, wearing a faint smile. "What can I say? I love the little rugrat." Her smile turning into a full-fledged grin, she opened the front door, already missing the younger woman standing less than a foot away from her. Wordlessly, she wrapped her arms around Sonny, pleased when she was quickly embraced. Neither said anything as they stood in each other's arms for a good fifteen seconds before parting. "I really had a great time this weekend Sonny. Your family is incredible. Thank you for inviting me."

Reaching up, Sonny gave Jack's arm a brief squeeze as she smiled. "Thank you for coming. It was wonderful having you there." Her smile broadened as she added, "And I think my family has unofficially adopted you. They really fell in love with you."

"Hm, that means that I have one Campbell to go and my mission is complete." Jack wiggled her eyebrows up and down as Sonny lightly chuckled. Though she was anxious to see her sister, Jack's feet refused to budge. An idea suddenly forming in her mind, she asked, "Hey, why don't you and Isaac meet Chloe and I for dinner sometime this week? Maybe Tuesday?" She would have suggested tomorrow night, but she didn't want to seem *too* enthusiastic to see the love of her life again. *Damn, she's like a drug and I'm an addict who's finding it difficult to go too long without having another hit.*

Sonny smiled, liking that idea very much. "Excellent. Where do you want to go?"

"I'll have to get back to you on that. Can I call you tonight?"

The blonde shrugged. "I don't know. Can you?"

Smirking, Jack leaned down and stole a quick kiss, instantly wishing that it could have been longer. Barely looking into startled green eyes, she replied, "I'll call you later. Be waiting by the phone." With a wink and grin the ex-Conqueror flew down the stairs.

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After spending some time with her brother, eating pizza and watching a couple of movies they rented from the video store, Sonny excused herself for the evening. Taking a quick shower, the young woman slipped into a pair of boxers and a T-shirt before saying her prayers and slipping between the covers. Glancing at the clock, she saw that it was almost ten thirty and decided to read for a little while before going to sleep. Just as she opened her novel to the page where she left off, the phone began to ring. Reaching over, Sonny grabbed the phone as she placed her book on the bed.

"Hello?"

"What are you wearing?" a low sexy voice inquired, which Sonny instantly recognized as belonging to Jack. She grinned, deciding to play along for at least a moment or two.

"Nothing but a smile," Sonny replied in a breathless voice. She heard her friend chuckle and smiled into the phone.

"Where are you?" The low sexy voice was still in place.

Sitting up in the bed, Sonny propped a couple of pillows against the headboard before pressing back into them. "Where should I be at 10:30 at night when I have to go to work the next morning? In bed of course."

"So...you're naked and laying in bed. Wish I could be there right now. I bet you look good enough to eat."

Hearing a long moan, Sonny started to squirm on the cool sheets as she felt the beginning of a familiar dampness between her legs. It was time to stop this sensuous yet dangerous game before things got out of hand. Lightly clearing her throat, Sonny touched her flushed cheek as she asked, "What's the matter? You didn't have enough dinner?"

Jack chuckled again. "Yes, but there's always room for dessert. And speaking of food, that was my original reason for calling. Sorry it took so long. After I arrived home, I had to take care of one thing after another and time just got away from me."

Grabbing her novel, Sonny began to absently thumb through the pages. "It's fine Jack. I wasn't asleep anyway. So, have you decided where we're going?"

"How does Italian grab you? There's this fantastic little place that Chloe and I often go to on Evergreen Street. I tell you that their four cheese lasagna is truly out of this world."

"Yummy. Italian grabs me just fine."

There was a slight pause before Jack asked, "And may I grab you too?"

Although it couldn't be seen, Sonny rolled her eyes. "You're incorrigible."

Jack grinned. "Yeah, that's true. Though, I think it only adds to my charm. Wouldn't you agree Sonny girl?"

The blonde laughed. "Definitely Jack. Definitely."

"May I ask you a question?"

"You just did but feel free to ask another."

"Are you really naked?"

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Just as she finished up with Pamela, who was a regular Thursday customer, a co-worker informed Sonny that she had a call. Ending her conversation with Pamela and telling her that she would see her next week, the blonde washed the oil off her hands before heading into the break room where the phone was. Bringing the phone to her ear, she pressed the correct button on the third try before uttering an exasperated hello.

"Hey there. Are you okay?"

Instantly knowing whom the caller was, Sonny smiled. "Yes, I'm fine. I just always have trouble getting this phone to work properly. It looks like a switchboard." When Jack chuckled so did she. "So what's up? By the way, Isaac said to tell you again that he enjoyed our dinner date the other night. So did I. It was fun."

Smiling, the brunette replied, "Yes, it was. We'll have to do it again sometime. Now, I was wondering if you would be interested in having lunch with me today."

Glancing at the clock on the wall, Sonny saw that it was almost twelve, which meant she had about an hour before her lunch break started. "Sure. That would be nice. My lunch break is at one. Could you meet me somewhere near here?"

"Don't they have a restaurant at the resort? We could eat there if you like."

"That's perfect. I get an employee discount there. So I'll see you at one?" Looking up, Sonny waved and smiled as she saw her twelve o'clock appointment walking by.

"Can't wait. See you soon."

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Aiming her fork at Sonny's Caesar salad, Jack speared a bit of lettuce and a rather plump piece of chicken. Depositing it into her mouth, she munched happily, smiling sweetly at the smirk directed toward her.

"Are you enjoying *my* food?" Sonny asked good-naturedly.

Running her tongue along her upper lip, the brunette didn't miss the look of desire that quickly passed across Sonny's face. While a grin tugged at her mouth, Jack nodded. "Yes, your food is very good." She offered her friend some of her hamburger, but the blonde shook her head deciding to just stick with her chicken salad. Taking a big bite out of her double meat hamburger with one hand, Jack attempted to steal another piece of chicken with the other but retracted her fork when a soft palm gently slapped her away. Sticking her bottom lip out, Jack pretended to pout. Sonny laughed.

"Why didn't you just get a salad to go along with your greasy burger and fries?"

Jack snorted. "Like you don't ever enjoy a greasy burger. I don't know why you just got a salad for lunch." The brunette glanced around the female laden restaurant before returning her attention to her companion. "Who are *you* trying to impress?"

Sonny smirked. "I'm not trying to impress anyone." She pointed her fork accusingly at the other woman, though there was a hint of a smile on her face. "Because of you and my calorie loving family I've gained two pounds in the last week."

Looking pleased with this information, Jack replied, "Good. We were saying that you needed to gain weight. You had been losing remember." Concerned blue eyes trailed up and down Sonny's body. "You could stand to gain a few more pounds too. I mean you look great but a few more pounds wouldn't hurt."

Touched, Sonny reached over and briefly squeezed Jack's hand. "Thank you for caring and I am trying to gain, I just don't think eating high calorie food is the way to make it happen. It's not nutritious."

"So after two servings of lasagna from Tuesday and a couple of fried chicken breasts last night, today you're making a change in your eating habits?" Jack laughed when she had a tongue stuck out at her in reply.

"Hey, was it my fault that you brought *Kentucky Fried Chicken* over? It would have been impolite for me to decline eating it."

The brunette chuckled. "So you sacrificed for me, eh?" At the other woman's eager nod, she chuckled even more. "You're so cute Sonny girl." Jack smiled as her statement earned her a blush. "You know, I had a particular reason for wanting to see you today."

"Really? And what reason is this?"

While dipping a french fry in a puddle of ketchup, Jack replied, "I wanted to talk with you about Blue." Detecting a low groan from her friend, the brunette smiled as she quickly ate and swallowed the fry. "Now, now. I just wanted to find out what you know about her. I mean, this woman could be a psycho for all you know."

"She's not a psycho."

"Oh, yeah? How do you know? You've never met her. Just because you've spoken on the phone with her a handful of times that doesn't guarantee that she isn't some masked murderer." When Sonny rolled her eyes, Jack added, "Well she very well could be."

"For that matter so could you."

"Me?" Jack pointed to herself, her blue eyes wide with shock. "You know me. I couldn't hurt a fly!" She paused. "Well...actually I could but that's different."

A blonde head shook. "Nope, for all I know you could have five bodies buried in that mansion of yours."

Jack smirked. "Oh, please. Do I look like a murderer to you?"

"They do say that appearances can be deceiving."

"Whatever." Jack rolled her eyes as she picked up her drink and took a long swallow. "Okay, perhaps she's not psycho. All I'm trying to say is that you should be careful. People should take caution when forming relationships with others over the Internet because some of them turn out to be dangerous and I don't want you getting hurt. I care about you too much Sonny girl." Jack attempted to put on her best innocent and concerned look.

A soft smile forming, Sonny quietly replied, "Jack, thank you but I feel completely and utterly safe where Blue is concerned. I know that I can trust her. I *feel* it deep inside. She would never hurt me on purpose. She loves me," Sonny softly added while thinking of the Southern woman whom she so desperately wanted to meet. Perhaps the next time they spoke she would bring it up.

Jack inwardly sighed. Thus far, she wasn't doing a good job of making Sonny's faith in her Internet identity waver. A thoughtful look appeared on her face as she wondered how she could successfully get rid of herself. Originally, Jack didn't think that this would be so difficult but Sonny was remaining as tenacious as a dog with a T-bone steak.

Okay, let's try a different angle. "Her screen name is Blueyez right?" Remaining quiet, the blonde merely nodded while wondering where Jack could possibly be headed with this. "So what does that tell you about her?"

"That her eyes are blue." Jack received an expression that plainly said *duh*.

Ignoring the look, Jack slowly nodded. "It very well could be, but you're looking at the obvious Sonny girl. Let's dig deeper. Blue means what? Besides being the color, it symbolizes gloom and depression. So...Dixie is it?"

Sitting back in her chair, Sonny folded her arms across her chest. "Uh huh."

"Okay Dixie chose the screen name of Blueyez, which could mean that she's often feeling blue and you could tell that by her eyes. Now they may or may not be blue but she is." Jack grinned, looking pleased with her explanation. There was quite a long pause as Sonny merely stared at her with an unreadable expression.

"Are you on medication?" the blonde finally inquired, breaking the silence.

Undeterred, Jack continued grinning as she retorted, "Nope, but your Southern belle might be since she's suffering from depression. Probably Prozac or something like that."

"Since when did *you* have a Ph.D.?" Not giving the other woman a chance to answer, Sonny continued. "And even if you did, how could you diagnose someone without ever having met or spoken with them? Jack, I know you mean well," pausing, Sonny's brow furrowed. "At least I *hope* you mean well, but you really need to stay out of my personal business. You have your own life. Live it." Glancing at her watch, Sonny muttered something about having to get back to work. Standing, she started to reach into her pocket for her wallet when Jack insisted that she was paying for lunch. Thanking her brusquely, Sonny headed out of the restaurant, ignoring when Jack called her name numerous times.

Hurriedly slapping a fifty-dollar bill on the table (most of which was the tip), Jack raced out of the restaurant to catch up with her perturbed friend. Minutes later, she found Sonny sitting on a bench at the entrance to a vast garden. Asking if she could sit down, Jack received a small nod in reply. Sitting, the brunette stretched her arms along the back of the bench before she stared up at the blue sky while gathering her thoughts. Blue eyes moving to rest on an upset blonde, Jack quietly apologized. Shrugging, Sonny didn't offer a comment. Bringing her right arm down, Jack slowly inched her hand toward Sonny's as though she was afraid that the younger woman would pull away. She was delighted when the blonde allowed her to hold her hand. After giving it a quick squeeze, Jack watched as green eyes fell upon her.

"Jack, I know how you feel about me, but you must realize that you and I aren't going to be together. The sooner you accept that, the sooner you can move on. I can only offer you my friendship. You have to accept that I'm going to be with Dixie," Sonny gently finished.

The brunette smiled at her. "If that's what you want. I only want your happiness Sonny girl." Turning her head away from Sonny, Jack rolled her eyes heavenward. *Oh, what a great big mess I've created!*

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Later that evening, Sonny sat at her computer staring at the nearly blank email before her. For the last ten minutes she had been trying to devise a short letter to Blue, but hadn't gotten past the salutation. Though deep in thought, Sonny managed to catch a whiff of pleasant cologne. Looking around, she spotted Isaac primping in front of a small mirror hanging from the wall. He was wearing a three-piece suit, of which his sister was sure one of his many lady friends had purchased for him. Swiveling around in her chair, she asked Isaac where he was going with an amused smile on her face. Sonny knew that it wouldn't be long before her brother dived back into the dating pool.

Glancing over his shoulder at her, he grinned, "I've got a date." Turning back to the mirror, Isaac continued fussing with his tie until he was satisfied with the way it looked.

"A hot one?"

Isaac's grin widened considerably. "Oh, it's absolutely sizzling!"

Chuckling, Sonny swiveled back around to face her computer screen. "I hope you have a great time. Just don't get into any trouble."

"Nah, Sarah will keep me in line." Turning, Isaac started to head back on the bedroom for his wallet when his sister suddenly appeared before him. Blinking, he wondered how she got there so quickly.

"Wh...what did you just say?" Sonny asked, green eyes filled with both anxiousness and surprise. Surely, Isaac hadn't meant that he was going out with *her* Sarah did he? Sarah was quite a common name so it had to be someone else. She frowned. For his sake, it better be another woman.

"I said that Sarah will keep me in line," Isaac repeated as he attempted to get around his sister. However, like a wall she wasn't budging. Looking vaguely annoyed, he asked Sonny to move out of the way. Isaac was supposed to pick his date up at her house at 8:00 sharp and he did not intend to be late.

Planting her hands on her hips, Sonny remained where she was. She did not intend to move until she received answers. "Sarah who?"

"Watkins. Who else?" Isaac replied, looking as though he expected his sister to automatically know whom he was referring to.

A blonde head began shaking adamantly. "There is no way on God's green earth that you are going out with my friend." When her brother started to protest, Sonny signaled him to remain silent. "No, you listen to me Isaac. I know exactly what's going to happen because you're a predictable moron. You'll wine and dine her for a week or two, making her feel like she's the center of your universe and then you'll break her heart. And when that happens I'm gonna have to break every bone in your body!"

Isaac was suddenly grateful that his sister wasn't carrying a baseball bat. "I'm not going to break her heart. I care about Sarah, despite your reservations."

Sonny rolled her eyes. "How many times have I heard you say that? If I had a nickel for every single time those words spewed from your mouth I'd have almost as much money as Jack!"

"I've never felt this way about anyone before Sonny. I don't blame you for having your doubts about me, but I'm being totally genuine. Sarah...I can't even begin to explain to you how incredible she makes me feel."

"You just got here. How close could you two have gotten in such a short amount of time?" As far as Sonny knew, her brother and best friend hadn't spoken to each other since Monday when Sarah stopped by for a visit.

"Well Tuesday we went out for coffee during my lunch break, and last night after you went to bed she and I stayed up for nearly four hours talking on the Internet." Isaac smiled broadly. "It was awesome. That was when I asked her out on a date, so this little sister is our first official date, and if I have my way it will be the first of many."

"Isaac..."

"Sonny," the dapper looking man started in a firm yet gentle tone, "I honestly care for Sarah and I assure you that I have never experienced these feelings for anyone in my entire life. This is real. Not a game and not a fling."

Sonny found pure sincerity when searching eyes the same exact color of her own. "You're not kidding, are you?" she softly inquired. She never thought she would witness the day when her brother actually started to have genuine feelings for someone. That he would open his heart to possibly...love? *This proves to me that anything is possible!*

Isaac smiled, the corners of his eyes crinkling as he did so. "Absolutely." Leaning down he chastely kissed his younger sibling on the cheek. "Now would you be so kind as to scoot out of the way? I've got to pick my date up at eight."

Wearing a hint of a smile, Sonny gently poked her brother in the center of his broad chest. "You be good to Sarah okay? She's my most cherished friend." Standing on her tiptoes, she smoothed down an errant lock of Isaac's hair. "You be on your best behavior."

Isaac rolled his eyes, though he was beaming. "Yes Mom."

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"Gin."

"Aw, crap!" Showing what a good sport she could be, Jack threw the ten cards she held in her hand on the felt green poker table. She mock glared at the grinning face sitting across from her

before they counted their cards and she added up the scores. It was humiliating losing three games of Gin Rummy in a row to someone she had just recently taught how to play. "You cheated."

"Just how did I cheat?" Chloe inquired, the grin on her face wider now.

Jack's expression turned pouty as she shrugged. Glancing at the tablet that they had kept score on, she noticed the final score. She had 255 points to Chloe's 520. That was totally unfair! "I dunno how you did it, but you did. You're a novice so how could you beat my a-my butt that well so quickly?"

Chloe giggled. "Just lucky I guess. You wanna play again?"

Jack shook her head. "Nah, losing so terribly to my little sister is embarrassing. Why don't we play something else? *Monopoly* perhaps? We haven't played that in a long time." Starting to smile, she fondly remembered the last time they had played the popular board game. It took so long to finish that they didn't get to bed until nearly two o'clock in the morning and they had started playing at ten. Neither hardly kept their eyes open during the last hour but it had been terrific spending that time together. And although Jack was receiving a thorough butt kicking tonight, she was having a wonderful time just hanging out with her sister.

Settling on *Monopoly*, Jack arose to get it when the phone suddenly rang. There were two phones in the room and both she and Chloe zeroed in on the one making the noise. It wasn't the ordinary phone, but the blue Blue one. This was the phone, which only Sonny had the number to. When she called via the dark blue phone, Jack knew to answer it as the Southern Dixie Monroe. The last time Sonny called she almost answered in her regular tone but managed to cover the slip before the other woman could notice.

Chloe tsked as she watched her sister hurry over to the ringing phone. "It's time for more adventures starring Deceiving Dixie."

Jack smirked. "Hush kid. I know what I'm doing." Signaling her sister to be quiet, the brunette picked up the phone, saying a soft and breathy hello. Hearing a snort, Jack informed the caller that she would be right back. Walking over to her sister, she released the brakes on the young woman's wheelchair despite her protests and guided her out of the room. Telling Chloe to go to her room and that she would meet her there soon with the *Monopoly* game and a bowl of popcorn, Jack closed the door, ignoring the slight disappointed frown on her sister's face. Returning to the phone, Jack took a deep breath before speaking.

"Howdy there," the brunette said in complete Dixie mode. "Sorry about that. I had to take somethin' out of the oven."

"What are you cooking?"

Jack frowned. What was she cooking? Closing her eyes, she tried to come up with something. "Um...a pie."

"Oh, yeah? That sounds yummy. What kind of pie?"

Jack glanced at the phone, her frown deepening. What was this? An interrogation?!? "An apple pie. It's my grandmother's recipe. I'd tell you what it is, but then I'd hafta kill you." Jack added a chuckle, pleased when Sonny chuckled as well. Now, it was time to change the subject. "So how are you? Is everything all right? Though I don't mind, you've never called this late before." Glancing at her watch, Jack saw that it was nearly nine o'clock.

"Everything is just fine and I'm doing well," Sonny assured her. "I've actually been trying to write you an email for a while now and then it occurred to me that I could just call you. Plus, I wanted to hear your voice," she shyly added.

More than anything, Jack fervently wished that Sonny knew whom she was talking with and that those words were meant for her. "That's so sweet darlin'." It was on the tip of her tongue to say that it was great to hear Sonny's voice but Jack figured that that would only draw the blonde closer to Dixie and she was attempting to 'wean' her off. *I'll be pleasant, however I'll sound a bit detached. Just enough to provoke her to have a smidgen of doubt of how Dixie might truly feel about her.* Jack shoved her guilt aside. She had to pull this off. Their romantic futures were at stake.

"I won't keep you long Dixie, but I wanted to ask you if you'd like to try meeting again?"

Jack allowed a long pause to settle between them before she offered a reply. "Sonny I would love to, but I've got a lot of stuff on my plate right now so..." she trailed off as she began to lightly drum her fingertips on the base of the phone.

"Oh, well that's okay." Sonny tried to hide her disappointment but failed miserably. "Will you let me know when your plate is uh...emptier?"

"I most certainly will." For good measure, Jack pretended to yawn, making sure that it reached her caller. "Oh! I'm so sorry 'bout that. I must be tired." She detected a faint sigh and nearly emitted one herself. She felt like a deceitful jerk.

"Okay, then I won't keep you. Just one more thing Dixie."

"Yes?"

"This may sound like a stupid question, but what color are your eyes?"

Jack almost laughed. So, their lunch conversation had stayed with Sonny after all. "Not stupid at all. They're brown."

"Brown?!"

"Yes. My screen name doesn't mean that I have blue eyes," Jack paused slightly. "Sweetheart, I

hate to rush this but I've gotta go."

"Um...sure okay. Goodnight Dixie. It was nice hearing your voice again."

"Ditto darlin'. G'night." Hanging up the phone, Jack walked over to the poker table and collapsed into her seat. Needing something to do, she began to gather the playing cards scattered across the table. "Damn, lying is hard work."

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Finishing her second box of *Bon Bons*, Sonny placed the empty box on the slightly sticky floor before she delved into the large bucket of buttered popcorn sitting on her lap. Tossing a few puffed kernels into her mouth, she looked ahead two rows in the movie theater at her brother and best friend. They were making goo goo eyes as they took turns feeding each other from a bag of *Gummy Bears*. If she weren't in such a foul mood, she would have thought the scene to be adorable. Instead, the upset blonde frowned deeply at the display of affection between Isaac and Sarah.

Grabbing another handful of popcorn, Sonny wondered why she had allowed herself to be coerced into coming along to the movies this evening with Jack, Isaac, and Sarah. The last thing she felt like doing was having fun. Swallowing, Sonny took a long sip from her soda before looking for another box of *Bon Bons*. When she failed to find one, she realized that she had eaten both boxes before the lights dimmed and the previews started. Sighing, she started to get up in order to make a trip to the concession stand when a soft warm palm landed on her arm. Turning to the left, the blonde looked at Jack questioningly. Wearing a concerned expression, Jack asked if something was bothering her. During the last two hours the quartet had been out, Sonny was unusually quiet. Announcing that she was fine, Sonny attempted to get up again, however the hand on her arm had her in a firm grip and wouldn't let go. Obviously irritated, the blonde informed Jack none too gently to remove her hand but merely received a shake of the head in reply.

"Talk to me," Jack gently said. Glancing at her watch, she saw that they had at least five more minutes until the previews started.

"About what?"

"About what's bothering you," Jack retorted as she unconsciously started to stroke Sonny's bare arm with her fingertips. "And don't say nothing, because I know something is wrong. I haven't seen you since Thursday. Did something happen in the last couple of days?"

Sonny wondered if she should tell Jack what happened Thursday evening. Within a few moments, she had made up her mind. Settling back in her seat, she nodded. "Thursday night I called Blue and spoke with her about us meeting." With a silent nod, Jack waited for her to continue. "She said that she would love to but she had a lot on her plate right now, which basically means no." Green eyes searched blue ones as though they held all of the answers. "Do you think she might be pulling away from me?"

Jack's first thought was to say a resounding yes. However, she figured that that wouldn't cause Sonny to feel any better. No, it was time for her to act like a true friend. She glanced toward Sarah, wondering what she would say if presented with a question such as this one.

"Sonny girl, she would be crazy to want to do that and I honestly don't think she is. She told you that she has a lot on her plate and I'm quite sure that she's telling the truth. What you need to do is give her some time for things to settle down in her life and then you two can set a date to meet." Lacing their fingers together, Jack gave Sonny's a gentle squeeze. "Don't let this worry you. It's needless to do so."

"Really?" Sonny asked, still unsure of how Dixie might feel about her. Tears stung her eyes and she blinked rapidly, not wanting to break down in front of at least eighty people.

Bringing the hand she held to her lips, Jack tenderly kissed the back of while keeping eye contact with her beloved friend. "Really."

Sonny began to smile for the first time that evening as she leaned over and kissed Jack's cheek before thanking her. She started to feel a little better after their brief talk. Perhaps Dixie really was just busy and did want to meet Sonny as much as she wanted to meet her. *I just need to stay positive.* Settling back, she offered Jack some popcorn and both women began to eat from it as the lights dimmed. A commercial with animated hot dogs, popcorn, and candy showed up on the grand screen as Sonny leaned toward Jack.

"You were right," she whispered, not wanting to disturb the people around them.

"Does that surprise you?"

Smirking, Sonny could still see her companion's wide grin despite the darkness of the theater. "You were right about Dixie's screen name not meaning that she has blue eyes. They're actually brown."

"So what does it mean?"

Shrugging, Sonny reached for her drink and took a sip. "I have no idea. She had to get off the phone before she could explain." Right on cue, the blonde heard Jack making the theme music from the movie *Psycho*. She even pumped her hand up and down, mimicking the ghastly shower scene. With her free hand, she lightly punched her arm while trying to keep from laughing. "That's not funny." Making it crystal clear that she was fibbing, Sonny was powerless to stop a giggle from escaping.

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Arriving home five minutes before eight, Sonny kicked her shoes off as soon as she closed the door. It was the first week of December and already the stores were beginning to get crowded. It had taken Sonny ten minutes to find a parking space at the mall and nearly twice that time to checkout her items at the majority of the stores she visited.

Placing her bags on the floor, the blonde walked over to the couch and sat gracelessly. Feeling confined, she raised up enough in order to remove her jeans, placing them on the coffeetable. It was great to be able to take her clothes off in any room again since Isaac had moved into his own place right after Thanksgiving. She'd missed his presence when he moved out, but Sonny loved having her privacy back. Besides, she was able to see Isaac all the time since he and Sarah were seemingly joined at the hip. They officially were a couple and Sonny couldn't be more thrilled though she was still often surprised that her brother the playboy was in a real relationship. He even held a steady job at *Brew 'n Paradise* and was the employee of the month. Yes, it was obvious that Isaac was finally becoming a grown up.

Relaxing for a few more minutes, Sonny then arose and headed into the kitchen to find something to eat. Starving because she hadn't eaten since her lunch break, she examined the contents of the refrigerator before choosing to have leftover pot roast. Heating the meat up in the microwave, she made a pot roast sandwich before deciding to make a salad to go along with it. Turning on the small radio sitting on her kitchen table, Sonny started to eat her dinner while listening to various tunes.

Feeling much better after finishing her meal, she washed her dishes before heading back into the living room and picking up her shopping bags. Dressed in only a T-shirt, panties, bra, and socks, Sonny plopped down on the couch, proceeding to wrap her purchases. Though she was by no means a professional wrapper, she did a decent job and had all her gifts successfully wrapped within an hour. Most of the gifts she had brought this evening would be packed into boxes and mailed to family members next week.

Deciding that she was in need of a shower, Sonny left the gifts on the coffeetable, couch, and floor as she headed into her bedroom. She was about to pull her shirt over her head when the phone started ringing. Quickly removing the shirt and tossing it on her bed, Sonny grabbed the phone and took a seat.

"Hello?"

"Whatcha up to?"

Sonny smiled into the phone, glad to hear the voice of her friend. "Just finished wrapping some Christmas gifts and was about to hop in the shower." Too late, she realized that she should have left that last part off. Surely, her caller would make it her duty to comment on it.

"Really?" Jack drew out the word thoughtfully. "You want me to come over and scrub your back for you? I can do the rest of you too while I'm there." The mischievous brunette grinned at the double entendre.

Sonny shook her head, a grin plastered on her face. "You...are...*so*...bad." She heard the other woman chuckle.

"I...*know*."

While laughing, the blonde leaned over to remove her socks, unconsciously beginning to fold them as she spoke. "I'm glad you called. I was planning on calling you when I finished with my shower."

"Couldn't resist hearing my voice before you went to bed and had naughty little dreams about me, eh?"

"Yes, that is my main reason for sleeping, so I can have erotic dreams about the ex-Conqueror *all* night long. You see, I simply cannot wait to remove all of the hindering clothing from my soft supple frame and slip between my cool inviting sheets so that I may meet you my dream lover. In fact, I was hoping that tonight we would try a little Kama Sutra. What do you think, hmm?" The second hand on Sonny's small bedside clock ticked by, as there was a long silence from the other end of the line. She briefly wondered if her caller had fainted. "Um, Jack? Hello? Are you still there?" Hearing a throat clearing, the blonde grinned triumphantly. *Rendered you speechless, did I Jack?*

"I'm here," Jack finally responded in a slightly breathless tone of voice.

Sonny's grin spread. "And are you okay?"

"Oh, sure. I'll have to break out my special friend tonight but other than that I'm just peachy."

Though having an inkling that it would be wise to head away from the X-rated direction this conversation was going, Sonny's curiosity won out over common sense. "What exactly is your special friend?"

"Come over and find out," pausing, a grin started on Jack's lips. "That is unless you want us to come to your place. Who knows? You might like my special friend."

"If I wanted a special friend then I'd get a man."

The brunette burst into laughter. "So you're *not* as naïve as you were starting to sound," she stated in a teasing voice.

Trapping the phone between her shoulder and cheek, Sonny reached behind and began to unclasp her bra. "I'm not as innocent as you may think Jack. I've dabbled in a few items that you'd never find at *Toys r' Us*. Fake penises-and while we're on the subject neither have real ones-have never held any interest for me. Been there, tried that and don't care to try it anymore." While removing her bra, the blonde shook her head, wondering why she was continuing to have this conversation and why she had just admitted to having used sex toys. *She doesn't need anymore encouragement!*

Once more, there was silence, but it wasn't as extensive as the previous time. "Er, has *Jack Daniels* paid you a visit tonight Sonny girl?"

Sonny smirked. "I'm not drunk. Anyway, I think we've talked enough about this subject."

"But I wanted to know what particular toys you've dabbled in," Jack replied in a whiny voice.

The other woman chuckled. "I think I'll just allow you to wonder about that," Sonny gave a slight pause before proceeding, "Now before we traveled down this sordid road, I did have something I wanted to ask you."

"Yes, I will marry you."

Though rolling her eyes, Sonny laughed. "That's not it. I haven't even been engagement ring shopping yet! I wanted to invite you to the grand opening of Peter's coffeehouse next Saturday. Actually, the official grand opening for the public isn't until Monday, but Saturday he's going to have a get together for friends and family. We're allowed to bring a guest so I'm asking you. Wanna go?"

"Gee, I'd love to but I received my own invitation in the mail and I'm bringing a gorgeous young lady with me."

"Really?" The expression on Sonny's face was one of surprise. Who could this gorgeous young lady be? She attempted to ignore the fact that she was a bit curious and jealous. After all, she didn't own Jack. She could date whomever she pleased.

"Yes, really. But thanks for asking me anyway. It means a lot."

Although she smiled, Sonny's euphoric mood had downgraded slightly. "Okay, well I best get off the phone now so I can take that shower and hit the hay."

"Sure, sure. Have sweet dreams. I love ya Sonny girl."

"Love you too Jack."

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The grand opening celebration of the new coffeehouse labeled *Jitterbugs* was underway and all invited were having a great time dancing, mingling, eating, and fiddling with the high-tech karaoke equipment. Well all except for the agitated twenty-seven year old blonde sitting alone at the end of the expansive marble topped bar and nursing an iced blended mocha. This being her fourth one of the evening, Sonny could practically feel the caffeine flowing through her body and figured she was well on her way to having the name of Peter's coffeehouse fit her perfectly.

Having been in a funk for the past few days, Sonny had attempted to pull herself out of it in time for this party but hadn't done a good job. She knew that she was being anti-social yet she just didn't have it in her to put on a happy face. Sure, she had spoken with a few people, but mostly had sat alone in her corner drinking iced blended mocha's one after another. The whipped cream, rich chocolate, and coffee they consisted of proved to offer the melancholy blonde a touch of solace.

Lifting green eyes from the counter, Sonny observed various others in the large coffeehouse. She estimated that there were around fifty invitees and perhaps it was just her imagination, but everyone else seemed to be in high spirits except for her. And perhaps it was just her imagination again, but they all appeared to be paired off.

Sarah and Isaac were mingling solely with each other now by cuddling in a booth and feeding each other bites of a hunk of chocolate cake they had obtained. Though feeling like the Scrooge of romance, Sonny looked at the new couple in annoyance. Just what was up with those two anyway? Ever since they became an item, it appeared as though they lost the ability to feed themselves. She refused to admit that she would have liked someone to feed *her* some chocolate cake.

Sonny sighed before sucking more vigorously on her straw as her eyes flickered to another couple just as her brother started to rain playful kisses on her best friend's cheeks and neck. She watched as her ex-employee turned professional singer, Hawke slow danced with the tall handsome man she had come with. She had introduced him as her friend but Sonny considered that they looked awfully intimate with their arms wrapped tightly around each other. Plus, the fact that they shared a kiss every so often tipped her off that there was more going on than just friendship. They looked happy together and though she was in a deep funk, Sonny acknowledged that they made a cute couple.

Hearing someone holler in triumph, Sonny glanced toward the area, which had been deemed the "Playpen". Within the Playpen were four pool tables, two dartboards placed on the walls, two pinball machines, and a number of small round tables set up for playing board games, each table having its own game such as *Monopoly*, *Scrabble*, *Sorry*, and even *Operation*. Focusing on the first pool table, Sonny watched as Peter pumped his fist in the air after obviously having beaten the dark-haired, muscular, and quite good-looking man he had been playing against. Remembering him as Kevin, the co-owner of *Jitterbugs* along with Peter's cousin Doug, Sonny observed him merely shaking his head and smiling at Peter's antics.

When she arrived a bit over an hour ago, Peter had somewhat shyly introduced the model lookalike Kevin as his love interest. Having spent a few minutes speaking with him, Sonny decided that she liked and approved of Kevin as her friend's partner. She told Peter as much when the handsome man stepped away. She also slapped his upper arm good-naturedly and grinned while congratulating him on landing a "super fit stud muffin".

Catching her eye, Peter smiled and waved before turning to Kevin and saying something. Giving him a quick but affectionate hug, the man purposefully headed in Sonny's direction. Signaling the bartender, Sonny asked him for another iced blended mocha. As he proceeded to make her drink, Peter slipped onto the padded stool next to hers. Concerned eyes peered at her behind gold-rimmed glasses as the man placed his hand over the one she had resting on the marble counter and squeezed.

"What's bothering you honey?"

"What makes you think that something is bothering me?" Spotting the cocktail napkin her drink



had been resting on, Sonny busied herself by starting to fold it with her free hand.

Reaching over, Peter gently tugged the napkin out of her hand and waited until her green eyes were focused on him before speaking. "Well this is a party and instead of having fun, you're sitting over here all by your lonesome looking like you just lost your best friend." As if on cue, Peter glanced over his shoulder, his eyes falling on Sarah and Isaac who were now finished eating cake, their lips busy doing something more intimate than eating. Turning back to Sonny who was putting a significant dent in her fifth coffee shake, Peter asked, "Does Sarah and your brother's relationship have anything to do with your mood?"

A blonde head shook in the negative. "No, no...I couldn't be any happier for Sarah and Isaac. I wish them nothing but the best. Truly...really...honestly. I think they make a terrific couple. Very sweet." Noticing that she was talking a bit rapidly, Sonny snapped her mouth shut. Putting her cup down on the counter, Sonny disengaged her hand from Peter's before lacing her fingers together and twirling her thumbs around each other. She started out slowly, but soon picked up speed as she gazed at her hands as though the movement of her thumbs was of great fascination to her.

Lifting a curious brow, Peter reached for the iced blended mocha, only to have a quick petite hand clamp down on his. "What are you doing?"

"I...ah...think you've had enough of these Sonny." His eyes falling on the nearby bartender, Peter watched the man quickly nod his head in agreement. When he made another move for the large drink, Sonny swiftly pulled it farther out of his reach. Sighing, Peter sat back on his stool regarding his friend with a look somewhere between annoyance and concern. "Sonny, do you think drowning your sorrows in a coffee drink is going to help any?"

"Sorrows?" The young woman adamantly shook her head. She made a show of looking around. "I see no sorrows here. Just a person enjoying an iced mocha at a bar. Don't make more of this than what it truly is Peter." Sonny offered the obviously unconvinced man a faint smile as she briefly patted his hand. "Now g'wan back to Kevin and play some more pool. I'm fine...really."

"Uh huh. I believe that about as much as I believe that humans can live without air. Level with me Sonny. Talk to me hon," Peter softly pleaded. "Tell me what's going on up here." He briefly tapped the side of Sonny's head with an index finger.

Glancing at her friend, the blonde concluded that he was likely not to give up. Sighing, Sonny took a long drag from her cup before placing it back on the counter. Swiveling around on the stool so that she was facing Peter, she gazed at him for a thoughtful silent moment before beginning to speak.

"I'm lonely," she stated, her voice cracking on the last syllable. Pausing, Sonny swallowed around a tightening throat as Peter looked at her compassionately. Reaching out, he cupped her knee, giving it a squeeze for good measure. "It seems like everyone I see has someone they can call their own and here I am attempting to carry on a relationship with a person who doesn't seem all that interested in actually meeting me." Sonny laughed humorlessly. "If it were possible, I'd

wring Cupid's neck."

Looking a bit quizzically at the dejected expression on his friend's face, Peter wondered for the hundredth time why she didn't take notice of what was right in front of her. Well...not *right* in front of her since the person she would see was him, but figuratively speaking. Did she just not recognize how perfect she and Jack were for each other? He knew that Jack did. That was plainly obvious, but why was dear sweet Sonny so slow on the uptake? Sure, the two of them had their problems in the beginning, but they had worked through them. So the million-dollar question was, why weren't they a couple yet? Peter slowly shook his head. If only that Blue person wasn't in the picture. *She's the thorn in something that has the ability to be a great romance!*

"What does...what's her name? Dixie?"

Sonny nodded as she stirred the thick tan substance within her cup, green eyes following the movements of the crimson straw.

Peter barely controlled himself from grabbing the mocha filled cup. He half expected Sonny to start bouncing off the walls. *Someone has consumed far too much caffeine!* Taking a deep breath, he then asked, "What does Dixie have that Jack doesn't?" Peter closely watched as the straw ceased to move and Sonny slowly turned towards him. After a few moments he began to think that she wasn't going to answer since she simply stared at him, amazingly still for someone who had such a great amount of an alkaloid within them. Finally, she blinked, taking a deep breath.

"I love Dixie and she loves me."

"Well honey if she loves you so much then why did you say she doesn't seem interested in meeting you?" Peter inquired in a gentle tone. "Is that love?"

Having another burst of energy, Sonny started to drum her fingertips on the marbled counter as her mind raced for an answer to this question. Did Dixie actually love her or had she tossed the words out with little regard? And was she truly busy or did she just not want to be bothered? Sonny recalled the two emails she had sent earlier in the week. She had yet to receive a response to either one and she knew that Dixie had read them because she checked. Perhaps the Southern woman was pulling away. Perhaps she had never loved Sonny in the first place and this had all just been a game to her. Maybe nothing they had shared had been real to her. As she admitted this to herself, Sonny's level of depression sank even lower. Had Dixie just played her for a fool? She sincerely hoped that she was wrong.

Unable to meet Peter's concerned gaze, the blonde woman looked down toward her lap. "I don't know...I don't know what to think anymore."

"How do you feel about Jack?"

Raising her head, Sonny looked at her friend quizzically. "Jack? We're just friends. Why does everyone think there should be more to it than that? Gosh, my own mother called me last week to ask, 'how things were progressing between us'. And my sisters keep hounding me with emails."

Pausing, Sonny shook her head in bewilderment. "I love Jack--I'll admit that. But I don't *love* Jack. Do you understand that?" A golden eyebrow lifted as Sonny noticed the broad grin now on Peter's lips. She barely refrained from rolling her eyes. "What?" She asked, sounding only slightly irritated.

He snickered. "Sonny and Jack sittin' in a tree. K-I-S-OW!" Peter pretended to look wounded after being the recipient of a punch in the arm. Snickering more, he stood up before leaning forward and giving his friend a hearty hug, complete with a kiss on each cheek. He was pleased to notice that she looked a bit more animated now and winked at her saying, "Sonny, sometimes what we're looking for we later find out we already had. Don't be so quick to overlook what's already here." Giving her a tender smile, he patted her back before releasing her and slipping away. A smile found its way to his lips as he glanced toward the entrance to his coffeehouse. *Perfect timing.*

Stopping, Peter waved until he had the latest arrival's attention and then inconspicuously pointed in the direction of the bar. Quickly getting the point, the tall leather clad figure standing just within the entrance gave Peter a nod and a smile along with two hearty thumbs up. Grinning, Peter proceeded toward the Playpen, intent on kicking Kevin's firm buttocks again via another game of pool.

After briefly stopping to speak with a couple of people, Jack casually sidled up to the bar, yet to be noticed by Sonny who was tapping her foot while gazing toward the wall as though she had found something of great interest on its cream colored texture. Stopping just behind the seated woman, Jack resisted the urge to press a kiss on the top of her blonde head as she slowly leaned down until her lips were a bare inch away from a delicate pink ear.

"What's a sexy little thing like you doing sitting here all alone?"

Nearly jumping out of her skin due to the unexpected whispered inquiry and tiny puffs of warm minty breath delivered into her ear, Sonny quickly swiveled around on her stool, coming face to face with the woman who had plagued a vast majority of her thoughts during the past week. She was about to utter a reply when she suddenly lost the ability to speak as her eyes trailed up and down Jack's body. Though vaguely aware that she was staring, she simply could not resist. Sonny shook her head a tiny bit. *Does she ever not look good?*

The six-foot gorgeous creature looked like a sensual and ultra sexy gangster. As she gazed at the black leather pants gently hugging Jack's powerful thighs and legs, Sonny briefly wondered if it was a requirement for the millionaire to wear leather on a regular basis. And how on earth could she comfortably wear it in Florida? Sure, it was officially wintertime now, but still...

Above the leather pants, Jack wore a strikingly white long-sleeved button-down Oxford shirt, which she'd chosen to leave untucked. A neatly arranged golden silk tie complete with thin black stripes woven into it, complimented the shirt. On the top of Jack's dark head was a black fedora, which she'd arranged so that her left eye was almost totally shaded. The words that came to Sonny's mind were "sexy as hell". On her feet was a pair of steel-capped black construction boots that fit in with the outfit perfectly.

"See something to your liking?" Jack rewarded the gaping blonde with a devilish smile. She had been hoping for an effect just like this one and was quite pleased to say the least. Never in her entire lifetime, had Jack taken so long to choose what she was intending to wear. If it hadn't been for Chloe's assistance, she might still be in her closet trying to decide.

Needing something to cool her parched throat, Sonny took a couple long sips from her drink, enduring a bit of a brain freeze in the process. Closing her eyes until the uncomfortable chill finished racing through her head, the blonde then took a deep breath before returning her attention to the mischievous ex-Conqueror.

"Aren't you here with someone Jack?" She inquired, having finally located the whereabouts of her voice, even if it did sound slightly weak. "Don't you have enough decorum not to flirt with me when you're on a date?" Sonny inwardly winced. If she had enough flexibility, she would have given herself a swift kick in the butt for sounding so blatantly jealous. *But I am, right? It's the reason I haven't spoken to her in a week and for lack of a more pleasant word, been so bitchy.*

Since Jack's surprising revelation on the phone last Friday that she had invited someone to Peter's grand opening bash, Sonny's mood proceeded to spiral downward much like the day before yesterday's leftovers into a garbage disposal. Though she was aware of her immature behavior, Sonny could not bring herself to "put on a happy face" when what she really wanted to do was break down into tears. Numerous times during the week, she had attempted to convince herself that her sudden depression was solely due to Dixie's recent behavior but that was only a minuscule part of it. The truth of the matter was that Sonny did not relish the idea of having another woman being the receiver of Jack's affection. Yes, it was selfish and unfair on her part, but she could not deny it any longer.

The blonde slowly shook her head. *I insist that she needs to move on and when she finally does I put her on ignore for an entire week. Sending mixed signals much Sonny?* Before she could continue on with her thoughts, Sonny was brought out of them by a deep chuckle. Looking up, she noticed that Jack was nearly doubled over in laughter and wondered what she could possibly find to be funny. Waiting until the abrupt laughter metamorphosed into tiny snickers, Sonny asked.

Wiping at watery and mirth filled blue eyes, Jack snickered once more before answering. "You actually." Grinning at Sonny, she moved sideways until she could lean against the bar. "You tickle me Sonny girl."

A curious expression spilled onto Sonny's face. "Tickle you? What did I say?"

"If I didn't know any better...which on second thought perhaps I don't, I'd say you were a touch jealous that I'd brought someone with me." That impish grin remained on her face as Jack patiently waited for a retort.

Though she promptly snorted, the expression on Sonny's face proved Jack's speculation to be

right on the money. Green eyes narrowed in annoyance as Jack let out a small chuckle. A broad smile on her lips, the brunette stood erect before turning around and scanning the crowd for a particular person. Finding her sitting at a table conversing with Hawke, Jack looked back at her sulking friend while she pointed in that direction.

"That's who I came with." She watched as Sonny's eyes settled on the person she was pointing to. When the blonde looked surprised and then relieved Jack had to bite down on her tongue in order to keep from chuckling again. Sheepish and guilt ridden green eyes slowly turned toward Jack. Though Sonny had not uttered a single word since the discovery, her expression plainly said, "Oops."

"Umm Chloe...uh...", her words faltering, the embarrassed blonde took a deep breath before attempting to speak again, "Chloe is the gorgeous young lady you were referring to on the phone last week?" She received a silent nod in reply. Looking all the more sheepish now, Sonny briefly returned her attention to the adorable mini-Jack who was making her way to the dance floor with a tall blond man whom she hadn't met. Trying to buy some time, Sonny watched the couple as they animatedly danced while Isaac did his best to sing Stevie Wonder's *"Isn't She Lovely"* to Sarah on stage with a bit of help from the karaoke machine. However, bless his heart, it wasn't helping enough, though Sarah was thoroughly enjoying the serenade anyway. It then occurred to Sonny that Chloe was dancing...standing on her own two feet...no wheelchair in sight.

Her face significantly brightening, the blonde gazed at Jack, who had been watching her face the entire time. "She's walking! And dancing!"

The brunette laughed while glancing over her shoulder at her young sister. "Yep, that she is."

"When? How? I didn't know!"

"Well...I attempted to call you a few times but you never returned them. She's been taking a few steps for a couple of weeks now but Monday was the first time she truly took the initiative to walk." Leaning toward Sonny, she whispered conspiratorially, "Though just between you and I, I think the kid's been able to walk for quite a while now and just pretended that she couldn't because she liked having me running around doing just about everything for her. Of course, she won't admit it." Jack winked, wearing a delighted smile. She'd nearly burst into tears, (okay so she had shed a few) when Chloe walked on Monday without any assistance. It had been a very proud moment.

Sighing, Sonny's head dropped forward as the guilt returned tenfold. Because of her immaturity, she had missed out on something of great importance. During the past week she hadn't been behaving like a true friend toward Jack and was deeply apologetic for it.

"Hey, what's the matter sweetheart?" Her leather-encased bottom taking occupancy on a barstool, Jack peered at Sonny's face, wondering why she looked so rueful now.

Glancing up at the concerned face, the blonde sighed. "I've been such a bitch," she whispered. "I completely ignored your attempts to get in contact with me just because I was upset that...that

you had a date for this party." Shaking her head, she hoarsely whispered, "I'm so sorry Jack. A true friend doesn't act like that. I don't even know why you're talking to me because it's so obvious that I don't deserve you." Her vision blurring, Sonny wiped at her eyes. Before she could take another breath, a pair of arms was wrapped around her body, holding her tightly. She briefly felt warm lips press against the side of her neck as she returned the hug with fervor.

"First of all," Jack started as she kept the smaller woman in her embrace, "you don't even come close to being a bitch. Now me," the brunette released a small self-deprecating chuckle, "*I've* acted like a bitch plenty of times in the past, but never you sweetheart. Please don't beat up on yourself," pausing, Jack leaned back so that she could look into watery verdant eyes. "Second, why am I talking to you? How could I not? Now that you've entered my life I want...*crave* to hear your sweet voice every chance that I get." Reaching up, Jack gently wiped away an escaping tear from Sonny's face. "Baby, don't you realize how much I love you? Nothing could ever...*ever* change that. You and Chloe are my entire world." Trailing her thumb across soft lips Jack said, "Now give me one of those smiles that always brighten my day."

Though it was a bit tremulous at first, Sonny did as she was told, her lips curving upward as Jack's did the same. Giving her a squeeze, Jack kissed her cheek with a loud smack. "That's much better Sonny girl."

Starting to feel so much better, Sonny returned the kiss. "Thanks Jack."

"Aaw, I should be thanking you." Standing, the brunette lightly stretched, quite aware that a pair of green eyes was focused on her movements. Concealing the grin that begged to burst forth, Jack asked her friend if she knew where the bathroom was. Giving her directions to where it was located, Sonny covertly watched as lithe form began to move away. Before she could take five full steps, Jack did an about-face and sauntered back toward Sonny. Leaning down, she remarked in a slightly husky voice oozing with sexiness, "Just to keep your mind racing while I'm gone, I'll have you know that I'm wearing leather underwear as well." Taking great delight in the blush that suffused her friend's face, Jack almost happily skipped toward the bathroom.

Before her brain had time to acknowledge what she was doing, Sonny made a beeline for the bathroom a mere ten feet or so behind an unsuspecting Jack. With a look of purpose, she pushed open the swinging door leading into the ladies restroom. Glad to not see anyone except for Jack, she quickened her steps in order to catch up with the woman before she could fully close the stall she'd chosen to occupy. Feeling a slight pressure on the door, which refused to close, Jack looked up, surprise mixed with a healthy dose of curiosity written across her face as she studied the determined blonde standing before her.

She was about to say something when Sonny pushed her back farther into the stall, causing her calves to touch the rim of the stark white porcelain toilet. And speaking of the toilet, it was suddenly occupied by the fedora, which toppled off of Jack's head. However, at the moment she couldn't care less, her eyes glued to Sonny. Looking exactly like a lion that had finally caught its prey, the petite blonde walked stealthily into the stall, briefly turning to lock the door. An audible click sailed through the air as she looked back to Jack with an expression that the brunette had seen one other time. Jack recalled it quite fondly. *My pool and chaise lounge had never seen so*

*much sexual activity.*

When she was about to make another attempt at talking, Sonny chose that moment to get her mouth busy doing something else. Though Jack had no objections when those soft lips started attacking hers with a passion she had never experienced. And though thoroughly surprised, the ex-Conqueror melted into the fiery kiss, moaning when Sonny's tongue wandered out to greet her own. As their tongues playfully dueled, Jack felt nimble fingers sliding beneath her shirt and tracing idle patterns along her sides. Her legs beginning to feel like jelly, the brunette was about to attempt sitting down when it became obvious that her little seductress had other plans.

Wrapping a hand around Jack's silky tie, Sonny nudged her toward the wall until her back was firmly pressed against it. Her entire body feeling as though it had just been infused by fire, Jack moaned surely loud enough for everyone in the building to hear it when that sweet tongue plunged back into her mouth. Wanting to touch every inch of this woman, Jack started by cupping her jean covered cheeks, giving the taut flesh an ample squeeze as their bodies began to writhe against each other.

"Ooh yes, Jack," Sonny breathlessly whispered against lips swollen from their heated kisses. Pressing one last kiss to those lips, she trailed her own across the taller woman's chin and to her throat where she took her time laving the area around Jack's pulse point. Finding it incredibly difficult to speak coherently, Jack lightly moaned as she raised a thigh, pressing it against the apex of Sonny's jeans. A tiny grin slipped onto her lips when she felt the movement of gently rocking hips.

Her brain obviously having shut down and ignoring the tiny voice inside that demanded that she stop what she had initiated, Sonny proceeded to hurriedly unbutton Jack's shirt, resisting the urge to just rip it open in her anticipation to view what lied beneath. She had enough sensibility left to realize that it wouldn't do for Jack to have to walk around with an unsecured shirt on. However, quite a few people probably wouldn't have any objections to that.

While those skilled teeth and tongue did delicious things to her neck, Jack wondered if her little friend actually intended to...well take her in a public bathroom stall. While she had no problems with the latter occurring, she would have preferred it to occur somewhere more conventional. Such as her super comfortable king-sized bed. Jack almost chuckled. Okay, perhaps their passionate activity on the chaise lounge hadn't been particularly conventional, but at least they had more privacy.

Before Jack could continue her mental debate, her thoughts were abruptly ended when she felt determined hands tugging on the fly of her pants and a soft mouth placing warm damp kisses between her bra encased breasts. Tossing her head back, Jack released a long guttural moan while a wicked little tongue delved within her cleavage and one hand slipped beneath the waistband of her now unzipped pants. Closing her eyes, Jack focused on the pleasure rippling throughout her body due to the petite woman before her. Was it possible to explode because of desire and need? She felt as though she were on the verge of doing so.

*Screw conventionalization*, Jack thought as she gazed at the blonde kissing her way down her

belly. *I need her now.* Silently lifting Sonny to her feet, Jack greeted her with a brief grin before reclaiming her mouth. She laughed when Sonny made a panting observation.

"You really *are* wearing leather undergarments." And though indeed she was, the matching black leather brassiere and panties showed more than they covered. Jack's breasts seemed dangerously close to escaping their confines and had Sonny taking the initiative to pull down her pants, she would have noticed that in the back a mere thin strip of leather, which appeared to resemble onyx dental floss 'covered' the ex-Conqueror's...assets.

"God, Sonny I want you so badly...I need you to feel you," Jack throatily admitted just before finding an enticing pink ear to nibble on. Deciding that her younger friend needed to be more unwrapped like she was, Jack set to work on unzipping her jeans when with a soft gasp Sonny took a swift step backwards. Darkened green eyes gazed up toward her own smoky blue with a look mixed with equal parts apprehension, confusion, and passion. Uh oh. Jack suddenly had a feeling that her libido wasn't about to be attended to anytime soon. *I knew this was too good to last for long.* "Something wrong?" she hesitantly inquired, hoping that the answer was no but realizing that it was most likely the opposite.

The blonde head shook from side to side. "Jack this is wrong. We can't do this."

Despite her first intentions to remain calm, Jack released a groan as she ran slightly tremulous hands through her hair. "Damn Sonny, you're gonna be the death of me." Pausing, she took a deep breath, which didn't actually help. "Tell me, why is this so wrong 'cause it feels *extremely* right to me!"

One word. "Dixie."

Barely refraining from using a strong expletive, Jack kept her mouth shut while she proceeded to fix her clothing, starting with buttoning up her shirt. She knew that the other woman's eyes were upon her yet she refused to make eye contact. Though she was quite aware that it was immature, Jack was on the verge of having a temper tantrum by merely walking out of the restroom without uttering another word.

Hearing Sonny calling her name, Jack refused to answer as she refastened her pants before straightening her tie. When she heard the desperate pleading in Sonny's voice she couldn't help but to look at her. When she saw the tears glistening in those expressive green eyes, she could have kicked her own butt. Drawing Sonny to her, she quietly held the smaller woman as she shed a few tears.

"I'm sorry," Sonny cried as she buried her face against her companion's shirt, tears staining the pristine whiteness. "I'm so very sorry Jack. It's wrong to lead you on."

"Hey, no need for an apology," Jack soothed, kissing the top of Sonny's head. "It's quite alright sweetheart." Leaning back so that she could see the blonde's face, Jack grinned. "Feel free to lead me on any ol' time." Glad when she received a chuckle, the ex-Conqueror's grin grew broader.



Inhaling deeply, Sonny stepped out of the warm embrace, taking Jack's hands in her own. "It's just that...well, I'm not ready to give up on Dixie. Maybe it won't work, but I feel that I should give us a chance."

Jack inwardly sighed. *And yet you can't keep your hands off of me. How exactly does that fit into your plan of giving her a chance?* Before she could give considerable thought to what she was about to say, Jack opened her mouth, throwing caution to the wind. "Sonny girl, I'm Blue." Barely realizing that she ceased to breathe, she closely observed Sonny's face for any signs of indignation. However, she couldn't detect any as the other woman merely granted her with an unreadable look for a few moments before she released a heavy sigh.

"I know," Sonny quietly admitted.

Say what? Jack fought hard to keep the surprise from showing on her face, not having any idea that her friend would come back with a reply such as that one. She knew? How could she know? And the better question was why hadn't she said anything when she first found out? Jack thought back over the course of their friendship, searching for any clues she might have given Sonny.

The facts.

Sonny knew that Blue was tall and Jack happened to be as well. She resided in Orlando as did Jack. They both had raised their sister from a small child because their parents were deceased. Also, it was quite a coincidence that Jack showed up on exactly the same day and time when Sonny was supposed to meet Blue for the first time at Disneyworld. However, she never showed up and therefore Sonny ended up spending the day with Jack.

Okay, it was entirely possible that she put two and two together. Now, wasn't she supposed to be upset that Jack had...well basically deceived her? Jack examined Sonny's expression again not detecting the slightest bit of ire. Hmm, perhaps she had made a big deal out of what seemed to not have any ill effect on her beloved. But just to be sure...

"And you're not upset?"

Looking perplexed, Sonny shook her head. "No, why would I be upset because of that Jack? I know that you're unhappy about my attempt to possibly build something with Dixie. If anyone has the right to be upset, it's you. It's as though I'm constantly teasing you and I wouldn't blame you if you told me to take a flying leap." She shook her head in self-disgust. "I insist that you move on and then I trap you in a bathroom stall. I'm really sorry Jack."

Jack slowly blinked as she digested the words just spoken. She took her declaration to being Blue as in melancholy blue. Sonny still didn't know. Jack wasn't sure whether to be disappointed or relieved by that fact. She actually felt a mixture of both.

Her lips curving into a soft smile, Jack reached out and brushed the back of her hand across Sonny's cheek. "It's okay Sonny girl. We can just forget this ever happened if that's what you want." Actually, she herself would never forget it. This was branded on her brain permanently.

Surely, not ever Alzheimer's could erase it.

Returning the smile, Sonny nodded. "Thanks Jack." Secretly, there was no way she was going to forget. Even if she'd felt inclined to do so.

"Maybe we should...umm...get out of here." Jack smiled again as she glanced toward the door, wondering if anyone had come in and heard them during their heated make out session. Now wouldn't that have made an interesting headline? The ex-Conqueror and the woman she booted out of the coffee business get caught playing tongue hockey in a public ladies room.

Lightly chuckling, Sonny headed toward the door when she caught something out of the corner of her eye. Looking into the toilet, she spotted Jack's black fedora floating on top of the clear water. Sheepishly, she reached down and grabbed the damp hat, shaking the water droplets from it before she offered it to Jack. "Sorry about your hat Jack."

Finding this humorous, Jack laughed. "Aw, it's okay." She shook her head. "I'm having the damndest luck with hats lately. Perhaps this is a sign that I should retire from wearing them!"

Sonny smiled at her. "No, don't do that. You look good in them." Not giving her friend a chance to reply, less she utter something suggestive, the blonde unlocked the door before walking out, Jack following closely behind her. They both halted when they spied the young blonde casually leaning against the sink with her arms folded across her chest. A huge knowing smile lit up her adorable face.

"Well, well, well," Hawke started in a singsong voice. "Just what were you two up to in there, hmm?" She just knew it! She knew that something more than friendship had to be going on between them.

Whereas Jack merely looked roguish, Sonny's cheeks were turning a deep crimson. Catching sight of Jack's face, she slapped her on the arm, annoyed when the brunette gave her a saucy grin. Hawke chuckled as she watched the silent interaction between them. They were just too cute for words!

"Nothing. Nothing at all," Sonny replied, not sounding the least bit convincing.

Hawke was unsurprisingly unconvinced. "Uh huh. Listen, until you two make a formal announcement I'm not going to breathe a word about your relationship. You can trust me." She smiled sweetly just to show how trustworthy she was.

"There's no announcement to be made!" Turning to regard a quiet Jack, Sonny concluded that she wasn't going to be receiving any help from the infuriating woman. When she glared the ex-Conqueror grinned and winked at her.

Snickering, Hawke pushed away from the sink and sauntered towards the exit after waving at a flustered Sonny and mischievous Jack. They listened-Sonny in complete embarrassment as she began to sing lyrics (with a little editing) from an Atlantic Starr song.

*Secret lovers  
That's what they are  
Try so hard to hide the way they feel  
They don't belong to anyone else  
But they can't let go  
Although they love each other so*

As Hawke's melodic voice drifted away from the room, Jack was nearly rolling on the floor in laughter while Sonny covered her bright red face. Surely, hopefully Hawke would make good on her promise not to tell anyone what she found in this restroom. Sonny had never known the younger woman to be a tattletale in the past.

Taking notice of the laughter, the blonde turned toward Jack, who actually had tears rolling down her face. Though she tried not to, Sonny found herself joining in on the laughter despite the embarrassing situation. She couldn't help it. Jack was infectious.

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Hearing the phone's incessant ringing, Briana put the final touches on her Christmas present to Sonny. A bright red bow was placed on the small rectangular gift before the young woman found a place for it under the cheerily decorated Christmas tree. Since her sister wasn't currently home, Briana walked over and picked up the phone just as Sonny's voice began to play via her answering machine.

"Happy Holidays," Briana jauntily spoke into the phone. Although there was five days until Christmas day, every year Briana ceased answering the phone with the customary hello between the dates of December 18th through the 30th. She then proceeded with Happy New Year's until the second of January officially arrived. It was a tradition that she created of her very own. However, no one in her family had picked up on it except for Melanie. Briana figured that converting one was better than none.

"And Happy Holidays to you too," a Southern accented voice replied after a moment's pause. "Is Madison home?"

Briana's interest was instantly awakened as she wondered just who this woman could be. The voice didn't sound at all familiar. "May I ask who is calling?"

"Sure honey. Her friend Dixie."

Golden brows nearly disappearing into her hairline, Briana moved over toward the couch and plunked down on it. "Dixie? Dixie Monroe?"

A soft chuckle wafted through the receiver. "Yes, that's right honey. I reckon that you have heard of me?"

"My sister has mentioned you," Briana answered a bit tightly. All she could think about was that

this woman was the sole obstacle standing in Sonny and Jack's way of being together. If it wasn't for her, they might already be a couple. And what a cute couple they would make too! Gripping the phone tighter than what was needed, Briana quickly decided that she had to be the one to eliminate Dixie. Completely ignoring the fact that she was sticking her nose where it did not belong, she started to speak.

"I think it's in your best interest not to call here any more. My sister hasn't heard from you in several days yet you claim to love her. Tell me just what kind of love is that?" Glancing toward the front door, Briana silently prayed that Sonny wouldn't enter before this conversation was done. She'd gone to pick up the ten pounds of Chinese food they had ordered and would be back at any moment now.

There was another pause, this one slightly longer than the last. "Are you Madison's little sister Briana? I've heard so much about you. All good of course."

"Yes, I am." Rising, Briana started to pace within the boundaries of the living room. "And you didn't answer my question. Just in case you thought otherwise, it wasn't rhetorical." She thought she heard a snicker, however it was much too brief to be declared as one. Regardless, Briana frowned.

"I do love her Briana as hard as it may be for you to believe. Your sister means a whole lot to me. I know that my behavior as of late has been less than... 'gentlewomanly' and for that I do apologize. I've just had a lot goin' on but I'm calling 'cause I'm ready and able to mend things with Madison. She means more to me than I could ever relay to you."

Despite her irritation at Dixie's presence in her sister's life, Briana couldn't help but to believe that she was being genuine. However, that didn't rule out the fact that she was still an obstacle. Dixie just had to realize that Sonny was not her perfect mate. She had to be made to realize that there was someone else out there for her. She sounded like a pleasant enough person. Certainly, someone would sweep the Southern belle off of her feet before long.

Unfortunately, before Briana had the chance to voice any of those thoughts she detected the sound a door makes when a key is inserted into it. Looking rather annoyed at the interruption, the teenager sighed.

"Hold on a minute Dixie." Walking toward the door, Briana opened it before her sister had a chance to. Giving her a distracted smile, she helped Sonny with the plastic bags filled with their dinner. As they headed into the kitchen, Sonny noticed the phone clutched in Briana's hand.

"Is that for me? Is it Jack?"

After placing her delicious burden on the kitchen table, Briana gazed at her sister curiously. "What?"

"On the phone?" Sonny pointed at the hand length object.

Briana glanced down toward the phone in her hand as though it had magically appeared there. Briefly, she thought about fibbing but then changed her mind. It shouldn't be up to her how her sister decided to handle Dixie. "Um...actually it is for you. Though it isn't Jack." Briana smirked while handing the phone to her sister. "It's your other woman." After enduring a swat on the butt, she left the kitchen in order to give Sonny some privacy. Before Sonny had a chance to say hello, Briana temporarily returned and rifled through the bags until she found the carton of chow mein along with a pair of chopsticks. There wasn't any indication just how long Sonny would be on the phone with Dixie and she was famished. Giving her patiently waiting sister a wink, she once again disappeared from the cooking area.

Taking a seat the kitchen table, Sonny raised the phone to her ear. "Hi Dixie."

She could almost feel the smile through the phone. "Well hi to you Sonny. I kinda reckoned that you weren't home."

"Actually, I just got in. Went to get some dinner."

"Oh, I see," Dixie paused. "Honey...I'm sorry for being absent lately. I wouldn't blame you if you were hotter than slabs of bacon in a sizzlin' grease laden fryin' pan."

Sonny burst into laughter as she propped her feet on the chair opposite the one she occupied. "Now that would be mighty hot!" She heard Dixie chuckle. "I'm nowhere near that Dixie. I understand about your full plate."

The Southern woman released a relieved sigh. "Well luckily, that full plate is now practically empty."

A hopeful smile suddenly lit up Sonny's countenance. "Is that so?"

"That is definitely so!"

"Great! So...where does that leave you and I? I mean what would you like to see happen now?"

"I would love to see you and I cozy and getting to know one another more intimately in a little cabin I rented out by St. John's River for New Year's Eve and Day. How 'bout it darlin'? It's absolutely beautiful there and it's not too far from Orlando."

Sonny's heart started a furious beating. She was both anxious and nervous at the prospect of finally...*finally* meeting Dixie in just a little over a week. Sonny mentally calculated it in her mind. The thirty-first was on a Sunday and she believed that there would be no problem with having Monday off. She had racked up plenty of time in her vacation account. Plus, it was New Year's Day--the day after just about everyone and their mother undoubtedly partied-- so just how busy would the massage therapy department at *Serenity Palace* get? Okay, perhaps there would be the few who staggered in, searching for help in easing their hangovers, but still...she should be able to get the day off.

Sound thoroughly delighted, Sonny informed her friend that she would be able to make it at the end of the following week. Proceeding to chat for the next twenty minutes, the two women organized their plans and briefly discussed the activities they would enjoy participating in during the brief vacation. By the time they got off the phone, they had decided to try hiking and canoeing, two things neither of them had ever done before. Deep deep down inside, Sonny was a little worried about doing the former. Hiking didn't sound like an activity that she could easily excel at. *I'll probably wimp out after walking a mile!*

"Sonny, I heard you say goodbye nearly five minutes ago so get your butt in here-and don't forget the goods! I'm practically dying of starvation here!"

Snickering, the blonde stood up before grabbing the bags and heading out of the kitchen to join her evidently impatient sibling. "You better not have eaten all the chow mein Ms. Melodramatic!"

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"Let me see if I understand this correctly. Next weekend you're going into the secluded woods to meet up with a woman whom you've only known thus far from the Internet."

A slight nod of the head. "Yep."

"Have you completely lost your mind?"

"Why? Did you wanna borrow it?"

Sonny instantly smiled upon hearing the snickers emanating from the two younger ladies sitting on both her left and right. Her smile turned into a devilish grin as she observed the smirking form sitting across from her. "Just an innocent question stretch."

This statement only proved to cause Jack's smirk to enhance. "Uh huh." Finding the crab salad she had ordered lacking flavor, Jack reached over toward her sister's plate and speared a cube of steak. "I believe that about as much as I believe your heading off into the wilderness to meet Trixie is a sensible idea."

"Dixie," Briana swiftly corrected. Thanking her while giving Jack her version of the evil eye (which wasn't even in the ballpark of being evil) Sonny started to add something else when her sister held up a hand for silence. Shutting her mouth, Sonny waited for the younger woman to speak her mind. "And, I have to admit that I agree with Jack here." Briana pointed her half-eaten breadstick at the woman she spoke of. She received a bright smile, which she returned before turning toward her sibling. "Sonny, your Internet friend sounds like a nice person but you can never tell these days. And it's odd that she couldn't make your date at Disneyworld yet she's now ready to meet you and she wants to do it in the woods instead of a public place like the theme park." Briana shrugged as she waved her breadstick about as though she was conducting an orchestra. "I mean, what's the deal with that?"

Vigorously nodding her head, Jack reminded Sonny of one of those cupie dolls you stick on the

dashboard of your car. "My thoughts exactly Bri!" she shouted in a voice loud enough for the occupants at the table next to theirs to overhear. "Sonny girl I think I might be picking up some bad vibes from this Dixie character. What kind of person wants that much seclusion on the very first meeting?"

"Mmhmm." Briana joined in on the nodding. "Seems kinda fishy sis. I think you should reschedule. Try pitching to Dixie the idea of you and she meeting at a restaurant or a coffeeshop." She glanced toward Jack with a wide grin. "Heck, you could even ask her to meet you at *Brew n' Paradise*. I'm sure Jack wouldn't mind." Briana chuckled as a pair of blue eyes rolled in her direction.

Choosing to ignore them both, Sonny looked to her left at a non-vocal Chloe. "What do you think hon? You agree with Ren and Stimpy?" While Jack and Briana quietly bantered over who was the Chihuahua and who was the cat, Sonny waited for a reply.

Needing an excuse for not immediately answering, Chloe quickly gathered a spoonful of mixed vegetables from her plate and shoved it into her mouth. Chewing ever so slowly, she held up a solitary finger to let Sonny know that she needed a few moments to swallow. While she thought about the question just posed to her, she recalled the conversation she and Jack had several weeks ago.

*"I'm talking about you being on the phone yesterday around oh say six o'clock in the evening. As I rolled by the living room, I couldn't help but to hear you talking and I would have kept going if it hadn't been for the way you were talking," pausing, Chloe slightly grinned. "So inquiring minds want to know what's up with the Southern accent Jack? You did quite well by the way. If I hadn't known you, I would have thought you were straight outta Mississippi!"*

*Jack laughed though there was a tinge of a blush on her cheeks. "Oh, well I was..." How much should she tell? Deciding that if there were anyone on this planet that she could trust with a secret, it would be her sister, Jack said, "talking to PerkyGrrl."*

*Chloe's face took on a very interested look. "That's great! But why were you pretending to be a Southerner?"*

*Softly sighing, Jack sat back on the couch while folding her arms in her lap. Looking at her sister, she replied, "Because PerkyGrrl is Sonny and Sonny doesn't know that I'm Blue."*

*The look on Chloe's face turned thoughtful as she absorbed that piece of information. "So...let me get this straight. You have somehow found out that Sonny Campbell is your online friend PerkyGrrl, but she doesn't know that you're Blue. And yesterday you called her pretending to be Blue, which you really wouldn't be pretending.... giving yourself a Southern accent so that she wouldn't be able to tell that she was talking to Jack?"*

*Jack gave her a short nod. "In a nutshell yeah."*

So, she had agreed not to breathe a word to Sonny about Jack being Blue. A slight smile touched

Chloe's lips after she finished swallowing. However, that didn't mean she couldn't have any fun with this. Looking at Sonny, her smile grew bigger and her blue eyes twinkled. Though having a strong suspicion that her sister was up to something, specifically no-good-very-bad trouble, Jack remained silent, waiting to hear what would come from between Chloe's smiling lips.

"Sonny," Chloe started as she sat back in her chair, "though I do believe that Ren and Stimp have made valid points, I think you should go for it. Don't let this opportunity of possibly meeting the woman of your dreams pass you by." Out of the corner of her eye, Chloe saw her sister staring at her with her mouth opened wide enough to allow access to a hummingbird. She barely refrained from laughing as she continued her short speech. "After all, we only live once and therefore you need to take this chance. Don't let yourself or other's bother you with the what ifs and maybes. I think Nike said it best. Just do it!"

Having not expected Chloe to be on her side, Sonny began to smile brightly. It felt good to have someone sitting at this table in her corner. "Really? You really think I should?"

The teenager nodded enthusiastically. "Absolutely!"

"Wait a sec," Briana interrupted while holding up a hand. She looked across to Chloe. "You don't have the smallest problem with this? You don't think it's the least bit dangerous for my sister to meet a woman whom she's never seen before in the woods? I don't have a problem with them meeting. I would just be more at ease if it were in public."

"Briana, your sister has been communicating with Dixie for over a year now and they've spoken on the phone several times. I would think that by now she would have an inkling if anything were amiss. And who knows? Perhaps they've already met. They do live in the same town." Feeling a hand fall on her knee, Chloe looked up at her sister who was giving her a barely discernible frown. Reaching under the tablecloth, the young woman lightly patted the back of Jack's hand while winking. The frown merely deepened causing both Sonny and Briana to notice. Almost on cue, they asked her if she was okay.

The brunette glanced between the two sisters, having not meant for them to see her expression. She reassured them with a quick nod that she was.

"Then why were you frowning at Chloe?" Briana curiously asked.

"Frowning?" Pointing at her chest, Jack stalled in the hopes that she could come up with a suitable answer. *Oh, kid I will definitely get you back for this one!* "I was frowning?" Jack asked, looking as though she had no clue that she had been.

Twirling a fork in the remainder of her mixed veggies, Chloe blithely answered, "Most likely she was frowning because she doesn't like the fact that I'm pushing Sonny's meeting with Dixie." Glancing at her older sibling, Chloe winked again. "Isn't that correct Jackie?"

Folding her arms over her chest, Jack only sighed. Was it terribly wrong to want to throttle one's sibling?



Knowing where this was headed, Briana suddenly grew extremely interested in the conversation. Her attention mainly focusing on Chloe, she grinned. She liked the way Chloe Foster's mind worked! "Is that because secretly they wanna be lovers and therefore Jack can't stand the idea of my sister getting involved with another woman?"

Chloe grinned back, pleased that Briana had caught on to what she had been implying. "Very well could be."

As though their brains were somehow connected, Jack and Sonny instantly thought of Hawke and the Atlantic Starr song she serenaded them with in the restroom at Peter's grand opening. What started out as soft chuckles soon turned into robust laughter while Chloe and Briana stared inquisitively, wondering what struck their older sisters as humorous.

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After making sure that all of the mistletoe was strategically placed, Jack went to check on the food, which had just been delivered by a catering service she hired two weeks prior. Walking into the den, she headed toward the broad table, which aromatic dishes were spread across. Checking every delectable item of food, the brunette nodded as a pleased smile spread on her lips. Everything looked perfect and she was ready for the Christmas Eve fiesta to begin. She then caught sight of the silent stereo. Ah. There was one more thing to do. Walking up to it, Jack rifled through a stack of CD's until she located the one that Chloe had specifically created on her computer for this evening. Slipping the thin disk into the CD player, she pressed the play button. Seconds later, Frank Sinatra began to sing his rendition of the classic "*Jingle Bells*".

As if on cue, someone chose that moment to ring the doorbell. Continuing to smile, Jack hurried to answer the door while silently praying that this evening of celebration with friends and family went off without a single hitch. Just before opening the door, she reached up, lightly tugging on the bright red Santa's hat sitting on her head to make sure that it was in place. She had started not to wear it, but Chloe insisted that she should because it made her look 'positively adorable'. Well if her sister thought that, then who was she to deny her?

Throwing open the door, Jack did her best interpretation of Santa Claus by ho-ho-hoing and wishing the visitors a jolly Merry Christmas. Laughing at her antics, Leslie and Laura wished her one as well as they took turns hugging the Santa wanna-be. Ushering them inside her festively decorated home (which happened to be the envy of her neighbors), Jack led them into the den where they deposited their gifts under a Christmas tree that Shaquille O'Neal might have to stand on his tiptoes in order to place the star on top.

Noticing that they were the only people in the room, Leslie turned to Jack asking, "Where's my favorite little person at?"

Jack chuckled. "Don't ever let Chloe hear you call her that. She's in her room wrapping the remainder of her gifts. You can go up there if you like because yours is already under the tree."

Leslie smiled. "K. I'm going to go talk to her." Placing a small yet heartfelt kiss on her

girlfriend's lips, she headed out of the den and up the stairs leading to the second level.

Switching into hostess mode, Jack asked Laura if she would care for a drink. "Among other beverages we have the traditional eggnog. The 'adult' and 'kiddie' kind."

Chuckling, Laura came to a quick decision. "I think I'd like eggnog. Some of the adult kind first and then I'll switch to the kiddie for the duration of the evening since I'm driving."

"You've got it." Striding over toward a much smaller table situated next to the catered buffet, Jack ladled brandy laced eggnog into a crimson mug with a hand painted picture of Santa's cheerful face on each side. Just as she handed the drink to Laura, the doorbell rang again. Excusing herself, Jack went to the answer the door, hoping that it was Sonny. She wasn't disappointed. Wrapping her arms around the petite woman, Jack gave her a big hug while wishing her a merry Christmas before doing the same to Briana.

"How are you two lovely ladies doing?" Jack jovially inquired, closing the door and winding an arm around each of their shoulders.

Reaching upward, Briana tugged on the white fuzzy ball sticking at the end of Jack's cap. "We're doing just fine Santa." She grinned at the taller woman and received one in return.

"Are we the first to arrive?" Sonny asked, slipping an arm around Jack's silk covered waist. She had made a mental bet with herself that the ex-Conqueror would most likely be wearing some form of leather this evening and was a little surprised to find that she was wrong. After having surreptitiously examined Jack from head to toe, she noticed that she wasn't wearing a stitch of it. Sonny smirked. Then again, after that little discovery in the bathroom stall, Jack very well could have leather underwear on. *Well it's not like I'm going to be finding that out for sure!*

Heading toward the den with the latest arrivals, Jack shook her head. "Nope, your ex and mine beat you here." Stopping them just before they entered the den where Laura was currently admiring the variety of ornaments on the Christmas tree, Jack asked Briana in a whispered tone if she could have a moment alone with her sister. Grinning from ear to ear, the young woman nodded glad to give the could be lovebirds some time to themselves. After grabbing a shopping bag filled with the presents they'd brought from her sibling, Briana headed into the den.

Her arm still around Sonny's shoulders, Jack gazed at the blonde's curious expression for a few moments before she slowly raised her eyebrows along with her eyes toward the ceiling. When Sonny's expression only grew more curious, Jack repeated the action.

Sonny cocked her head to the side in question. "Have you suddenly developed a twitching habit?" She chuckled when the other woman looked amused.

"Very funny short stack." Placing two fingertips under Sonny's chin, Jack lightly pressed upward until green eyes focused on the small bit of mistletoe hanging from the archway. A mere couple of seconds later, a blonde head was shaking.

"Tricky Jack, but I'm not going for it."

"No trick." The ex-Conqueror attempted to look innocent. "You owe me a kiss because we got caught under the mistletoe. Those are the rules. I didn't invent them."

Sonny poked a finger at her chest and then realized she'd come dangerously close to a breast. If the slight smirk on Jack's face was any indication, she'd also noticed. However, to her credit she didn't seem inclined to mention it. "You planned that."

"I did no such thing!" So what if it was quite obvious that she had? She still wasn't going to admit it!

"You did too!"

"I did not!"

Muttering something under her breath, Sonny glanced into the den where Laura and Briana were conversing over mugs of eggnog and not paying them any attention. Turning her attention back to the woman before her, she decided to give in and get this over with while ignoring the fact that deep down inside she wanted to comply with the rules of what a couple had to do after being caught under mistletoe.

Remaining silent, Sonny cupped Jack's face while gazing up into piercing blue eyes, which were gazing back into her emerald ones with a passion a part of her ached to return. Standing on her tiptoes, she lightly pressed her lips to the brunettes, both of their eyes closing on contact. She had intended the kiss to be brief, but declined to pull away the instant she felt the tip of a warm tongue brushing against her lips. However, she did manage to pull away when cheers erupted around them and she heard the unmistakable click of a camera.

Standing before them were Laura, Leslie and Chloe who they discovered had been the photographer since she was holding a Sony camera. All three women were wearing matching grins as they looked at them. Almost simultaneously turning to their right, Jack and Sonny spied the smiling quartet standing before the open front door, all of them laden with presents. Whereas Jack returned the smiles, Sonny looked as though she wanted to vanish into thin air. She had a feeling that she was going to receive a healthy dose of ribbing about this throughout the evening. Glancing at Hawke who was busy whispering something to her "friend"--the same one she'd brought to the *Jitterbugs* grand opening--Sonny instinctively knew that she would be the main one.

Coming forward, Isaac placed a kiss on both Jack and his sister's cheek. His green eyes twinkled with mirth as he looked at his younger sibling. "Merry Christmas Sonny. Our we getting an early start on unwrapping our main present?" He inclined his dark curly head toward Jack, just in case it wasn't obvious what or rather whom he was referring to.

Sonny groaned. Let the (although good-natured) teasing from friends and family begin.

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The party was moving along quite well. Everyone had full tummies and were thoroughly enjoying themselves and the time had come to start opening presents. Excitedly (who doesn't like opening Christmas gifts?), some guests chose to sit on the floor surrounding the tree while others sat occupied the couches and chairs. Having been initiated as the official gift giver, Chloe stood by the Christmas tree ready to start handing the guests their presents.

Before she could get started, Isaac said that he and Sarah had an announcement to make. After obtaining everyone's attention, Isaac reached into his pocket and pulled a small object out, which was concealed in his hand. With a tender smile on his face, he looked at Sarah as he began to slip the object, which turned out to be a though modest in diamonds-exquisite engagement ring. Isaac then announced that a few days prior to this evening he had proposed to Sarah and that they were to be married on New Year's Eve. Yes, it was quite soon but Sarah and Isaac were anxious to start the new year as husband and wife. They were planning on having a small and intimate wedding and Sarah took this opportunity to ask Sonny to be her maid of honor.

Squealing in delight, Sonny ran up to her best friend and nearly hugged the life out of her, exclaiming, "I'd be honored to be your maid of honor!" Returning the exuberant hug, Sarah richly chuckled.

After a hearty round or two of congratulations for the happy wife and husband to be, it was time to litter Jack's clean carpet with torn gift-wrap, bows, boxes and decorative tissue paper.

Occasionally sipping from a mug filled with eggnog (the kiddie kind) Jack watched, a slight smile on her lips while everyone exchanged gifts, sharing smiles, hugs and thank you's as they unveiled their presents. Though she had already given away most of her presents to the people gathered tonight at her home, she had decided to wait for everyone else to get done before she gave Chloe, Sonny, and Briana theirs.

Her smile growing larger, Jack looked down at the slim white and gold accented box lying on her lap. Lifting the cover, she fingered the lovely certificate stating in bold Italics that she had ten free one-hour massages to be used anytime at *Serenity Palace*. While Jack proceeded to open the neatly wrapped gift, Sonny had mentioned that she had no idea what to get her. After all, what do you get someone who could buy just about anything they wanted? However, Jack quickly assured her that the gift was perfect. And it was. A grin lifted the corners of Jack's lips as she thought about just whom she would be collecting the ten massages from. *Sonny girl, I predict we are soon going to be spending quite a bit of time together at your place of business!*

So caught up in imagining those soft, warm, petite hands on her body for a solid hour ten different times, Jack nearly jumped out of her skin when she felt a tap on her shoulder. Glancing toward her left, she spotted Leslie leaning against the arm of the couch she was occupying. Putting her mug down along with her gift from Sonny, she turned to face the woman, one eyebrow raising in question.

"Now that you've nearly scared the living daylights out of me, may I help you?" She smirked when her ex-girlfriend grinned.

Leaning down so that only Jack could hear her, Leslie said, "We need to talk."

"I told you that the edible panties were Chloe's idea." She grinned, blue eyes twinkling with obvious mischief. "I was against it, but of course she wouldn't listen to me. You know kids these days." Trying not to laugh, Jack thought back to when Leslie opened the gift, first reading the small Christmas label attached, which said that what lay inside was truly for she and Laura. A smile forming on her lips after reading the label and then handing it to her girlfriend, Leslie revealed her gift, which turned out to be licorice panties in an assortment of flavors and colors including cherry, grape, and peach. Both women had turned bright red, however Laura quickly recovered by holding up a pair of purple grape panties and exclaiming that she hoped they fit. Everyone laughed.

It was Leslie's turn to smirk. "Only someone as twisted and bad as you would give someone edible panties for such a family oriented holiday." Reaching out, she lightly cuffed Jack on the back of her head, though there was a bright smile on her face. In all actuality, Leslie didn't mind receiving the panties, which turned out to only be her 'joke' gift from Jack. Both she and Laura had been the recipients of two tickets for a one week long Caribbean cruise, which they were to say the least thrilled about. It would be their very first vacation together. Leslie briefly wondered if the panties would keep until they went on the trip.

"Anyway, I wasn't referring to the panties," Leslie continued as she rose from the arm of the couch. "I want to talk with you about something else. Could you come with me please?" Wrapping a hand around Jack's biceps, she tugged until the other woman got to her feet and then led her out of the den and into the empty kitchen where they each sat in a chair at the breakfast table. After scooting her chair closer to Jack's, Leslie said, "I wanted to speak with you about that gift you purchased for Briana. Jack are you sure you want to give that to her? I mean think about this. *Really* think about this."

Jack sighed, having received a few calls and even a couple of emails from her ex-girlfriend during the past week concerning the not so small gift she bought for Sonny's little sister. Having gone shopping with her, Leslie had been against it the moment Jack revealed to her what she intended to purchase. As a matter of fact, the first words out of her mouth had been, "Are you nuts? Sonny is going to flip!"

"Les, I have given it considerable thought and I know what I'm doing. She's going to love the present," Jack replied as she absently began to fiddle with a button near the bottom of her shirt. Perhaps she was a bit nervous about Sonny's reaction, but last week she had decided not to let that stop her. Her mental debate was what is the point of having an abundance of money if you can't feel free to spend it on the people you care about?

"Of course she's going to love it. What nineteen-year-old wouldn't? Don't you think it's a bit...extravagant though? I'm sure that Sonny will."

Shrugging, Jack stood up having had enough of this conversation. The more they discussed it, the more nervous she became. "Look Les, I bought it and I'm not taking it back. If Sonny doesn't

like it then that's her problem. I bought it for Briana not her and if she's going to get an attitude over the amount of money that I spent then so be it."

Slowly nodding, Leslie decided to let the subject drop. Apparently, Jack had made up her mind and there was nothing she could do to change it. Standing, Leslie wrapped an arm around her friend's waist as she released an overly dramatic sigh.

"Good luck Jack," she said in a solemn tone. "May the force be with you."

Playfully rolling her eyes, Jack led them back where the party was in full swing.

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Observing the two festive envelopes covered with miniature Santa's and wrapped up in thin ribbons--one red, the other green--Chloe wondered what could be inside. Ever since she was old enough to start opening her own gifts, she enjoyed trying to guess the contents, mainly using the method of shaking. However, this method didn't prove fruitful since ninety-eight percent of the time during the last fifteen years she was wrong.

Since shaking wasn't going to work with the slim envelopes, Chloe decided to just find out what lay inside the old fashioned way. She began to pull the ribbon of one envelope when her sister informed her to open the other first. Becoming more curious, the young woman picked up the envelope tied with the green ribbon and started tugging it off while everyone in the room watched with interest. Jack had mentioned to her sister that she would be receiving the rest of her gifts tomorrow but she was eager to give her this one tonight, her 'big Christmas present'.

Prying open the envelope, Chloe pulled out what she recognized as gift certificates. She quickly counted four of them and upon reading, learned they were supposed to be redeemed in order to receive one hundred thousand frequent flyer miles on each certificate. A post-it note stuck to the first one, Chloe read it aloud for everyone's ears.

Ho-ho-ho kid,

I figured since you enjoy traveling with Justine and the gang you can take them or three of whomever else you might want on a vacation. You can go virtually anywhere you want with these frequent flyer miles, so have a great trip. Just remember to call me on a regular basis ;-) Merry Christmas kid. I love you with all my heart.

Your Big Sis

A blinding smile on her lips, Chloe practically threw herself into her older sibling's arms, nearly crushing the certificates still held in her hand. Branding each of Jack's cheeks with kisses, she thanked her profusely as the guests shared smiles and chuckles. Chuckling as well, Jack returned the sweet kisses before asking Chloe to open the remaining envelope.

"Oh! I almost forgot!" Resembling a little kid who had just been let loose in a vast candy store, Chloe placed the certificates and post-it note back inside their envelope before grabbing the yet

to be opened one. After sitting next to her sister she proceeded to open the envelope covered in red ribbon. Spying another post-it note, Chloe read that before checking out the four long slips of paper and four small plastic cards inside.

Ho-ho-ho again kid,

You all are going to need some cash, so these are to help with your expenses. Don't I just think of everything? ;-)

Jackie

Taking out the plastic cards first, Chloe laughed when she saw that they were actually phone cards worth three hundred minutes each. Obviously, her sister expected her regular calls to last a long long time. Looking up into smiling blue eyes identical to her own, Chloe kissed her sister again before she returned her attention to the envelope and pulled out the last part of her gift, which was four American Express traveler's cheques. And what pretty cheques they were, valued at one thousand dollars each.

Surviving another bone-crushing embrace (which she could honestly never have enough of), Jack smiled broadly, pleased that Chloe liked her gifts.

"Thank you so much Jack. You are by far the best sister a girl could ever have," Chloe enthused, nearly bouncing up and down on the couch in her excitement. Of course, she planned on taking Mary, Justine, and Antonia and she could barely wait to call them. In fact, she probably wouldn't even be able to wait until morning.

"I'll say," Peter chimed in while sitting next to the Christmas tree with his partner Kevin. He grinned up at Jack. "You interested in adopting me? I'll be the best brother you could ever have Jack!"

She laughed. "You're on. I'll have the papers drawn up."

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Ten minutes later, Jack had corralled everyone into the front yard of her home where both Sonny and Briana would be receiving their presents from her. Before she revealed them, her guests took time admiring and commenting on multitude of decorations and lights strewn about the two-story mansion. There were even lights in the bushes and trees surrounding the home. All of Santa's reindeer along with the big jolly man himself in his gift filled sleigh were situated upon the roof, looking as though they were about to ride off into the sky at any moment. In the lead of the bunch, Rudolph's famous red nose shone brightly, blinking every so often like a beacon of light. Hanging along the edge of the roof were lighted 'icicles' of different shapes and sizes.

The ground was covered with a thick layer of realistic looking snow, which glowed as if tiny crystals were imbedded into it. Although none could be created with the pretend snow, there were still pre-made glowing snowmen standing amongst the pure white flakes. One of them was a man and the other a woman (distinguished by her fluorescent earrings and necklace). It was

obvious that the life-sized duo were exclusive since they were holding stick hands and Mr. Snowman was puckering up for a kiss.

Obviously having decided to work outside for a change, six of Santa's little elves surrounded by lighted red and white candy canes taller than them, diligently labored, creating toys for all the boys and girls of the world. One of them even moved as he repeatedly pumped his little fist up and down while hammering at the wheels on a blue toy truck. Another elf admired his handiwork, watching an eight-car choo-choo train riding along an oval track. It even played a Christmas melody as it hurried along the track.

"Wow, Jack this is gorgeous," Leslie commented as she along with everyone else took in the entire scene. "I just hope there isn't a massive blackout in Orlando because of all the juice you must be pulling!" She grinned, letting the other woman know that she was only teasing. Yet, she inwardly winced, wondering just how much higher than usual Jack's electricity bill was going to be for the month of December. *Luckily, she can afford it, but this isn't going to be cheap!*

Returning the grin, Jack retorted, "No need to worry. If there is a blackout I'll just buy the whole city candles."

"Aw, that's so very sweet of you Jack," Briana interjected, suddenly looking quite mischievous. "However, you needn't buy any of *us* candles. Just plant a steamy kiss on Sonny here and she'll light up as brightly as that Christmas tree of yours." The young woman squawked when a handful of snow found its way into the back of her shirt. Although artificial, the snow still managed to be cold since it primarily consisted of water. Turning around, she spied the culprit who wore a satisfied smirk.

Briana slowly shook her head. "You shouldn't have done that Sonny."

Sonny arched a golden brow. "And yet possibly knowing that I did it anyway. Question is, now what are *you* gonna do Bri?"

Answering for her, Chloe cupped her hands around her mouth before loudly declaring, "SNOW FIGHT!"

As though it was planned, everyone immediately bent down and began to gather handfuls of snow that they tossed at anyone who caught their attention. A dozen grownups giggling like little children dodged flying snowballs (jumping over hardworking elves and whatnot) while attempting to hit as many people as possible. Hawke's date Stephen performed an impressive back flip swiftly followed by a tuck and roll that landed him behind Mrs. Snowman, who protected him from three snowballs soaring in his direction.

It was more than likely that they were the only people in the entire city who were having a snow fight at that time and they were enjoying themselves immensely. So involved in their horseplay, none of them even cared when others slowly drove by giving them curious looks. They didn't even care when a couple of the neighbors peeked out of their windows toward the Foster home after hearing a plethora of shrieks and boisterous laughing. One of the neighbors quickly glanced



toward the sky thinking that it had miraculously began snowing. He felt a bit foolish as he observed the clear midnight blue sky.

After being almost simultaneously pummeled by five snowballs, two of which came from her own sister (oh yes, she would most definitely pay) Jack raised her Santa cap in the air and waved it back and forth signaling an end to the rambunctious snow battle. An errant snowball caught her squarely in her mouth, which happened to be open at the time, before everyone ceased fire. Turning, she mock glared at Leslie, the one responsible for the albeit non-toxic, fake snow in her mouth. Leslie merely grinned and others chuckled while Jack spit the soft flakes out. She then chuckled as well, thinking that it was sort of funny. She wished that she had recorded all of this on her video camera.

Replacing her crimson cap on her head, Jack asked Sonny and Briana if they were ready for their presents yet. When two blonde heads nodded, Jack crooked a finger at the oldest one, gesturing her to come nearer. Sonny carefully made her way through the snow toward Jack, a smile on her face. Smiling back, the brunette leaned down to grab the thick red velvet bag lying next to the only girl elf in the entire bunch. Reaching into it with both hands, she pulled out a gift wrapped box large enough to contain two toaster ovens. Handing the present to Sonny, she and everyone else waited expectantly for her to open it.

"Wow, what could this be?" Sonny wondered aloud.

Jack smiled again. "Why don't you open it and find out?" Her friend chuckled.

"Good idea, Jack." Sitting the box on the ground, Sonny knelt in the snow and began to tear off the paper. Once it was totally removed, she lifted a corner of the box and pried the top back before pulling out what was inside. "Jack this is nice." The blonde drew out the last word of her statement as she admired the full-face helmet. Shining as though it had just been polished, it was candy apple red with chin bar and tinted face shield. The interior of the helmet was lined in black leather and felt soft to the touch. Prompted to try it on, Sonny did so, noticing that it was a perfect fit. Removing it as she rose to her feet, Sonny tucked the helmet under her left arm and hugged Jack with the other. "Thank you honey. I love it, it's so cool." She gave the woman a thousand-watt smile. Though it was the sort of helmet one would use for a motorized bike, she fully intended to try it with her twenty-four speed.

"You're welcome, but that's not all," Jack replied. "What good is a cool helmet without a cool bike to use it with?" Without waiting for a reply, she grabbed Sonny's hand and led her away from the house with everyone choosing to follow them. When they stopped next to the curb, Jack removed the sheet from a large object parked next to it with a flourish. A few appreciative whistles sailed through the air.

"Oh, my," Sonny softly uttered as she slowly walked toward her present, almost hesitantly running a hand along its length. Now her helmet would go with this splendidly. This was a candy apple red Aprilia Scarabeo motorbike and the first word that came to Sonny's mind to describe it was 'sweet'. It resembled a motorcycle with its sleek form, comfortable two-person riding positions, and sixteen-inch alloy wheels. Tearing her eyes away from the bike, Sonny

looked up at Jack. Shaking her head, she started to say something but didn't get the chance as the other woman covered her mouth with two fingertips.

"It's like I can read what's going on in that head of yours. You were about to say that you couldn't except, right?" Wordlessly, the smaller woman nodded while Jack did the same. "Well I'm asking you to change your mind. It was my fault that your bicycle was destroyed and though I know you purchased another one, when I saw this it just screamed 'buy me for Sonny girl'," pausing, Jack grinned. "Evidently, I listened. So, please don't hurt my feelings by refusing to except this gift. I know you want it. Please take it. She wants to go home with you."

Sonny chuckled softly. "*She* told you that?"

Jack nodded. "She sure did. A.S.-that's what I call her for short-has been sitting in my garage for the past week asking about you. I kept telling her that she'd have to wait until Christmas Eve to meet you. She was so very anxious." Somehow, the brunette managed to keep a straight face, though Sonny clearly had a problem with mimicking it as she burst out laughing.

Walking up to her, Sonny threw her arms around the other woman, hugging her tightly as she thanked her for the presents. Sonny hadn't ridden a scooter in a few years but she couldn't wait to try this one out. Hopefully, it was like riding a bike. Once learned then it was never forgotten.

Not being able to stay back one second longer, Briana sidled up to the Aprilia, reverently running a hand over the handlebars. Since she had previously learned to operate a Harley motorcycle on her own, she knew that she could handle this. Though she and Sonny had arrived at Jack's home in her car, she wondered if Sonny would allow her to ride this crimson beauty to her apartment. Turning toward her sister wearing the most charming smile she could muster, Briana asked. Before Sonny could offer a reply, Jack thrust a small object into Briana's hand.

"If you want to go home on Sonny's Aprilia then how do you intend to get your own new ride there?" Jack inquired. She had a faint smile on her face as she watched two matching pair of verdant eyes look down at what lay in Briana's hand. It was a keychain, however, not just any keychain. Briana instantly recognized it as merchandise from that television show Xena: Warrior Princess she faithfully watched each week. It would be a great addition--along with the X: WP poster and two action figure dolls Sonny had given her earlier--to her growing collection. The keychain was the gold and silver toned new improved chakram, which was a part of the heroine Xena's fighting gear. A short link chain attached the circular chakram to a D-shaped screw clasped keyring where a single key and small silver car alarm remote was hooked.

Briana glanced between the keychain and Jack's face once and then twice. She could hardly believe what her eyes were seeing...what was right in the palm of her hand. It was a keychain with a key on it. A key that she expected belonged to an automobile. And it sure as heck wasn't her Nissan key! Her hand beginning to shake ever so slightly, Briana closed it around the keychain, holding it as though it were her lifeline. Slowly, her eyes moved upward to the blue ones closely watching her. Was it just her imagination or did Jack look the slightest bit nervous? Briefly, the teenager wondered why.

Meanwhile, the expression Leslie wore was one of obvious nervousness as she studied her ex, looking for any signs of animosity. Well so far, Sonny didn't look as though she wanted to shove Jack into the chimney with Santa. Noticing the look on her girlfriend's face, Laura leaned toward her so that she could talk without being overheard.

"Percentage wise, I think there's only a twenty-five percent chance that she'll freak out over the giving of this gift."

Inclining her head toward Laura, Leslie retorted, "How did you come to that conclusion?" Inwardly, she smiled, pleased that her new love interest instinctively knew what she was thinking about without her even having to mention it. *Ah, I've just got to love her.*

"Sure, she was upset when Jack attempted to give her money in the past, but this is different. It's a gift...an *extremely* nice gift for Sonny's sister and has absolutely nothing to do with her. There's no way she could benefit from it." Shrugging, Laura added, "So there shouldn't be any problems."

"Then what does the twenty-five percent chance of Sonny freaking out allude to?" Hearing a high-pitched joyous scream, both women turned their heads in the direction of the trio standing by the brand new Aprilia motorbike. Actually, Sonny was leaning against the bike, her arms folded over her chest as she regarded her sister trying to seemingly fracture every bone in Jack's body. It was impossible to gauge the expression on her face.

"Well," Laura drew out the word, looking thoughtful as she and everyone else watched Briana--taking her new buddy Chloe along with her--suddenly sprint down the street as though she had just shoplifted from an expensive boutique and a slew of security guards were hot on her trail. She had been sent on a treasure hunt to find her gift. Her only hint: It was either on that street or the next one over. "There's always the possibility of her being a little envious that her friend bought her baby sister an exotic sports car. Especially, since she's not exactly in a position to do so herself."

"An exotic sports car?" Isaac asked, having overheard (okay, perhaps he had been trying to listen) what Laura just said. "Jack bought Bri *that* for Christmas?" Hearing his semi-rhetorical question, other guests started to migrate toward the small group.

Laura nodded. "Yes, she did. You know how your sister loves her cars." Giving a brief nod in Leslie's direction she continued, "Les went shopping with her to buy it."

Pointing toward herself, Leslie quickly amended, "But I never condoned this. In fact, I tried to talk her out of buying it. No teenager is ready for a six-figure car *and* there's no telling how Sonny will react."

Isaac glanced toward his sister who was quietly talking with Jack. From his standpoint she didn't look in the least bit upset. Though, from countless experiences with them he knew that women could be tricky and complex creatures. Often it was difficult to tell what they were truly feeling and thinking. Glancing toward Sarah, he resisted the urge to take her in his arms and kiss her

senseless. Rarely, was it difficult for him to read her and on those occasions when it was she tried her best to help him understand. This was one of numerous things he adored about her. Isaac considered himself a lucky man. Never would he have guessed that his younger sister's best friend from high school would end up being the love of his life.

"I personally think she'll be fine with it," Sarah spoke up as she unconsciously slipped an arm around her fiancé's waist, bringing him closer. "Sonny has a lot of pride, which is why she was ticked with Jack before when she wanted to give her money, but this is a totally different situation. It's not a payoff, it's a gift with no strings attached for Briana." Isaac nodded his head, indicating that he agreed, though only half of his attention was on this conversation since he could feel the warmth stemming from the petite beauty holding on to him. Casually, he lightly kissed the top of her dark head, earning a few beguiling smiles from those around them and a tender one from Sarah.

"I sure hope you're right Sarah," Hawke uttered, gazing toward Jack and Sonny. "There has been enough bickering between those two. They don't need another obstacle just when they're so close to building something meaningful." Apparently, everyone in attendance agreed as they all gave a collective nod. Even Stephen and Kevin, who didn't know either Sonny or Jack that well, joined in on the nodding.

"You think they are?" Peter asked, as he glanced up and down the street wondering where Briana could be with this exotic car. Though, he wasn't anywhere close to being a car buff, he was interested in seeing how it looked. "Isn't Sonny supposed to go see this Blue lady in a few days?" Why she would choose this woman whom she hadn't met and who didn't even have the decency to show up at Disneyworld over Jack who obviously wanted to be with her and practically worshipped the very ground she walked on was beyond him. If he swung in the traditional direction and so did Jack, he would pick her in a heartbeat!

Hawke shook her head affirmatively with a mildly dissatisfied look on her face. When she'd first learned of Sonny's upcoming trip, she briefly thought about popping all of her tires on New Year's Eve so she wouldn't be able to go. However, a little voice way in the back of her head told her that somehow Sonny would find out who committed the misdeed and then she would be in a world of trouble. Plus, it just isn't nice to poke holes in someone's tires, now is it?

"Maybe she'll see this woman and then discover like we already have that she and Jack are destined to be together," Sarah offered.

Slowly shaking her head, Leslie added, "If it wasn't for stubbornness and pride they might have been together weeks ago." A chorus of agreement resonated through the gossiping group.

Unobserved by anyone except for Sonny, who came along with her, Jack sneaked up behind Leslie sweetly inquiring, "Exactly, which of us is stubbornness, and the other pride?"

Only blushing on the very rare occasion, Leslie felt her cheeks practically glowing with heat as she glanced between Jack and Sonny. Last she knew they had been conversing near the curb so just how they gotten there so fast? And why did they arrive at such an inopportune moment?

*Damn sneaky people!* "Umm, I wasn't uh..." Her usually quick mind could come up with nothing to say.

Laura tried to come to the rescue. "Oh, we were discussing an article from *Climax*."

One of Jack's eyebrows arched as both of Sonny's lips smirked. "Really? What kind of article is this? Did you write it?"

"No. Actually, a colleague of mine did," pausing, Laura nearly put her brain into overdrive while trying to quickly come up with an explanation. Luckily, she was saved from having to do so.

"Yeah," Isaac started, picking up where the magazine writer left off, "It was one of those advice columns." Sarah nodded, attempting to give validity to his fabricated story. "A woman wrote in about her inability to tell her friend that she loved them and when you guys came over that's why you heard Leslie talking about stubbornness and pride keeping those two people from moving on to the next level of their relationship." Finishing, he looked quite pleased to say the least. However, one look at his sister let him know that she wasn't buying the tale. Glancing at the tall brunette, he noticed that she wasn't either. The young man inwardly sighed. Oh, well. At least he gave it a try.

Before either Jack or Sonny could form a response, every head in the group swiveled around when they heard the unmistakable sound of a car horn beeping, all of them knowing that it must have been Briana with her new car. Well it was about time that she and Chloe returned! Beginning to move toward the curb, nearly every mouth opened wide enough to inhale a Big Mac when the car parked adjacent to the sidewalk. This was one sexy automobile. Well, if one could refer to a car as sexy that is.

As its passenger and driver wore equal grins, everyone else, including the purchaser of the vehicle openly admired it. *It* was a Ferrari 355 F1 Spider Fiorano and those in attendance wholeheartedly agreed that it was the greatest looking car that they had ever seen up close and personal. A two-seater convertible, the Italian beauty sported black leather interior and a smooth curvy silver physique complete with double wishbones on all four corners of the car.

Her hands still wrapped around the suede steering wheel, Briana located Jack's whereabouts and beamed at her. She loved-no. She was positively no doubt about it enamored with the car and would live in it if that were practical. Twice during her and Chloe's test drive around the surrounding neighborhoods, she had felt her throat getting that familiar tightening and a few tears escaped her eyes. Briana could hardly believe that this Ferrari was hers. It belonged to *her*. How surreal.

"How does she feel?" Jack inquired while sidling up to the car.

Wearing a grin that was surely in danger of tearing her cheeks, Briana tenderly ran her fingertips along the steering wheel, her eyes on Jack's. "She's terrific in every way. A smooth ride and feel." Slowly, she shook her blonde head from side to side. "I'm half expecting to wake up at any moment."

Chuckling, Jack replied, "You're very much awake."

"You sure?" Suddenly the look of wonderment on Briana's countenance was replaced with a slight mischievous one. "Maybe you should pinch me just to make absolute sure. Or," dramatically pausing, the young woman glanced in her sister's direction. Sonny almost looked mortified, certain that her sibling was about to say something that she rather not be witness to. "Or you could pinch Sonny for...well just because. I'm sure she'd get a thrill out of it." A few laughs erupted due to the teasing remark. Covering her mouth with a hand, Jack broadly smiled behind it.

Briana barely had time to give her sister a playful wink before the small blonde came barreling toward the driver's side of the car. *Uh oh*. Heeding Chloe's advice that she should start the car, Briana turned the key in the ignition before hurriedly pulling away from the curb, carrying she and her passenger down the street. And just because she knew that her sister couldn't possibly catch her now, Briana stepped on the brake before she half turned in her seat and stuck her tongue out at Sonny who stood about fifty feet away. Moments later, the silver Ferrari was flying toward the end of the block, the laughter of the two youngsters inside it floating through the still night air. Standing in the middle of the empty street, Sonny followed the car.

"That's alright," she called in as loud a voice as she could muster. "You can run but you can't hide! I know where you're temporarily living!"

Heartily laughing, Jack walked toward the middle of the street to collect her embarrassed little friend. Wrapping an arm around Sonny's shoulders, she gave her a brief squeeze, a smile on her lips. Nearly forgetting why she was so embarrassed, the blonde returned the engaging smile while unconsciously slipping an arm around the other woman's waist. Together they began the short trek back to Jack's yard where the snow fight had suspiciously resumed. They would never know who started it. Seemingly, not paying them any attention whatsoever, the adults bolted around the wide yard while trying their best to hit human targets.

"You want to adopt my baby sister along with Peter?" Sonny asked while glancing at the scene before them in amusement. "After all, I've got two more and I'm about to inherit a sister-in-law so that's plenty."

Jack chuckled and then ducked, narrowly missing a snowball hurled in her direction. After gracing Laura with a mock glare, she turned back to a grinning Sonny. "Tell you what. You agree to marry me and then I would automatically inherit Bri."

"Jack..."

Stopping them just as they stepped onto the sidewalk, the brunette faced her friend, gently placing a fingertip against her lips. "Sssh, no reply is needed." Tenderly smiling, Jack brushed her lips against Sonny's. "Merry Christmas Sonny girl," she whispered.

Sonny wrapped her arms around Jack, hugging her tight. "Merry Christmas Jack."

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Well today was the day that the happy couple would become Mr. and Mrs. Isaac Campbell. Certainly, quite a few women scattered around Florida were in mourning today if they knew that the ex-playboy was finally tying the knot. Both he and his fiancée had planned on a small intimate wedding, but once Briana let the cat out of the bag to their parents that plan incinerated as quickly as a wooden house doused in kerosene. On the day following Christmas, Paul and Annette arrived back in Canova Beach from their vacation and promptly received a phone call from their youngest child who let them in on the little secret that Isaac and Sarah were getting married on New Year's Eve.

Though Briana completely understood that her brother did not want the family to know of his impending wedding until after it was over, she decided to tell anyway, claiming that she had done it for his own good. And although he wanted to swipe one of her tennis rackets and pretend her bottom was the ball, deep down Isaac knew that she had done the right thing. He could only imagine how his father would react if his only son (his playboy son at that) were to get married without his knowledge. The retired police officer would be a very disgruntled man and it wouldn't be simple for Isaac to assuage his anger. Yes, Briana had definitely saved him-a thirty-three year old man-from being in trouble with his dad and possibly mom as well. Though Annette was much easier going than her husband, she undoubtedly would not take hearing the news of her son's secret wedding lightly.

After Paul and Annette were made aware of Isaac's upcoming nuptials they immediately placed a call to Sarah's parents who they were still close with even after all these years of not living less than a mile from. Needless to say, Faye and Michael Watkins (who was previously on the force along with Paul) were less than pleased to hear that their only daughter was intending to get married for the first time without even bothering to tell and involve them in the ceremony. The Watkins and Campbell's conversed for over an hour via their speakerphones about what they were going to do in order to make this small intimate wedding not so small and intimate. Afterwards, Sarah was the recipient of a phone call from her parents, which quickly turned into a lecture on why she should have told them about the wedding in the first place. She lost count of how many times she apologized.

Though their children repeatedly informed them that it would be impossible to pull off a grand scale wedding with only four days to plan, the Parents would not be dissuaded. As far as they were concerned, this wedding was going to be Sarah and Isaac's first and last. Therefore, they would send them off down that road of happily marital bliss with a big bang. They saw it as their responsibility to take over...ahem...take *care* of the wedding plans. After all, they *were* the Parents.

By sunset of December 26th, Paul and Annette arrived in Orlando where they met up with Michael and Faye at their home to discuss wedding plans. The first business to be discussed: they would split the bill fifty-fifty, although Michael insisted that the bride's parents were supposed to pay for the wedding. Of course, Paul wasn't going for that so it was unanimously voted half-and-half. By the evening of December 30th with much help from renowned wedding coordinator Lance Mitchell-Faye knew him through a friend whose daughter had gotten married

a few months back-everything was in place and they were ready to begin the ceremony at 11:00 sharp the next morning. And thank goodness for the invention of the Internet because due to their electronically sent RSVP invites (a few relatives and friends who didn't subscribe to the Internet had to be called), they mostly received affirmative replies.

So, it was just passed 10:30 am on New Year's Eve and all one hundred plus guests had arrived and were being escorted to their seats. The bride and groom sides were nearly equal in the number of guests they had and all of them waited in anticipation for the ceremony to begin. Those that knew Isaac could hardly believe that he was finally settling down. Practically everyone had expected him to be a wandering-eyed playboy until the day he died. Well today he was proving them wrong and they couldn't be more thrilled.

After having helped Sarah with her wedding dress and giving her some much needed words of encouragement since she was unsurprisingly a bit nervous, Sonny left the bride in the capable hands of her mother. Walking into the main part of the church, she paid careful attention to not tripping in the high heels she wore as she moved down the aisle searching for a particular person. Finding her, Sonny smiled as she slid into the pew four rows back from the platform where the ceremony would take place. Taking a deep breath, she slipped her feet out of her shoes. She had been wearing them less than an hour and they were already causing her feet to start aching. Briefly, she wondered why she had worn them when it was well known that she detested the irritating shoes so much. The only positive attribute about high heels was that they made her appear taller. *That is not worth having to deal with them*, Sonny thought as she started flexing her stocking covered toes. And speaking of stockings, she hated those too.

"How's Sarah?" Jack asked as she played patty cake with the tiny person sitting in an infant car seat on her lap. On she and Chloe's arrival at the church, Jack had immediately searched for Sonny's sister Melanie intent on kidnapping her namesake for a while. Luckily, Melanie and Brian had been more than happy to let her baby-sit. They dearly loved the new little addition to their family, but it was nice to get a break every once and a while. They just hoped that the baby wouldn't start fussing after the ceremony started.

Leaning toward the duo, Sonny took a playful munch from her niece's soft cheek, earning a small giggle in the process. At least, it sounded like a giggle. No matter what, it was adorable. "She's a little nervous but she'll be fine. Her mom is finishing her up." Glancing passed her friend, Sonny's brow lifted in curiosity as she watched Chloe and Briana quietly talking amongst themselves. When she'd left a while back to attend to Sarah, they had been in that same position nearly sitting on top of each other while discussing one topic or another. *Hmm. They seemed to have warmed up to one another quickly*, Sonny thought as she crossed one leg over the other. In fact, the two were almost inseparable during the last few days. *That's nice*. A smile lifted the corners of her lips, which quickly faltered when she caught site of a person whom she would have been happy to never lay eyes on again. What was she doing at the wedding? Certainly, no one had seen fit to send her an invitation.

Looking at her friend, Jack noticed the distasteful expression she wore and wondered about it. She asked. Wordlessly, Sonny pointed straight head and Jack followed the movement of her finger. She did a double take before she believed what her eyes were seeing. Oh crap, what in the

world was Alicia Hastings doing at Isaac's wedding? It wasn't like she cared about him or anyone else for that matter.

As though she felt the two sets of hostile eyes upon her, a carefully coifed red head swiveled around the large church until Jack and Sonny were found. Excusing herself from the conversation she was having with a person who didn't know her all that well, Alicia began to make her way toward the two women sitting a few rows back from where she stood. Noticing that she was headed in their direction, Jack and Sonny released simultaneous groans.

Throwing decorum completely out of the window, Sonny asked, "What the hell are you doing here? Don't tell me you were invited." Somehow, Alicia kept the borderline polite smile on her lips as she regarded the frown on Sonny's face.

"Sonny please," Jack managed to say in a whisper that almost sounded like a quiet shout. "No matter how annoying your cousin is don't forget that we are in the house of God." The polite smile disappearing, Alicia gave Jack a dirty look, which the brunette gladly returned. "Also," pausing, Jack protectively cupped the baby's small pink ears with her hands, "remember that there is a young impressionable child here who can hear you. She doesn't need to be subjected to that type of language."

Having paid rapt attention to her minute lecture, Chloe and Briana exchanged amused looks while trying not to outright laugh at the expression that the 'blaspheming' blonde sported. Looking properly chastised, Sonny promptly apologized to both Little Jack and God, though not in that order.

Thoroughly amused as well, Alicia leaned against a pew before folding her arms over a tight red blouse that showed so much cleavage one could successfully insert a wallet into it and it would stay put. A smile on her lips, which was nowhere close to reaching her eyes Alicia said, "In answer to your brusque questions Sonny, I'm here because my cousin whom no one thought would ever do so, is getting married. I'd like to witness the event. And I'm sorry to tell you this," in truth she looked extremely delighted, "but I *was* invited."

"Who in their right mind would invite you to this wedding?" Jack asked, voicing Sonny's next question before she got the chance.

Alicia tsked as she looked at her ex college sweetie. "What's the matter Jacqueline? You're not happy to see me?"

"I thought we made it perfectly clear last month that neither of us wanted to see the other ever again?"

Laughing, Alicia waved a dismissive freshly manicured hand in the air. "Jack honey, I didn't mean what I said that night." A smile that could only be described as devilish appeared on lips, which perfectly matched her blouse. "Come on Jack. Don't tell me that you didn't have any fun that night. It was sort of exhilarating don't you think? I was so turned on when I left you." Hazel eyes glued to Jack's face, Alicia completely ignored the irritated stares from her two blonde

cousins and Chloe.

Having a temporary mental blackout Sonny blurted, "You call trying to rape her exhilarating? How twisted can you be?"

For long moments, none of them said breathed a solitary word. It was as though time chose that moment to stand perfectly still. Even Little Jack stopped her gurgling as her expressive green eyes glanced between her stunned looking playmate, the equally surprised and incensed expressions on the two young women sitting to her right and the reddened face of the blonde now standing as she glared at a silenced redhead. Her shaking hands were at her sides as they repeatedly clenched and unclenched.

Blinking as though her dark eyelashes were in slow motion, anguished blue eyes traveled between her sister and the woman whom she hadn't seen since she was in elementary school. Scooting forward in her seat, Chloe failed to notice when Briana slipped a comforting hand into her own as she stared in disbelief toward Alicia.

"Rape?" The word came out in a barely audible whisper. "You tried to rape my sister?" When Alicia failed to respond as quickly as Chloe would have liked she repeated her question in a louder tone of voice, which caught the attention of a few people around them including the wedding coordinator who happened to be within hearing distance. Hastily, he headed in their direction arriving just in time to witness Jack wrapping an arm around and trying to mollify her younger sibling.

"How come you didn't tell me?" Chloe quietly inquired.

"Sweetie it wasn't as bad as it sounds. Honestly. There was just a bit of a miscommunication between Alicia and I." Looking toward the redhead, Jack asked, "Right?" Without vocal comment, Alicia eagerly nodded while wishing that she had never come over there in the first place.

When Chloe appeared unconvinced, Sonny attempted to alleviate the situation. "Chloe she's telling the truth. I overreacted and I'm sorry for my outburst."

"As you should be," Alicia said, having the audacity to look exasperated as though she had done nothing wrong.

Wanting to smack the woman into the next state, Jack angrily stated, "Shut up Alicia."

Deciding to get a word in edgewise, Lance Mitchell wedding coordinator extraordinaire, held up a hand for silence. Amazingly, every one of the women ceased to speak. After quietly giving directions into the tiny microphone attached to his headset, the tall slender man dressed in an impeccable Armani suit glanced between the women and even the baby before his brown eyes squarely landed on Jack searching for answers. He didn't want there to be any problems. This wedding had to go off without so much as the smallest hitch.

"Okay, mind telling me what's going on here?"

She tried out a nonchalant shrug. "It's okay now."

One of Lance's carefully plucked eyebrows raised. "Okay now? Okay? I heard something about an attempted...rape," he whispered the last word, "and everything is magically okay now? Honey I accept that answer about as much as an ATM machine would accept a library card. You need to get real with me," he replied in his usual fast-paced voice, which sounded like he had recently consumed at least a gallon of coffee.

Jack looked a bit stupefied as she gazed toward the wedding coordinator who appeared as though he might start lecturing her at any moment. In his presence, she suddenly felt ten years old again. *How did he do that?* "I umm...I uh...well...I am real...ah...Mr. Mitchell."

"That's Lance honey. Referring to me as Mr. Mitchell reminds me of the dad on *Dennis the Menace*. Now," with a pause, he turned his attention on Alicia and Sonny. Without a word, he indicated for Sonny to retake her seat and she promptly did so without comment. Pointing at Alicia, Lance donned a piqued expression as he remarked, "I have a suspicion that you're bothering these fine ladies and that really chaps my hide, you know?" Not waiting and truthfully not caring if he received a reply, Lance placed a hand on Alicia's elbow before twirling her around until she was facing the tall double doors leading outside. "So I think it's time that you leave. The wedding will start soon and I don't want you anywhere in the building."

Yanking her arm out of his grasp, Alicia regarded him with an insolent look. "Do you know who I am? I have every right to be here!"

Lance placed his hands on his hips as he gazed toward her. "Honey," he managed to make it sound as though he was truly calling her bitch, "not only do I know who you are, I couldn't care less. And no you actually don't have any right to be here. You weren't invited and you're not anyone's guest so if you would be so kind, if only for this one time in your miserable little life, please vacate the church before I call someone to assist you out. Now is that what you want Ms. Hastings? I know we would like to avoid a scene, wouldn't we?"

If looks could truly kill, Lance Mitchell wedding coordinator extraordinaire, would have dropped dead right there on the carpeted church floor in his neat Armani suit. "You cannot make me leave. I am a part of this family. My own mother, " Alicia pointed at Sonny in an almost accusatory fashion, "is her mother's older sister and you're telling me that I don't have an invite?"

Cocking his head to the side, Lance stared at her thoughtfully for a moment before answering. "Did you not comprehend the words which rolled off of my tongue? I thought I was speaking English. Did it sound like I was speaking English to you ladies?" He directed his question at Jack, Sonny, Chloe, and Briana. All of them immediately shook their heads in the positive. Little Jack released a small giggle. With a pleased smile, the wedding coordinator turned back to the perturbed Alicia. "I thought as much. Anyhoo, you need to make like a banana and split honey. I repeat you are not on the list of invitees."

Alicia stood her ground not liking to be told what to do one little bit. She was the one and only beloved little girl of Charles Hastings the III who had made the Fortune 500 list more than once. No one dared to order her around. Heck, she did the ordering and she took great pride in that task! Deciding that a little ordering was now required, Alicia demanded to see the wedding guest list only to have Lance swiftly shake his head while telling her that she couldn't.

"Why not?" she huffily inquired. This man was starting to get on her last nerve. She made a mental note to talk to her daddy about him later. If she had her way, Lance Mitchell would never plan another wedding for as long as he lived!

Tapping the side of his head, Lance replied, "Because the list is in here. I have a memory that an elephant would be envious of. Take my word for it Ms. Hastings. You're not on the list so I'm asking you again to please leave." After glancing around them to make sure that no one was listening, Lance took a step closer to Alicia. Wanting to hear what he was about to say Jack, Sonny, Chloe, and Briana scooted so far to the edge of their seats that they were in danger of falling off. "If you are not out of this building within two minutes, " Lance began in a low serious voice, "I'm afraid that people might find out what happened between you and Jacqueline Foster. More importantly, they might find out what you attempted to make happen and I'm sure this would generate a lot of adverse publicity for both you and your tycoon father. After all, you are his daughter so what does that say about his parenting skills, hmm? He didn't raise you to treat people with dignity and respect? And if certain people were to delve into your past would they find out other not so nice information about you? And would they hesitate to take this information public?"

Though hazel eyes narrowed in anger, there was a hint of uneasiness in them as well. "Are you threatening me?"

Suddenly, Lance's lips curved into a charming smile. "No honey, I'm just filling you in on what could possibly happen should you choose not to follow my suggestion. I know quite a few people who might take an interest in your background. I would like to save you from having to deal with any problems that may arise," pausing, Lance studied Alicia's face. She didn't look quite so snooty now.

Pushing the strap attached to her purse higher on her shoulder, the redhead shrugged while trying to look indifferent. "Fine. I don't care about this stupid wedding anyway and as far as I'm concerned you can all go to," Alicia made a point of looking directly at Jack when she emphatically said, "hell." With as much dignity as she could muster, Alicia headed towards the double doors, ignoring the various looks cast her way. Pushing them open with more force than what was required, she vanished from the church.

Looking after her, Lance dramatically whispered, "Amen." He then turned his attention on the four women who were gazing up at him with expressions ranging from awe to curiosity. He smiled. "Now that the she-devil has left the building, we can focus on more important matters," Lance started in his usual energetic voice. Glancing at his watch, he remarked that it was almost show time and then pointed toward Sonny, indicating for her to stand again with a short wiggle of his index finger. She popped up from the seat in a fairly good imitation of a Jack-in-the-box.

"Honey, you're the maiden of honor so I need you to get in your correct place." Glancing over his shoulder, he noticed Matthew sitting and chatting with his wife Candace and their two children. "And Sonny please pick up the best man and flower girl on your way."

A blonde head nodded obediently. "You've got it Lance." After giving Jack, Chloe, and her sister a quick 'see you later' Sonny headed in the direction of her brother-in-law.

Brown eyes then zeroed in on Briana who offered up a smile that was returned. "Briana, sweetheart what are you doing on this row?"

"Um, I was just visiting until the wedding started," she replied in a voice, which was almost meek.

The wedding coordinator nodded, seeming to accept this answer. "Okay, well since you're an immediate family member, I need you to get to pew number two pronto." He held up two fingers just to make himself abundantly clear. Either that or he was giving her the peace sign. "So scoot your booty." His brown eyes twinkling, Lance winked at her.

Squeezing Chloe's hand, which she still held, Briana kissed both Big and Little Jack's cheeks before she slid out of the row and headed farther toward the head of the church. Lance was about to say something to Jack when he suddenly heard someone speaking to him via the headset he wore. Nodding and listening intently for a few moments, he then reciprocated with instructions, speaking rapidly into the small microphone near his mouth. Done, Lance pointed at the baby. However, before he could get a single word out Jack was speaking.

"Can't she just stay with me?" The ex-Conqueror protectively wrapped her arms around the car seat carrying her namesake. She wasn't ready to give the baby up just yet. In fact, if it were possible she would take the little bundle of joy home with her. Little Jack was positively too cute for words!

"Oh, sure sure," Lance hurriedly replied. "One little one out of place isn't going to upset everything." Smiling, he leaned down and tenderly brushed the back of his hand across the baby's cheek to have her smile at him for the attention. She took it anywhere she could get it, which fortunately happened to be a lot of places. "Aren't you a beauty? Yes you are. Yes you are," the man cooed, losing his professionalism for a few precious seconds. Jack and Chloe exchanged grins at the display being put on before them.

Straightening, the wedding coordinator unzipped a black fanny pack that was fastened around his waist and pulled out a small plastic bag, which he handed to Jack. Inspecting the contents of the bag, she noticed that it was filled with a few sliced and frozen bananas. She then looked up at Lance curiously.

"Those are for the baby in case she gets a little fussy during the ceremony. I know she's just shy of being two months old, but she can still suck on them. You'll just have to hold them for her. They're nice, cool and sweet so Little Jacqueline should enjoy them. Also, do you have a bottle

for her?"

"Yes, her mom gave me one filled with 'homemade' milk," Jack replied as she pulled out a plastic bottle containing a white substance from Little Jack's pink and blue bunny covered baby bag.

Lance nodded. "Good, good." He then glanced at his watch again. "Okay ladies, I best be on my way. I have to make sure that Sonny, the bridesmaids, the groom's gorgeous boys and everyone else are where they are supposed to be."

"Thanks for the bananas and for getting rid of Alicia."

Lance smiled at her. "Honey, you're welcome for the bananas and *extremely* welcome for the she-devil."

Jack, Chloe, and Lance shared a chuckle, which Little Jack did an impressive imitation of.

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Checking her watch, Sonny noticed the time. It was just half passed three o'clock, which was the time she had intended to leave in order to get to St. John's River before sunset. Deciding to change since she didn't want to ride all the way there on her motorbike with a skirt on, Sonny exited the reception hall and headed to her Aprilia. At first, she was going to take her car but then changed her mind, thinking that she would give her scooter a bit of a workout. It might take longer to get there on her scooter but she wasn't in that much of a rush.

Grabbing her backpack from the handlebars, Sonny headed back into the reception hall and then toward the restrooms. Once inside, she slipped into a stall and proceeded to change into something a little more comfortable. Dressed in chinos and a white long-sleeved button down blouse, Sonny checked her appearance in the mirror taking the time to fluff her short hair a bit and add some more color to her lips before she walked out of the restroom with the backpack slung over her shoulder.

Before she could take five full steps after leaving the restroom, a hand wrapped around one of her own. Leading her to the bustling dance floor, Jack wrapped her arms around Sonny's waist and pulled the woman's body against her. Both women quelled the moans that wanted to escape at the contact of their bodies. Instinctively winding her arms around Jack's neck, Sonny looked up at her as they began to dance to the slow song that the talented band was playing.

"Where were you off to in such a hurry?" Jack quietly asked, brushing her lips against the other woman's forehead.

Sonny's eyes briefly closed at the contact of that soft mouth. "Um, I'm getting ready to go meet Dixie in Astor."

"Ah, yes," Jack nodded, pretending as though she had forgotten. Her hands started stroking the small of her companion's back, thumbs moving back and forth in a slow rhythmic pace.

It suddenly occurred to Sonny that the longer she stayed in Jack's arms, the harder it would be to leave them. She had to leave and she had to do it now. "Jack, I should be going," Sonny stated in a hoarse whisper. "I...Dixie...she's waiting for me. I told her that I'd try to be there by sunset." Was it just her imagination or did her arms wrap tighter around Jack's neck? Sonny gave a slight shake of her head. Traitors.

While looking into Sonny's eyes, a tender smile tugged at Jack's lips as she kept her arms right where they were. "Stay with me, Sonny girl," she asked in a hushed tone. "She may have you for the rest of your life if that's what you choose. I'm only asking to have you for the duration of this song."

Swallowing with a bit of difficulty, the blonde nodded. "Okay, Jack. Okay." Neither woman needing to speak another word, they held each other tighter as their bodies moved in unison.

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When Sonny arrived at the St. John River campground, it was a quarter after five that evening. Taking off her helmet, she settled it on the handlebars as she gazed at the cabin standing about twenty feet ahead. She took a deep relaxing breath. Behind that door was Dixie Monroe, the woman whom she'd been anxious to meet for over a year now.

Removing the straps of the backpack from her shoulders, Sonny brought it in front of her before unzipping the pouch located in the front. Pulling out her new cell phone, she proceeded to punch in Briana's cell number. Before she left the reception, her sister had made her promise that she would call her the moment she arrived in Astor. Since she would be staying at Chloe and Jack's house, Briana informed her sister to call on her cell phone instead of at the apartment.

The phone rang a total of five times before a breathless and giggling Briana picked it up. "Helloooo?"

Sonny smiled into phone. Her sister sounded like she was in good spirits. "Helloooo back to you sis."

"Hey Sonny! You got there okay?" Briana inquired, though her voice sounded distracted.

"Yes, ma'am. And the first thing I did was call you like I promised that I would." She didn't receive a quick reply as she heard a creaking noise in the background shortly followed by a high-pitched laugh. Arching an eyebrow, Sonny wondered what they could be doing. She asked and it took a couple moments before her sister answered.

"Oh, Chloe and I are just fooling around." Another laugh in the background, which Sonny now guessed belonged to Chloe. Briana giggled. "We're playing around-talking. Yes. We're having a great time...talking."

There was a thoughtful pause on Sonny's end of the line. "Well, I'm glad you're having fun. Talking that is."

"Yes, indeed, we are. So, I should let you go meet...Dixie then." Twin chuckles rang through the phone, giving Sonny the sneaking suspicion that they shared a private joke.

The other brow joined its twin as Sonny speculated if the two young women had gotten into Jack's liquor cabinet. Although, Briana didn't sound inebriated. It was more like she seemed...deliriously happy. Yes, that was it exactly. However over what, Sonny hadn't much of a clue.

"Okay, I'll see you tomorrow then." As an afterthought she added, "You be good." Sonny could have sworn that she heard Chloe whisper something to the effect of 'she definitely is' but wasn't positively sure.

"I will Sonny. You have fun with Dixie." Sonny could feel her sister's grin even through the phone. "I want all the details tomorrow. Every bit of 'em. I love you."

Smiling, Sonny countered with, "I love you too Bri. Goodnight." Ending the call, she placed the phone back where it belonged before standing and bringing her leg over the bike. She could feel the muscles in her thighs pulling just a bit after having been straddled on the motorbike for nearly an hour. Slinging the backpack over one shoulder, Sonny leaned down and checked herself in the rearview as best she could. Straightening, she deeply inhaled and then exhaled, repeating a few times before allowing her feet to propel her towards the front door.

Arriving much too quickly, she paced back and forth on the porch for a good thirty seconds before getting up the nerve to knock on the door. Afterward, she took a step back while waiting for the door to be opened. So nervous, Sonny didn't even realize that she was holding her breath as she waited for the click that signified that the door was being opened. It didn't take long before she heard the unmistakable turn of the doorknob, even over her rapidly beating heart. *This is it. I'm finally going to meet Dixie. Oh God, please don't let me faint before she can fully open the door.*

Within moments, Sonny found herself staring up into the eyes of...

Jacqueline Foster.

Sonny blinked twice, her mind trying to process this information.

And then she finally allowed her lungs to do their intended job and breathed. A shaky breath, which was louder than the evening wind rustling through the surrounding oak trees.

And then she promptly burst into tears, only to find herself wrapped in Jack's arms within a couple of heartbeats.

"Ssh ssh," Jack softly comforted her as she rubbed the other woman's back. "Please don't cry PerkyGrrl. It's alright."

Removing her face from the crook of Jack's now damp neck, the Sonny gazed up at her wearing the tiniest of smiles. "I wished...I secretly wished that Dixie was you," pausing, she took a deep shuddering breath. "I guess those little things really do come true sometimes."

Both women shared a soft chuckle before Jack asked, "You're not upset with me?"

"Perhaps later on after I've truly had a chance to think about all of this I'll kick your butt." The blonde playfully grinned, as did her companion. "However, at this moment I couldn't be anymore ecstatic." Noticing Jack's lips, which were so close that she could feel wisps of warm breath, Sonny realized that she couldn't wait another moment to have them on her own. "Please kiss me, Jack."

Smiling, the brunette began to lower her head as she whispered, "Your wish is certainly my command Sonny girl." Jack brushed her lips against Sonny's twice in an almost teasing fashion before she decided to add more pressure, molding her mouth against her beloved's. They released equal sized moans into the air as they held each other tighter, their kiss deepening, tongues languidly exploring.

Wanting a bit more privacy, Jack gently pulled Sonny inside of the cabin while managing to keep contact with her lips the entire time. After unceremoniously dropping her backpack on the floor, Sonny felt her back brush against the closed door as a pair of hands roamed up and down the sides of her body and an incredibly soft mouth gently sucked her tongue into it. The entire length of her body suddenly felt as though it was on fire, a delicious fire that she wanted extinguished yet at the same time didn't. Slipping a hand underneath the back of Jack's shirt, Sonny felt the heat of her naked skin and ached to feel more. In fact, she wanted to caress every inch of Jack's body and had every intention of doing so.

When Jack came up with the idea of them going upstairs, Sonny readily agreed. After temporarily ceasing the heated kisses with a great amount of difficulty, the pair almost flew up the flight of stairs leading to the loft. Stopping on the last step, Sonny stared at the scene before them while Jack stood off to the side, watching her face. It was simple yet breathtaking. Red and white rose petals were strewn on the floor leading to the double bed, which was also covered with a few of the fragrant flowers along with one long stemmed red rose laid against a pillow. Instead of using the lamp, Jack had created natural light with a few white candles lit around the small space. The glow of one candle near her, illuminated Sonny's smiling face somehow managing to make her appear even more beautiful.

Slowly walking toward Jack, she softly kissed her lips. "I love it," after a brief pause she added, "And I love you."

For a split second, the brunette figured that her heart would swell out of her chest due to those three little words, which she had ached to hear. With her throat tightening, joyous tears sprang to Jack's eyes. "I love you too Sonny. Oh, I love you so much," she fervently whispered just before her mouth sought out the other woman's.

As their tongues mapped out the contours of each other's mouths, Jack urgently began to

unbutton Sonny's shirt, desperate to feel the heat of her skin. After undoing the last button, Jack pushed the shirt from her companion's shoulders and allowed it to drop to the floor. Thinking that undressing was a terrific idea, Sonny tugged on the edge of Jack's shirt until the other woman got the idea and raised her arms so that it could be removed. The shirt didn't fair as well as Sonny's since it was catapulted over the banister and gravity pulled it to the first floor.

As the woman stood before her, Sonny raised her hands, her fingers beginning to trace the swell of Jack's breasts, which were partially covered by her bra. Closing her eyes, the brunette enjoyed the light caress, shivering when those warm hands were replaced with an inquisitive tongue that traced the same paths Sonny's fingers had taken. Softly moaning, Jack felt the insistent tugging on the clasp of her bra until it finally released. She shrugged her shoulders, helping the straps to slide off and faintly heard as the bra made impact with the floor. Instantly, her legs turned to mush when a hot mouth enveloped her right nipple, gently suckling the aroused tip. Two hands planted themselves on a leather-covered rear and squeezed in a slow rhythm as that mouth explored more of Jack's breast.

Her legs weren't going to hold her weight much longer. Thinking that it wouldn't be suave to collapse on the floor, Jack raised Sonny's head and proceeded to kiss her senseless as she led them toward the bed. Falling backward onto the soft bed, Jack brought Sonny along with her and she landed snugly on top of the brunette. A grin curving her lips at the delicious weight laying on her, Jack undid the other woman's bra as she nibbled on her lower lip, eliciting a low moan in the process. Placing her hands on either side of Jack's head, Sonny pushed the upper half of her body upward, helping to remove her own bra before she slowly started to lower herself, allowing her nipples to brush ever so lightly against Jack's. A rush of heat passed through both of their bodies on contact of the sensitive tips. Doing it again, Sonny caused the same thing to happen along with a faint growl from her about to be lover. Lazily, a grin spread across her lips as she gazed down at Jack while managing to keep her upper body from fully touching her own.

A dark eyebrow arched. Was little Sonny purposefully teasing her? It certainly seemed like it. Though she didn't think it possible, Jack's libido elevated even further. Did she mention that she loved this woman? "Sonny?" she called in a voice thick with need.

"Yes?" The blonde drew out the word as she leaned down and placed a kiss on the tip of Jack's nose before raising her body again. She moaned in pleasure as two hands found purchase on her lower back.

"Are you trying to give me a heart attack?" Jack teasingly inquired, closely watching a pair of full breasts dangling above her. She was on the verge of salivating.

Noticing where Jack's eyes were, Sonny scooted upward until her chest was directly above the other woman's face and most importantly her mouth. "Now why would I want to do that?" Though not receiving a verbal reply, she obtained a much more gratifying one when Jack successfully drew a rosy tip into her mouth. Sonny couldn't have gotten away, even if she had truly wanted to, since that mouth was holding her nipple captive firmly yet gently as a tongue brushed back and forth across the tightening bud. As the blonde moaned, her lower body beginning to unconsciously rub against Jack's, the strong arms around her tightened their hold

before Jack smoothly switched their positions with Sonny now laying on her back.

Deciding that it was time for them to lose every stitch of clothing they had on, Jack knelt between the other woman's legs before she worked on unfastening her chinos before drawing them down her body until they were completely off along with Sonny's shoes and socks. Unhurriedly, Jack slid her fingertips along the blonde's legs and up toward the outer region of her thighs, all the while hearing her shallow breathing as she waited for her beloved to touch her anywhere and everywhere. After stroking along the tops of Sonny's thighs, Jack's agile fingers moved inward, caressing the heated sensitive flesh of her inner thighs causing her to writhe on the bed.

"You like that?" Jack softly inquired, already knowing the answer but wanting to hear it.

"Mm, you know I do Jack...feels so good," Sonny breathlessly replied.

Smiling now, Jack's fingers began to travel further south, heading down quivering legs before they made a U-turn, stopping when they reached the waistband of Sonny's panties. Hooking her index fingers into the sides of them, Jack tugged on the underwear trying to remove them, which proved an easier task when Sonny helped by raising her bottom slightly above the bed. After dropping the cute little undies on the floor, Jack quickly removed her own clothing, tossing her leather pants and bikini briefs across the room before settling between Sonny's legs again. Leaning down, she placed the sweetest of kisses on the blonde's lips while simultaneously reaching for the lone rose on the pillow. As she continued to kiss her love, she trailed the soft petals of the rose against her cheek, instantly feeling the lips below hers curving into a smile. Finding it contagious, she smiled back after breaking the tender kiss.

Staring into darkened green eyes, she whispered, "I can hardly believe that you're here with me. I'm so lucky." The rose still in her hand, Jack gently traced the contours of Sonny's lips with it.

Reaching up, Sonny brushed the palm of her hand over Jack's cheek. "I'm here and I don't plan on going anywhere." She smiled again. "And as for being lucky, I think that extends both ways."

Turning her head towards it, Jack cupped the hand resting on her cheek and delicately touched its palm with her lips before sitting up. Holding on to the rose's stem, Jack placed it against Sonny's cheek, caressing the slightly reddened skin with the petals before gliding it back toward her ear, making sure that the very edge of a petal kissed along the ridge of her ear. Green eyes fluttered shut as Sonny enjoyed the contact, almost feeling as though it were Jack's very lips on her skin. Her heartbeat quickened as the petals danced along her neck, gliding along ever so sensitively...slowly...sensually.

Jack watched, almost mesmerized as the tender petals left goosebumps in their wake while skimming along her lover's arms and then her shoulders. The smaller woman started to moan when the rose made contact with her breasts, first stroking the valley of them before soft petals languidly circled her aureoles, the circular movements becoming larger and larger until her entire breasts were being caressed. Watching as Sonny's breasts moved up and down quickly because of her shallow breathing, Jack couldn't help herself. Leaning over, she proceeded to love them

with her mouth, making sure to take equal time with each one. Arching into her mouth, feeling that skilled tongue laving her tips, Sonny placed a hand on the back of Jack's head, holding the woman to her.

Too soon, Jack moved on, trailing hot damp kisses along Sonny's tummy, her abdomen, and then coming back up to kiss her navel before dipping the tip of her tongue inside it. Hearing a sharp gasp of both surprise and rapture, Jack started to stroke the navel, her tongue delving in and out of it at a leisurely pace as the body beneath her stirred in excitement. Trailing her mouth down farther, Jack grazed over Sonny's pelvic area with her tongue, causing her hips to jerk slightly. Attempting to keep her body still, Sonny waited for Jack to make her next move. Her mouth was close...so close.

However, Jack's mouth had other plans as it bypassed the glistening golden curls before it and began kissing the insides of Sonny's thighs, gently nipping at the skin every so often. Her body starting to squirm at the pleasurable feeling of Jack's teeth and tongue, the blonde thrust her hips upward trying to insinuate. Immediately getting the hint but not acting like it, Jack moved the rose in her hand until it was resting on Sonny's tummy. Raising her head, she winked at the woman, her lips curved into a sensuous smile as she lightly caressed her beloved's skin, even trailing the crimson petals around and in her navel.

"Jack..." The petite woman hoarsely whispered as she clutched handfuls of the cover beneath her. She hungered for release so much that she could almost taste it.

"Yes sweetheart?" As she waited for an answer, Jack slid the rose downward until it was delicately pressed against Sonny's womanhood. The hips before her jerking again, Jack smiled as she allowed the petals to flicker across swollen sensitized lips.

"Oh, God! Jack please..." Moaning, Sonny's hips moved as she tried to press her against the fragile flower.

Twirling the rose around the blonde's center, Jack noticed the beads of Sonny's natural juices beginning to coat the petals. She suddenly wanted her tongue to be those petals. However, she was determined to wait for Sonny to tell her what *she* wanted. Continuing her ministrations she asked, "Please what love?"

Licking parched lips, Sonny almost shyly made contact with a pair of tender blue eyes as she softly replied, "Please touch me...with your mouth. I need you inside me."

Very happy to oblige, Jack coaxed the other woman's legs onto her shoulders as she dropped the rose on the bed. Moving into toward Sonny's center, she grazed her nether lips with her mouth, feeling the thighs she had her palms pressed against shiver. Not being able to wait a moment longer, Jack slowly slipped her tongue between Sonny's lips, tasting her and instantly knowing that she could never tire of it. Urgent hips pressing against her mouth, Jack thrust her tongue matching their pace.

Loudly moaning and writhing on the bed, Sonny clutched the covers tighter as her hips began to

move faster and faster, Jack's tongue keeping a steady rhythm with them. As the mouth pressing against her suckled the bit of engorged flesh between her lips and a tongue swirled around it, Sonny knew that she wouldn't be able to hang on any longer.

"Jack...baby...yes, oh God yes..." Her hips bucking, Sonny threw her head back as she shouted the name of the woman so brilliantly loving her, again and again. Breathing laboriously, Sonny felt as Jack made her way up her body, leaving a path of kisses that caused her to delightfully shiver. Soon a mouth found its way onto her own and Sonny slipped her tongue out to greet Jack's as she loosely wrapped her arms around the woman's neck, immensely enjoying the weight on top of her.

"Mmm," Sonny moaned against Jack's lips creating a slight vibration. "That was invigorating," she whispered, a lazy smile on her face. She felt like a queen after a hearty banquet.

Softly chuckling, Jack kissed her again while nodding in agreement. "Absolutely."

"And do you know what would be even more invigorating?" The blonde inquired as she slowly began to trail a hand down the side of Jack's body, smiling as the action caused the brunette's breath to catch.

"What's...what's that?"

Brushing her lips against Jack's ear, she softly intoned, "This." Before Jack had a chance to contemplate on what 'this' was a stealthy but very welcome little digit found its way between her legs.

"Ooh, *that*," she replied in a voice, which sounded wobbly to her own ears. Observing the grin on her lover's lips, Jack captured that grin with her mouth as her hips bucked against Sonny's hand.

While her tongue continued its dance with the brunette's, Sonny nudged until Jack's fuzzy mind processed the hint and slipped off of her. Lying on her side now, Sonny sucked on a tender full lower lip as she slipped another finger inside Jack, thrusting within her, keeping pace with her gyrating hips.

"Sweetheart...yes," Jack whispered between moans, her body tense, hips steadily pitching forward to meet Sonny's hand.

Leaving tiny kisses along the other woman's jaw and then the ridge of her ear Sonny ardently whispered, "You feel so good. Come for me baby." Noticing how tasty it looked, Sonny took a flushed lobe into her mouth, earning another moan of approval.

She felt Jack's inner muscles contracting around her roaming digits, her hips pressing upward at a more hurried pace and instinctively knowing that she was near her climax, thrust as deeply as was possible. Raising her head, Sonny watched her lover's face, small beads of perspiration dancing along her brow and hairline, joyous tears sitting in the corners of eyes currently almost

dark as the evening sky, mouth swollen from their intense kisses partly open as she took gulps of air. What a beautiful sight she was.

Feeling an abundance of love for this woman flowing through her, Sonny pressed her lips to Jack's as she catapulted over the precipice, her hips bucking furiously now against the fingers continuing to move within her. Wave after wave of ecstasy rippled through her body as she declared her love for Sonny, whispering against her lips while tears slid down her face.

They lay quietly for a few moments sharing sweet little kisses before Sonny removed her digits and brought them to her face, knowing that she had the other woman's full attention as she cleaned her index finger. After tasting a sample of her lover's essence, she concluded that she would have to get up close and personal in the very near future. Done, she offered the remaining digit to Jack who teasingly twirled her tongue around it before bringing it into her mouth where she proceeded to suck the finger clean, tasting herself.

Taking twice as long to finish, Jack finally released Sonny's finger as a grin started to form on her lips. Wrapping her arms around the smaller woman, she gently pulled until Sonny was resting on top of her and kissed her mouth as she stroked the length of her back with both hands. "PerkyGrrl?"

Sonny pressed herself into Jack, wanting to get as close as she could. "Yes Blueyez?" she countered, smiling now, trying to remember when she had ever felt so jubilant.

"You rock."

Chuckling, Sonny kissed her again, not being able to get enough. "Why thank you very much. You pebble."

They shared a laugh before their mouths began to share in another activity.

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## **Epilogue**

*Around eleven months later...*

They were on their way out of the door when Jack suddenly stopped, patting her pockets before concluding that she had forgotten her wallet.

Sonny glanced at her watch. "Hurry honey. We're gonna be late."

"Okay, be right back." After kissing her love, Jack headed up the stairs, taking them two at a time. Opening she and Sonny's bedroom door, she walked inside, faltering after taking a couple of steps as she noticed five pairs of large brown hostile eyes staring at her. Thinking that her mind was playing some sort of cruel trick on her, she rapidly blinked trying to clear the image before her. Unfortunately, it refused to budge. *Oh, God I've lost my mind!*

"I...I...must b...be...drea...dreaming," she stammered. She tried to move but her feet suddenly felt like they consisted of lead.

One pair of the brown eyes before her rolled. "No, you're awake. Unfortunately."

Jack heard Sonny calling her name from downstairs but she couldn't respond as she stared at the five large white and black spotted *talking* animals. "You're cows! Talking cows. Cows can't talk!"

"Oh, but *we* can," the cow who spoke before said. Evidently, she was in charge. "We're the ghosts of cows passed Jack!" Her brown eyes narrowed as she took a step towards the brunette who still couldn't move. "Or should I call you murderess?" Four heads nodded, obviously liking the unappealing nickname.

Closing her eyes, Jack slowly counted to ten before she reopened them, chagrined to find that the bovines were still in her bedroom. "What do you want with me? Why are you here?"

Not answering the question right away, the head cow turned and indicated for the cow standing in the back to open Jack's walk-in closet. Wrapping her mouth around it, she pulled the door open before they all quickly stepped back, as though they had been scalded. Raising a hoof, the leader pointed toward the closet, her eyes now filled with anguish along with anger as she looked at Jack.

"That is why we're here," she said, her voice even sounding anguished.

The brunette glanced between her and the closet. "What do you mean?" Again, she heard Sonny calling out her name, this time louder than before. "Sonny I'll be down in a minute!" she called back, not removing her eyes from the talking bovine.

"You," the head honcho pointed her hoof in Jack's direction now, "aren't you ashamed?"

"What do I have to be ashamed about?" Jack retorted, starting to get indignant. She wished that the cow would just get straight to the point so that she could go check herself into a clinic for psychiatric treatment.

"What do you have to be ashamed about? How could you ask that question?" Another cow said before the leader indicated for complete silence. Obediently, the cow shut her mouth.

"I've lost count of how much leather you've purchased over the years," the leader started. "That closet is a disgrace. Leather pants, leather jackets, shoes, belts, hats, wallets...even leather underwear!" She glared. "How much leather does one person need Jack? And you live in Florida for goodness sake!"

"I...I...it's not like I'm the only person in the world who buys leather."

"I'm not talking about other people...I'll deal with them later. I'm talking about you right now!" she pointed her hoof again. "Do you not realize that you are affecting the lives of others when you go gallivanting around stores for leather this and leather that?" She indicated her subordinates with a nod of her head. "We perish so that you humans can be fashionable. Well thanks a lot."

Speechless, Jack heard footsteps nearing the bedroom door. She briefly wondered if it could be another one but then decided that it sounded like a two-footed being. The ex-Conqueror watched as Sonny slipped into the room, a quizzical expression on her face.

"What's taking so-" Stopping, Sonny slowly turned to the left where she noticed the bovine posse standing. An eyebrow arching, she looked back at her partner. "Um, Jack why are there cows in the bedroom? For that matter, why are there cows in the house at all?"

"We're here to confront Jack on her leather purchasing habits," the leader interjected.

"Oh." Sonny nodded as though it made sense now. She leaned against the doorjamb watching.

"In fact," the leader looked thoughtful. "Jack we want you to come with us."

A slight pause. "Why?"

The four-footed creature headed toward Jack with the others following her, all of them having dangerous glints in their eyes. "Because we want you to see what happens to us. And after you see...you can experience. I wonder how you'd look as a pair of pants."

"You're not about to find out!" Her feet lighter now, Jack turned and ran headlong into Sonny, who was blocking the exit. "Sweetheart, c'mon let's go. We have to get out of here!" she urgently stated while glancing over her shoulder at the advancing cows.

"Jack, you're not going anywhere," Sonny replied in a casual voice.

"What?" The brunette stared at her in shock. "Baby...honey...sweetie...move your rear, okay? I really think they mean to do us harm."

A blonde head shook. "No Jack, that's where you're wrong." She pointed at the anxious woman. "They mean to do *you* harm." She smiled a smile so very full of charm. "You see, I'm more of a cotton lover myself."

"Sonny," Jack glanced back again. The cows were only a couple feet behind her. "Sonny move. Please!"

"No."

"Sonny get out of the way now!"



"Nooo."

"Please, please..."

Placing her hands on Jack's shoulders, Sonny gently shook her. "Jack, you're dreaming."

"Mooove!" She thought she felt a hoof touch her back.

"Jack...Jack...honey...JACK!!"

Opening her eyes, the brunette noticed that she was in bed and Sonny was hovering above her, hands still on her shoulders. Wordlessly, blue eyes flitted around the room, which thankfully was bovine free. Breathing a sigh of relief, Jack wiped at her damp forehead. Releasing her shoulders, Sonny back down on the bed.

"Did you have that dream again?"

The brunette nodded.

"That's the sixth one this month."

"I know," Jack croaked. "This time you were in it." Sitting up in the bed, she sighed just before her eyes landed on the cow sitting at the foot of their bed. Growling low in her throat, she pointed at it. "It's that thing's fault."

Following her finger, Sonny bit back a laugh. Reaching over, she grabbed the small stuffed cow and placed it on her lap. "How is Callie the Cow responsible? She's an innocent little toy."

"Well it's your fault then. You're the one who brought it here as a little 'joke'. I started having the dreams a couple nights after her arrival."

Sonny couldn't contain her laughter anymore and burst into a fit of giggles while Jack attempted to look peeved, but there was a smile on her face. Plucking the stuffed animal from her partner's lap, Jack looked at, a sigh escaping her lips.

"I think I'm gonna cut back. I have enough leather as it is."

Grinning, Sonny inquired, "Think you can do that?"

Turning to her, Jack kissed her lips. "With you, I can do anything." They both chuckled. "Meanwhile, I think we should give Callie to Chris. I think he'd like her." Jack nuzzled the mouth of the toy against Sonny's neck, eliciting a giggle. "In fact, we should do it tomorrow when we go see him at the hospital."

Sonny smiled as she thought about the newest little addition to the family. Her nephew and Isaac and Sarah's first child Christian. Paul was to say the least, a very proud and happy grandpa when

the baby entered the world the day before yesterday. He finally had a *grandson* to carry on the Campbell name, although his brother's grandchildren would have done so. Also, he and Annette had another grandchild to spoil rotten.

"As if we along with everyone else haven't given him a lot already."

Jack laughed, thinking of all the baby supplies and toys Christian had received. "That's a lucky little guy."

Sonny agreed, as she took Callie the Cow from Jack's hands and placed her on the nightstand before she kissed the other woman's neck suggestively. "Now what were you saying about with me you could do...anything? Did you mean that?" Gently turning Jack's head toward her, Sonny traced her lips with a finger as she smiled.

Slowly starting to grin, Jack nodded. "Oh, yeah." She kissed the lips before her as she lowered them both down until they were stretched out on the bed. "I meant every single word." Forgetting all about bovines and leather, Jack set to concentrating on her beloved PerkyGrrl.

**~The End~**